

# making sexual and reproductive health services work for young adult sex workers: recommendations

Planned Parenthood Toronto, together with Maggie's: Toronto Sex Workers' Action Project and researchers from the University of Toronto, conducted a community-based research project to better understand young adult (age 18-29) sex workers' sexual and reproductive health needs. The project included focus groups and interviews with 18 young adult sex workers and an online survey with 62 respondents, for a total of 80 participants.

Here are participants' top recommendations for health care providers:

# 1

## adopt a non-judgmental approach to working with sex workers

- Be aware of how non-verbal cues, such as facial expression and body language, can convey a judgmental attitude
- Be aware of your own prejudices and the motivation behind them

- Provide a clear statement on your organization's position regarding sex work, so that sex workers know what to expect when using your services and can make an informed decision about whether or not to disclose their work

# 5

## publicly voice your position on sex work

# 2

## become familiar with the social realities of sex work

- Become educated on how stigma and fear of criminalization faced by sex workers increase their vulnerabilities and negatively impact health
- Contact your local sex worker led organization for sensitivity training

## provide appropriate services

- Recognize that sex workers have needs that extend beyond their work and that their occupational health needs are not always sexual
- Be sure to ask about personal relationships when conducting a sexual health intake

# 4

## recruit staff and volunteers with sex work experience

- Increase access for sex workers by having staff and/or volunteers with sex work experience as part of your organization, as sex workers will be more likely to use your services

# 6

- Place a wide range of free safer sex supplies in an area where sex workers can discreetly take as many as they need without fear of judgment from staff or other clients
- Consider extending your hours of operation to accommodate the schedules of sex workers who work often at night

## make your work place accessible to sex workers

# 3

## understand the diversity of sex working experiences

- Be aware that sex workers provide a range of different services and work in a variety of ways, so they have unique needs and challenges

# 7