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Gap Analysis of the Social Services Referral Network for Sex Workers in Worcester, MA

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Abstract

An investigation on the presence of female sex workers in Central Massachusetts has highlighted the lack of social services provided to this population. Commissioned by the Worcester Division of Public Health (DPH), and as part of a broader collaborative effort among social service organizations (SSO), this study:

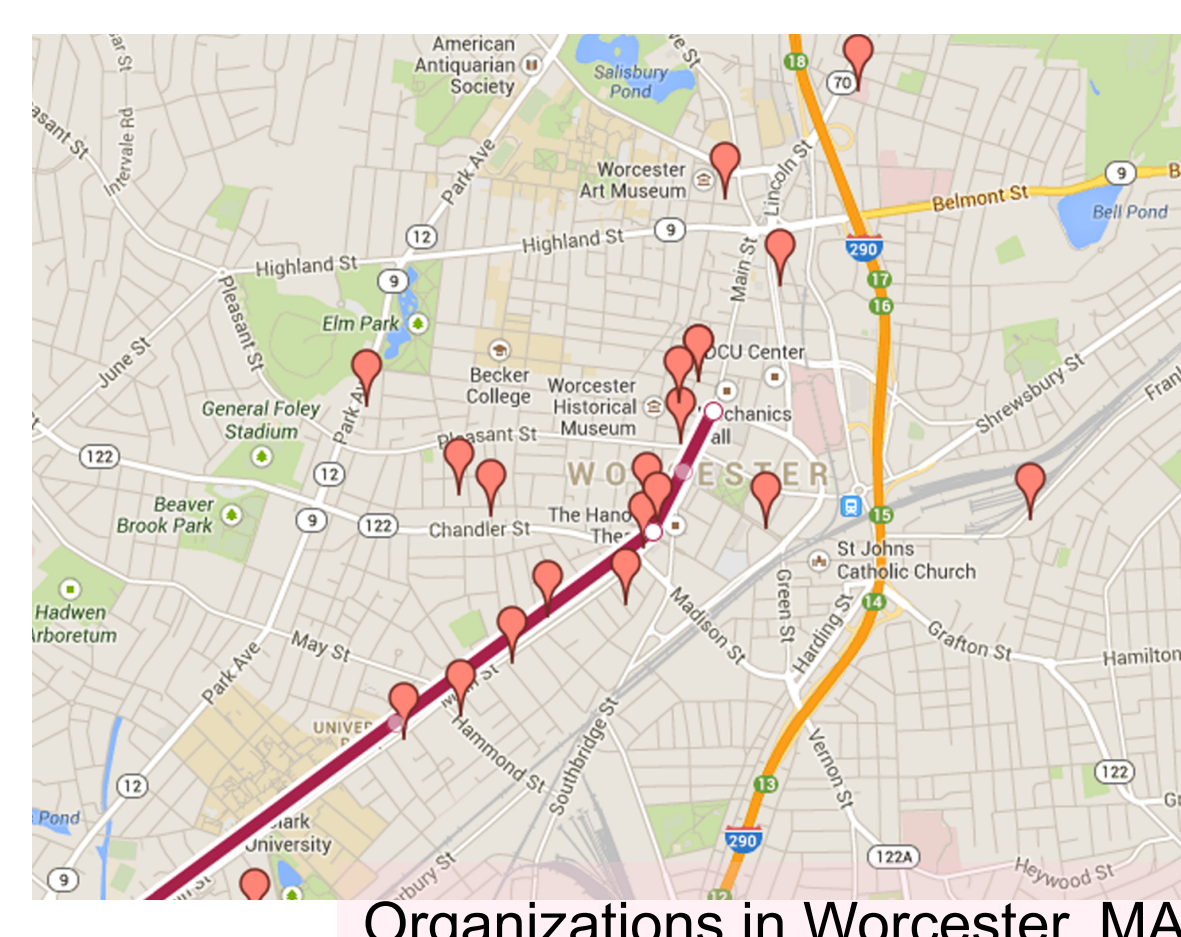
