

COLLABORATIVE ACTIONS

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Ministry of Community and Social Services
Violence Against Women Service System Strategic Plan

Implementation Team: Collaboration and Accountability

1.0 TERMS OF REFERENCE

Function:

The functions of the Service System Collaboration and Accountability Implementation Team are as follows:

- (i) Promote enhanced collaboration with the child welfare service system partners by pursuing opportunities to increase awareness of and responsiveness to women experiencing violence and their children.
- (ii) Identify and pursue mutual opportunities between Ontario Works and the VAW sector to strengthen partnerships.
- (iii) Initiate a dialogue with representatives of the legal services and court systems and the VAW service system to explore opportunities and implement strategies to promote a more collaborative approach to strengthen the service system accountability to women experiencing violence and their children.
- (iv) Explore opportunities with education sector partners to increase awareness of women experiencing violence and their children, within the context of current provincial initiatives.
- (v) Enhance partnerships with health sector partners to improve access and outcomes for women experiencing violence who have mental health and addiction challenges.

2.0 SCOPE

According to the implementation team's terms of reference (reproduced above from Strategic Plan document), the 5 functional areas of the Service System Collaboration and Accountability

Implementation Team are: child welfare and VAW, Ontario Works and VAW, the legal services and court systems and the VAW service system, Education sector partners, and health sector partners.

In this first year of the service system strategic plan, 2009-2010, the team's focus will be primarily on the first functional area — child welfare.

The impetus to reorganize the terms of reference for the Collaboration and Accountability Team emerged from a collective response from team at the previous Forum on November 24, 2008, in which members expressed the need for a more manageable focus, in which concrete deliverables could be envisioned.

The current ordering of the terms of reference is based on what the Team felt would be achievable in the short term, rather than on priority criteria. “What is do-able?” by the CWR's VAW transfer-payment agencies — is the central organizing question.

2.1 FOCUS QUESTIONS

The following questions are meant to assist the Collaboration and Accountability Team's focus during the team discussion on April 23, 2009:

- 1. What have we done as an individual agency that has worked?**
- 2. How can those successes be generalized so that we may all learn and/or benefit from them?**
- 3. How can we replicate some of those successes in other areas?**

3.0 CAS-VAW COLLABORATION AGREEMENTS

Since the implementation of the CAS/VAW Collaborative Agreements in 2004, municipal collaboration committees each comprised of the municipal CAS and local VAW agencies are asked to prepare an annual status report on the progress of their individual collaborative partnerships for the

Ministry of Community and Social Services. These annual status reports are opportunities for Agreement Committees to reflect upon the work of their member agencies by identifying best practices/achievements, common challenges, and actions required to improve collaboration within their municipality.

The purpose of this section summary is two-fold:

1. To provide greater clarity regarding the gaps/challenges that may still exist between the Violence against Women sector and Children’s Aid Societies and in which communities they are more evident, with particular focus on the Central West Region.
2. To highlight the strategies used and/or suggested by individual collaborative agreement committees’ to mitigate existing issues in the various provincial regions.

It is intended that this overview of the common challenges and best practices or achievements of the CWR collaborative agreements will provide the Collaboration and Accountability Implementation Team with potential directions to be explored and pursued at a regional and/or community level.

This dialogue is premised on the need to create a “Big Picture” — to develop a mutual understanding of the individual and overlapping concerns within both the CAS and VAW sectors as a starting point (reference to article, *Holding the Big Picture: Working in the best interests of children exposed to woman abuse: Some thoughts on furthering child welfare and VAW collaboration* by Susan Harris and Barbara Sinclair).

3.1 METHODOLOGY

This sectional commentary on the CAS-VAW Collaborative Agreements is based on a review of the five CAS-VAW 2008 Agreement Committee Annual Reports the Central West Region – comprised of five municipalities: Dufferin County, Halton region, Waterloo, Guelph-Wellington and Peel; as well as on review of four of the five 2009 year-end Agreement Committee Annual Reports from Guelph-Wellington, Peel, Waterloo and Duferin/Caledon.

3.2 ACHIEVEMENTS AND BEST PRACTICES

As part of the reporting process, local committees are provided with an opportunity to highlight their achievements and best practices within the collaborative actions portion of the reporting template. There were several examples of best practices and/or achievements noted across the region. First, the Waterloo Region has reported that workers are more comfortable in determining what and how much information to share and an increase in reciprocal initiatives has been noted on both sides.

The Halton Region has noted that a good understanding and knowledge of respective sector mandates, roles and responsibilities works best when sectors work together on a team such as in “Bridging Families.” Regarding this performance indicator of cross-sectoral understanding and awareness, Dufferin County noted that job shadowing between FTP and DCAFS has occurred in the past and was effective. Both Peel and Guelph-Wellington indicated that regular quarterly meetings of the Collaboration Committee are a necessary to fostering a collaborative spirit in both sectors. Peel noted that ongoing training was effective with a CAS designated lead to ensure continuity and availability of training throughout the region. Finally, Waterloo Region highlighted that their CAS/VAW agreement on specific roles and responsibilities is embedded in a feedback mechanism between the Agreement Committee and the DART Committee (the Waterloo Community Coordinating Committee).

3.2.1 INNOVATIVE TRAINING INITIATIVE

On May 30, 2009, the Peel CAS-VAW Collaborative Agreement Committee will host a one day conference to assist the membership of the CAS-VAW Collaborative to review and reengage themselves in the collaborative work of the two sectors.

The conference is titled *Let’s Try on Each Other’s Shoes: Building Stronger Relationships between CAS and VAW Staff* and uses popular theatre via “Forum Theatre” as a vehicle to explore issues and to provide a provocative and impactful experience for the participants to:

1. Build upon the established relationships between the two sectors to enhance the skills of the participants to manage conflict in a healthy way, appreciate one another's role and seek opportunities to support the work of each sector in a respectful manner.
2. Provide opportunity to develop a framework of self reflection and awareness in order to build stronger relationships.
3. Develop skills to effectively utilize a social justice perspective which is ethical, respectful and responsible.

