



Toronto West
Local Immigration Partnership
Community Collaboration at Work

Women Against Violence Action Group Presents:

First Response Toolkit for Frontline Staff

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Immigration, Refugees
and Citizenship Canada

Immigration, Réfugiés
et Citoyenneté Canada

Table of Content

Content	Page
1. Mission Statement	3
2. Purpose of Toolkit	3
3. Defining Violence Against Women	4
4. Facts	4
5. Dynamics of Abuse	5
6. First Response Steps: Working With Women Experiencing or At-Risk of Domestic Violence	6-7
▪ <i>Identifying Abuse</i>	
▪ <i>Responding to a Disclosure</i>	
▪ <i>Basic Safety Planning</i>	
7. Crisis Lines & Resources	8
8. Glossary of VAW Terms	9
9. Recognition and Acknowledgments	10

1.Mission Statement

Women Against Violence is an Action Group of the Toronto West Local Immigration Partnership (TWLIP) that aims to promote the message that gender-based violence is everyone's issue to address. The Action Group supports local community organizations in enhancing knowledge and building capacity to address this issue.

2.Purpose of Toolkit

This toolkit has been prepared to help frontline staff:

- Respond to clients and situations with sensitivity
- Increase women's safety
- Provide information on resources and options
- Make effective, timely referrals to specialized services and supports
- Encourage women to take action to stop the violence and begin to take steps towards positive changes in their lives.

Note:

This guide is not intended to replace an agency's own policy, service plan or referral procedure.



Picture Source: Amnesty International

3. Defining Violence Against Women

What is Gender-Based Violence?

Gender-based violence (GBV) is the general term used to capture violence that occurs as a result of the normative role expectations associated with each gender, along with the unequal power relationships between the two genders, within the context of a specific society (Bloom 2008, p14).

Source: Bloom, Shelah (2008), Violence against Women and Girls: A Compendium of Monitoring and Evaluation Indicators.

4. Facts

Approximately every five days, a woman in Canada is killed by her intimate partner. Out of the 83 police-reported intimate partner homicides in 2014, 67 of the victims—over 80%—were women.

On any given night in Canada, 3,491 women and their 2,724 children sleep in shelters to escape abuse.

Every night, about 300 women and children are turned away because shelters are already full.

53% of incidents where women are sexually assaulted, and 60% of incidents where women are beaten, choked or have a weapon used against them are reported to police.

Half of all women in Canada have experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual violence since the age of 16.

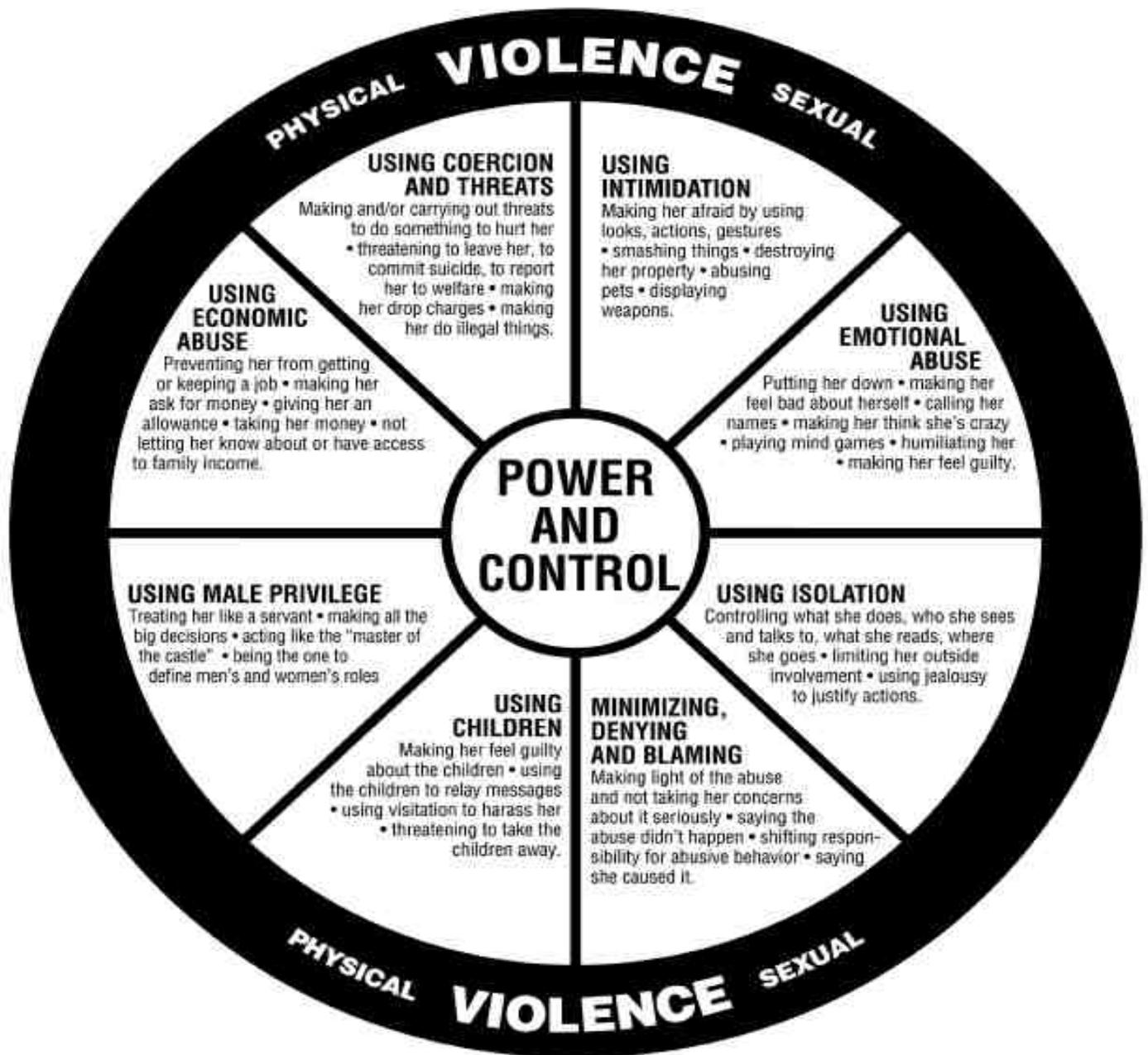
Aboriginal women are killed at six times the rate of non-aboriginal women.