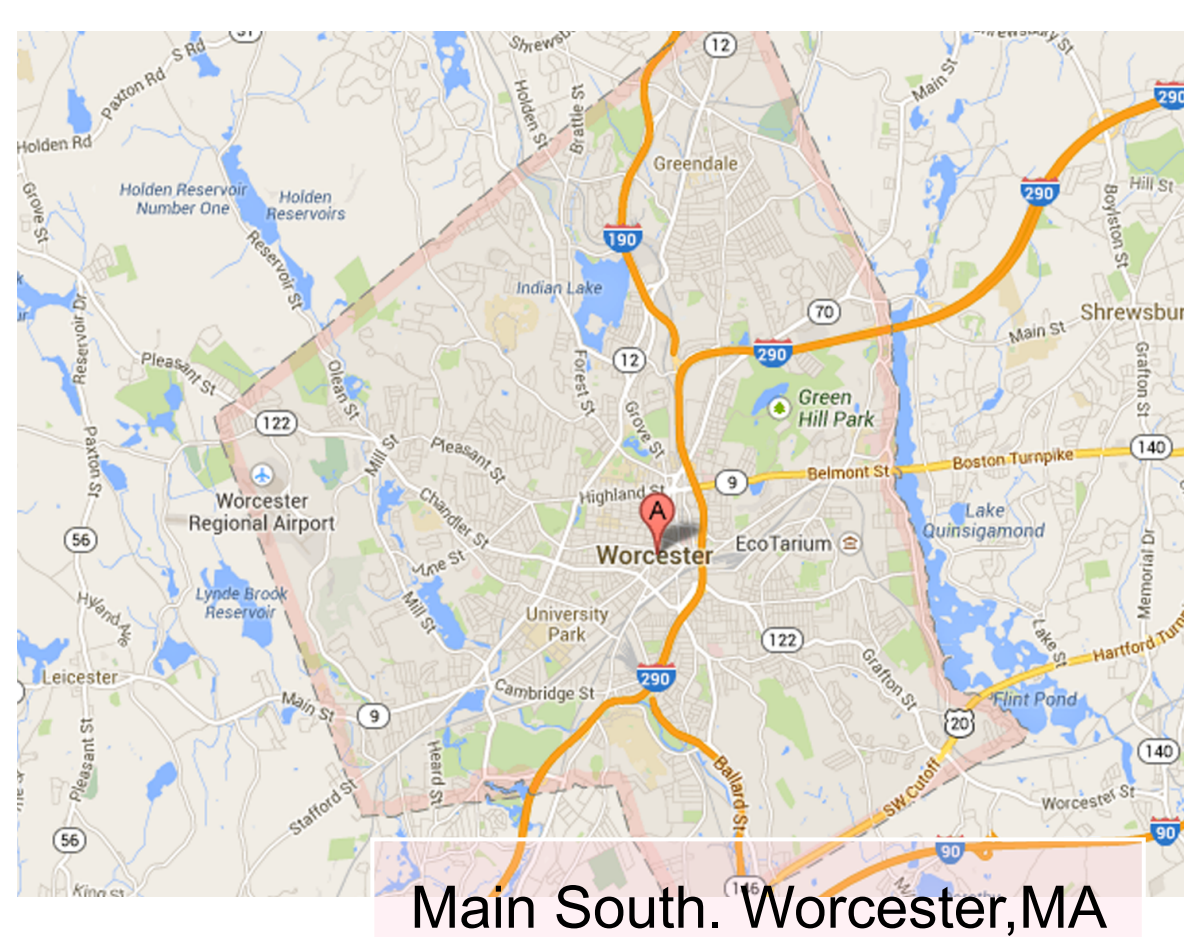
- Maps out the referral network among the SSOs in the city of Worcester
- Identifies gaps in the services provided which led to the creation of a model of efficient services based on domestic and international best practices.
- With a network density of 0.07, an average betweenness of 51.027, a closeness of 0.012 and an eigenvector of 0.027 among the SSO organizations, our findings suggest there are three main gaps:
 - (1) lack of knowledge,
 - (2) lack of communication, and
 - (3) insufficient capacity and services.

