



## Developing Trauma Informed and Gender Informed Approaches in Substance Use Practice and Policy

### Merging Trauma Informed Practice and Gender Transformative Principles

The Centre of Excellence for Women's Health (CEWH) is a research and knowledge exchange centre focused on linking research on gender and health to policy and practice. Over this 2-year project, funded by Health Canada, CEWH will engage with leaders from across Canada to further integrate trauma informed, gender informed and gender transformative approaches into Canadian practice and policy aimed at addressing substance use.

Trauma informed practice (TIP) is a critically important approach to improving substance use services, programming, policy and health promotion initiatives. However, without integrating a gender transformative approach into TIP, issues of equity can easily be ignored, or perpetuated.

This project is on the forefront of merging these approaches in expanding the evidence base, developing materials and conducting pilot testing and knowledge transfer, by working with interested champions in regions across Canada.

### TGS Project Goals & Activities

The goal of the Trauma, Gender, Substance Use project (TGS) is to guide the further integration of trauma informed, gender informed and gender transformative practices into prevention, health promotion, treatment, harm reduction and policy affecting those who use substances in Canada.

Gender transformative principles will be integrated into TIP in this process, to address various equity issues in Canada's population.

CEWH will engage with key leaders from across Canada to collaboratively develop: evidence based guidance, materials, knowledge products and public health messages. These will be implemented and tested in a number of diverse pilot sites, including: treatment, public health, policy/program development settings. Evaluations of the processes of co-development and the pilot tested outcomes will form the basis of knowledge transfer, the dissemination of results, and the development of practice and policy recommendations.

#### TGS Project Summary

This resource has been made possible by a financial contribution from Health Canada. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of Health Canada.

## Trauma Informed Practice

Trauma informed Practice (TIP) is a systemic approach to service provision, which is based on an understanding of the prevalence of many forms of violence and trauma and the wide range of adaptations people make to cope. TIP is not about treating trauma, but rather trauma informed services take into account an understanding of trauma in all aspects of service delivery and place priority on the person's safety, choice and control.

TIP works at the client, staff, agency and system levels from the core principles of trauma awareness, safety and trustworthiness, choice and collaboration, and building of strength and skills. Trauma informed practice is more about the overall essence of the approach, or way of working, than a specific treatment strategy or method.

## Gender Informed & Gender Transformative Approaches

Gender and sex are both key to understanding and treating individuals with substance use issues. Sex related factors affect the biological responses to both substances and treatments, and gendered factors such as norms, roles, relationships and opportunities affect the uptake and treatment of substances across the gender continuum. Integrating gender informed principles into TIP is a key step in assuring the effectiveness, safety, appropriateness and relevance of treatment, at both service and system levels.

Gender transformative approaches actively strive to examine, question, and change rigid gender norms and imbalances of power as a means of reaching health as well as gender equity objectives. In the context of substance use responses, gender transformative initiatives seek to not only address the issue of substance use, but at the same time transform and improve gender and health equity.

## Centre of Excellence for Women's Health Contacts

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