Women are at greater risk of experiencing elder abuse from a family member, accounting for 60% of senior survivors of family violence.

Source: <http://www.canadianwomen.org/facts-about-violence>

5.The Dynamics of Abuse

Violence within adult relationships involves intentional and systematic tactics of abuse which are used to establish power and maintain control over the thoughts, beliefs, and conduct of a partner. These tactics can include, but are not limited to, the examples below:



DOMESTIC ABUSE INTERVENTION PROJECT

202 East Superior Street
Duluth, Minnesota 55802
218-722-2781
www.duluth-model.org

Source: For Additional Wheels of Relationship Dynamics, visit: <http://www.theduluthmodel.org/training/wheels.html>

6. First Response Steps

Please note that this is a framework with strategies to support a client through a disclosure of abuse. However, each response must be adapted to support a client's individual concerns, needs and goals.

➤ Identifying Abuse

As a worker, you may suspect a woman is experiencing abuse. She may not want you to call her at home or leave messages. She may cancel meetings at the last minute or appear socially isolated, sad, afraid or withdrawn. This client may initially present to your agency asking questions about various possible outcomes and she may speak in hypotheticals. Or she may say that she is gathering information on behalf of an individual she knows who is experiencing abuse.

If you suspect that a woman you are working with may be experiencing violence or abuse, it is imperative to respond supportively and remember that she is the expert of her own experiences. She may not identify her experiences as abuse, and she may not choose to discuss the topic further.

If she should choose to identify the abuse, it is extremely important to provide her with opportunities for her to tell her own story through her own words.

Here are some initial open-ended questions you could ask, to encourage her to talk with you:

- **(Woman's name)**, you have told me a little bit about **(abusive person/type of relationship/abuse tactic)**. Can you tell me a little about what happened the last time this occurred?
- How often does this behaviour happen? How do you feel when **(abusive person)** behaves like this?
- What type of behaviours would scare you if **(abusive person)** acted against you?
- Has **(abusive person)** ever threatened you or hurt you? Physically, emotionally, financially?
- Do you have concerns about your safety? Your children's safety?
- Are you concerned about the impact of your partner's behavior on your children?
- Do you feel safe to go home after our meeting today?

➤ Responding to a Disclosure

If a woman does disclose abuse, the front-line worker should keep in mind that their response must be sensitive to the client. The frontline worker should:

- Remain calm and remind the client that the abuse she is facing is not her fault.
- Listen with no judgement, validating and believing what she is saying.
- Respect how much or how little context of the abuse the client is willing to share (VAW-informed interpreters should be used whenever necessary).

