

Responding to Woman Abuse: A Resource Guide for Service Providers

Coalition for Woman Abuse Policy and Protocol in Prince Edward Island
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Notes...

Available Services

Emergency Resources

If a woman discloses abuse to you and you determine that is an emergency situation, ask her if she would like you to call any of the resources below on her behalf or if she would like to call them herself. If it is not an emergency situation, please refer to the “Referral Resources” on the next page.

Anderson House **1-800-240-9894**

within Charlottetown **892-0960**

24-hour service for abused women and their children. Emergency shelter, food and clothing; crisis telephone service; emotional support, information and referral.

PEI Rape and Sexual Assault Crisis Centre **1-800-289-5656**

within Charlottetown **566-8999**

24-hour crisis line for victims of rape and sexual assault including incest and spousal rape. Trained volunteers answer calls and provide information, advocacy and support.

Child Protection:

Child protection services for abused children. After-hours calls concerning child abuse are screened and, if necessary, referred to workers on call across PEI.

Charlottetown **368-5330**

Montague **838-0700**

O’Leary **859-8811**

Souris **687-7060**

Summerside **888-8100**

After Hours Child Abuse Line **1-800-341-6868**

Adult Protection

Charlottetown **368-4790**

Montague **838-0772**

O’Leary **859-8725**

Souris **687-7096**

Summerside **888-8440**

For Police and Medical emergencies **911**

Referral Resources

If a woman discloses abuse to you and you determine that is not an emergency situation, ask her if she would like you to call any of the resources below on her behalf or provide her with the contact information.

Family Violence Outreach Workers:

Family Violence Prevention - Eastern PEI	838-0795
East Prince Transition and Support Services	436-0517
West Prince Transition and Support Services	859-8849
Queens County Outreach	566-1480

Emotional support, information and referral for abused women and their children.

Victim Services

Charlottetown	368-4582
Summerside	888-8217

Assists victims of crime across the province. Services include: information and referral; short-term counselling; assistance through the Court process; victim impact statements; and criminal injuries compensation.

Turning Point Program 368-6392

Men's group counselling program aimed at helping men to stop violence against their female partners

Community Legal Information Association 892-0853

toll free 1-800-240-9798

Provides basic legal information including free pamphlets on a wide variety of legal topics to the general public.

The following community and government services are listed in alphabetical order.

Addiction Services

Queens Region	368-4120
East Prince Health	888-8380
Southern Kings	838-0960
West Prince	853-8650
Eastern Kings	687-7110

Addiction Services offers services for the purpose of preventing, reducing and eliminating the potential and harmful effects of alcohol and other drugs incurred through substance abuse and chemical dependency and gambling.

Child and Family Services

Charlottetown	368-5330
Souris	687-7060
Montague	838-0700
Summerside	888-8100
O'Leary	859-8811

Homemakers and home helpers; child protection services; general counselling; assistance with children with special needs; transportation in cases of special need; and other social services.

Child Support Guidelines Office

Charlottetown	368-6220
Summerside	888-8188

Child Support Officers will assist separated parents with Child Support Guidelines calculations.

Community and Family Services of PEI

892-2441

Individual, family and marital counselling; information and referral; family life education; family advocacy; and specializes in anger management for victims and abusers. Ladies' Auxiliary provides a Christmas shop for low-income clients.

Community Mental Health Services

Richmond Centre	368-4430
McGill Centre	368-4911
Summerside	888-8180
Montague	838-0782
Souris	687-7096
West Prince	888-8180
Wellington	854-7259

Referral source for women and children providing treatment, assessment, consultation services, immediate short term counselling and suicide intervention.

Consumer Services

(toll free) 1-800-658-1799

Charlottetown	368-4580
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Assistance and counselling is available to any consumer with a debt-related problem.

Correctional Services

Provincial Correctional Centre, Charlottetown	368-4590
Prince Correctional Centre, Summerside	888-8208

The Correctional Centres house adults serving custodial sentences of less than 2 years.

Crown Attorneys

Charlottetown	368-4595
Summerside	888-8213

The Crown Attorneys represent the Attorney General in the prosecution of all criminal cases under the Criminal Code of Canada and Provincial Statutes. In cooperation with Victim Services, Crown Attorneys assist victims with Court preparation upon request.

East Prince Women's Information Centre **436-9856**
Information and referral for women on issues such as employment, wife-battering, addictions, legal rights, sexual harassment, etc.

Family Legal Aid
Charlottetown **368-6043**
Summerside **888-8219**
Services to low-income clients in family law matters such as separation, divorce, custody, for victims of family violence and for child protection cases.

Family Court Counsellors
Charlottetown **368-6056**
Mediation services; reports to the Court, e.g. custody reports ordered by Supreme Court Justices; family and marital counselling; and referral to appropriate legal and other agencies.

Home Care and Support
Charlottetown **368-4790**
Montague **838-0772**
O'Leary **859-8725**
Souris **687-7096**
Summerside **888-8440**
Adult protection; home care nursing; visiting homemakers; occupational therapists; community support workers.

Income Support
Charlottetown **368-5330**
Souris **687-7060**
Montague **838-0700**
Summerside **888-8122**
O'Leary **859-8811**
Financial assistance; day-care subsidy; transportation in cases of special need; providing legal representation for support issues through the Family Support Orders Program.

Island Help Line **1-800-218-2885**
24-hour free, confidential service for all Islanders providing information, support, crisis counselling on family matters, child abuse, alcohol and drugs, parenting and suicide.

Lawyer Referral Service **(toll free) 1-800-240-9798**
Charlottetown **892-0853**
Legal advice provided early before your problems become complicated or expensive. Nominal fee for one half-hour of advice. Monday to Friday, 9a.m. - 4p.m.

Maintenance Enforcement **368-6010**
Enforcement of provincial orders and agreements and contact for out-of-province enforcement for the benefit of child and spousal support.

PEI Community Justice Resource Centre **368-6390**
Programming of the Centre focuses upon the delivery of services which will develop and reinforce positive lifestyles. Programs include the Turning Point Program which is a men's group counselling program aimed at helping men to stop violence against their female partners; the Female Anger Management Program; the Male Anger Management Program; and the Sexual Deviance Assessment / Treatment Program.

PEI Humane Society **892-1190**
After hours emergency calls **892-1191**
Investigation of animal cruelty and abuse; shelter for homeless and endangered animals.

Positive Parenting from Two Homes **368-4333**
1-877-203-8828
This program is for parents who are worried about the effects of separation, divorce or parenting from two homes on their children. Parents want help managing these changes to ensure that their children do not get caught in the middle of parental conflict. This free program can help.

Pownal House **894-3515**
Individual, marital and family counselling; support and self-help groups; family life education program; and advocacy on behalf of clients.

Prince County Family Services Bureau **436-9171**
Supportive counselling and referrals for families of limited income and for unmarried mothers; mediation services.

Probation Services
Charlottetown **368-6060**
Summerside **888-8200**
Montague **838-0600**
Souris **687-7017**
O'Leary **859-8806**
Community based supervision of adults and young offenders subject to orders imposed in criminal court.

Salvation Army
Charlottetown **892-8870**
after hours **566-9982**
Summerside **888-3870**
after hours **436-6044**
24-hour service. Emergency shelter, food and clothing; transportation in emergency cases if needed; pastoral counselling; operation of a senior citizen home; and provision of a chaplain to the Correctional Centre.

Other Important Numbers:



1 Introduction

Woman abuse has a serious impact on our lives, our families, school and workplace life and the community. Consider the “ripple effect” of an incident of woman abuse, in this case, a woman who is hit by her husband and whose child is witness to the violence.

The victim and other family members may suffer emotional pain and fear, physical injury, depression, misuse of prescription drugs or alcohol and sleep loss.

The child may be impacted at school and witnessing the violence could cause poor attendance, difficulty concentrating, exhaustion and acting out.

There may be an impact in the workplace of the victim when the violence causes absenteeism, poor job performance, difficulty concentrating, exhaustion, safety concerns/injuries or alcohol or drug abuse.

The violence will impact the community by creating a need for police intervention, and causing family breakdown, dysfunctional adults and children and the involvement of welfare, health and counselling services.

Woman abuse effects the whole community and it is the responsibility of the whole community to provide support to women who want to stop the cycle of abuse. According to a recent PEI survey, 97% of Islanders agree. The belief that family violence is “private” stigmatizes those caught in violent relationships, makes others reluctant to intervene, and thus perpetuates the problem.

Why is it important for service providers to be aware of and intervene in issues of woman abuse?

Given the current Canadian statistics which show that 51% of Canadian women report having experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual violence since the age of 16¹, service providers are more likely to have clients who are experiencing abuse than they realize.

Some service providers, such as many of those working in the justice system or those working in child protection, have specific mandates to work with victims of violence. Other service providers, such as health care professionals and those working in the area of financial assistance, have a wider mandate, and are often unaware that they may be the first people an abused woman will come to for help. The health care system is a point of early intervention because abused women may seek medical help before they turn to the police or the courts. As well, it is a likely first point of contact for abused immigrant or refugee women who may be mistrustful of involving police (e.g., they may have experienced the police to be, or perceive them to be, agents of oppression), as well as for rural women who may not be comfortable turning to local authorities who know the abuser.

Professionals in the health and social service sectors are uniquely positioned to identify and respond to abused women. For example, abused women may come into more frequent contact with the health care system than with other systems of support because of their abuse-related injuries and other health concerns. For example;

- Studies repeatedly show that at least 50% of women patients admitted to psychiatric hospitals are known to suffer from abuse.²
- 4 in 5 abused women report their injuries at least once to a physician.³
- 22% to 35% of emergency room visits by women are believed to result from acts of violence.⁴
- Abused women are 16 times more likely to abuse alcohol and 9 times more likely to use drugs than women who are not abused.⁵

The response that a woman receives from a health care provider will impact on her decision to contact other service providers in the justice or other sectors.

