



Ready. Inspire. Act.

RIA HOUSE

Annual Report 2019

## **Our vision**

is a world where people's bodies are not victimized, exploited, bought or sold for the sexual gratification of another person.

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## **Our mission**

is to stand with and support women with experience in the commercial sex trade, and its associated exploitation, trafficking and prostitution, by providing a range of community-based services.

# A letter RIA House Executive Director

Heather Wightman

Dear RIA Community,

**Ready. Inspire. Act** is an organization purposed to serve and support women in the aftermath of being bought and sold for the sexual gratification and power gain of another person. At the core of our work is building trust with and between each other as a staff team, as a Board of Directors, as donors and funders, which we extend to the

women we walk with every day. As a team, we have demonstrated...

**Readiness** to dig deep and reflect, to speak up and out for what is right and good and just.

**Inspiration** that we find in one another that supports the next woman we are privileged to meet.

**Action** to stand up and with each other so that we grow and heal as a people through the strength of our different stories and pathways forward.

2019 was a year of building deeper relationships with one another and the women we support every day.

We trust the women we walk with to know what it is they need support around.

We trust the women we meet, as the experts in their life stories.

We trust that you the RIA community will continue to show up every day with us which makes the work possible.

Thank you, all of you, for being part of making 2019 simply awesome!



## Board of Directors

Becky Keys  
**Chair**

Tiffany Lillie  
**Vice Chair**

Drita Protopapa  
**Treasurer**

Meghan Honigman  
**Secretary**

Joanne Frye  
Lisa Jackson  
Diane Miller  
Rebecca Hawk  
Alaa Abusalah  
Rev. Lucy Marshall  
**Members**

*sisterhood*

**FREEDOM**

**love**

GROWTH

**SAFE**

READY · INSPIRE · ACT

**THRIVE**

connected

**honesty**

**peace**

PATIENCE

**courage**

**POWER**

**survivor**

*beautiful*

community

ACCEPTANCE

**HOPE**

**compassion**

**heard**

# Who we are

We are a team of survivors, advocates, clinicians, and dynamic leaders who are committed to standing alongside women with lived experience in the sex trade as they grow and heal.

We offer a range of services including emotional and safety support, information and referrals, personal advocacy, peer mentorship, clinical therapy, and case management. RIA also provides peer support groups and access to a caring and informed community.



**Stacy**  
Supervisor of  
Peer Mentorship  
Services



**Rosemary**  
Peer Mentor Fellow



**Paola**  
Acting Clinical  
Director



**Margo**  
Grant Writer



**Meg**  
Group Specialist



**Heather**  
Executive Director



**Danielle**  
Outreach &  
Clinical Care  
Coordinator



**Beth**  
Director  
of Programs

A person wearing a light-colored winter jacket and a beanie is walking from right to left across the bottom of the frame. The background is a textured orange wall with a wooden door on the left. The text 'Steps We Took in 2019' is overlaid on the wall. 'Steps' and 'We Took in' are in white, and '2019' is in a large, bold, dark blue font.

# Steps We Took in 2019

The RIA House team saw tremendous growth in programmatic and organizational development.

## January

- Led presentation for human trafficking awareness month at Framingham State University to start the conversation about the realities of legalizing prostitution
- Partnership with TUFTS 180 Consulting team launches to expand RIA Deodorant Salve business
- Organizational rebranding project begins alongside Algorithm

## February

- Conducted two participant focus groups as a part of RIA House rebranding project
- Supervisor of Peer Mentorship Services attends SPACE

International Women of Colour Against the Sex Trade conference in London

## March

- Executive Director is awarded the 2019 Serif & Heljo Protopapa Community Service Award at MAPA Translations' 1st Annual International Women's Day event

## April

- Staff attend the 2019 Victim's Rights Conference at Boston Seaport hosted by MOVA

## May

- Two clinical interns from Boston University & William James College complete their nine month clinical field placement with

RIA House

- Monthly sustaining membership campaign is launched

- First Annual Storytelling Event "Stories I Haven't Yet Told" takes place at Regent Theater in Arlington, MA

- New clinical social work intern from Simmons School of Social Work begins nine month field placement

- Director of Programs receives training grant for EMDR trauma treatment certification

## June

- Two new board members are welcomed to the Board of Directors
- Invited to compete in

a month long Charity Warrior Challenge to win \$10K through social media challenges and live event voting