*****Through the use of popular theatre, the Peel Collaboration Agreement Committee seeks to create an unique experience for participants that is unlike other workshops about relationship building and conflict resolution*****

3.3 COMMON AND LOCALIZED CHALLENGES

The summary report provided an opportunity for the two sectors to identify areas where the agreements are not working as well as expected and concerns they have noted. The most frequently mentioned instances where the agreements were not working well or where there were concerns cited, fall under three main categories:

- Lack of resources in terms of staff and funding for training on collaboration agreements;
- Issues of time constraints and high CAS caseloads impact the ability to connect with one another across sectors;
- Staff turnover; and to a lesser degree
- Issues of trust and resistance to collaborate on the part of some agencies.

While the lack of resources for training on collaboration agreements continues to be noted as the main barrier to these agreements working well, some agencies have found resources within their

organizations to orient staff on the agreements and most have expressed a commitment to provide training on an annual basis.

For example, regarding the performance indicator of ongoing formal/informal consultations between sectors and their commitment to ongoing training, the Peel committee finalized a Conflict Resolution Policy which will be embedded within the training and allow for the development of mediation skills among the Committee representatives. Next steps are to develop the procedures to support the policy.

In terms of time constraints, high caseloads and staff turn over; the Waterloo region reported that these factors in relation to the implementation of Differential Response are an ongoing challenge. Moreover, the lack of resources, most notably, funding for flexible interpreter services to meet the needs of the increasing diversity throughout the Waterloo region, was a major challenge in 2007-2008. It was also felt a lack of awareness of the extent of the region's Aboriginal population limited service provision as workers often only became aware of Aboriginal concerns when clients self-identified.

Caseload volume was reported by Dufferin Country as a barrier to CAS and VAW agencies working collaboratively in developing and implementing a safety/service plan to assist women and their children. DCAFS caseloads, availability and worker transfers prevent this work from happening on a more regular basis. Significantly, in terms of ongoing information sharing, Guelph-Wellington reported that while an environment of pro-active information sharing existed around changes to legislation, there exist challenges for VAW agencies to provide court documentation as "expert witnesses" rather than maintain role with clients as counselor and support person.

3.4 ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN NEXT YEAR

Many regions noted that they would continue to conduct joint training to inform new and current CAS/VAW staff of the agreement, its purpose and each of their respective roles. In addition to training on agreements and roles and responsibilities of each sector, some regions identified a need for training

on the dynamics of abuse, perpetrator accountability, duty to report and training on diversity awareness and transgender issues.

In terms of their agreement on respective roles and responsibilities, the Waterloo VAW-CAS Committee will become a subcommittee of DART as DART undertakes the process of developing subcommittees in efforts to enhance service to specific populations. In 2009-2010 the plan is to more fully entertain supporting in-service training between sectors, including for example, vicarious trauma workshops and orientation through the Family Violence Project. Moreover, the F & CS is currently reviewing its Model of Service and will be adding an additional Family Violence Team in 2008-2009 to accommodate the service needs of families. In 2009-2010, FCS will fully develop the Family Centered Planning Framework, incorporating the use of Family Group Decision Making. Collaborative planning activities will be undertaken within this framework with families, their support networks along with other service providers.

In addition, specific collaborative actions on the part of individual agencies include K-W counseling in Waterloo to explore the development of new programming in partnership with WLU School of Social Work; and the discussions which began in 2008 between F & CS and 7 Generations Healing Society are ongoing with the hope of developing strategies for 2009-2010 around the introduction of Healing Circles for F & CS staff, with 7 Generations and the Aboriginal community.

In terms of collaborative actions to facilitate access to Aboriginal specific services, the Guelph-Wellington Region has articulated a strategy of direct contact with Aboriginal community/Band by CAS in order to develop service plans and to improve collaboration. The Halton CAS will be considering a community staffing Model in which one worker would be assigned to work directly with Family Service agencies.

3.5 NEXT STEPS

The Ministry will continue to investigate opportunities to support additional training to assist the implementation of the collaboration agreements in the regions. Providing

ongoing training on collaboration agreements, as well as the CAS/VAW Collaboration Training Curriculum, is the key to keeping these agreements working well, to promote more local committees to join the agreement, and to enhance agency capacity to support both women and children who have experienced instances of abuse.

4.0 EXISTING RESEARCH DOCUMENTS AND PUBLIC POLICY DIRECTIONS RELATED TO CHILD WELFARE AND VAW COLLABORATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY RELATIONSHIP

The Literature & Methodology:

- This section is a compilation of selected professional articles, most of which are available on line, and relevant websites divided into three separate focus areas:
 - Child Welfare and VAW Collaboration;
 - Legal services and court systems;
 - Guidelines and frameworks for coordinated community response and cross-sectoral collaboration

- This listing consist of the document or website reference information followed by excerpts (some entries do not include excerpts) by way of constructing a bases upon which the Team can develop its strategic objective of promoting enhanced collaboration with the child welfare service system partners.

- The excerpts have been selected on the bases of their clarity in describing issues, challenges, barriers and solutions relevant to child welfare and VAW collaboration, and are meant to springboard brainstorming around formulating concrete collaborative actions within CWR municipalities.

4.1 CHILD WELFARE AND VAW COLLABORATION

Research Articles, Documents & Policy Papers

1. **The Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (OAITH). (2008, Dec.).
 Survivor Voices: Welcoming women to make change: Calling on services and
 policymakers to include survivors of woman abuse in their work. Retrieved April 15,
 2009 from <http://www.iaith.ca/pdf/survivorvoicesfinal.pdf>**

The following findings are excerpted from the areas related to our immediate terms of reference.