Abused women may also have contact with social service professionals for a variety of reasons related to their personal well-being or that of other family members. Many women are in a position where their abusive partner controls the family money and they need financial help to leave the relationship. This could be the first step a woman takes in making her decision to leave. A helpful and knowledgeable response from an income support worker could prevent further and prolonged abuse.

How you respond to your women clients has a direct impact on reducing violence against women and children in your community. The following are some quotes from women interviewed in PEI in 1999 which illustrate the impact that a response had on their safety;

“[T]he first time I ever called the ... RCMP, ... in 1983-84 ... they asked to speak to [my husband]. [My husband] knew them, he spoke to two of them, and ... he put me back on the phone, and [they] said, “well, just settle down and if you want to call your lawyer in the morning you can do so,” and I said, “I may not be alive in the morning” and he said, “oh, Mrs. -, you’re going to be alive in the morning” and that didn’t make me feel very good so I never contacted the RCMP again ... and there was many a time I should have called them, but I didn’t because of what happened there. Things have improved, thank god, because when I called them in 1993, they were good, they were responsive.”

“But I got a lot of help, I couldn’t have done it myself. If those resources were not there I couldn’t have done it. I would have just, I would probably still be with [my husband]. I’d still be slaving away and waiting on him hand and foot, meeting his needs, forgetting about my own, because that’s what a woman’s suppose to do.”

“[The response I received at Anderson House] was probably what saved my life over the long run.”

Service providers should not expect to address this issue on their own. In Prince Edward Island,

there are many services which have been developed specifically to provide assistance to abused women (see Emergency and Referral Resources at the beginning of this manual).

Why is it important that there is a holistic response and how do you fit in?

As part of the Response to Woman Abuse: Policy and Protocol Initiative, working groups in each of Justice, Hospital Emergency and Income Assistance were brought together to create or revise protocols to assist service providers to respond safely and effectively to woman abuse. These working groups included survivors of woman abuse, community organizations such as Transition House Association, Community Legal Information Association and the PEI Association of Newcomers to Canada, policy makers and front line service providers.

As a result, the Province of PEI has woman abuse protocols in each of the following areas:

- Financial Assistance
- Victim Services
- Police
- Family Court Services
- Probation
- Turning Point Program
- Community Justice Resource Centre
- Hospital Emergency

As well, preliminary work is being done on protocols for Crown Prosecutors and Adult Corrections.

A binder of these protocols, along with the Victims of Family Violence Priority Placement Policy for subsidized housing, is available in each workplace which has an included protocol. Determine where the protocol for your workplace is kept and ensure that you take responsibility for knowing what you are expected to do if a client discloses abuse.

To assist other groups to develop their own protocol for responding to woman abuse, a policy development tool was created and is available from Community Legal Information Association or on the project website.

At a workshop in April of 1999, during the first phase of this initiative, 65 policy makers, survivors of woman abuse, community organizations and front line service providers identified policies and protocols were already in place as well as where the gaps were. During that workshop several messages were sent by the participants to the project Steering Committee. One of those messages was:

“We need to move towards a holistic, co-ordinated response to woman abuse. Service providers need to share information on policies, procedures and services to ensure that they provide appropriate and timely responses. “

At a subsequent workshop, held in November of 2000, the members of the working groups came together to develop strategies to ensure that the response given to victims of woman abuse is

holistic. Some of the strategies that you can use to ensure that you are providing a holistic response are:

- use this resource guide to help you determine where to refer women for services you do not provide
- ensure that you are familiar with the response that other services provider by reviewing their protocols
- have a designated person in each service to work with women who are in or leaving abusive relationships
- put pamphlets and posters about other services in your waiting rooms
- make time for education and training
- attend multi-sector information exchange and training sessions
- build in an evaluation of your own protocol and others as well to test how is it working provincially and regionally - include feedback from other service providers as well as clients and users of the service
- provide comment boxes and cards for clients to fill out
- hold multi-sector case conferences
- make sure that you let other services know when you make policy changes that will affect your services

Notes:

2 Protocol Summaries

Woman Abuse Protocol for PEI Financial Assistance Workers

The **Purpose** of this protocol is to, through service delivery as it relates to Financial Assistance:

- O encourage safe and appropriate responses to women; and
- O encourage disclosure and intervention at the earliest point.

The protocol is guided by the values of respect, listening and empowerment of women.

Each Financial Assistance office will have a Designated Worker to work with women in or leaving abusive relationships. Before meeting with the designated worker, a woman may come into contact with receptionists, intake workers and financial workers. The protocol outlines the responses that each will give to a woman who discloses abuse. The response will focus on acknowledgement of her situation with belief and an attitude of “I’m here to help” as opposed to “Prove to me that you need help”.

The Stages of Responding to Abuse

The protocol outlines three stages in responding to abuse situations:

- 1 The first is the **Emergency Response** stage, at which point the worker will focus on the safety of the woman and her children.
- 2 The second is the **Crisis Response** stage, during which the Worker will focus on assisting the woman to access necessities.
- 3 The third is the **On-Going Response**, which begins when the safety and necessity issues have been dealt with and the time has come to begin planning for the future.

The protocol recognizes that it is important to work together with the woman to carefully assess her situation before moving to the next stage as some of the procedures followed for clients in non-abuse situations can jeopardize the woman’s safety.

Training for Financial Workers

The protocol outlines the importance of training for Receptionists, Intake Workers, Financial Workers and Designated Workers which provides an awareness of dynamics and stresses of family violence. This training is mandatory for all staff, with specialized training in woman abuse for Designated Workers.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROTOCOL (for Hospital Emergency Workers)

This protocol recognizes that domestic violence as a social issue which has very serious health implications for women, children and men and that the vast majority of victims of domestic violence are women.

The Domestic Violence Protocol informs and guides health care providers to identify and respond effectively to patients who have experienced and continue to experience violence in their lives. The purpose of the protocol is to ensure consistent screening, identification and effective intervention for domestic violence.

The Role of Emergency Staff

The protocol sets out responses for all emergency staff that a victim of domestic violence may come into contact with. Receptionists, Clerical Staff, Paramedics, Commissionaires and Volunteers are provided with information about what to do if they suspect abuse or if a patient discloses abuse.

Nursing Staff and Physicians have an augmented role which includes five aspects of care that should be provided to victims of domestic violence:

- L screening / identification
- L assessment / examination
- L documentation
- L safety planning
- L referral

Protocol Highlights

- The protocol calls for **UNIVERSAL SCREENING** for abuse. All patients who present at Emergency for care or treatment will be asked, privately and in a safe environment, whether their injuries are as a result of domestic violence.
- The protocol recommends immediately removing a patient who discloses abuse to a safe, private and supportive environment.
- The protocol outlines how to assess the safety of the patient and her/his children and provides information about mandatory child abuse reporting.
- Confidentiality is recognized as a safety issue.
- Information about other government and community resources are outlined to ensure that helpful and appropriate referrals are made.
- A further focus of the protocol is self-care for the health care provider.

Woman Abuse Turning Point Assessment/Treatment Protocol

Turning Point's mission is to stop men's violence against women by providing group counselling for men who abuse their partners. The focus is on challenging and helping men to take responsibility for their violent and abusive behaviours and on teaching men to deal with anger and other emotions in a constructive manner.

Protocol Highlights

Victim Contact

- C Although women and children are not direct client's of the program, ensuring their safety is deemed to be paramount in planning intervention strategies with men.
- C The co-ordinator will make contact with the victim prior to and throughout the client's involvement with the Turning Point Program. The co-ordinator will determine if the victim is willing to have contact with the co-ordinator, will tell the victim about community resources and support services that are available to her, make referrals if appropriate and clearly tell victims that treatment entry and program completion will not guarantee their safety or the safety of other family members. Victims will be encouraged to report changes in the client's behavior to the Program Co-ordinator.
- C Victims will be encouraged to carry on their person, a copy of the Offender's Probation Order.
- C Resource kits will be forwarded to victims at the time of initial victim contact if so desired.
- C All victim contacts are held in confidence except when risk to self or others have been identified.

Dismissal from Treatment

- C Non-acceptance of responsibility for abusive and controlling behavior toward the victim will result in the client's dismissal from the program.

Risk Identified Within Treatment

- Identification of risk related behavior toward the victim(s) within treatment will lead to immediate contact with the victim(s) in order to identify risk. Contact will also be made with the referring Agency.

Woman Abuse Protocol: Victim Services

Victim Services is a province-wide, criminal justice system based program operated by the Prince Edward Island Office of the Attorney General. Victim Services workers are professionals with backgrounds in social work and the criminal justice system. No fees are charged for this confidential service. Victim Services workers assist many victims of various types of crime. This protocol specifically address services to abused women:

Protocol Highlights

INFORMATION, EMOTIONAL SUPPORT, REFERRAL

- The worker will provide short-term counselling and emotional support, referrals to appropriate services and agencies and information about family violence and legal options available to the client. The worker will listen and help her to assess her options, but will not tell her what to do. The worker will help the client to make her own decisions and choices and will assist with safety planning.
- The worker will act as a liaison with police regarding the case. This assistance may include arranging and/or attending police interviews with the victim, advocating on her behalf at her request, obtaining copies of any recognizance orders and undertakings and assisting police with applications under the *VICTIMS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE ACT*.

VICTIM IMPACT STATEMENTS

- If criminal charges are laid, the worker will assist the client to prepare and file a victim impact statement, if she chooses to do so. A victim impact statement describes the harm done to, or loss suffered by, the victim of a criminal offence and is considered by the judge at sentencing.

ASSISTANCE THROUGH THE COURT PROCESS

- The worker will assist the client through the court process by informing the client of the outcome of election/plea, any upcoming court dates and times, and any other relevant information from the accused's court appearances. The worker will also assist the client by providing a court orientation, appointments(s) with the Crown attorney prior to the court date, accompaniment and transportation, if needed, to court.

FOLLOW UP/LIAISON WITH OTHER CRIMINAL JUSTICE PERSONNEL

- Once the court process is complete, the Victim Services worker will continue to provide information, support, and liaison with criminal justice personnel as needed.