- Outreach & Clinical Care Coordinator completes year long Psychoanalytic training at Boston Psychoanalytic Society & Institute to further support participants

## July

- Staff attend Violence Against Women & Human Trafficking Retreat
- Group Specialist attends 2019 Massachusetts Victim Assistance Advanced Academy in Beverly, MA

## August

- Survivor Fellowship Training Program

launches & first survivor fellow is hired

## September

- Staff attend 16th Annual Human Trafficking & Social Justice Conference and three staff members present current research being done in partnership with William James College

## October

- Algorithm films first round of branding videos
- Office of Victims of Crime awards a three year federal grant to hire a full time peer mentor and a part time clinician
- Supervisor of Peer Mentorship Services heads to Washington DC to advocate on

behalf of decriminalization bill

## November

- Staff attend MA Attorney General Maura Healey's CEASE Summit for Human Trafficking in Longwood, MA
- Interviews begin to hire peer mentor and clinician

## December

- 6th Annual Benefit Concert takes place in Framingham, MA featuring Sympli Whitney
- Generous holiday gift donation from a local team of women is distributed to 40 RIA participants
- Gifts of Hope International donates gift bags for 18 children of participants

# Stepping Into RIA



I see the message on my phone, listen to the voicemail, and jot down the return number to call back a woman interested in services. I call, preparing for the 20 minute interaction that will soon connect her with a mentor, a listening ear, and hopefully the resources she is looking for.

She's heard about RIA House from a friend. She heard we did groups in the prison, she heard that we have people on staff who get it, who've been there. "There's something about having someone to talk to, who knows where you've been, that's just, different..." she says, and pauses. I nod my head with conviction though I know she can't see me. I find myself agreeing, affirming her need for connection and understanding that only lived experience offers in this unique way. I listen to her hopes and goals for herself right now. I can't stop myself from saying, "that's so awesome", when she starts talking about staying clean, getting her kids back, getting her own place, applying for college. There's not enough space for all the hopes in this two line intake form. Life's goals cannot be so contained.

I say, "It's ok if you don't have an emergency contact". I read through a list of community based supports to gain insight into how we can connect her with pro bono legal support, job readiness courses, housing vouchers, medical care. I hope she knows that

we will try our hardest to help her succeed.

We talk briefly about how safe she feels in the community from traffickers, pimps, customers, partners. Does she feel in danger? She's not sure if he's still locked up, but she's no longer afraid. I think about all that goes unsaid between these short intake answers.

"Who in your life would you consider a source of support?" I ask. "My sponsor, my mom, my kids. I do it all for my kids", she says. "I wouldn't have come this far without my sponsor" she reflects.

We're almost finished with this initial step into RIA House. "Final question", I say. "What do you like to do? What interests do you have?" She pauses, quiet for a moment. "Well, I guess I'm just starting to figure that out again. I spent so long, not really knowing anything about myself...Now I've got to learn it all over again. But, I like to listen to music, I like to be outside, going on walks and working on my recovery. I like to cook for people who like to eat."

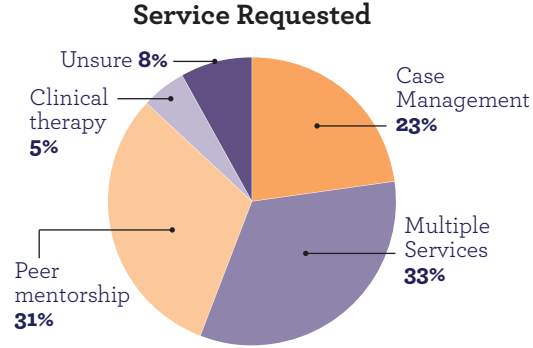
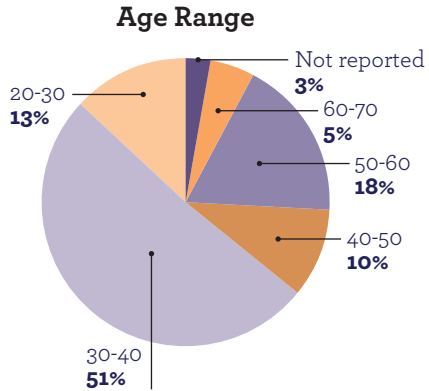
Our call closes, and her next step will lead her to one of our peer mentors—a team of women whose collective experiences offer permission, and care, and open arms for each of the participants to be real with where their own story has brought them. This is only the beginning, and only she knows where the path can lead.