Some concerns for survivors—and their advice for change

In choosing services they would improve, and the kinds of changes they would like, survivors in both the surveys and meetings gave examples of concerns based on their personal experiences. List of Services: Police, Social Assistance, Housing, Family Court Criminal Court, Training and Education, Women’s Shelters, Community Counselling, Child Welfare, Legal Aid, Medical Services, Immigration

<p>Social Assistance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • puts pressure on women; increases stress • financial support is inadequate to women and children’s needs • suspicious attitude makes women feel like criminals stealing from the workers • makes decisions without telling women why • won’t give information about discretionary funds that women could access • too many punishments; little 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • treat women with compassion and respect • increase rates and tie to cost of living; increase start-up funds • reduce paperwork and ‘legalese’ language • welfare workers should have to live for a week on welfare rates • give women the information they need to access available discretionary funding • increase dental, eye and drug coverage
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	<p>flexibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • inadequate start-up funding for women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increase special diet allowance, eg. for baby formula, etc.
<p>Family Court</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • courts don't understand serious impacts of abuse, or hold the abuser accountable • women are being sent to mediation • women are being forced to represent themselves because they can't afford a lawyer and family courts don't take self-represented women seriously; there is bias against selfrepresentation but women have no choice • court cases drag on because of abuser delay tactics and nothing is done about it; women have to keep paying costs for this • restraining orders are difficult to get • joint custody is giving abusers more opportunities to control abuse women and children • courts are threatening to take children away from survivors of abuse • family court is just another way for abusers to manipulate and control women • children's lawyers lack education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • judges and children's lawyers should receive more education on the impacts and complexities of woman abuse • family law information centres should give workshops on filling out forms; give more help to women, not just provide handouts • women should not have to represent themselves in family court • all documents should have to be filed on time— enforce deadlines—and before proceedings begin and abusers should not be allowed to keep delaying the process • woman abuse survivors should have specialized lawyers who know the abuse issues • do not order visits with abusers when children are afraid of them • joint custody should not be awarded in cases of woman

	<p>about complexity of abuse and the tactics of abusers</p>	<p>abuse</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • listen to children’s voices at a younger age • address “common law” issues for women
<p>Criminal Court</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • courts don’t hold abusers accountable • sexual assault survivors are still treated like they are the problem • Domestic Violence courts are not running the way they are supposed to operate • court delays and the length of time it takes to get through the process are unfair; unsafe • court language is inaccessible • courts are intimidating to survivors • people with money get better treatment • abusers lie in court with no consequences • sitting waiting for court time costs women money for childcare, lost work time, and can be a safety issue for survivors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stronger sentences, including for first time offenders; stop ‘slap on the wrist’ approach • increase court watch programs in courts • no bail for abusers • enforce criminal harassment laws • more accountability re: recognizance and surety issue • should be more consequences for breaches • provide video testimony to women/children • separate rooms; women should not have to see abusers at court • enforce perjury laws • tighten processes to save court and women time; stop delay tactics and repeat remands
<p>Child Welfare</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • need more education on woman abuse and impacts on women and children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • training on impacts of abuse and holding the abuser accountable, not mothers

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • need for more compassion; better attitude • don't remove children from abuse survivors • onus is on the woman to prove abuse and risk to her children; judgemental • reactive (too few workers to do proactive work with women/children) • women can't provide basics for children, so child welfare pays a foster home instead of providing that money to women themselves • makes women afraid to tell shelter workers the truth about abuse • don't advocate with women for housing, financial support • direct links between family supports/child protection makes mothers uncomfortable • children on waiting lists for years for services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increase staff that provide ongoing support • advocate for women within systems • specialized workers for woman abuse issues • give women the money spent on foster care so they can take care of their own children and keep their families together • be more respectful/ helpful to survivors and stop blaming mothers for abusers' actions • talk to children separately outside the home • should be responsible for finding counselling for the children; not forcing women to find it • better investigation of foster care homes • family supports and child counselling services should not be directly linked to child protection mandate
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2. Ontario Association of Interval and transition Houses (OAITH). (2003, March). In the best interests of children and mothers: A proposed child welfare response. Toronto: Eileen Morrow, OAITH Coordinator. Available on line: [http://www.iaith.ca/pdf/In the Best Interests of Children and Mothers.p df](http://www.iaith.ca/pdf/In%20the%20Best%20Interests%20of%20Children%20and%20Mothers.pdf)

Outlines a proposal for a differential response within child welfare practice where woman abuse is identified.

In particular, this Response Model proposes a specific approach by child welfare in response to reports of child witnessing of woman abuse under the “emotional harm” section of the Child and Family Services Act.

→ Although there are some particular suggested practices highlighted in the Model, much of the detailed development of practice, coordination and tools for implementation will require further development between the violence against women and child welfare sectors, in cooperation with local community partners who have expertise in specific responses to women from marginalized communities.

a) OAITH has been working on issues arising from the new child welfare legislation and practice on “emotional harm,” since before the legislation was passed.

This work was driven by numerous concerns about impacts on women and children as shelters were asked to report women staying in their residences to child welfare. In particular, shelters were concerned about the chilling effect of reporting all mothers seeking shelter to a child protection agency and the potential that such reports could result in fewer women calling shelters for support.

b) Clarification of MCFCS policy:

- OAITH meetings with the Minister and officials within the Ministry of Community, Family and Children’s Services (MCFCS) led to a Ministry directive for all VAW and CAS agencies clarifying that admission to a women’s shelter did not require automatic reporting to child welfare.
- While this clarification reduced reports by shelters, reports by police and other community professionals continue to occur at increasing rates and OAITH shelter advocates continue to fear the long-term impacts of these reports.

c) Some common themes and concerns:

A canvass of shelters regarding their concerns elicited a number of common themes that warranted action.