CRIMINAL INJURIES COMPENSATION

- If the abused woman has received physical injuries and/or emotional trauma requiring treatment as a result of crime(s) committed against her, she may be eligible for criminal injuries compensation. Compensation may be awarded when a person is injured or killed in Prince Edward Island as a victim of an offence such as assault, sexual assault, murder, robbery, criminal negligence, or arson.

WOMAN ABUSE PROTOCOL

(PEI Community Justice Resource Centre)*

PREAMBLE

It will be the responsibility of all staff to respond to needs associated to protecting individuals from potential risk of behavior identified withing client contacts, both at the assessment and treatment stages of program involvement.

To ensure the safety of potential partner abuse victims, the Centre's staff will:

1. Identify to clients at all stages of program contact (assessment and treatment) that all identifications of risk to self and others will lead to appropriate actions to reduce the risk of harm.
2. In cases where risk of harm to self or others has been identified, the staff person will immediately contact referral agencies, identified victim and police agencies (in those circumstances where clearly defined threats have been documented.)
3. In cases where presenting information identifies possible presence of assaultive abusive or aggressive behavior within intimate relationships, the staff person will identify such to client and referral agent. Upon identification, the staff person will recommend immediate referral to the Turning Point Assessment process.
4. In all cases where risk levels are present related to partnership violence Victim Services' mandate applies. Contact will be made to identify the need for support services to the female partner.
5. It is at all times an overall responsibility of Centre staff to make immediate referrals of clients presenting risk levels associated to Partnership abuse to the Turning Point Co-ordinator as a component of case planning within all programs of the PEI Community Justice Resource Centre.

* N.B. This is the entire Woman Abuse Protocol for the PEI Community Justice Resource Centre.

WOMAN ABUSE PROTOCOL

Family Court Services

Violence against women and its impact on children continue to pose serious questions for dispute resolution professionals and the practise of mediation. Parties to mediation must be able to negotiate safely, voluntarily, and competently in order to reach a fair agreement. Mediation cannot be fair if one of the parties is unable to mediate effectively and competently.

Abuse in intimate relationships poses serious safety risks and may significantly diminish a person's ability to mediate. Family mediation cases in which there is or has been domestic violence are complicated and can be dangerous to the participants and the mediator.

Mediators need to identify which cases are appropriate to mediate, which cases are inappropriate to mediate and which require specialized mediation. Each family situation is different and needs to be assessed on its own unique merits.

This protocol outlines that all cases being considered for mediation at Family Court Services will be screened for abuse during an interview with each parties individually.

OUTCOMES OF SCREENING FOR ABUSE IN MEDIATION CASES:

- 1. YES - MEDIATION IS APPROPRIATE.**
- 2. NO - MEDIATION IS NOT APPROPRIATE.**
- 3. MAYBE - A MODIFIED FORM OF MEDIATION MAY BE POSSIBLE.**

The protocol outlines some ideas about how to facilitate a modified form of mediation.

PROBATION SERVICES WOMAN ABUSE PROTOCOL

The Office of the Attorney General, Community and Correctional Services, Probation Services, has overall responsibility to deliver community-based correctional services to both adult and young offenders. The Woman Abuse Protocol has been developed to assist Probation Officers in responding to incidents of woman abuse.

There is a growing social consensus that woman abuse is a deep-rooted problem that extends across all socioeconomic, cultural and ethnic boundaries. To act fairly and nondiscriminately, Probation Officers must understand the dynamics of woman abuse through education, training and self-examination of their own biases. The aim of this protocol is to ensure the offender is held accountable for his actions and correct his behaviour; taking into account the safety of the woman; by utilizing a clear, consistent response to woman abuse.

Protocol Highlights:

The protocol outlines the steps to be taken by Probation Officers when they are preparing Presentence Reports, supervising Probation Orders, Conditional Sentence Orders or Recognizance Orders or Undertakings or developing and supervising Alternative Measures Agreements in cases involving woman abuse. Also outlined in the protocol is that all Probation Services staff must attend Divisional training on woman abuse.

Depending upon the task that the Probation Officer is engaged in they may:

- C Consult with Victim Services to determine if a Victim Impact Statement has been prepared and whether contact with Probation Services is desired.
- C Contact the victim to request assistance in verifying facts and ascertain the victim's wishes as to future contact with the offender.
- C Determine what programs are available in the community to assist the offender with his behaviour related to woman abuse.
- C explain to the victim the contents of any "no contact" condition, provide her with a copy of the Order, encourage her to keep a copy of the Order on her person, or readily accessible, at all times, and advise her how to report breaches of the "no contact" condition.
- C Develop Alternative Measures agreements taking into account the safety of the victim and the needs of the offender and provide a copy of the signed Alternative Measures Agreement to the victim.

Part “C”, General Investigations, Chapter 3: Domestic Disputes

This police protocol was developed by the Chiefs of Police Association and, as such, was a joint effort of municipal police and RCMP in PEI. It has been adopted by the Charlottetown City Police and is in the process, as of April 30, 2001, of being reviewed for sanctioning by the other police forces in the province. The protocol outlines the police response to victims of family violence, as defined by Section 1(q) of the Victims of Family Violence Act, which includes victims living with the abuser in a family relationship as well as victims not living with the abuser but who have children with the abuser, regardless of marital status.

Objectives

The protocol is based on the following objectives:

- Ensure the safety and security of the victims,
- Stabilize the situation,
- Apprehend and charge any alleged offender,
- Prevent a breach of the peace,
- Attempt to deter any future incidents of domestic violence
- Inform all parties of their legal rights,
- Promote and foster good public relations,
- Notify Child and Family Services of the presence of children during the dispute

Outlined in the protocol are the steps to be taken by police when responding to calls and investigating domestic disputes and steps to take in terms of disputes concerning custody/access and property issues. Also outlined are the steps to take when assisting victims to access the Victims of Family Violence Act remedies.

Some Highlights

- Shift supervisors are charged with the responsibility of reviewing occurrence reports and following up with officers who have not laid a charge in a domestic dispute to determine the reason.
- Where there are reasonable grounds to believe a breach of a “Restraining Order” has occurred, members shall investigate and charge the suspect immediately or as soon as reasonably possible.
- Where a Civil Court Order, such as an order made in family court, makes mandatory reference to police in such terms as “shall” or “must” there is a legal duty to carry out the functions as stipulated and all reasonable efforts must be made to comply. Failure to do any less may be construed as Contempt of Court.
- When a complaint of stalking is filed member(s) shall immediately conduct a thorough investigation.

3 *Self-awareness*

It is important to do a self-assessment of your own biases, beliefs, values and attitudes about woman abuse. If you have personal issues with violence or negative attitudes or biases about women in abusive relationships, it is important to deal with them before you can effectively help women in abusive relationships. Following is a self-test which can help you to begin that self-assessment about your understanding of woman abuse and your attitudes and biases.

QUIZ ON WOMAN ABUSE

Circle your response: TRUE or FALSE

- | | | | |
|-----|--|---|---|
| 1. | Woman abuse occurs most often in lower income families. | T | F |
| 2. | Woman abuse is only about physical abuse. | T | F |
| 3. | The victims of woman abuse are often to blame for the violence. | T | F |
| 4. | Woman abuse is a private family matter. | T | F |
| 5. | Alcohol causes violence in relationships. | T | F |
| 6. | Woman abuse has little impact on children. | T | F |
| 7. | People who are abusive are “mentally ill”. | T | F |
| 8. | A woman in an abusive relationship just needs someone to save her. | T | F |
| 9. | Once a woman leaves her abusive partner she is generally safe. | T | F |
| 10. | There’s no point in trying to help an abused woman, she’ll just go back. | T | F |
| 11. | Pregnant women are safe from abuse, if only until they give birth. | T | F |
| 12. | Many women stay in abusive relationships to protect their pets. | T | F |

* answers can be found on page 34

Notes...



4 *What is Woman Abuse*

Responding to Women in Abusive Relationships

Work with women in abusive relationships begins with the awareness that she is an adult who, when given support, choices, safety and opportunity, can and will work in the safe and responsible interests of herself and her children.

While often frustrating for service providers, the ambivalence, denial, and helplessness which often characterize women in abusive relationships are in fact learned messages which have allowed her to survive the abuse. By nurturing, giving in, pacifying, and anticipating the moods and needs of the abuser, a woman, while never able to control or stop the abuse, often buys time to leave, call for help, or decreases the severity or duration of the incident.

Women in abusive relationships have often been socialized to consider others before themselves. Interveners ask the woman to completely change her beliefs and behaviours and place her needs first. This is a monumental task for any person and more difficult for women in abusive relationships whose confidence, esteem, and identity have been destroyed by the abuse. The ambivalence common to women in abusive relationships is raised by the struggle between caring for herself and the learned messages she has which tell her that:

- < no one would believe her anyway
- < leaving him is wrong as partnerships and marriages are for good and bad times
- < leaving him is abandoning him when he is sick or has severe problems
- < leaving him splits up the family and he is a good provider/good father
- < leaving him could be fatal to her, the children, or significant others or to him if he becomes suicidal

The expected response when people have difficulty in relationships or marriages is that they work together to address and solve the problems. This concept in woman abuse is neither safe nor workable. Traditional methods such as couple counseling are not effective or safe while abuse exists.

Service providers must recognize that expecting women to leave or begin focusing on themselves and their safety and needs is a complete and total deviation from what they have learned. It is not usually what would be suggested regarding any other problem. Service providers need to understand that for a woman to leave an abusive relationship she must:

- < begin feeling, thinking and acting in her own interests with clarity, strength and

- decisiveness even though she has endured abuse and may or may not have been taught these qualities prior to the abuse
- < act in spite of the threats of harm to her, to himself, or to the children used by the abuser and simultaneously take action to protect herself and her children
 - < accept and deal with the reality that leaving will place her in further and unpredictable danger
 - < ignore the threats of losing the children
 - < ignore or refuse to answer his constant phone calls where he cries, pleads, tells her he can't live without her, begs her to return or promises anything she wants in return for coming home or letting him come back
 - < understanding that his threats of suicide are tactics and not her responsibility
 - < ignore the shock and disbelief of friends and colleagues who thought he was a nice guy and cannot believe he would hurt her
 - < ignore the statements of people or service providers who subtly or blatantly tell her it was her fault, it couldn't have been that bad, she had to be part of the problem
 - < cope with the sadness and insecurity of her children who miss Daddy and plead with her to take them home
 - < cope with finding a way to financially support herself and her children
 - < accept that often, at least temporarily, she has lost her home and security
 - < deal with all this and attempt to remain strong and decisive

As a result of the barriers listed above, women may leave and return many times during their process of working through these issues.

