

Update: Legal Services Society of BC and the Definition(s?) of Sexual Abuse

by kevin harding - Wednesday, January 11, 2012

<http://politicsrespun.org/2012/01/update-legal-services-society-of-bc-and-the-definitions-of-sexual-abuse/>

A while ago [I wrote about the puzzling decision on the part of the Legal Services Society of BC to publish a handbook on sexual abuse against men that defined such things as being made to "feel embarrassed" by a woman, being "criticized on performance" by a woman, or the withholding of sex as sexual abuse.](#)

Colleagues and activists shared with me today [a blog post from the Battered Women's Support Services Society today, that provided an update:](#)

on December 8, 2011, LSS updated the fact sheet by amending the definition of sexual abuse, removing the reference to feeling “embarrassed,” and making other minor changes. Thus, some of the most troubling aspects of the document have been removed, namely, a definition of sexual abuse that reinforces a male entitlement to sex and incorrectly implies that women are not free to refuse sex in any circumstance and for any reason, a view that is contrary to law and which deeply trivializes the experiences of survivors of sexual abuse. LSS also advised that a separate publication for gay men is forthcoming.

However:

Despite the amendments LSS has made, the document, especially within an otherwise gender- and sexual orientation-neutral framework, remains problematic. The issue of men’s social and economic power in relation to women is rendered invisible, as is an analysis of who is most often the primary aggressor in an abusive relationship. There also remains the question of how this publication, including the problematic and legally unsupportable definition of sexual abuse, was able to make its way into circulation in the first place. The concerns raised by this publication are particularly important given LSS’s role in administering public legal aid.

It appears the work is not done. Just as there is tremendous pressure being put on the Province of BC by lawyers to properly fund Legal Aid, which the Legal Services Society administers, there needs to be additional pressure put on the LSS to ensure it's giving proper and not gender-biased advice.

And there's more. Including a complete destruction of how "Men’s Rights Activists use the language of equivalency to undermine women’s anti-violence work and delegitimize women as the primary victims of abuse, claiming that domestic violence is a gender-neutral phenomenon and that men’s experiences of “husband battering” are being suppressed."

[Take a look at the BWSS' blog post for more, including citations and statistics.](#)