- Shelters reported a variety of relationships between child welfare and violence against women sector agencies ranging from very positive to very challenging.
- Shelters also reported inconsistency of interpretation of the legislation as it applied to child exposure to violence, both between agencies and within agencies—and said this inconsistency was occurring in both child welfare and violence against women services.
- Shelter workers felt that child welfare workers often did not understand the complex nature of woman abuse dynamics.
- Shelters asserted that this lack of understanding was resulting in blaming of mothers for their victimization and the exposure of their children to violence, coupled with lack of accountability for the abusers. They expressed concern about the requirements placed on abused mothers to protect their children while supports and services to assist women and children were being continually eroded in Ontario.

d) Context of a differential response to woman abuse within child welfare

Any practice model exists within a context and that context must be clearly acknowledged and addressed for any successful collaboration between sectors to occur.

These elements of the context were highlighted repeatedly in our discussions with OAITH members during the development of our proposed model:

The two systems that would have to interact in order to collaborate on a child welfare response to woman abuse have very different histories, philosophical foundations, mandates and structures, as has been partly outlined above.

- The child welfare system has a legislated mandate, which both governs the work of child welfare and its relationship with the community and confers on the child welfare system powers and responsibilities that do not exist in the violence against women sector. The legislated mandate of child welfare results in an imbalance of power between the two systems that influences their interrelationships and ability to control outcomes; that is to say, child welfare has greater power to control the relationship and the roles/ outcomes within the violence against women sector and this puts the VAW sector at a disadvantage.
- Funding resources between the sectors are vastly different. A legislated mandate provides child welfare with increased ability to pressure government for resources, unlike the VAW sector, which has no such ability and remains seriously under funded, and even threatened as cuts and restructuring by the current government continue. The resources available to the two sectors are seriously out of balance. For example, in 1995, the Government of Ontario implemented a 5% cut to core budgets within all women's shelters in the province. It has never been restored and core funding has been frozen while costs—and demands for service—continue to rise.

According to the June 17, 2002 Ontario budget documents, however, allocations from the Government of Ontario for child abuse and neglect have increased 139% since 1995 to respond to the rising caseloads of child welfare. Between 1998/99 and 2000/2001, child welfare expenditures in Ontario went from \$408.3 million to \$749.9 million, an increase of almost 85% in two fiscal years.¹⁵ Because VAW shelters form the primary referral system for child welfare agencies in cases arising from reports of 'domestic violence', the continuing funding imbalance between the sectors is a serious concern.

- While there is an imbalance of power and resources that is unfavourable to the violence against women sector, there is still at this time a deficit of analysis and expertise within child welfare

with regard to appropriate practice and response to child exposure to woman abuse. Although initial basic training of child welfare workers has been underway, there are significant numbers of child welfare staff and supervisors who have not yet received training in appropriate response to woman abuse reports.

Initial training was mandatory, but the mandatory phase has now ended and training is provided on request only. There are no guarantees, therefore, that all child welfare staff will, in fact, be trained. The 25-year-long experience of the violence against women sector, therefore, will continue to be a critical assistance in creating safe and effective responses within child welfare systems to children exposed to violence.

- The amendments to the legislation, the development of a risk assessment and eligibility spectrum including family violence, as well as the current protocol development process will increase interaction between the two systems and the points at which the above imbalances come into play.

e) The Woman Abuse Coordination Model—Introduction

The following is an outline of a proposed practice model for response by child welfare agencies to child exposure to adult violence against women. The model encompasses the many contributions of counselor advocates for both women and children within women's shelters and our other partners across Ontario.

Guiding Principles of the Model:

1. The safety and well-being of child witnesses of woman abuse is inextricably linked to the safety and well-being of their mothers and this must be the first consideration in evaluating any intervention.
2. Abusive partners must be held solely accountable for their actions and for the negative impacts of exposing children to their violence.

3. A feminist, anti-racist, anti-oppression perspective of practice is integral to the safety of both child witnesses and women who experience violence. This approach recognizes that women and children's lives are constructed within a context of disadvantage both for women and children as a whole, women as mothers, and among specific groups of women and children. It also recognizes that such a perspective cannot be achieved unless specific communities of women participate in all processes from early stages of development.

4. No one agency can accomplish these goals.

5. Accurate screening and assessment of violence against women and appropriate, effective, non-blaming service provision to both child witnesses and their mothers can decrease risk and minimize the need for intrusive measures such as apprehension of children, supervision orders or other intrusive and non-supportive interventions. This should be a key goal.

6. Any model developed must have a specific response for First Nations women and children, which reflects and respects Aboriginal practices. Such a model would need to be developed by First Nations violence against women advocates.

f) Elements of the Woman Abuse Coordination Model

There are two main elements to the suggested approach:

1. The development of a support, education and monitoring program to coordinate a frontline differential response within child welfare practice with respect to violence against women.
2. The creation of a differential frontline staff response within child welfare specific to the intersection of violence against women with child abuse or child exposure to violence, including differential policy, procedures and practice to guide both frontline child welfare staff and their supervisors.

3. Peel Children’s Aid. Violence Against Women and Children Volunteer Management Collaborative. Ontario Network—Canada Volunteerism Initiative Archive. Available online: <http://www.pavro.on.ca/ocvi/snapshots/snapshot1.html>

A dozen organizations in Peel Region could develop a plan for a new volunteer management service delivery model by sharing application criteria, training and pooling of volunteers.

This is one of the conclusions of a comprehensive study carried out by the volunteer sub-committee of the Collaboration Agreement for the Children’s Aid and the Violence Against Women agencies of the Regional Municipality of Peel.