Forms of Abuse

Woman abuse is physical, sexual, psychological, financial or emotional abuse, or the threat thereof, of a woman, by someone with whom she has an intimate relationship. Intimate partners include a husband, common-law partner, boyfriend, same sex partner or an ex-husband, partner or boyfriend.

Forms of Abuse Include:

Physical Abuse is slapping, hitting, punching, kicking, burning, choking, stabbing, shooting, pushing or biting. It is being slammed against a wall or being injured with a weapon or object. It can include restraining or withholding food or medical attention. Brutal beatings can result in bruising, lacerations, broken bones or death.

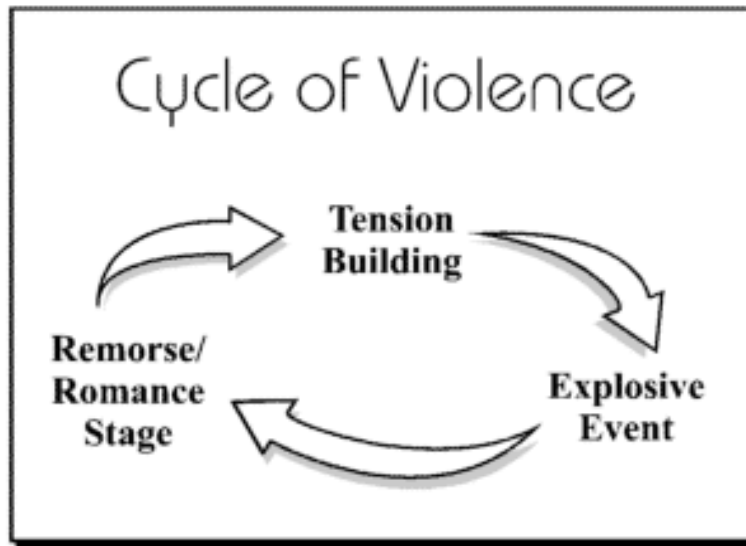
Sexual Abuse includes unwanted or forcible sexual touching or activity, having pain or injury inflicted during sexual acts, malicious withholding of sex, demeaning sexually through jokes, name calling, excessive jealousy, sexual accusations and denied ability to protect herself from sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV.

Emotional/Psychological Abuse is the experience of criticism, name-calling and put-downs, alone or in front of friends and relatives that over time has a debilitating effect on victims. It includes any abuse which attacks self-esteem by acts such as unjust blaming, false accusations about loyalty, controls on time, activities and actions, shouting, screaming, any form of degradation or denial of ideas and feelings. It includes living with the constant fear caused by threats to the woman or the people or animals who are dear to her, of murder and physical harm, suicide, kidnaping children, property loss or damage, or deportation. It can also include control of a woman's eating and sleeping habits, use of weapons, harassment, verbal attacks that humiliate her or make her feel insecure, constant criticism, unfair accusations, isolation from friends, forcible participation in degrading acts and all other acts which are designed to manipulate, intimidate or terrorize her into compliance.

Economic Abuse means having no access to the family's money. It implies that the abusive partner maintains control of the family finances, deciding without regard for the other person how the money is to be spent or saved, thereby reducing the woman to complete dependence for money to meet her personal needs. Even though a woman may live in a comfortable house, wear good clothing or have children who are well-equipped with toys and luxuries, she may have no control over what monies come into the family or over any decisions about what will be bought. Economic abuse can include withholding or restricting money needed for necessities like food or clothing, preventing her from getting or keeping a job, taking her money, denying her independent access to money or excluding her from financial decision-making. As with all forms of woman abuse, economic abuse occurs at all socioeconomic levels.

The Cycle of Violence

Abuse is a systematic pattern of behaviour. In most cases, abuse happens in a repetitive sequence, often referred to as the "cycle of violence".⁶ In the tension-building phase, the abuser experiences a period of increasing stress and tension. This may build over a matter of hours, days or weeks during which time a woman will try to avoid an outburst by accommodating the demands of the abuser. She may feel that she is "walking on eggshells." When the pressure peaks, the abuser explodes, unleashing anger and rage and trying to control the situation through partner abuse. In the early stages of a violent relationship, violence is less frequent. Victims try hard to accommodate the abuser, partly in hopes of avoiding the violence. In later stages, as a survival technique, and as a means of easing the tension, some women may consciously or subconsciously, initiate an action that will get the violence over with and reduce the tension. After the abusive incident, there is a period of relief when the abuser offers apologies and promises to change. This pattern occurs again and again over time. Often, the incidents of abuse start to become more frequent and severe, with shorter periods of relative calm.



(Walker, 1979)

The cycle of abuse follows a distinct sequence and pattern. Abused women often go through phases of:

abuse follows a

- increasing fear;
- isolation;
- developing more and more complex adaptations (psychological and psychosocial); and
- alternating periods of hope (that things will improve or change, that the violence will end, that she will escape) and increasing fear for herself and her children and their survival.⁷

Did you know that...

- 51% of Canadian women report having experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual violence since the age of 16. [Statistics Canada, 1993]⁸
- Nearly 3 in 10 Canadian women (29%) who have ever been married or lived in a common-law relationship have been physically or sexually assaulted by a marital partner at some point during the relationship. [Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 1994]⁹
- Of 22,000 victims of spousal violence reported to police in 1997, 88% were female and 12% were male. [Statistics Canada, 1999]¹⁰
- Women are seven times more likely to be killed or hurt in their homes than by strangers. [Statistics Canada, 1993]¹¹
- 2/3 of all murdered women died at the hands of their intimate partners. [Statistics Canada, 1993]¹²
- 40% of woman abuse incidents begin during pregnancy. [Noel and Yam, 1992]¹³
- Woman abuse occurs in all forms of relationships including marital, common-law, lesbian and dating and exists in all cultural, socio-economic and religious communities. [Sinclair, 1985]¹⁴
- Abuse is the single major cause of injury among women - more frequent than auto accidents, muggings and rapes combined. [Hadley, 1992]¹⁵

Myths and Facts about Woman Abuse¹⁶

There are a number of myths or fallacies surrounding woman abuse. These myths, some of which are listed below, consciously or unconsciously serve to color our perception of violence against women.

MYTH: ABUSING OR THREATENING TO ABUSE IS A PRIVATE MATTER. NO ONE SHOULD DISRUPT FAMILY SANCTITY.

REALITY: 97% of people in a recent PEI survey disagree with the above statement.¹⁷ Families should be protected from the invasion of their privacy except when the interests of individual family members and/or the community are jeopardized. The interests of family members and the community are jeopardized when individuals suffer from the threat or reality of family violence.

Woman abuse is assault and assault is a crime, whether it occurs inside or outside the home. The belief that family violence is “private” stigmatizes those caught in violent relationships, makes others reluctant to intervene, and thus perpetuates the problem.

MYTH: THERE'S NO POINT IN HELPING ABUSED WOMEN. THEY'LL JUST GO BACK.

REALITY: Many abused women go through an "ambivalent" stage, trying to decide whether to go or stay. Forces pulling them away are as strong as forces pulling toward the relationship. They leave to test if they can survive outside the relationship, and return to test if the relationship can change. While frustrating to outsiders, this stage enables women to finally resolve their situation.

MYTH: MALE VIOLENCE IN RELATIONSHIPS IS RARE, OR WE WOULD HEAR MORE ABOUT IT.

REALITY: Of 22,000 victims of spousal violence reported to a sample of 179 Canadian police agencies in 1997, 88% (19,575) were female and 12% (2,679) were male.¹⁸

We don't hear about abusive relationships because both abusers and abused persons hide the facts from others. Their secrecy is made easier because communities find it difficult to believe abuse in families occurs. Societal values may accept violence, especially directed against women or children, so violent incidents are not recognized as abuse.

MYTH: WOMAN ABUSE IS A REACTION TO THE LIBERATION OF WOMEN.

REALITY: There is no evidence to suggest that the incidence of abuse is lower among women who are economically dependent home-makers. Further, the "women's lib" theory does not explain the prevalence of woman abuse throughout history where the woman's role has been one of subservience.

MYTH: CHILDREN WHO GROW UP IN ABUSIVE SITUATIONS GET USED TO IT AND LEARN TO DEAL WITH THE ABUSE.

REALITY: Evidence suggests that in a significant number of cases where children grow up seeing their mother abused, as adults the males become abusive and the females become submissive to abuse. Those who do not grow up to become abusers or victims are always be affected in some way by the abuse they witness.

MYTH: WOMEN "ASK FOR IT". THEY DRIVE MEN TO VIOLENCE.

REALITY: 22% of Islanders believe the above statement.¹⁹ However, stress and conflict are part of any relationship. Violence is never an appropriate way to solve a problem. No one deserves to be abused.

MYTH: ONLY POOR WOMEN ARE ABUSED.

REALITY: 49% of Islanders believe that women in economically stable families are not abused by their partners.²⁰ However, woman abuse is a widespread problem that cuts across all socioeconomic levels as well as all ethnic, cultural, rural and urban populations.

MYTH: ABUSED WOMEN LIKE IT, OR THEY WOULDN'T STAY.

REALITY: Women stay for varied and complex reasons. They hope to change the man they love, believe the honeymoon promises, feel guilty for breaking up a family, fear his threats, do not have the social or economic resources to make it on their own, and/or have no place to go. The dynamics of "traumatic bonding" create a strong emotional attachment to their abusive partner.