- Assess and mitigate the level of risk she faces, while supporting whatever decision she chooses to keep herself safe.
- Get the woman's permission before taking action on her behalf, and respect her right to make her own choices.
- Be transparent as you explain confidentiality, along with the limitations of confidentiality when issues of child welfare arise.

➤ **Basic Safety Planning**

A **safety plan** is created in collaboration with the client that includes actions and strategies she has found effective in keeping herself safe. The plan can include new resources that she is willing to employ to increase her safety.

A safety plan can include potential action plans, a list of resources or referrals specific to her needs, or a safe escape plan, should she ever consider leaving the abusive situation. If she discloses that she is in immediate danger (i.e. of being assaulted onsite/ during the current meeting) and you as a worker are at risk as well, prioritize safety and call emergency services (911). If she has stated that she is in danger and is seeking supports, determine:

- If she has any immediate medical injuries that need to be addressed. If she consents, support her to seek out medical assistance for physical ailments. If possible, accompany her to this emergency visit.
- If she would like to call 911 to report the abusive incident and, if so, support her with that call. Advocate for any necessary language interpretation services she may need.
- If she is in need of additional counselling services or needs to connect to specialized VAW services, provide her with crisis numbers for her to call (*note: list of available crisis resources are located)
- If she does not feel safe to return home, brainstorm safe places that she can stay. This could include a relative, trusted friend, neighbor, VAW women's shelters, or safe community spaces such as a church.
- If she is in need of a shelter space, locate crisis shelters through sheltersafe.ca and support her in calling appropriate shelter locations to complete an intake.
- Create a list of crisis supports, community resources, personal support and emergency contacts she can keep to access services. If possible, keep a copy in her client file.
- If she chooses not access alternative housing and wishes to remain in the relationship, provide her with referrals to specialized VAW resources to create a more in-depth safety plan.
- Encourage her to keep a copy of all important documents with her or in another location for safe keeping; if possible, keep these photocopies in her client file with your agency.

Source: Adapted from Bathurst Finch Women's Safe from Violence Initiative Community Worker First Response Protocol, May, 2014.

7. Crisis Lines & Resources

VAW Crisis Lines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assaulted Women’s Helpline: 416.863.0511, Toll-Free 1.866.863.0511 • Distress Centre: 416.486.1456 • Ernestine’s Women’s Shelter Crisis Line: 416.746.3701 ext.0 • Toronto Rape Crisis Centre: 416.597.8808 • VAW Shelter Crisis Line: www.sheltersafe.ca (each shelter has a crisis line) • Women’s College Hospital Domestic Violence Program: 416.966.7111
Shelters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central Family Intake: 416.397.5637 or 416.338.4766 • VAW Shelters in Canada: www.sheltersafe.ca
Legal Advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barbra Schlifer Clinic: 416.323.9149 • CLEO (Community Legal Education Ontario): www.cleo.on.ca • Criminal Injuries Compensation Board: www.sjto.gov.on.ca/cicb • Law Society Referral Services (LSRS): 416.947.5255, Toll Free: 1.855.947.5255, www.findlegalhelp.ca • Local Community Legal Clinic, Duty Counsel Offices, Specialty Legal Clinics: www.legalaid.on.ca/en/contact • METRAC: 416.392.3135 (Information Regarding Legal Rights) • Ontario Legal Aid: • Rexdale Legal Clinic: 416.741.5201 • South Etobicoke Community Legal Services: 416.252.7218 Toll Free: 1.800.668.8258 (interpretive services available), www.legalaid.on.ca
Police Victim Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 911 • Service Crisis line: 416.808.7066
Employment & Social Services (Ontario Works)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.toronto.ca (Search employment services to verify closest location to the client.)
Toronto Community Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.211toronto.ca 416.397.4636
Other Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joining Hands: Reaching Out To Our Communities – A Training Manual For Community Leaders on Violence Against Women: http://www.rexdalewomen.org/pdf/RWC_2011_NFF_lowres.pdf • Ontario Woman Abuse Screening Project Learning Resources: http://womanabusescreening.ca/en/lr?Name=Value • Ontario Women’s Directorate :Training for staff: http://www.citizenship.gov.on.ca/owd/english/organizations/training.shtml • Ontario Women’s Justice Network: Understanding Violence Against Women: http://owjn.org/owjn_2009/legal-information/understanding-violence-against-women • Opening Doors for Abused Women – A Collaborative Approach to Prevent Violence Against Women: http://www.rexdalewomen.org/pdf/NFF-Campaign-Opening-Doors-for-Abused-Women2014-15.pdf • The Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women: Learning to end abuse: http://onlinetraining.learningtoendabuse.ca/resources • What is Gender-Based Violence Training: http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/svaw/advocacy/modelsessions/what_is_GBV.PDF

8. Glossary of VAW Terms

Abuser/Abusive Partner is a person who engages in a pattern of coercive, exploitative and violent tactics against an intimate partner in order to establish and maintain power, control and dominance over the partner.