A phased-in plan for volunteer management services could be initiated by sharing application criteria, training and pooling of volunteers. This would presumably save time by standardizing practice and distributing resources. It would also increase the visibility of the CAS/VAW and volunteer sectors.

Interviews with agency staff representatives responsible for volunteer management, revealed:

- most agencies had similar organizational practices in place concerning the volunteer application process including general screening and risk management practices, training and supervision protocols;
- variances occurred in sources of volunteer recruitment, data collection, volunteer roles, policy documentation and wait-list management;
- the need to clarify the definition of the term ‘volunteer’, which for some organizations, included individuals who were Ontario Works clients or those performing community service hours as a condition of a probation order.

4. British Columbia Ministry of Children and Family Development. (2004, May). Best practice approaches: Child protection and violence against women. Ministry of Children and Family Development. Available on line: http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/child_protection/pdf/cp_vaw_best_practice_2004-07-22.pdf

This document contains best practice approaches that provides information and gives guidance to workers providing protective services when assessing and intervening in situations involving violence against women when children may be at risk of harm. A major focus of the document is understanding that the safety and well-being of children are often dependent on the safety of the non-abusing mother and that wherever possible, supportive services should be offered to the mother in order to enhance her ability to continue to care safely for her child(ren). (source: Geffner, Jaffe, Suderman; 2000)

- These best practice approaches promote an integrated response that links the safety of children with their mother's safety wherever possible, and attempts to build on the strengths between women's and child protection services.
- This document was developed to address expressed concerns of child protection workers and of clinicians who provide services to women and children in violent relationships.
- A major focus of the Best Practice Approaches: Child Protection and Violence Against Women is to recognize the reality that the safety of the mother is linked to the safety of the child and that wherever possible, supportive services should be provided to the mother in order to enhance her ability to care safely for her child(ren).
- Child protection workers will best be able to accomplish this if they understand the overlap between woman abuse and child protection, dynamics of woman abuse, women's experience of being abused, the impact of this abuse for women and mothering in the context of abuse.
- In addition, this document describes an integrated approach for meeting the safety needs of children while providing supportive services to women so that women's safety remains a parallel consideration throughout child protection involvement.

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- In order for child protection workers to respond to women experiencing abuse in relationship and their children in a helpful and supportive manner, this document includes the following information about violence against women in relationships:
 - i. overlap between child protection and violence against women and the importance of providing a coordinated, women-centred response in these situations
 - ii. challenges of mothering in the context of woman abuse
 - iii. the social context of abuse and the further effects of woman abuse upon marginalized women
 - iv. the dynamics of violence against women, the impact upon women and upon children who are exposed to it
 - v. barriers to accessing supports and considerations for leaving an abusive relationship
 - vi. best practice approaches in situations of violence against women in relationships

- **Integrating Child Protection and Women-Centred Approaches**

Because of the significant overlap between the child's safety and the safety of the mother in the context of violence against women, it is more complex for child protection workers to assess and intervene. Historically, the development of independent services for women and children has separated the safety needs of women and their children. This document encourages an approach that links the safety of children with their mothers wherever possible and attempts to build on the strengths between women's and children's services.

- A significant obstacle to collaboration has been the tension caused by the different historical developments and missions of the domestic violence and child welfare movements.
- The domestic violence movement began less than 30 years ago in order to provide safety to battered women because public institutions were not doing so.

- Some women involved in violent relationships and their advocates viewed child protection services as yet another public institution that overlooked domestic violence and the needs of abused women, or blamed the women for the harm their abusive partners caused to their children.
- Because of child protection's focus on the safety of the child, child protection workers did not consider the identification of domestic violence to be important to accomplishing child protection goals. When domestic violence was identified, child protection workers have often misunderstood its dynamics and held mothers responsible for ending it.
- Furthermore, as the domestic violence movement has focused primarily on the needs of women in abusive relationships, and been slower to directly address the needs of these women's children, child protection workers have not viewed transition house workers as potential allies in their efforts to protect children."

5. Harris, Susan and Sinclair, Deborah. (year?). Holding the Big Picture: Working in the best interests of children exposed to woman abuse: Some thoughts on furthering child welfare and VAW collaboration. Available online:
<http://www.womanabuseprevention.com/html/BigPicture.htm>

Websites

Child Welfare League of Canada

http://www.cwlc.ca/index_e.htm

CWLC is a national, membership-based organization dedicated to promoting the protection and well-being of vulnerable young people. We play a significant role in promoting best practices among those in the field of child welfare, child and youth mental health, child rights and youth justice.

For Policy Initiatives see: [The Welfare of Canadian Children: It's Our Business](#). It's a collection of resource papers for a healthy future for Canadian children and families.

****Very little about the intersections between Child Welfare and Violence against women****

Centre for Research and Education on Violence against Women and Children

<http://www.crvawc.ca/index.htm>

4.2 LEGAL SERVICES AND COURT SYSTEMS

Research Articles, documents & Policy Papers

1. **Jaffe, P. G., Crooks, C. V., and Poisson, S. E. (2003, fall). Common misconceptions in addressing domestic violence in child custody disputes. *Juvenile and Family Court Journal*. Available online:**
http://www.crvawc.ca/documents/Misconceptions_Custody_Fall03.pdf

- In the United States and Canada, domestic violence is now clearly recognized a criminal behavior. Assault of intimate partners has gone from being ignored to being a major social issue on the public agenda.
- Some laws and services have begun to address these needs because children are recognized as indirect victims of domestic violence.
- The movement to recognize domestic violence as a crime has now extended to the family court in child custody proceedings. In these proceedings, judges are being asked to consider domestic violence as a significant factor in determining the appropriateness of a violent spouse becoming a custodial parent, or even whether such a parent should have regular unsupervised contact with children.
- In spite of legislative change, there have been resistance and difficulties in developing an integrated legal and service response that would meet the spirit of these legal reforms. Changes

in legislation are often not matched by changes in actual practice in the field (Jaffe, Crooks, & Wolfe, 2003).