MYTH: PREGNANT WOMEN ARE RARELY ABUSED.

REALITY: 17.4 % of Islanders believe that expecting mothers are safe from abuse.²¹ In fact, women who are pregnant are more vulnerable to violence. 40% of victims of woman abuse first experience violence during pregnancy.²² For many women the abuse started, or became more severe, during a pregnancy. Pregnant women may have even less access to resources and thus are more dependent on their partners than at non-pregnant times.

MYTH: MEN WHO BATTER ARE MENTALLY ILL.

REALITY: Mental illness among abusive men is rare.

MYTH: FAMILY VIOLENCE HAPPENS WHEN THE ABUSIVE PARTNER DRINKS TOO MUCH ALCOHOL.

REALITY: 92% of Islanders believe the above to be true.²³ Though drinking and abuse are often associated, one does not cause the other. The abuser has qualities which are contributing factors to both drinking and violence.

MYTH: ABUSERS ARE VIOLENT IN ALL THEIR RELATIONSHIPS.

REALITY: Men who believe their partner or children are their property and must be controlled do not have the same belief about other people, so are not necessarily violent toward others. Sometimes outsiders find it difficult to believe the abuse occurs, because the abuser seems quiet and controlled outside his home. On the other hand, some family abusers are violent both inside and outside their home.

MYTH: THE ABUSER IS NOT A LOVING PARTNER.

REALITY: Most men do feel guilt and remorse about their actions. The abuser may be passionately loving and affectionate at times, especially during the "honeymoon phase" of the cycle of violence. Such loving behaviour often keeps the abused woman in the relationship..

MYTH: GIVING THE ABUSERS "A TASTE OF THEIR OWN MEDICINE" WILL STOP THE ABUSE.

REALITY: Using violence to stop violence is a contradiction, and it doesn't work. Violence generates more violence. However, several pilot projects in Canada and the U.S. indicate that arresting and prosecuting abusers does reduce repeat offenses. Abusers need to know their behaviour will not be accepted.

MYTH: NOBODY CAN HELP PEOPLE IN A VIOLENT RELATIONSHIP.

REALITY: Across Canada, people have broken the cycle of violence in their lives. Most had help from others. Experience has shown that appropriate legal and psycho-social interventions can stop abuse.

Notes:

Profile of a Woman in an Abusive Relationship²⁴

Women in abusive relationships often have common characteristics and beliefs. She will often:

- < blame herself and take responsibility for the abusive behaviour of her partner; believe her actions cause the abuse, and, in some way, excuse the abusive actions
- < tend to be passive rather than assertive in her interpersonal relationships
- < be socially isolated by her partner and lack substantial support networks of friends or relatives
- < tend to “give in” as a way to survive
- < have low self-esteem; see herself as incompetent, unworthy, unlovable and may be ridden with guilt and shame; believe if she had “gotten it right”, the abuse would not be occurring
- < tend to feel depressed and/or have suicidal thoughts or behaviours
- < have injuries which do not match the explanation she gives
- < be economically and emotionally dependent upon her partner
- < be deeply concerned about her children’s welfare and support; and will frequently remain in the relationship because “children need a father”
- < believe her partner will change because he isn’t always violent, and is sometimes loving and kind
- < tend to minimize the violence as a way of coping with the pain in her life
- < prolonged use of drugs such as tranquillizers, antidepressants
- < the intermittent or continual presence of stress reaction such as tension, hyperactivity, headaches, insomnia, pain in the back, chest or stomach

Profile of An Abuser²⁵

Abusive men also tend to have many characteristics in common. He will often:

- < be jealous and imagine his partner is having affairs.
- < try to isolate his partner.
- < try to control his partner.
- < have a Jekyll and Hyde personality
- < have other problems with the law.
- < have an explosive temper and fly into a rage without provocation.
- < use insults, putdowns or slanderous names to abuse his partner in addition to physical assault
- < tell his partner that the abuse is her fault
- < come from a family where violence is practiced.
- < be more violent when his partner is pregnant or soon after giving birth.
- < deny the beatings or their severity, seeming not to remember them.
- < do whatever it takes to drive his partner away and then whatever it takes to get her back including grabbing the kids, apologizing profusely, sending flowers, crying real tears and promising anything he knows his partner wants to hear
- < repeat the above pattern over and over again.

Barriers that Prevent Women from Leaving or Telling²⁶

Situational Barriers

- < fear that, if she leaves or tells anyone of the abuse, she or her family will experience more violence, or possibly be killed
- < shame and humiliation that this is happening to her
- < financial control of her resources by the abuser
- < fear that she will be unable to financially support herself and her children
- < belief that children must have a father at all costs
- < fear of "losing" her children
- < immobilized by psychological and physical trauma
- < hope that the abuser will change or she, herself, will become a "better" person
- < belief that she "causes" the abuse
- < fatigue from living under high and constant stress and erosion of self-esteem

Community Response Barriers

- < family/community/religious pressures to "keep the family together"
- < fear of being ostracized from her home community
- < fear of police involvement
- < absence of family/community support systems
- <
- < lack of affordable housing, childcare, equal employment opportunities

- < lives in isolation and has little or no knowledge of options/resources available
- < lack of English language skills prevents her from accessing services and increases isolation
- < lack of information about their rights and the law

Cultural Barriers

- Belief that marriage is binding till death.
- Separation/divorce brings shame to the family and negatively impacts future relations. (eg. a divorced woman's siblings' prospects for marriage will be jeopardized.)
- Religious/cultural teachings which promote a subservient position for women. ("to love, honor and *obey*.")
- Guidance provided by community leaders whose understanding of woman abuse is informed by beliefs and values based on traditional female/male roles. (eg. a woman must try harder to be a good wife.)
- fear of jeopardizing Canadian status and being unaware of her rights as a refugee or newly landed immigrant and fear of police involvement
- fear of police involvement because of strained relations with the police/legal system here in Canada and/or in country of origin (eg. dictatorship)
- dynamics and cycle of violence in relationships
- affects of abuse on children

The Link Between Violence Against Animals and Family Violence²⁷

“He told my kids that I had until Friday to come home [from Anderson House] or he was going to kill the cats. I didn’t come home [that time] ... My kids loved their kitties and when they asked him ‘where are the cats?’ and he said ‘I shot them’.”²⁸

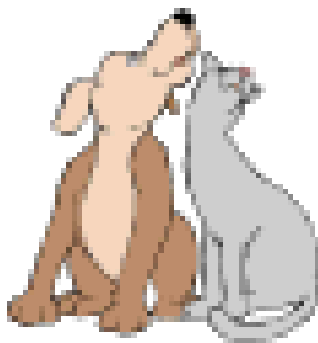
Professionals are just beginning to understand how child abuse, domestic violence and animal cruelty are linked. But the fact that they are connected is all too clear.

Recent studies in the United States found that:

- up to 40 percent of domestic violence victims delay leaving an abusive situation because the abuser has threatened their pets. Abusers often use pets as blackmail, further endangering the lives of the victims and their children.
- nearly 80 percent of battered women indicated the abuse they had suffered was also inflicted on the family pet.

In Alberta, researchers suspect statistics would be just as high as south of the border. To determine a link between animal and domestic violence, the YWCA Sherif King Family Violence Prevention Centre and the Calgary Humane Society are doing a joint study.

Unfortunately, it is not easy to come to the aid of victims with pets. Most animal shelters do not take in pets while victims and their families look for safe homes. There are many issues to consider - safety, confidentiality, pet ownership, financial needs, veterinary care, pet transportation, staff training and ethical codes. Although they do not usually provide boarding for pets, the PEI Humane Society will take in pets of women who are leaving abusive relationships and in need of a safe place for their pets until they find a safe place to live.



Animal Abusers may Hurt People Too

We need to realize that people who mistreat animals may hurt humans too. If there is human abuse, a professional should investigate the potential for animal abuse and vice versa.

QUIZ ON WOMAN ABUSE (Answers)

1. Woman abuse occurs most often in lower income families.

FALSE: Woman abuse is a widespread problem that cuts across all socioeconomic levels as well as all ethnic, cultural, rural and urban populations.

2. Woman abuse is only about physical abuse.

FALSE: Woman abuse is physical, sexual, psychological, financial or emotional abuse, or the threat thereof, of a woman, by someone with whom she has an intimate relationship. Intimate partners include a husband, common-law partner, boyfriend, same sex partner or an ex-husband, partner or boyfriend.

3. The victims of woman abuse are often to blame for the violence.

FALSE: Stress and conflict are part of any relationship. Violence is never an appropriate way to solve a problem. No one deserves to be abused.

In the early stages of a violent relationship, violence is less frequent. Victims try hard to accommodate the abuser, partly in hopes of avoiding the violence. In later stages, as a survival technique, some women may provoke fights to get the violence over with and reduce the tension.

4. Woman abuse is a private family matter.

FALSE: Families should be protected from the invasion of their privacy except when the interests of individual family members and/or the community are jeopardized. The interests of family members and the community are jeopardized when individuals suffer from the threat or reality of family violence.

Woman abuse is assault and assault is a crime, whether it occurs inside or outside the home. The belief that family violence is “private” stigmatizes those caught in violent relationships, makes others reluctant to intervene, and thus perpetuates the problem.

5. Alcohol causes violence in relationships.

FALSE: Though drinking and abuse are often associated, one does not cause the other. The abuser has qualities which are contributing factors to both drinking and violence.

6. Woman abuse has little impact on children.

FALSE: Evidence suggests that in a significant number of cases where children grow up seeing their mother abused, as adults the males become abusive and the females become submissive to abuse. Those who do not grow up to become abusers or victims are always be affected in some way by the abuse they witness.²⁹

7. People who are abusive are “mentally ill”.

FALSE: Mental illness among abusive men is rare.

8. A woman in an abusive relationship just need someone to save her.

FALSE: Only she can make the decision to leave an abusive relationship. It is the service providers job to empower her with information and resources to help her make an informed decision.

