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# MISSION RECORD



FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2023

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Black Press Media

## 'It's getting worse': Over 2,000 SARA For Women turnaways in one year

### Women, children fleeing domestic violence in Mission and Abbotsford discover lack of housing

Dillon White  
Mission Record

Over 2,000 women and their children were turned away from transition houses in Mission and Abbotsford in the span of a year.

"It's getting worse," SARA For Women executive director Michelle Puffer said.

From April 2022 to March 31 2023, SARA For Women's transition house in Mission had 730 women and 347 children turnaways while the Abbotsford location had 1,003 women and 577 children turnaways.

During that period, 35 women and 41 children were served in Mission and 45 women and 45 children were served in Abbotsford.

Puffer says when SARA is at capacity and forced to turn someone away, they make an effort to work with other agen-

cies to find space. However, sometimes they can't. The next option is often trying to find a friend to call.

"We really are trying to make sure if somebody's fleeing intimate partner violence — if they've made that step — we don't want to give them a reason to go back home," Puffer said. "We will do everything in our power to find them other locations and sometimes that's not in our community — sometimes that's further away."

At the Mission office, Puffer says more women are showing up who are fleeing domestic violence and/or at risk of homelessness because they can't find a safe place to go with their kids.

At the Mission Transition House, the SARA For Women team was able to secure housing for the majority of the women who received services and continued ongoing support upon

their departure.

"As always, some situations can be very challenging and the team has had to come up with creative ways to work with the legal system as some women fleeing abuse have acquaintances within that network. Collaboration with resources to ensure the women's safety is always paramount," SARA For Women's annual report reads.

In December 2022, severe weather led to the evacuation and closure of SARA's Santa Rosa facility due to the instability of the structure.

The women and children that were living at Santa Rosa were rehoused within other SARA programs and with client's families. In total, there were eight women and three children that were evacuated and rehoused between December 2022 and March 2023.

Continued on A3



More than 2,000 women and children had to be turned away from transition houses in Mission and Abbotsford in the span of a year and experts say it is getting worse. / Photo by simonapilolla of Getty Images

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