- Service providers such as staff at shelters for abused women continue to document how domestic violence survivors are re-victimized and even endangered by child custody and visitation arrangements that allow batterers regular opportunities to renew threats and maintain power and control of former spouses.
- The purpose of this article is to document some of the gaps between the intended vision of legislative reforms and the reality for women and children separating from abusive men.
- The focus of this article is on the barriers faced by women and their children. We identify seven common misconceptions about the existence and relevance of domestic violence in the context of child custody disputes.

Misconception #1: Domestic violence is rarely a problem for divorcing couples involved in a child custody dispute.

Reality: The majority of parents in “high-conflict divorces” involving child custody disputes report a history of domestic violence.

Misconception #2: Domestic violence ends with separation for abused women.

Reality: Abused women often face continuing risks from their partner after separation.

Misconception #3: As long as children are not abused directly, they are not harmed by exposure to domestic violence.

Reality: Children exposed to domestic violence may suffer from significant emotional and behavioral problems related to this traumatic experience.

Misconception #4: Since domestic violence is behavior between adults, it is not relevant for the determination of child custody.

Reality: Domestic violence is highly relevant to the determination of child custody by courts and court-related services.

Misconception #5: Family courts, lawyers, and court-related services, such as mediation and custody evaluation, can assess the needs of abused women and their children as well as the impact of the batterer.

Reality: The significance of domestic violence is often overlooked by family courts, lawyers, and court-related services.

Misconception #6: Legal and mental health (counseling) services for abused women and their children separating from batterers are readily accessible and well coordinated.

Reality: Abused women often experience difficulty accessing appropriate legal and mental health counseling services for themselves and their children.

Misconception #7: There are no apparent solutions and community strategies to the complex dilemmas posed by abused women and children separating from batterers.

Reality: There are many emerging community and court innovations in responding to women and children separating from an abusive parent.

2. **National Association of Women and the Law. (2000, April). Stop excusing violence against women: NAWL's position paper on the defense of provocation. Available online: http://www.nawl.ca/ns/en/documents/Pub_Report_Provoc00_en.pdf**

3. **Alaggia, R., Jenney, A., Mazzuca J Redmond, M. (2007). In whose best interest? A Canadian case study of the impact of child welfare policies in cases of domestic violence. *Brief Treatment and Crisis Intervention*. Oxford University Press. Online: <http://brief.treatment.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/short/mhm018v1>**

North American child protection systems have been experiencing an era of sweeping child welfare reform over the last decade. Despite the breadth of these changes, legislative and policy impacts are rarely evaluated to ascertain whether changes are resulting in the outcomes they were designed to

achieve. Using a participatory research framework, 70 participants from relevant service sectors and service recipients from a large urban centre in Canada, were interviewed about legislation in cases of children exposed to domestic violence. While most stakeholders noted the "spirit of the Act" to be well-meaning and based on a credible body of child research, there were serious concerns cited with the implementation and impact of policies that resulted from this piece of child welfare legislation.

- 4. Schechter, S., and Edleson, J. (1999). Effective Intervention In Woman Battering & Child Maltreatment Cases: Guidelines for Policy and Practice. Recommendations from The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges Family Violence Department. Reno, Nevada, US: National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. Available online: http://www.saiv.net/SourceBook/Storage/documents/doc_greenbook.pdf**

The book is broken into five chapters. Chapter 1 articulates an overall principle of safety, well-being, and stability for all victims of family violence and the need to hold batterers accountable for their violence. In Chapter 2, a series of principles are developed to guide communities in structuring their responses to families experiencing dual forms of violence. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 focus on specific recommendations for the child protection system, the network of domestic violence service providers, and the juvenile or other trial courts with jurisdiction over child maltreatment cases.

- 5. Hankivsky O. (1999). The Legal System and its Impact on Women's Health: A Largely Uninvestigated Terrain. British Columbia Centre of Excellence for Women's Health and Maritime Centre of Excellence for Women's Health (MCEWH). Retrieved April 15, 2009 from <http://www.acewh.dal.ca/eng/reports/hankivsky-legal.pdf>**
- 6. A project of the Victoria Status Of Women Action Group, 1998-2000. Court Monitoring Report: Gender Bias in the Courtroom – Executive Summary. Funded by Status of Women Canada. Available online: <http://pacificcoast.net/~swag/cmpreport.htm>**

The Victoria Status of Women Action Group (VSWAG) initiated the Court Monitoring Project (CMP) to document the criminal courts' treatment of complainants seeking legal recourse for violence against

women. This research shows how gender bias works in the courtroom. The findings of this research will be used to:

- * Promote attitudinal and behavioral changes among courtroom players;
- * Foster the creation of a system that acts towards the prevention of violence against women
- * Create opportunities for consciousness-raising and empowerment for women.

The importance of such court monitoring programs is evident in our research findings which document the following:

- a. Gender bias by the defense counsel
- b. Minimizing violent behavior of the accused
- c. Gender bias introduced by the crown counsel
- d. Gender bias among judges

Recommendations:

The findings support recommendations that all parties need further education about the complexity of male violence against women in relationships.

1. In recognizing the experience of women, there is a great power imbalance and re-victimization when the defendant acts in his own defense, so we recommend that this right be suspended in cases of violence against women.
2. In the interests of not minimizing the violence, determining that the offense was a one-time incident upon a defendant having no criminal record is an argument that we recommend be removed from defense.
3. In the attempts at ending patterns and cycles of violence, access to counselling for defendant's should always be enforced, therefore we recommend that judges always order counselling, taking into account the defendant's income and expenses whether or not he pays for this service.
4. To move away from male-defined norms and the desire to embrace the defendant's

credibility, we recommend that letters of support for the defendant always be regarded as having no weight of importance.

