

SEX WORKERS' RIGHTS ARE  
HUMAN RIGHTS.

HOW DO I PROTECT  
MYSELF FROM  
VIOLENCE  
& EXPLOITATION?

KNOW YOUR  
RIGHTS.  
IGNITY,  
JUSTICE.

RESOURCE GUIDE  
BY  
BUTTERFLY  
(ASIAN & MIGRANT  
SEX WORKERS'  
SUPPORT  
NETWORK)  
2019

# How do I protect myself from violence & exploitation?

Some of us may fear seeking help from law enforcement or service providers because of the discrimination and stigma that we face, the criminalization of sex work, the fear of being charged by bylaw officers, precarious immigration status as well as the potential risk of arrest and deportation.

\*Remember: Being a sex worker or selling sex is not illegal in Canada

You should be protected from violence or exploitation like every member of society. You should be able to access support and advocate for your rights.

Contact us to support you and your co-workers.

Butterfly (Asian and Migrant Sex Workers Support Network)

416-906-3098

butterflysw.org

Sex work does not inherently involve violence or exploitation. Like other jobs, sex workers may have good days and bad days at work, but violence and exploitation are never an acceptable part of any job. Unfortunately, mainstream attitudes in our society towards sex work can make us feel like these are normal parts of our job. It is very important to learn your rights to help yourself or your co-workers in case of violence or exploitation while working in massage parlours, holistic centres, body rub parlours, hotels, in-call locations or other sex industry jobs.

## Understanding your rights helps you to protect yourself and your coworkers.

\* Keep your own record of hours and dates you worked

\* Your employer should not withhold your documents, e.g. ID or passport (keep them yourself)

\*\* The Employment Standards Act laws (e.g. minimum wage, work hours, leaves and holidays) still protect you even if you do not have permission to work in Canada

# How do I prevent workplace violence & harassment?

You have the right to protect yourself from workplace violence and harassment. You should be protected from violence and harassment like every member of society.

- No one can use any physical force or threaten you with physical harm.
- No one should harass you by teasing, yelling, bullying or sending offensive jokes or materials, or intimidating you.
- You should not be subject to harassment or sexual violence of any kind in the workplace, whether it comes from an employer, a manager or a colleague, clients or law enforcement (bylaw, immigration and policy) officers.

## SEX WORK IS NOT VIOLENCE. VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT (E.G. SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND ASSAULT) ARE NOT PART OF THE JOB.

- Consenting to provide sex services does not mean you accept violence against you.
- You always have the right to reject any unwanted sexual contact.

You are protected by the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA).

This means that you have the right to:

- *know about health and safety hazards*
- *participate in keeping your workplace healthy and safe*
- *refuse work that you feel is unsafe*

\*Domestic or sexual violence leave provides workers with a job-protected break from work when they or their children are facing domestic or sexual violence (after 13 weeks of consecutive employment). This means that you would have your job back afterwards.

You are protected by the Criminal Code.

You are legally protected from assault, bodily harm, sexual assault, theft, robbery, trafficking, kidnapping and forcible confinement.

# Temporary work permit (TRP) for victims of trafficking.

If you have been trafficked, you may be able to apply for a Temporary Work Permit to stay in Canada temporarily (the length of the permit usually is 6 months to 1 year).

You may be required to collaborate with enforcement agencies or testify against your trafficker in order to receive the permit.

## ACCESS WITHOUT FEAR POLICY IN TORONTO

Toronto has been deemed “Access City Council, which was formed to reaffirm its commitment to undocumented residents (people without a valid student, tourist or work visa, refugee status, who are not permanent residents or citizens, or who otherwise do not have immigration documentation to be in Canada) of Toronto to ensure that all residents are able to access municipal and police services regardless of immigration status.

Police in Toronto regardless of your immigration status are required to disclose your immigration status to city officials, police or service providers (even if you are being asked).

**How do I get support if I do not have secure immigration status?**

# Getting help from service providers

Due to the conflation of sex work and trafficking, some service providers may see us all as trafficked victims. It is important to tell service providers what you want and need, and how they can support you. You also have the right to decide how to identify yourself to service providers (as a victim of trafficking, or not, as a sex worker, or not, immigration status, etc).

We encourage you to talk to service providers about your concerns related to disclosing your identity and/or information being shared with other services providers and law enforcement. It is important to discuss this **before** you disclose information, consent to share information with others, or signing any form. Remember, you have the right to object to the sharing of your information — including sharing information among service providers. Some organizations are not able to provide anonymous and confidential services. Ask in advance whether this is possible.

## Know your Rights! Safety, Dignity, Justice!

SEX WORK IS WORK.

SEX WORKERS ARE ENTITLED TO SAFETY, DIGNITY, EQUALITY, AND JUSTICE.

### FILING COMPLAINTS AGAINST LAW ENFORCEMENT

No one has permission to violate our rights, and that includes law enforcement. You may file a complaint if you experience any misconduct, harassment, or violence from bylaw enforcement or police.