This study illustrates the need for an ongoing body, like the Worcester Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation (WAASE) to critically examine the proposed recommendations and support the development, implementation and monitoring of a coordinated county wide response to sexual exploitation in the city of Worcester.

Purpose

- Explore the existing gaps in the social services network in Worcester, MA provided to sex workers.
- Map the social services referral network
- Assess the service gaps in the existing organizations
- Create a model based on domestic and international best practices in servicing sex workers
- Generate a series of recommendations that will help address the existing gaps in order to provide better, sustainable and more efficient services to the sex workers of the area

Study Area



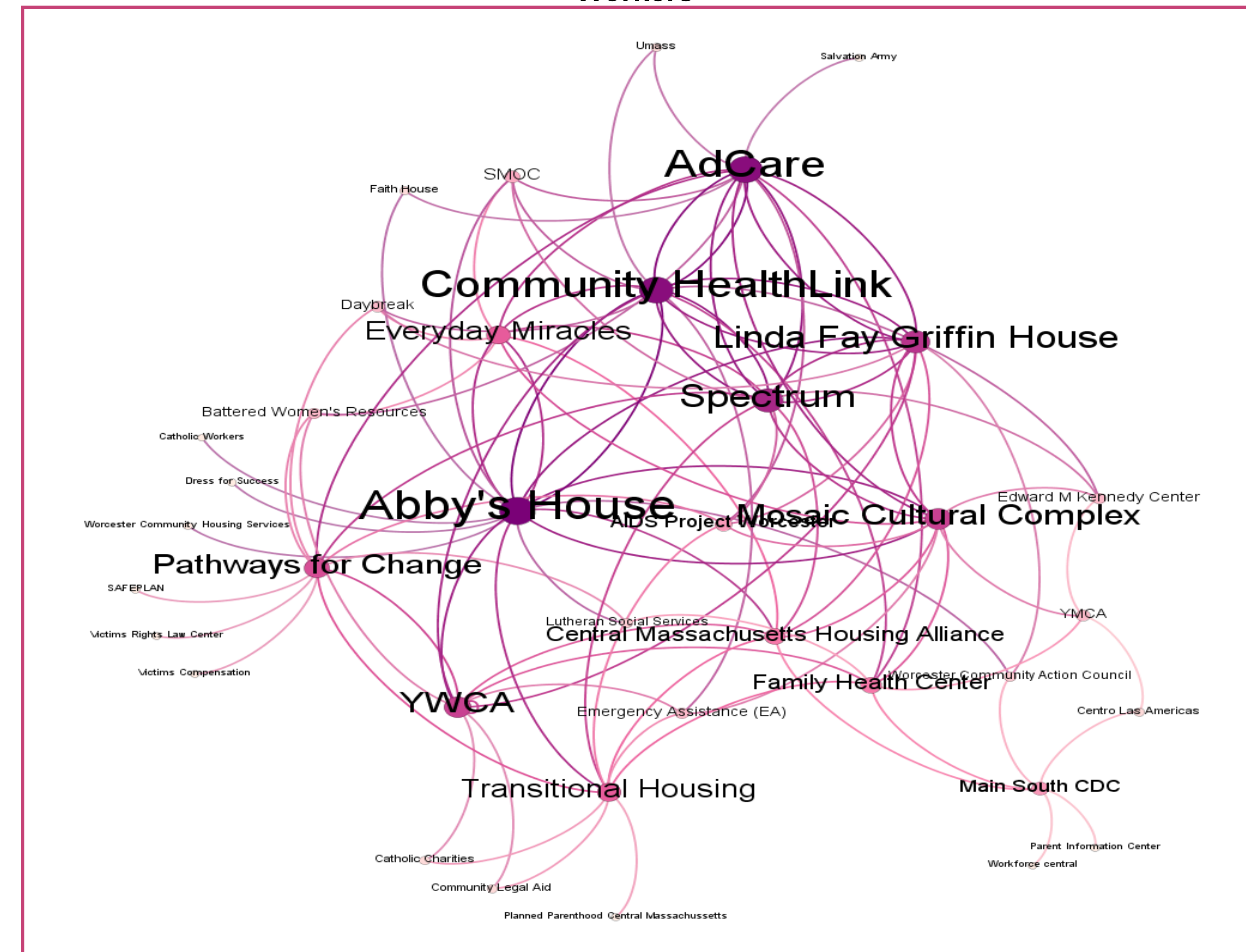
Methods

- 32 organizations identified that can potentially offer services
- Surveyed organizations on (1) their services/programs and (2) their referral network.
- Analyzed using Microsoft Excel and NodeXL for the referral network