5. As it fails to recognize women's experience of violence in relationships, we recommend that the state of the defendant's current relationship when it is described as 'stable' be given no relevancy.

Websites

Ontario Women's Justice Network

<http://www.owjn.org/custody/lobby1.htm>

A series of lobbying tools and fact sheets on woman abuse and issues relating to custody and access.

Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System

<http://www.lfcc.on.ca/>

The Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System (formerly the London Family Court Clinic) is a non-profit social service agency helping children and families involved with the justice system as victims of crime, witnesses of crime, parties in custody disputes, subjects of child protection proceedings, litigants in civil suits for compensation, teenagers in therapeutic care settings, or youthful offenders. We are known around the world for our grounded approach to understanding children exposed to domestic violence, supporting their mothers, and creating training resources for service deliverers.

The Centre has a long list of publications with an exclusive section on Children and Domestic Violence listing Resources, Training Materials, and Books from the Centre.

The Centre is known around the world for its innovative work on the effects of domestic violence on children of all ages, from infants to teenagers. Here, in one place, you find all the material on our web site related to child witnesses to violence at home.

http://www.lfcc.on.ca/children_exposed_to_domestic_violence.html

4.3 GUIDELINES AND FRAMEWORKS FOR COORDINATED COMMUNITY RESPONSE AND CROSS-SECTORAL COLLABORATION

Research Articles, documents & Policy Papers

Canada

1. Women in Cities International /Femmes et villes international. (2007). Project on Building Community-Based Partnerships for Local Action on Women's Safety. Available online: <http://www.femmesetvilles.org/>

This document provides a framework for community-government collaborations.

This is a guide for community-based women's groups to create partnerships with their local municipal government.

What makes it special is the consideration given to:

- The particular characteristics of community based women's groups;
- The particular characteristics of municipal governments; and
- The importance and special challenges in creating partnerships between the two.

Partnerships between community-based women's groups and municipal governments are beneficial because together they can do important work to create safer and more inclusive communities for women and girls in all their diversity.

In order to tap into the things that are going on across the country, the guide builds on 6 existing projects in various sites. In all cases, the groups are active in creating safer and more inclusive communities for women and girls, and have been / are working with their local municipalities.

2. Coordinated Community Action Model. Domestic Violence Institute of Michigan. Ann Arbor, MI.
3. Community Mobilization for Domestic Violence Prevention Kit. Transforming Communities Creating Safety and Justice for Women and Girls, includes:
 - a. Multicultural Alliance Building: Uniting diverse community efforts

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- b. Community Attitudes: How to use them to prevent Domestic Violence
 - c. The Facts for community mobilization to prevent Domestic Violence
 - d. Community Action: Organizing activism in the community
 - e. Change: Proving that it works
 - f. Awareness: Informing your community
4. Kivel, Paul. (1996). Where do Batterer's Intervention Programs Fit In?
 5. Team Development Cycles. NOTE: No Formal Reference Given.
 6. Shepard, Melanie. (April 1999). Evaluating Coordinated Community Responses to Domestic Violence. Minnesota Center Against Violence and Abuse.
 7. McHahon, Martha & Pence, Ellen. (January 1997). A Coordinated Community Responses to Domestic Violence. Duluth, MN: Duluth Intervention Project.
 8. Herbst, Kris. (2003). Close to Home: A Community Development Response to Domestic Violence. Retrieved September 8, 2003 from www.changemakers.net/journal/03september/herbst.cfm
 9. Preventing Violence In America: The Transforming Communities Project: A Working Model. NOTE: No Formal Reference Given.
 10. Integrating Community Building and Violence Prevention. (August 2003). Institute for Community Peace & Family Violence Prevention Fund. Retrieved Oct. 10, 2003 from <http://endabuse.org/programs/display.php3?DocID=251>
 11. Funk, R.E. Creating a Coordinated Campus-Community Response to Men's Violence.
 12. Thelen, Rose. Advocacy in a Coordinated Community Response: Overview and Highlights of Three Programs.

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13. Murphy, C.M., Museer, P.H., & Maton, K.I. (Sept. 1998). Coordinated Community Intervention for Domestic Abusers: Intervention System Involvement and Criminal Recidivism. *Journal of Family Violence*. Vol 13 #3. p. 263-284.*
 14. Syers, Maryann & Edleson, Jeff. (Dec. 1992). The Combined Effects of Coordinated Criminal Justice Intervention in Woman Abuse. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. Vol. 7 #4. p. 490-502.*
 15. Tolman, Richard & Weisz, Arlene. (Oct. 1995). Coordinated Community Intervention For Domestic Violence: The Effects of Arrest and Prosecution on Recidivism of Woman Abuse Perpetrators. *Crime & Amp: Delinquency: Special Issue: Responding to Violence Against Women*. Vol. 41 #4. p. 481-495.*
 16. Weisz, Arlene, Tolman, Richard & Bennett, Larry. (Dec. 1998). An Ecological Study Of Nonresidential Services for Battered Women within a Comprehensive Community Protocol for Domestic Violence. *Journal of Family Violence*. Vol.13 #4. p. 395-415.*
 17. Gamache, Denise, Edleson, Jefferey & Schock, Michael. (1988). Coordinated Police, Judicial, and Social Service Response to Woman Battering: A Multiple-Baseline Evaluation Across Three Communities. *Coping with Family Violence: Research Resources on Prevention (CDC)*. Points of view in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official views of MCADSV or the CDC. and Policy Perspectives. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications. p.193-209.*
 18. Strategic Planning to Address Violence Against Women: Ten Tips for State Health Departments. CDC.
 19. National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare. (Nov. 2006). Where Do I Belong? Domestic Violence & Women with Mental Illness. Rockville, MD.