#### COMPLAINTS AGAINST POLICE

Office of the Independent Police Review Director  
416-246-7071 / [oiprdcomplaints@ontario.ca](mailto:oiprdcomplaints@ontario.ca)  
[www.oiprd.on.ca](http://www.oiprd.on.ca)

#### COMPLAINTS AGAINST BYLAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS

The Customer Service Improvement Team,  
City of Toronto  
311 / [mlsfeedback@toronto.ca](mailto:mlsfeedback@toronto.ca)  
City Hall, 100 Queen St. W., 16th floor, West Tower, Toronto, ON, M5H 2N2

\* You can give your feedback anonymously but you have to disclose your identity when you file the formal complaint

#### Ombudsman Toronto

(you must go through the city internal process first )  
416-392-7062 / [ombudsman@toronto.ca](mailto:ombudsman@toronto.ca)  
[www.ombudsmantoronto.ca](http://www.ombudsmantoronto.ca)

SOME OF US MAY BE SCARED TO FILE A COMPLAINT. YOU MAY CONTACT BUTTERFLY TO DISCUSS YOUR OPTIONS, INCLUDING CARRYING OUT THE COMPLAINT COLLECTIVELY AND ANONYMOUSLY.

**Butterfly (Asian and Migrant Sex Workers Support Network)**  
416-906-3098 / [www.butterflysw.org](http://www.butterflysw.org)

- Outreach and hotline services
- Leadership-building, trainings, and networking
- Accompaniment, interpretation and translation services
- Emotional, social, health, and legal information, services, and support
- Emergency and crisis support (e.g. violence, arrest, or detention)
- Research, publications, public education, lobbying and advocacy

The services and supports are anonymous. You do not need to provide any legal name or private information



**WORKERS' ORGANIZATION**

Workers Action Centre

(for confidential and non-judgmental support on workplace issues)

416-531-0778 / Toll Free: 1-855-531-0778 /

[www.workersactioncentre.org](http://www.workersactioncentre.org)



**SUPPORT FOR WOMEN EXPERIENCING VIOLENCE**

Assaulted Women's Helpline

416-863-0511 / Toll Free: 1-866-863-0511 / [www.awhl.org](http://www.awhl.org)



**LEGAL AID**

Legal Aid Ontario

To find out if you qualify for legal aid support (financial support when you need a lawyer or legal advice)

Toll-free: 1-800-668-8258 / [www.legalaid.on.ca](http://www.legalaid.on.ca)

## COMMUNITY LEGAL CLINICS

Some clinics provide legal services to people in specific areas. To find out which legal clinic is closest to, enter your postal code here: <https://www.legalaid.on.ca/en/contact/contact.asp?type=cl>. While there are many clinics around the Greater Toronto Area, we have included a list of legal clinic partners with Butterfly.

**Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic**  
(for women who have experienced abuse)  
416-323-9149 / [www.schliferclinic.com/](http://www.schliferclinic.com/)

**Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic**  
(non English-speaking: Chinese, Vietnamese, Laotian and Cambodian communities)  
416-971-9674 / [www.csalc.ca](http://www.csalc.ca)

**Downtown Legal Services**  
416-934-4535 / [www.downtownlegalservices.ca](http://www.downtownlegalservices.ca)

**Parkdale Community Legal Services**  
416-531-2411 / [www.parkdalelegal.org](http://www.parkdalelegal.org)

**South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario**  
(for people who self-identify as South Asian, including Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, Tamil, Bangladeshi, Indo-Caribbean, mixed race, and others)  
416-487-6371 / [www.salc.on.ca](http://www.salc.on.ca)



## OTHER INFORMATION

**Ministry of Labour**  
1-877-202-0008 / [www.labour.gov.on.ca](http://www.labour.gov.on.ca)

**Emergency**  
Call- 911

# BUTTERFLY

A Asian & Migrant  
Sex Workers Support Network

## OUR MISSION

Butterfly's work is about building community with migrant sex workers: a place where we can share love, care, laughter, and tears.

Community is what gives us the strength to support each other, resist oppression, grow together, and actualize our dream.

Our mission is to:

- Building safety and dignity
- Building leadership, growing support networks, and promoting solidarity
- Enhancing access to legal rights, health, social, and labour services
- Promoting equality and eliminating racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, stigma, and discrimination against Asians, migrants, and sex workers
- Facilitating the voices of sex workers being heard
- Advocating for legal and policy change (including decriminalization of sex work and abolishing the immigration prohibition of sex work policy)

## CONTACT US

Email: [butterfly@gmail.com](mailto:butterfly@gmail.com)

Phone: +1-416-906-3098

Website: [www.butterfly.org](http://www.butterfly.org)

Co-ordinators: Irene Lam & Anna Malla

Graphic Designer: Lily Li

Funded by City of Toronto