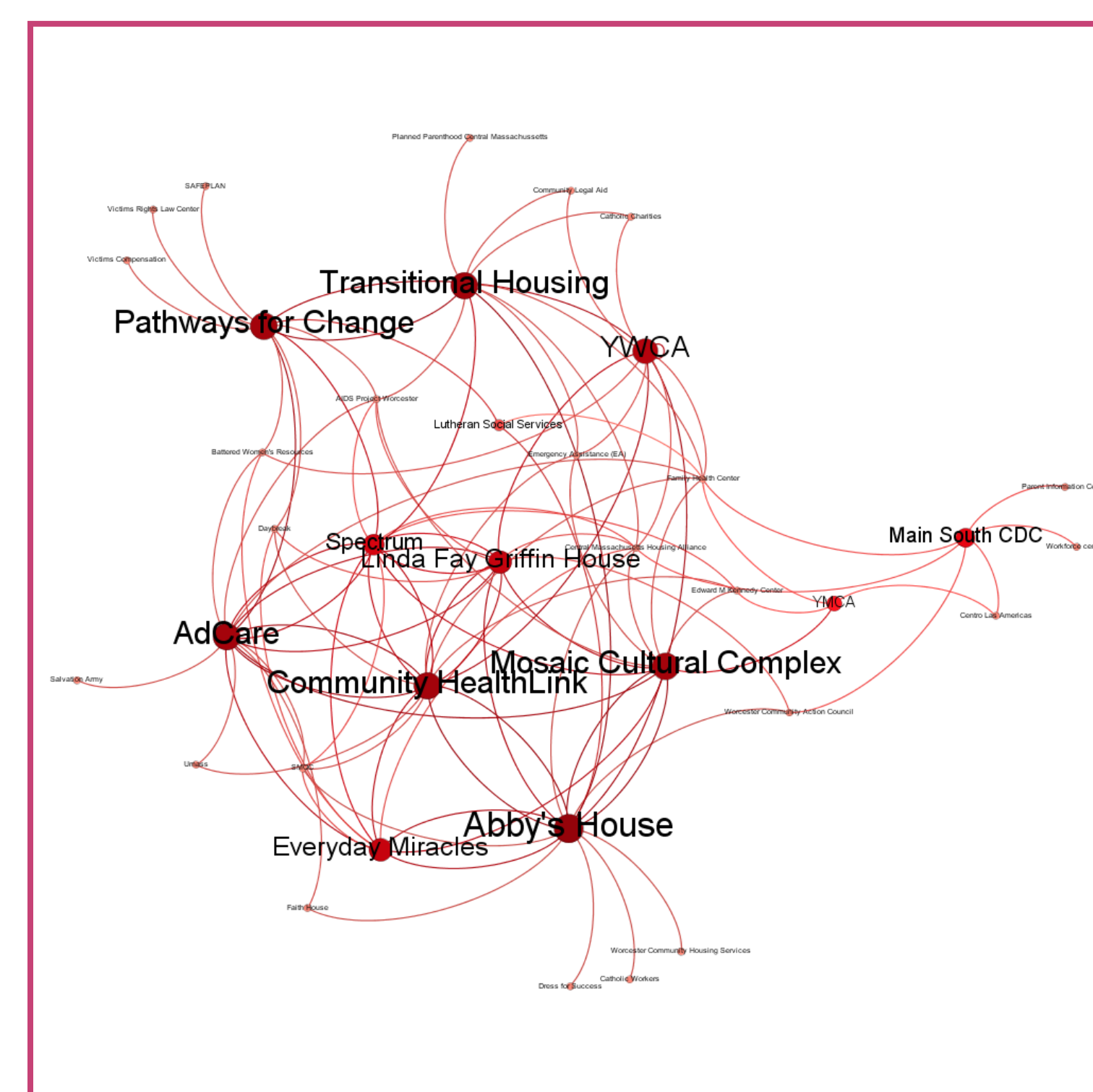
Results

Type of Measure	Value
Vertices/Nodes	37
Total Edges/Connections/Relationships	105
Average Geodesic Distance	2.35
Graph Density	0.08
Average In-Degree	2.84
Average Out-Degree	2.84
Betweenness Centrality	51.03
Closeness Centrality	0.01
Eigenvector Centrality	0.03
Clustering Coefficient	0.14