**39**  
new intakes  
were completed  
in 2019

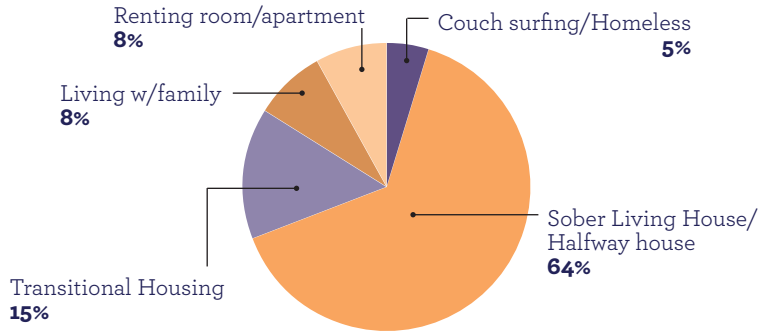


## Reported at Intake, We Asked 39 Women

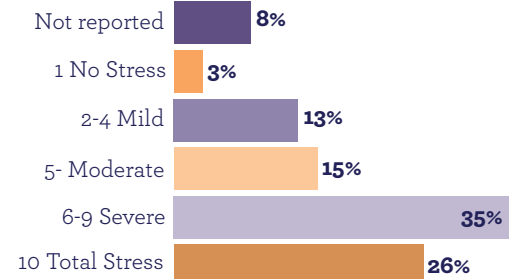


### What is your current housing situation?

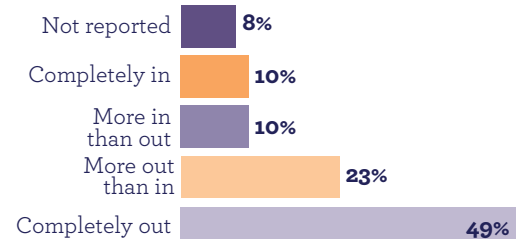
almost 80% of our intakes come to us while  
in a sober living/transitional house



On a scale of 1-10 how much stress do you experience around providing for your basic needs like food/clothing/housing/etc?



On a scale of 1-4 how would you describe your relationship to "the life" in the commercial sex trade?





# What are Your Hopes and Goals?

During the initial intake process, participants are invited to share their hopes and goals, but often cycles of addiction, exploitation, poverty and isolation can push people into a narrative that doesn't allow for dreaming. At RIA House, we believe that stepping out of this narrative is possible, which is why we talk for hours and drive for miles to ensure every woman knows that she doesn't have to step out alone.



*I want to remain sober and also overcome the trauma I've endured, and help other females if possible along the way.”*



*I really just want to be able to get a job and an apartment and get my life back together, and to get my daughter back.”*



*I want to get back to work, have a routine every day, and feel like I have a purpose in my life.”*



# Steps of Support

## A care encounter

can be as short as responding to a text message or as long as several hours supporting a woman after a sexual assault—helping her recuperate, seek medical attention, and report the crime. An encounter can include running support groups in local sober living houses, or helping participants access food pantries, identification cards, and new housing. It includes all the touchpoints that help build trust so that healing and growth can happen in people's lives.

In 2019 we delivered **2530** care encounters to **221** unduplicated women.

### Clinical Therapy

**627**

Encounters

### Survivor-led Peer Mentorship

**774**

Encounters

### Groups

**582**

Encounters

### Case Management

**90**

Encounters

### Specialized Services & Crisis Management

**86**

Encounters

### 1:1

### Support

**371**

Encounters

# Your Partnership Matters

## SheFund=SheMatters

### Trust is built slowly.

We are committed to walking with women no matter how long it takes. Impact happens over coffee, a meal together, a car ride to appointments, via phone, FaceTime, and text. The SheFund works to prevent re-exploitation by pushing against the system of poverty. In relationship with a RIA staff person, participants get the support they need to take their next steps.



For example, it is difficult to get a job without a phone and transportation, but many participants cannot pay for transportation and a phone without a job.

