

## PURPOSE & METHOD

**Purpose:** To identify factors impacting women's experience of domestic violence shelter.

**Method:** Semi-structured narrative interviews conducted with 9 women in shelter after experiencing violence in their intimate relationships.

## PARTICIPANTS

- **Mean age:** 28 (range 23-39)
- **Ethnicity:** 6 Indigenous; 2 White; 1 South Asian
- **Education:** From grade 10 to some college
- **Children:** 7 mothers, 1 first time pregnancy
- **Previous shelter stays:** From 0 to 4
- **History of mental health concerns:** 5 women
- **History of substance use concerns:** 6 women
- **Disability or long-term illness:** 5 women

## FINDINGS: TENSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- Using a feminist intersectionality framework, the analysis identified factors that are important to women's experiences in shelter.
  - Tensions related to the delivery of shelter services were noted at three levels:

### Interpersonal

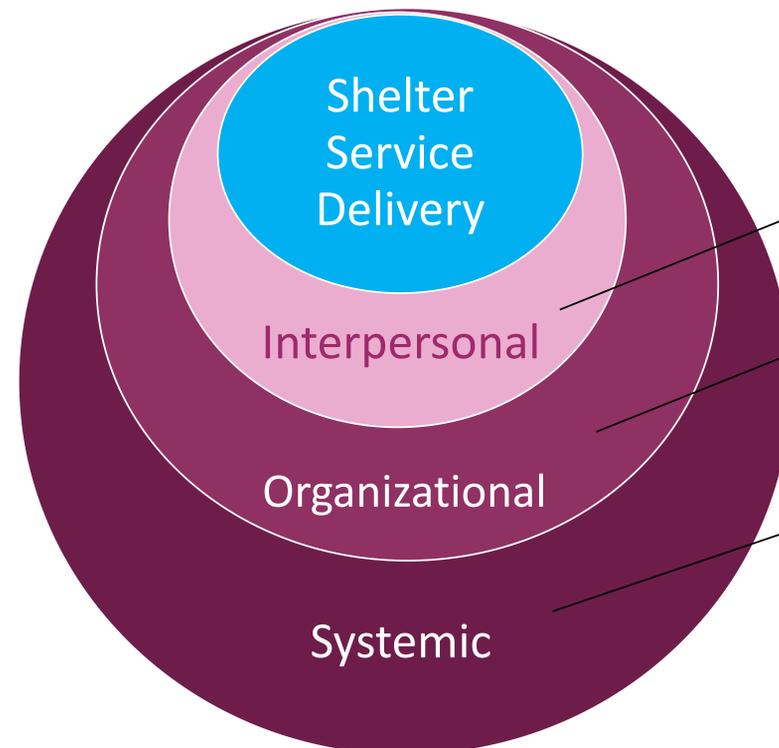
Prioritizing client-centered care and developing positive relationships between shelter staff and residents

### Organizational

Rules that promote safety versus rules that promote autonomy

### Systemic

Coordination of multiple systems and services (e.g., housing, justice, child welfare and healthcare)



#### Recommendations concerning the interactions between shelter residents and shelter staff

- ✧ Outline what women can expect during their time in shelter, including some of the feelings they might experience
- ✧ Validate women's experiences and communicate effectively with residents
- ✧ Seek out and apologize to residents who you may have hurt

#### Recommendations that involve shelter services, policies, and rules

- ✧ Increase the number of staff, particularly counselors and childcare workers. Increase annual salaries of staff members.
- ✧ Work to ensure residents have one consistent counselor, and that they are able to speak with their counselor on a regular basis (i.e., daily)
- ✧ Develop a system whereby women can protect personal belongings. Educate women about the effects of theft on community-building.

#### Recommendations related to the organization and policy of the larger systems within which shelters work

- ✧ Examine and, if needed, revise funding models to ensure that shelters have adequate resources to implement recommended changes
- ✧ Create additional second stage and permanent low-income housing
- ✧ Examine and revise policies related to child custody/child welfare and housing for women who have experienced intimate partner violence

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