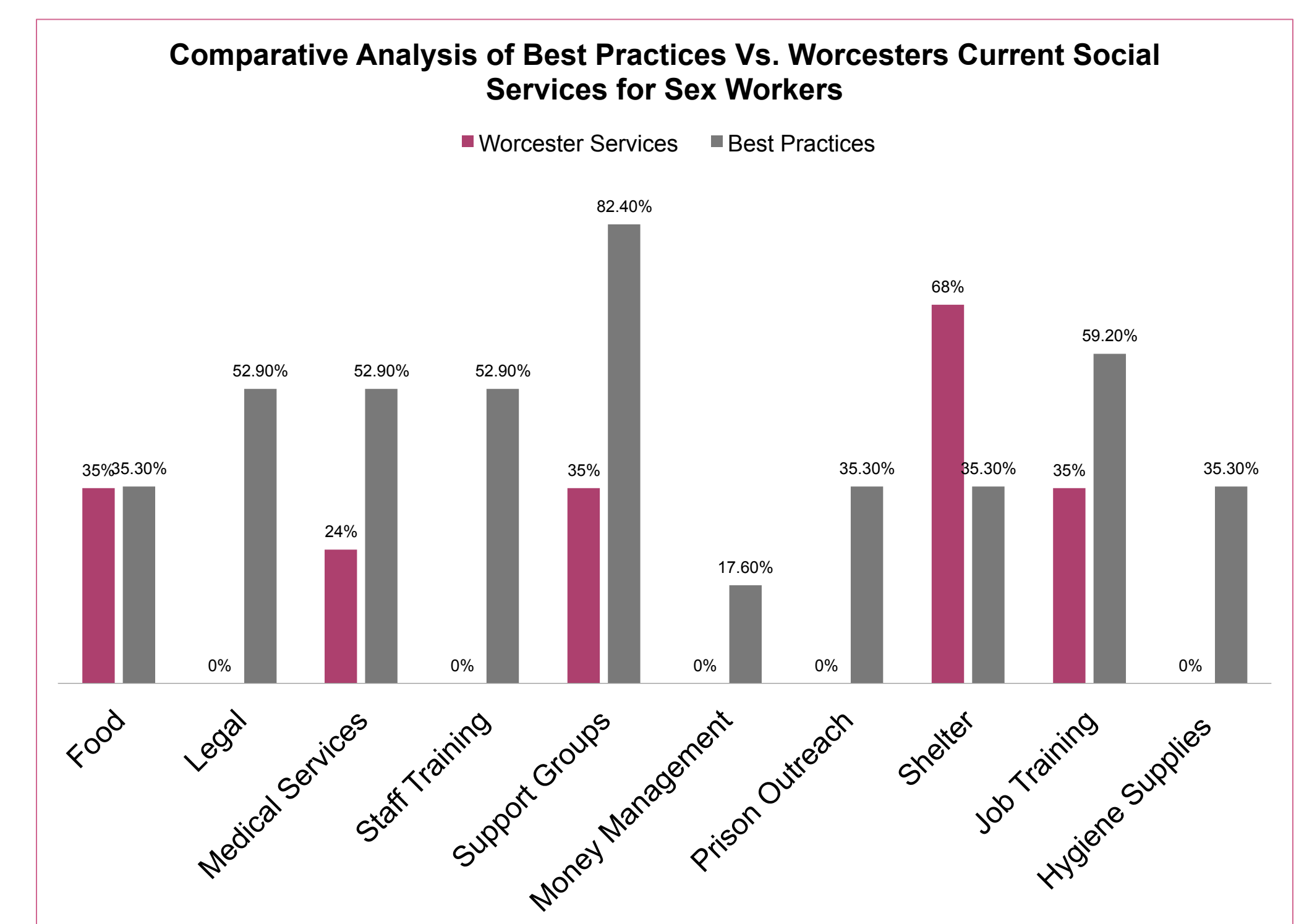
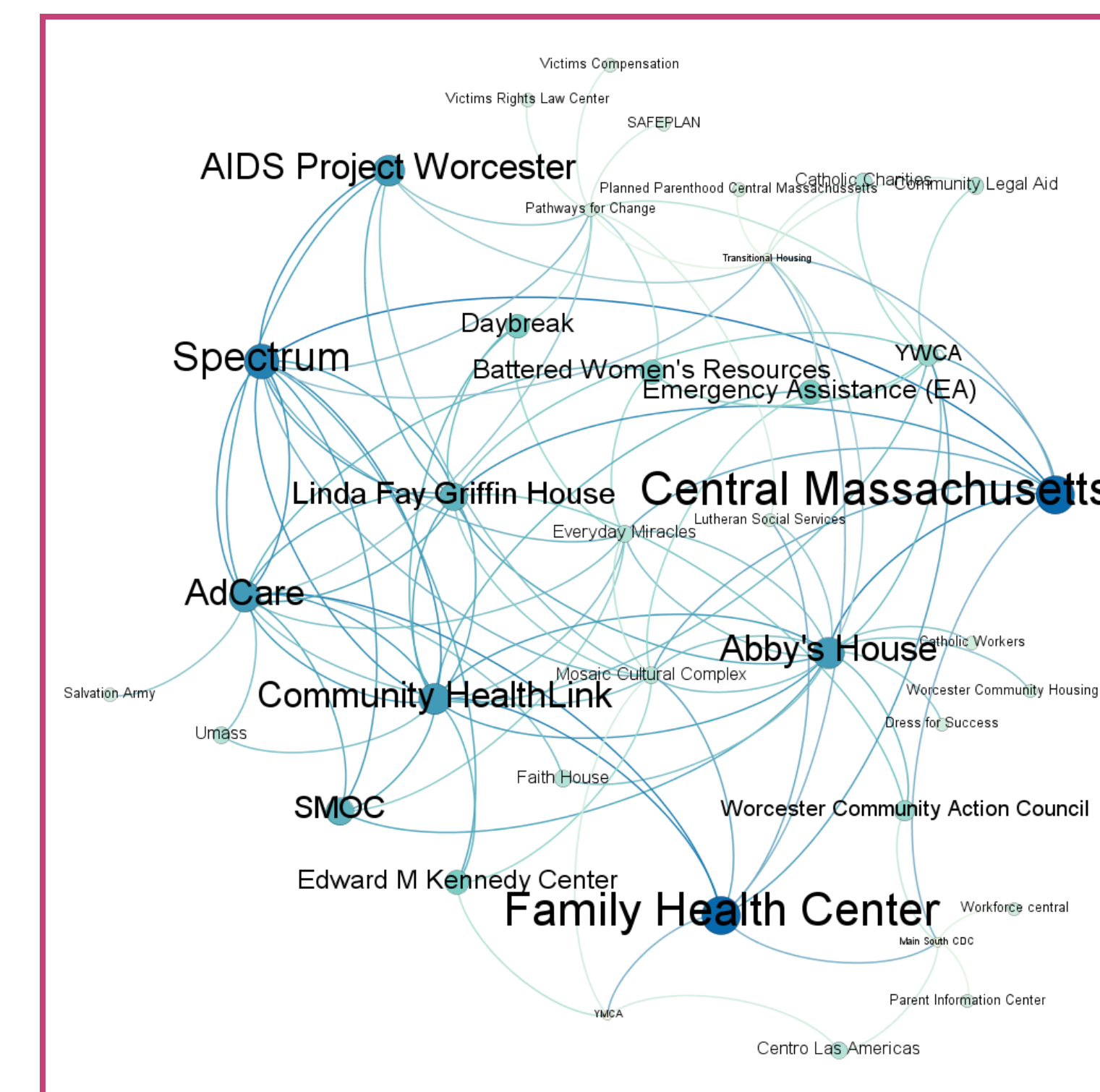
Referral Network of Social Service Organizations that Might Provide Service to Sex Workers



Network of Referrals Made by Organization



Network of Referrals Received by Organization



Conclusion

- Lack of communication among the network of social service organizations that may provide services to sex workers in the Worcester County.
- Lack of communication created inefficient referral network.
- Insufficient knowledge of the various services and programs offered by organizations has led to:
 1. referrals being made to organizations that do not provide the needed service, and
 2. weight of referrals of certain types of cases falling on few organizations.

Recommendations

- With increased communication, knowledge, and collaboration among the social service organizations the referral network would improve leading to:
 - Redistribute the referrals amongst numerous organizations that offer the same or similar services but had not been included previously in the referral network.
 - Creation of a comprehensive database that stores all the information on services and programs offered by all the social service organizations in Worcester that might provide service to sex workers

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