**Last year, the SheFund helped approximately 45 women access supports like phones and transportation to take their next steps towards new opportunities.**

### 2019 SheFund

Hygiene	
Identification Document	
Education	
Clothing	
Gas	
Gift Card	
Transportation	
B-day gift or other celebration	
Meal/Coffee	
Children's items	
Groceries	
Insurance	
Laundry	
Utilities	
Rent/Housing	
Moving	
New Phone	
Retreat	
<b>TOTAL SPENT</b>	<b>\$13,145</b>

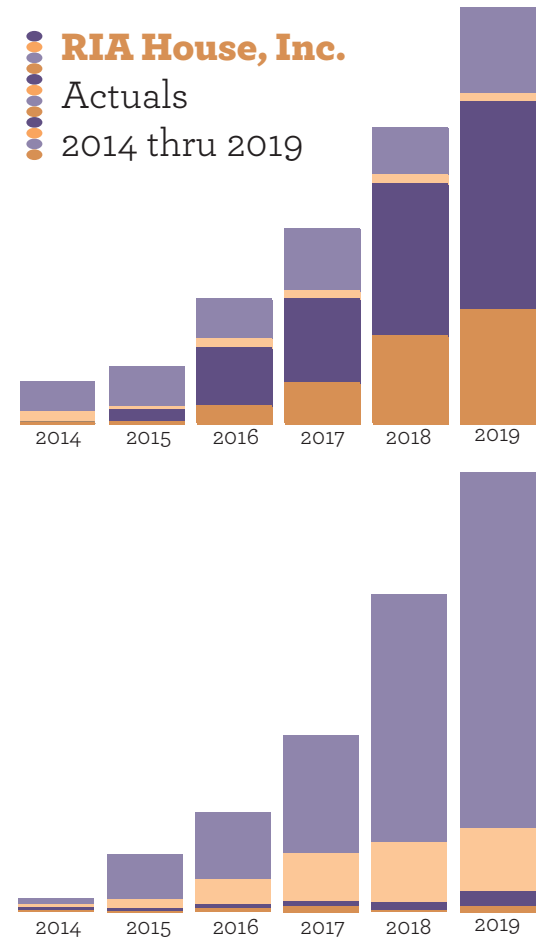
# Steps to Sustainability

## Income

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Individual & Corp Contributions	29,898	39,015	38,418	61,799	46,181	83,820
Events	10,401	2,823	9,687	7,579	9,271	8,591
Federal & State Grants	-	11,728	57,050	82,580	149,245	204,788
Foundation Grants	1,000	2,000	17,177	40,111	86,500	111,371
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>41,299</b>	<b>55,566</b>	<b>122,332</b>	<b>192,069</b>	<b>291,197</b>	<b>408,570</b>

## Expenses

Personnel & Consultants	4,976	39,368	59,276	103,268	216,399	311,305
Operations	2,441	8,028	21,272	41,414	52,149	55,335
General and Administration	2,892	2,444	4,227	4,393	7,513	12,233
Fundraising & Other Expenses	1,679	959	2,879	5,342	1,458	5,457
<b>Total Expense</b>	<b>11,988</b>	<b>50,799</b>	<b>87,654</b>	<b>154,417</b>	<b>277,519</b>	<b>384,330</b>
<b>Net Income</b>	<b>29,311</b>	<b>4,767</b>	<b>34,678</b>	<b>37,652</b>	<b>13,678</b>	<b>24,240</b>



# Steps Forward

RIA House is positioned for continued growth in 2020!

We have plans to add 2 new staff members, allowing our team to reach more participants.

We have plans to expand our peer mentor fellowship & clinical internship programs to further the training of mentors and clinicians.

We continue to explore opportunities to build a justice enterprise that supports employment opportunities & pathways that will enable us to offer individualized supportive housing.



# Steps Together

We couldn't  
have done this  
without

# You!

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**In Kind Contributions:** Algorithm Marketing, Payroll Manager, Event Volunteers, Social Work Interns, & our many volunteers who helped with administration, event planning, and more.





**Collaborative Partners:** Amilia's Light, Amirah, Ascentria HT Legal Services, Bags of Hope, Bakhita House Ministries, Boston University School of Social Work, Dignity Matters, Gifts of Hope Unlimited, Framingham Police Department, Natick Police Department, Department of Homeland Security, HEAL Trafficking, Highpoint, Hope Rising, Lawyers Clearinghouse, Lesley University, Linda Faye House, Massachusetts Coalition to End Human Trafficking, MetroWest Legal Services, Middlesex County District Attorney's Office, New Life Home Refurnishing, SMOC: Rhodes House, Serenity House, Shadows, MA State Police, YOU Inc., Wayside Youth & Family Services, Wesley United Methodist Church, William James College. World Without Exploitation



# Keep in touch

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