9. Once a woman leaves her abusive partner she is generally safe.

FALSE: Leaving an abusive relationship doesn't end the violence for many women. Violence often increases dramatically during or after separation and it is an extremely dangerous time for victims of abuse.

10. There's no point in trying to help an abused woman, she'll just go back.

FALSE: Many abused women go through an "ambivalent" stage, trying to decide whether to go or stay. Forces pulling them away are as strong as forces pulling toward the relationship. They leave to test if they can survive outside the relationship, and return to test if the relationship can change. While frustrating to outsiders, this stage enables women to finally resolve their situation.

11. Pregnant women are safe from abuse, if only until they give birth.

FALSE: Women who are pregnant are more vulnerable to violence. 40% of victims of woman abuse first experience violence during pregnancy.³⁰ For many women the abuse started, or became more severe, during a pregnancy. Pregnant women may have even less access to resources and thus are more dependent on their partners than at non-pregnant times.

12. Many women stay in abusive relationships to protect their pets.

TRUE: Recent studies in the United States found that up to 40 percent of domestic violence victims delay leaving an abusive situation because the abuser has threatened their pets.³¹ Abusers often use pets as blackmail, further endangering the lives of the victims and their children. Canadian statistics appear to similar.



5 *Legal Issues and Resources*

Woman abuse, when it includes physical or sexual assault, is a criminal offence. Police are expected to lay charges whenever there are legal grounds to do so. The law applies equally to married couples, common-law relationships, same sex relationships and to separated /divorced individuals.

Following are some areas of the law applying to woman abuse that service providers should be aware of.

MANDATORY REPORTING OF CHILD ABUSE

On PEI, you are required by law to report child abuse. If a client discloses abuse in her relationship or you *suspect* abuse and there are children living in the home, you are required by law to report to Child Protection. Children are considered “in need of protection” when they are witnessing abuse *AS WELL AS* when they are being abused. Child Protection can be reached at 1-800-341-6868 or at these local numbers:

Child and Family Services

Charlottetown	368-5330
Souris	687-7060
Montague	838-0700
Summerside	888-8100
O'Leary	859-8811

Victims of Family Violence Act

In certain circumstances the police may lay charges under the Criminal Code and also seek an Emergency Protection Order under the Victims of Family Violence Act. The Victim of Family Violence Act does not carry any criminal consequences and the abuser will not have a criminal record.

Emergency Protection Order (EPO)

EPO's are available 24 hours a day and come into effect as soon as the abuser is told about it. Police are guided by their “DOMESTIC DISPUTES” protocol to advise the victim of the option of an Emergency Protection Order, and, if it is an emergency and the victim is in agreement, the police officer will telephone a Justice of the Peace to make the application. The Justice of the Peace will decide if an EPO will be made and what it will include. The order could include removing the abuser from the home, and that he not take, sell or damage property. It can also give the victim or another person, temporary custody of the children and give the victim temporary possession of the family home. The abuser may also be told to stay away from his partner and commit no further acts of violence.

Victim Assistance Order (VAO)

The VAO is a longer term remedy than the EPO and can be used when that order expires or if the situation is not an emergency. The VAO may give the victim exclusive use of the home for a specified time, temporary custody of the children, police supervision or removal of her personal belongings and those of her children from the home and a stay-away directive to the abuser. Applying for this order requires the assistance of a lawyer, however, Victim Services and Transition House Association Outreach Workers can provide a Victim Assistance Orders Information Kit.

For more information about the Act, refer to “The Islander’s Guide to the Victims of Family Violence Act”, which is available, free of charge, from Community Legal Information Association (see Referral Resources section).

Legal Aid

There is limited legal aid in Prince Edward Island beyond the legal aid that is available to assist those charged with a crime. Some options available include:

Family Legal Aid

If your client has a low income and family violence or child protection issues, she may apply for Legal Aid from the Public Defenders’ Office. If she qualifies, one of its staff will take her case, free of charge, and assist her with family law issues including child protection issues. However, there is little money for family law legal aid and only special cases will qualify.

Law Foundation Family Legal Aid Program

There are limited funds available for family law legal aid set aside by the Law Foundation of PEI in partnership with the Province. A lawyer must apply on your client’s behalf. Priority is given to those cases where the main issues are child custody, access, visitation and/or financial support. This fund is designed for those who are not eligible for regular legal aid.

Family Support Orders Program

If your client gets any form of social assistance, including a daycare subsidy, she is eligible for this program. The program helps to get child support from the client’s partner or spouse or former partner or spouse for children on social assistance. If necessary, they provide legal assistance in custody matters. Clients are referred to the program by their financial caseworkers at Social Services.

Family Mediation

Mediation is a voluntary way to solve problems led by a trained, neutral person who helps couples to decide issues about separating. The Family Court Counsellors provide mediation services free of charge and will help clients make decision about issues of where the children will live and how much time they will spend with each parent. For issues of child and spousal support and division of assets and debts, clients will need to contract with a private mediator.

Lawyer Referral Service

If your client calls this service, she will be given the names of two lawyers. She may see one of them for a 30 minute meeting at a cost of \$10.00 plus tax. The Lawyer Referral Service is run by the Law Society of PEI and administered by Community Legal Information Association.

Maintenance Enforcement

Maintenance Enforcement is a free program run by the government of PEI that will help your client to collect support payments. If she is awarded spousal or child support or if her partner agrees to pay support and signs a Separation Agreement, she can file the order or agreement with the Maintenance Enforcement office. No matter where the paying spouse lives in Canada as well as some states and other countries, the Maintenance Enforcement office can help

Probation Services

Probation Services provides community-based supervision for adult and young offenders who are required to follow all the conditions of Probation or Conditional Sentence Orders and Alternative Measures Agreements for a set period of time. Any order restricting contact between the offender and victim, or other individuals named in the order, will be monitored and supervised by a Probation Officer. The victim has a right to speak to the probation Officer if she wishes to.

Notes:



6 *How Can You Help?*

Helpful Approaches

Take Responsibility for Educating Yourself

- know what you are expected to do (know your protocol)
- know who in your unit is trained to respond to women who are in abusive relationships and refer women in crisis to them immediately

Show Respect

- accept the fact that the woman is speaking about being abused and believe her
- show you care
- be honest and genuine
- say, “it’s not your fault”
- listen and let her talk about her feelings

Ensure Confidentiality

- talk in a quiet place
- assure her you will not repeat the conversation
- if she tells you about a child who is being abused or who she suspects is being abused, tell her that reporting child abuse or suspected child abuse to child protection authorities or the police is required by law

Be Open-Minded

- avoid judging her
- keep your personal feelings and opinions to yourself
- do not blame
- offer alternatives, not advice
- be patient; she will take action to leave an abusive situation when she is ready

Offer Support

- let her know she’s not alone
- remember, she can make her own decisions, don’t tell her what to do
- believe in her ability to make changes when she is ready
- tell her about help available and give her information about services available along with contact information
- ask her if she wants you to refer her to any of the services

Notes...

7 *Listening and Questioning Skills*

Every service provider should be familiar with their own protocol and what is expected of them. If part of your job is to encourage disclosure of abuse by your client in order to provide support and information, the following are some skills that can help.

In The Road Less Travelled, M. Scott Peck has this to say about listening:

“Even though we may feel we are listening very hard, what we are usually doing is listening selectively, with a pre-set agenda in mind, wondering as we listen how we can achieve certain desired results and get the conversation over with as quickly as possible or redirected in ways more satisfactory to us.”

“The Knowledge that one is truly being listened to is frequently in, and of itself, remarkably therapeutic.”



Sometimes just listening to your client and making sure she feel listened to can have a significant impact on her decision to leave her abusive relationship. Following are some tips to assist you in becoming a more effective listener.

Qualities of an Effective Listener:

- You must want to hear what she has to say
- You must want to be helpful
- You must be able to accept the feelings expressed whatever they may be or however different they may be from your own feelings
- You must trust her capacity to handle the feelings, to work through them, and find solutions
- You must appreciate that feelings change, they are not permanent
- You must be able to see her as separate from you.

Active Listening

Active listening is a specific listening technique where the listener tries to understand how it feels to be the other person, and describes in "feeling" words what the listener has heard in the speaker's statement.

Purposes

- Helps people free themselves of troublesome feelings
- Promotes a relationship of trust
- Facilitates problem-solving by the person with the problem

Active Questioning

You can use active questioning as a effective listening tool to help you to ensure that you understand what your client is trying to tell you.



Open and Closed Questions

Any questions that can be answered with a “yes” or “no” is a *closed* question and is often of little assistance in communicating effectively. Usually *open* questions that require the other person to actively participate in a discussion are the more useful kind of questions to ask.

There are various types of open questions that you can use to encourage your client to disclose abuse and seek help if you are the appropriate person in your office to do so.

Broadening Questions

Invites more comment; gets at hidden messages

- K “Can you tell me more about?”
- K “I’d like to hear more about?”
- K “What was important about that?”
- K “How did that happen?”

Clarifying Questions

Clear up ambiguities, terminology

- K “What did you mean by “inappropriate?””
- K “When you say that he does things to frighten you, can you give me a specific example?”

If there is no disclosure of abuse but you have a suspicion that your client is in an abusive relationship, check your protocol to ensure you know what you are expected to do. If you are expected to ask questions to encourage disclosure, ask some gentle but direct questions as suggested by your protocol.

Ensure that you are familiar with your protocol and what you are expected to do if your client does disclose abuse.

8 *Safety Planning*

The following is a guideline for assisting your client to develop a safety plan. It is important to understand that **leaving an abusive relationship is a process** which may take years just as the abuse has taken place over a lengthy period of time. Therefore, remember that the service provider's role is to inform the client of all options but the decision about going home or not going home must ultimately be made by the client and respected by the service provider. **A crucial component of developing a safety plan with your client is helping her take control of the situation.**

It is recommended that all service providers be familiar with emergency resources that address the needs of victims of woman abuse (see Emergency Resources at the beginning of this manual).