Advocacy includes the support that domestic violence programs offer to individual women, including 24-hour crisis line, shelter, food, clothing, transportation, general, legal and medical assistance, accompaniment to court and other services, information and referrals, assistance with rent and utilities, crisis intervention, support groups, men's re-education groups and childcare and children's programming.

Battered Woman/Domestic Violence Victim/Survivor is someone who has experienced verbal abuse, financial abuse, physical abuse or sexual violence.

Child Support is financial support paid by a parent for a child or children who do not live with them. Depending on state law, child support can be entered into voluntarily or ordered by a court or administrative agency. The support can be supplied in different forms, including medical support that is typically covered by the non-custodial parent or through public assistance, the cost of which may be wholly or partially reimbursed by the non-custodial parent. It can also be in the form of a one-time payment, regular installments paid directly to the custodial parent or regular withholdings from the non-custodial parent's wages.

Economic Abuse includes, but is not limited to the withholding and/or restricting of money needed for food and/or clothing; denying the right to seek and/or maintain employment; taking personal money; denying independent access to money; and/or, excluding the victim from financial decision-making.

Family Maintenance Enforcement Program is a program that can help you collect your support payments if you already have a court order or a separation agreement that is filed in court.

Gender- Based Violence (GBV) is the general term used to capture violence that occurs as a result of the normative role expectations associated with each gender, along with the unequal power relationships between the two genders, within the context of a specific society.

Physical Abuse includes bodily harm, discomfort or injury including hitting, punching, slapping, kicking, pushing, burning, biting, torture, restraining, and assault with a weapon, withholding of food and/or medical care, and/or murder.

Psychological/Emotional Abuse is any act that provokes fear, diminishes the woman's dignity or sense of self-worth, and/or intentionally inflicts psychological trauma as a means of exerting power and control over the woman. Psychological abuse can include criticism, degradation, humiliation, excessive possessiveness, threats (suicidal, homicidal, deportation, kidnapping children, harming family, friends and/or pets), controlling a person's daily activities, social isolation, and/or purposeful destruction of property and/or pets.

Sexual Abuse includes any act of forced sexual activity, sexual harassment, unwanted sexual touching, the refusal to use protection from STD's or unwanted pregnancy during sex, and forced exposure to, or participation in pornography or prostitution.

Spiritual Abuse includes degrading another person's spiritual beliefs, withholding the means to practice, and/or forcing adherence to a belief system.

Verbal Abuse is the use of vexatious comments that are known or that ought to be known to be unwelcome, threatening, degrading, offensive, and/or embarrassing. Economic/Financial Abuse is the misuse of an individual's money or belongings by another individual.

Violence against Women (VAW) / Woman Abuse is directed to those that identify as women, through the actual or threatened physical, psychological, sexual, financial, verbal, or spiritual abuse by someone with whom she shares an acquaintance, intimate, familial, or romantic relationship. The United Nations General Assembly (1993) also defines woman abuse as, "any act of gender-based violence that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty whether occurring or in private."

Women Abuse is any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life." Using this definition as a point of departure, woman abuse is defined here as the actual or threatened physical, psychological, sexual, financial, verbal, or spiritual abuse of a woman by someone with whom she has/or has had an intimate, familial or romantic relationship (United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, 1993).

Source: World Health Organization 2013

9. Acknowledgments

This toolkit was developed by the Toronto West LIP's Women Against Violence Action Group. We would like to acknowledge and thank the following organizations who reviewed various drafts and provided useful feedback on this kit.

AIDS Committee of Toronto

Access Alliance

Delta Family Resource Centre

Earnestine's Women Shelter

Elsbeth Heyworth Centre for Women

Islamic Social Service and Resources Association

JobStart

Polycultural Immigrant and Community Services

Rexdale Women's Centre

Toronto Public Health

YMCA

Note: This toolkit will be available on the Toronto West LIP website at www.torontowestlip.ca

Notes