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20. Billions Lost to Abuse in the U.S. Each Year, Study Finds. (May 7, 2003). The Family Violence Prevention Fund. Speaking Up. Vol.9 #8.
 21. Awareness + Community Action=Change. (1998). Transforming Communities Learning and Training Institute Manual.
 22. Vision, Political Moments, and Organization/Planning. (1998). Transforming Communities Learning and Training Institute Manual.
 23. Types of Change Created Through Community Mobilization: Policy and Process. (1998). Transforming Communities Learning and Training Institute Manual.
 24. Organizing to End Domestic Violence in Culturally Diverse Communities: Selected Resources. (May 2001). Transforming Communities. San Rafael, CA.
 25. Vision and How it Relates to Our CCR Prevention Work. NOTE: No Formal Reference Given.
 26. Transforming Communities. Transforming Communities: Technical Assistance, Training & Resource Center. San Rafael, CA.
 27. Hampton, L, Jenkins, P., Thomas, P.G. (1996). Chapter 13: Transforming the Culture: Creating Safety, Equality, and Justice for Women and Girls. Resources on Issues in Children's and Families' Lives Vol.4 Preventing Violence in America. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications. p. 263-285.
 28. Donna Garske. Joining Across Boundaries to End Violence: Community Mobilization.
 29. Rave, Jodi. (September 25, 2006). Despite Nationwide Drop, Indian Women Still Beaten. Retrieved September 26, 2005 from http://www.helenair.com/articles/2006/09/25/montana/a05092506_1.txt

30. Pyles, Loretta. (December 2003). Transforming the Culture of Advocacy for Social And Economic Justice. Retrieved February 2, 2004 from www.arte-sana.com/articles/transforming_culture_advocacy_article
31. Garske, Donna. (Spring/Summer 2005). Collaboration in Diverse Communities. Catalyst. Vol.3 #2. p. 6-8.
32. Kaye, Gillian. (2001). The Six “R’s” of Participation. Transforming Communities: Creating Safety and Justice for Women and Girls Technical Assistance and Training Project. San Rafael, CA: Marin Abused Women’s Services.
33. Evaluation and Impact-Minded Questions: How to Answer with Data. NOTE: No Formal Reference Given.
34. The Difference Between a “Project” and a “Campaign”. NOTE: No Formal Reference

Readings

1. Allen, N.E. & Hagen, L.A. (2003). A Practical Guide to Evaluating Domestic Violence Coordinating Councils. Harrisburg, PA: National Resource Center on Domestic Violence.
2. Organizing and Maintaining a Coordinated Community Response in Rural Communities. Alabama Coalition Against Domestic Violence.
3. Thelen, Rose. (May 2001). Minnesota Rural Project for Women and Child Safety: Recommendations for Protocol and Collaboration Elements for Local Multi-disciplinary Teams. Retrieved December 31, 2003 from <http://www.mincava.umn.edu/rural/documents/protocalguide/protocolguide.shtml>

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4. Littel, Kristin, Malefyt, Mary B, & Walker, Alexandra H. (July 1998). Assessing the Justice System Response to Violence Against Women: A Tool for Communities to Develop Coordinated Responses. Violence Against Women Online Resources.
 5. Fostering Collaborations to Prevent Violence Against Women: Integrating Finding from Practitioner and Researcher Focus Groups. (May 2001). National Violence Against Women Prevention Research Center. Charleston, SC: Author.
 6. Cohen, Larry, Baer, Nancy, & Satterwhite, Pam. (2002). Developing Effective Coalitions: An Eight Step Guide. Retrieved November 17, 2003 from www.preventioninstitute.org/eightstep.html

Websites

Guidelines for Effective Collaboration: Questions to consider prior to entering into a collaborative arrangement

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/pubs/tobac-tabac/gec-dce/index-eng.php>

Collaborations are often very positive, mutually beneficial experiences. A well chosen collaborator can lend credibility, expertise and improve the impact and reach of your organization's projects and initiatives.

1. Review the Goals of Your Organization
2. Research the Potential Collaborator
3. Consider the appropriateness of the collaboration
4. Carefully Examine the Proposed Project
5. Review

Collaborations can be a great aid to an organization's operational challenges, but they could also lead to problems. Think carefully before you decide to join forces. Considering these issues beforehand will help ensure that the collaboration is in everyone's best interests.

Toolkit To End Violence Against Women (US Context)

<http://toolkit.ncjrs.org/>

To provide concrete guidance to communities, policy leaders, and individuals engaged in activities to end violence against women, the US National Advisory Council on Violence Against Women developed the Toolkit To End Violence Against Women. The recommendations contained in the Toolkit were reviewed by numerous experts in the fields of sexual assault, domestic violence, and stalking.

Each Toolkit chapter focuses on a particular audience or environment and includes recommendations for strengthening prevention efforts and improving services and advocacy for victims. We encourage you to consult all chapters of the Toolkit for instruction, guidance, and inspiration.

Center for Partnership Studies (US based- International Context)

<http://www.partnershipway.org/>

The Center for Partnership Studies (CPS) is a nonprofit for public benefit corporation that conducts research and develops and disseminates education on the partnership model. It provides information and tools to promote the shift from domination to partnership in all aspects of society – from families and education to economics and politics. CPS is a member of the NGO (nongovernmental organization) section of the United Nations and supports the UN Millennial Goals.

The mission of the Center for Partnership Studies is to advance human development by accelerating movement to the partnership model of relations. The partnership model is a way of structuring beliefs, institutions, and relations that supports the realization of our enormous human capacities for consciousness, caring, and creativity and promotes nonviolence, human rights, justice, and a sustainable environment.