Safety Planning Tips:

- / if the woman chooses to return to and remain in the relationship encourage her to develop an Emergency Escape Plan
- / provide her with emergency phone numbers, list of resources, and brochures in her language and ensure that it is safe for her to take them
- / assist her in seeking immediate safety (eg. Anderson House, staying with supportive family or friends, admission to hospital, hotel room, etc.)
- / explore how she will take the children out of danger, especially in the middle of the night
- / inform her of legal rights (eg. calling the police, Victims of Family Violence Act, etc.) or refer her to someone who can
- / develop an **Emergency Escape Plan**

Contacting your client

During your appointment, ask your client if it is safe to contact her at home or if other arrangements should be made to get in touch if necessary. If you do need to contact her at home, ensure that you block your phone number so that it doesn't appear on her caller ID and do not leave a message on a machine or with another family member unless she has given you permission to do so. Even leaving your name and place of business can potentially cause further abuse for your client.

Tips for creating an Emergency Escape Plan

- L Put the following in a safe place:
 - C a small amount of money
 - C keys
 - C medication
 - C children's favourite toy or blanket
 - C your identification
 - C children's identification
 - C bank book
 - C mortgage documents
 - C passport
 - C health card
 - C lease papers
 - C other important documents.

- L Alert a supportive family member or friend of your situation.

- L Ask a neighbour to call 911 on your behalf when you give them a pre-determined signal.

9 How to Support the Client's Children

Woman Abuse has a direct impact on children. In as many as 4 out of every 10 cases where a woman is being abused in her home, there are also direct physical and/or sexual assaults against children living in the home. As well, the psychological impact on children of *witnessing* violence in the home is *similar* to the impact of *direct victimization*. The impact can impair psychological development, including: intelligence, memory, recognition, perception, attention, imagination and moral development. A child's social development may also be impacted, resulting in an impaired ability to perceive, feel, understand and express emotions.³² Children who witness violence in their homes are 5 times more likely to experience mental health problems than children in the general population³³ and are more likely to become involved in violent relationships as adults.

So, how often do children witness the violence occurring in their homes? In a sample of 363 PEI cases of domestic violence reported to police, 57% involved child witnesses. Some estimates indicate that children witness up to 80% of reported family violence in Canada.

Children who witness domestic violence or are exposed to the threat of violence in their homes are at risk and in need of protection.

MANDATORY REPORTING OF CHILD ABUSE

Children are considered “in need of protection” when they are witnessing abuse *AS WELL AS* when they are being abused. On PEI, you are required by law to report children in need of protection. If a client discloses abuse in her relationship or you *suspect* abuse and there are children living in the home, you are required by law to report to Child Protection. Child Protection can be reached at 1-800-341-6868 or at these local numbers:

Child and Family Services

Charlottetown	368-5330
Souris	687-7060
Montague	838-0700
Summerside	888-8100
O'Leary	859-8811

Assessing the Children's Safety

When a client discloses abuse, it is imperative that the children's safety be assessed by whomever is indicated by your protocol as the appropriate person. The following are supplemental questions which should be asked of clients with children who are living with violence in their home.

- P Ascertain the whereabouts of the children. Are they here with the client? Are they with the abuser? Are they with family or friends? Are they safe?
- P Is the client concerned about the child (ren)'s well being?
- P If the client is being hospitalized, can children be cared for by supportive family or friends?
- P Has the family received or are they currently receiving help from Child Protection?

10 *Confidentiality*

Confidentiality is an important part in developing trust in a relationship. The issue of confidentiality should be discussed with your client to ensure awareness of its meaning in the context of your service and your woman abuse protocol.

Inform your client of standards of practice regarding confidentiality, using professional judgement in terms of timing and delivery in keeping with the spirit of your protocol.

The following is a guideline to help facilitate a conversation about confidentiality.

- ~ Reassure the client that your conversation will not be discussed with her partner, nor will it be discussed with any other member of the family, without her consent.
- ~ If she voices concern about documentation, inform her of any benefits of full documentation to help her make an informed decision
- ~ Inform her about the mandatory reporting of child abuse or suspected child abuse and other limits to confidentiality.
- ~ Explain about case conferences and get her permission to discuss what she tells you with others at the case conference

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11 *Diversity and Woman Abuse*

*Cultural Diversity and Woman Abuse*³⁴

The work to end violence against women must encompass all forms of violence rooted in both sexism and racism. Racism is embedded in all the institutions and systems that make up Canadian society. Women from minority cultures have challenged everyone to recognize that inequality and power imbalances can not only be part of the status quo but also of agendas for change, governments, service providers and advocates (De Keseredy, MacLeod, 1997: 192).

Organizations dedicated to ending violence against women share this reality. Throughout the 90s many of them have made a commitment to anti-racism work. The struggles continue, but from them and from the experiences of immigrant and visible-minority women and women of colour, have come some excellent resources and models to assist in the work.

While there has been some progress, barriers still exist that make the experience of abuse for immigrant and visible-minority women even more difficult than for mainstream women:

- Cultural barriers refer to factors associated with the belief and cultural systems of the country of origin (e.g., fear of divorce, fear of going to "outsiders" for help, fear of losing the children, and abuse as part of other violence).
- Informational and language barriers refer to factors associated with access to information about the legal system and social services, including a lack of language skills (e.g., an inability to speak English or French can make an abused woman dependent on the abusive family member for all day-to-day activities).
- Institutional barriers refer to factors rooted in the institutions of the host country (e.g., sponsorship breakdown, fear of deportation and fear of the police).

The resource handbook [Abuse is Wrong in Any Language](#) identifies these barriers and provides clear, practical suggestions on how service providers can help women to over-come them. It also provides excellent information on cross-cultural communication, a range of available legal remedies, and where to get appropriate resource material.

Learnings/best practices for finding an interpreter. (Fully trained cultural interpreters who understand violence issues are unfortunately not readily available. The ideas listed below, taken from [Abuse is Wrong in Any Language](#), may help to identify interpreters who can fill the gap.)

- Try to find agencies with specialized services, such as the PEI Association of Newcomers to Canada, that have staff or that may be able to connect you with others who speak the woman's language.
- Try to find a volunteer in the community who can act as interpreter. When you look for an

interpreter, there are several issues to keep in mind. You must be able to guarantee confidentiality. You must be able to carefully select someone who does not make your client uneasy. People who speak the same language may have significant differences, such as dialect, class, ethnic group, religion and caste, that create barriers.

- Try to assess the sensitivity of the interpreter to issues such as family violence. Has she intervened in such situations before? If the interpreter's tone, attitude or choice of words is inappropriate, the abused woman will get the wrong messages, no matter how supportive the service provider is attempting to be.
- Try not to use the immigrant woman's children as interpreters. If her abuser has sexually assaulted her, for example, she will likely not mention it if she has to rely on her children to translate.
- Be aware of gender relations in the country of origin or in the ethnic community. Would your client be uncomfortable with a male interpreter?
- Be aware of the personal relationships between the abused woman and the interpreter. Do not use a friend of either the woman or her husband to act as the interpreter. He or she may be biased and may attempt to influence your client one way or the other. Many ethnic communities are small, and the abused woman may know the interpreter socially and not want to discuss her personal problems with him or her.
- Ask the woman if the interpreter is acceptable before you make the arrangements. Make it clear that if she is not satisfied, you will find someone else.

Women with Disabilities³⁵

Studies done by and for women with disabilities point out that women with disabilities are at much greater risk of being abused in their lifetime than are women without disabilities. The isolation and economic insecurity suffered by many women with disabilities makes them more dependent on their families and care-givers. Not only does this isolation and dependence place them at greater risk for abuse, it also makes them more afraid of threatening their support system by reaching outside the system for help.



Women with disabilities must often depend on a variety of people to provide them with assistance in carrying out their everyday lives. For this reason, their "family" is understood to include not only parents, husbands, boyfriends and other relatives, but also friends, neighbours and caregivers.

Caregivers can include attendants, interpreters, home-makers, drivers, doctors, nurses, teachers, social workers, psychiatrists, therapists, counsellors, and workers in hospitals and other institutions.



This large number of people, and the intimate physical and emotional contact they provide, greatly increases the risk of abuse for persons with disabilities.

Women who live in institutional settings, and women who are multiply or profoundly disabled, are most vulnerable to abuse, because they are more dependent upon even larger numbers of people and less able to get away.

The Roeher Institute study, “Harm’s way: The many faces of violence and abuse against persons with disabilities”, 1995, pointed out that people with disabilities are less likely than women without disabilities to be aware of their rights, to know how to identify abuse and to know what to do in the event of harm.

Understanding the barriers—physical, attitudinal and economic—that women with disabilities face is the first step. Training service providers, service funders, politicians and bureaucrats is the second step.

Learnings/best practices for meeting the needs of women with disabilities who have been abused:

- Watch the video, Double Jeopardy, as this is an excellent awareness-raising video and is available, with a discussion guide, through the Canadian Association of Independent Living Centres, Ottawa.
- Read Meeting our Needs: An Access Manual for Transition Houses, written by Shirley Masuda with Jillian Ridington for DAWN Canada: DisAbled Women’s Network Canada, 1990. This Manual outlines the nature of abuse in the lives of women with disabilities, teaches about the different types of disabilities, investigates the level of accessibility of crisis-support services and makes detailed recommendations for improved access in a "how-to" section.
- Train service providers, board members and community groups. Work with women with disabilities in your community and the resources listed [in the bibliography] to develop a training program that raises awareness about women living with disabilities, develops an action plan for integrating the knowledge into service changes and develops a plan for social action that continues to keep the issue on the political and funding agenda. Responding to Family Violence and Abuse is a resource that provides practical training ideas.
- Use the “Access Checklist”, which was produced by DAWN Ontario and provides a comprehensive to-do list to use in ensuring that programs and events are accessible. To order, contact DAWN Ontario.



Violence in Lesbian Relationships³⁶

Homophobia and heterosexism in our society has kept violence in lesbian relationships behind very tightly closed doors until recently. The research that is now being done on this issue is forcing a re-examination of how women's violence is defined within a feminist framework of male power and control. Women's groups, and shelters in particular, have been in the forefront of opening up this discussion and expanding knowledge and understanding.

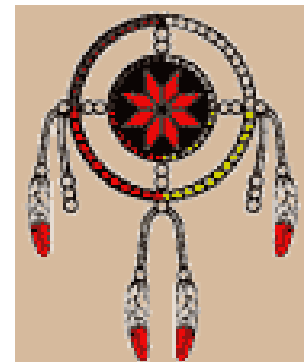
There is a huge amount of work to be done in removing the barriers that lesbians face in finding services and resources to meet their needs. Combatting homophobia, exploring the effects of internalized homophobia and misogyny on lesbian relationships, and educating social, medical and legal services on violence in lesbian relationships, need to be integrated into all violence against women work.

Learnings/best practices for service providers who are responding to lesbian abuse:

- Provide ongoing training on homophobia and heterosexism for staff, volunteers and board members.
- Rewrite all policies (service mandates and staff benefits) and written materials (intake forms, service brochures, etc.), using inclusive language, so that lesbians know they are welcome.
- Have books, posters, and other resources inside your organization that convey a welcoming and positive attitude toward lesbians.
- Create a safe and supportive atmosphere for lesbian staff and lesbian service-users.

Aboriginal Women³⁷

Aboriginal people seek holistic responses to woman abuse that recognize their need for spiritual and psychological healing, not just their need for physical safety and the healing of physical wounds. They have rejected an understanding of violence that concentrates primarily on gender-based power inequities. They see their people as victims of power inequities based on racism and classism that have contributed to the loss of Aboriginal culture and tradition. Many want the healing focus to be on keeping families together. They do not see escaping to shelters as an appropriate solution, because it involves leaving their communities and the support, familiarity and cultural traditions that these communities represent.



As people concerned with woman abuse begin to focus more on the solutions, the healing perspective of Aboriginal peoples is becoming a guide for change. Aboriginal peoples emphasize

the importance of working not just with individuals but with all members of families, with communities and with nations. Aboriginal writings underscore the basic message that the process of helping someone change cannot involve coercion, power or control, because these are what caused the problem in the first place (DeKeseredy, MacLeod, 1997: p. 192).

The Aboriginal perspective does not embrace blaming and punishing but values strengthening the community and the individual's bonds to the community, thereby increasing feelings of self-esteem and self-worth.



This perspective has been an extremely useful one as Aboriginal people struggle to deal with the impact of the abuse they suffered in the residential school system. Over the last 10 years, the extent and the effects of this abuse are finally being recognized. Physically, sexually, emotionally and spiritually abusive behaviours were learned and often internalized as a result of residential school experiences and this contributed to the break-down of family life and traditional ways. In Prince Edward Island the residential schools and an outbreak of TB which forced many Aboriginal children into orphanages created a whole society of people who feel powerless and, for some, the only way they know to regain that power is to use control and violence over others. Solutions must acknowledge the impact of these experiences and the need for healing from past abuse.

Aboriginal people in Canada have often led the way in terms of mobilizing the community for prevention of woman abuse. The Mid-island Tribal Council Family Development Program, listed in the resources section below, encourages the community to accept responsibility for abuse as a community problem and also to participate actively in the recovery process. The process promotes individual and family health as well as community health.

Learnings/best practices for healing (adapted from Family violence in Aboriginal communities: An Aboriginal perspective):

- Ensure that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people alike understand that family violence is not part of traditional Aboriginal culture and is unacceptable.
- Find holistic solutions.
- Allow solutions to be community-driven.
- Have all programs and organizations that are designing and delivering programs and services acknowledge the impact of the past, and the need for healing individuals, families and communities.
- Stress that everyone has a responsibility for eliminating family violence in Aboriginal

- communities.
- Help existing Aboriginal governments to develop innovative, culturally appropriate solutions, rather than adapting existing programs and services that may not address the underlying causes of family violence in Aboriginal communities.
 - Heal existing program and service-delivery agents, caregivers, Elders, healers and service providers, before they are to heal others.
 - Underline that Aboriginal organizations and governments must embrace the urgent need to heal communities and to rid them of family violence, alcoholism, suicide and other such forms of social malaise.
 - Respect the uniqueness of each individual and of each community.
 - Know that the centre of Aboriginal communities is the family; consequently, Aboriginal people may seek treatment for the whole family in the case of family violence.



Older Women

The 1990 National Survey on Abuse of the Elderly in Canada estimated that 4 percent of seniors residing in private homes reported experiencing abuse and/or neglect.

In addition to the forms of abuse noted on page 23, older women may also suffer from:

- ***financial exploitation***, which can include the misappropriate or misuse of funds or property, the forced sale of a home or possessions, forced change of will or abuse of trusteeship or guardianship. Other forms of abuse suffered by older women include;
- ***medication abuse***, which includes the misuse of an older person's medications and prescriptions, including withholding medication and over medicating; and
- ***neglect***, or the intentional withholding of basic necessities or care.

Principles Guiding Interventions³⁸

The following ethical principles can serve as a guide for a community's responses to abused and neglected older persons. They can help formulate thoughts on approaches and interventions.

1. As with all adults, older persons have the right to:

- Have the basic requirements of life - food, clothing, shelter and social contact;
- Live free from physical, emotional, financial, sexual and medication abuse; violation of civil/human rights; and neglect
- be informed about their civil and legal rights;
- self-determination;
- live their lives as they wish, provided they do not infringe upon the rights and safety of others;
- participate in making decisions about themselves, to the full extent that they are able to do so;
- refuse assistance and intervention.

2. Every situation involving suspected abuse and neglect must be assessed individually to determine what the older person wants and the degree of intrusion warranted. Situations will vary in degree of risk for the adult person.

3. In a suspected case of abuse or neglect, an intervention:

- should be the least intrusive or restrictive;
- should be aimed at maximizing the older person's choices;
- should be based on the older person's strengths and abilities for positive action;
- can only be undertaken with the voluntary and informed consent of the older person whenever and whatever degree that person is able to participate;
- should respect the older person's privacy.

4. Assault, theft, uttering threats, fraud and neglect are crimes. The police should be called to deal with complaints or instances of alleged criminality.

[Adapted with permission from the British Columbia InterMinistry of Health, and Ministry Responsible for Seniors (February 1992) Principles, Procedures, and Protocols for Elder Abuse, pp. 3-4]

5. All interactions with older adults should be sensitive to culture, religion, race, gender and ability. It is essential to recognize the needs of multicultural and aboriginal communities, people living in rural or remote areas, and special needs groups, such as people with mental, physical and emotional disabilities.

Teens

Abuse in relationships is not restricted to adult relationships - many teenagers experience dating violence. Some questions to ask a teen to determine warning signs of dating violence include:

Are you going out with someone who:

- Is jealous and possessive, won't let you see other friends, checks up on you or won't accept breaking up? Justifies these behaviours by saying that he acts this way because he loves you so much?
- Pressures you to have sex and thinks of women and girls as sex objects? Tries to make you feel guilty by saying "If you really loved me you would..."? Gets too serious about the relationship too quickly?
- Tries to control you by being very bossy, criticizing the way you dress, talk and dance, making all the decisions and ignoring your opinions?
- Is violent, has a history of fighting, a bad temper or brags about mistreating others?
- Abuses drugs or alcohol and pressures you to take them?
- Blames you when he mistreats you?
- Has a history of bad relationships, blames the other person?
- Believes that men should be in control and women should be submissive?
- Is described by friends or family members as scary or dangerous?³⁹

If the response you receive is positive, believe her and tell her that jealousy and possessiveness do not equal love and that she does not deserve to be hurt. Ensure that she understands the options available to her, make any referrals necessary and help to make her own decisions about what to do.

12 *Worker Safety and Support*

As a service provider, it is important to be aware of your own safety in addition to the safety of the women and children you are providing assistance to. It is important to meet with your client in a place that is safe for you both. For example, before you agree to meet with your client in her home, ensure that there is no chance that the abusive partner will have access to the home. If you don't feel safe, explore other places to meet. If the abusive partner calls requesting information about the woman, ensure that your name and contact information is not given to him and that all information about the case remains confidential. If you are contacting the woman at home, be sure to block your telephone number for your safety and hers.

Working with someone in an abusive relationship can be stressful. Arrange to debrief with another worker after the interview to ensure that you don't carry those emotions into your next interview or meeting or at the earliest time possible.

Supporting Co-workers in Abusive Relationships

Another aspect of worker safety to consider is the likelihood that someone you work with is experiencing violence in their relationship. Some women use the workplace as a place of safe haven while others experience continued abuse and harassment by her abusive partner while at work. Lots of workplaces have found ways to ensure that they are supportive places for women experiencing family violence.

Comprehensive workplace strategies include a variety of initiatives. A "best practices" model would combine some of the following elements:



- T first of all, ensuring that the woman is safe
- T a top-down commitment to fight violence against women
- T awareness and education programs
- T an Employee Assistance Program that includes support for survivors of family violence
- T resource materials for employees and supervisors
- T written workplace policies and procedures against violence, harassment, and discrimination
- T workplace programs to identify and help violent men
- T general violence prevention and women's safety programs
- T a "zero tolerance" policy⁴⁰



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These publications are available by contacting the National Clearinghouse on Family Violence at 1-800-267-1291 or <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/familyviolence/index.html>

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The following publications are available free of charge from Community Legal Information Association by calling 1-800-240-9798 or 892-0853 in Charlottetown:

- P ***A Guide for Witnesses***
- P ***A Guide to the Courts in Prince Edward Island***
- P ***Anderson House***
- P ***Common Law Relationships***
- P ***Islanders Guide to the Victims of Family Violence Act***
- P ***Lawyer Referral Service***
- P ***Sentencing***
- P ***Stalking is a Crime Called Criminal Harassment***
- P ***Sexual Assault***
- P ***Victim Assistance Order Information Kit***
- P ***You and Your Lawyer***
- P ***Victim Services***

Available from the Advisory Council on the Status of Women:

- P ***Moving On***

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