



BC Association of
Specialized Victim
Assistance &
Counselling Programs



B.C./Yukon
Society of Transition
Houses



BC Institute
Against Family Violence

CRITICAL ELEMENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE RESPONSE TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

BRIEFING DOCUMENT

ISSUE: Training on Violence Against Women

Effective training on violence against women for justice, health and social service personnel and community-based victim support service providers should be built into basic and professional training as well as ongoing in-service training budgets. Training should: be both discipline-specific and inter-sectoral; include representatives of front-line, community-based organizations; and cover the range of topics essential for effective intervention with *all* women who are victims of violence.

KEY POINTS

- The area of violence against women is a complex one: the legal and policy landscape is often challenging and frequently changing; responses are required from a broad range of sectors; coordination of both services and information-sharing is key; and the stakes are high – the lives of women and their children are often at risk.
- While some discipline-specific training on violence against women is clearly appropriate, it is important to recognize the particular value of inter-sectoral training that trains together those sectors that are expected to work together, such as police, Crown, victim services, counselling services, shelters, child protection, hospitals and other health care agencies, including community health, mental health and addictions services.
- Even where training is discipline-specific, the value of participation of other sectors in development and delivery of training on violence against women cannot be over-estimated; for example: police and Crown participation in training for hospital sexual assault and domestic assault service providers, victim services and health worker participation in police or Crown training, or victim support services and police participation in child protection training.
- The benefits of such collaborative training include:
 - Each discipline learns about roles, responsibilities and perspectives of the others
 - Players get to know each other through both formal and informal interaction, allowing them to “put a face to name” and exchange contact information, providing opportunities to dispel myths, correct misperceptions and allay fears
 - Participating in shared tasks enhances participants’ ability to work together
 - Participants learn and practice collaborative models of working together, including risk assessment and safety planning
 - Service provision to victims of power-based crimes is enhanced

- It is important to recognize diversity in all training on violence against women, rather than marginalizing diversity by addressing it only in diversity-specific training initiatives. Diversity training should include consideration of culture, race, colour, immigration status, ability, sexual orientation, gender identity, socio-economic status, age and geographic location.
- All training on victimization and violence against women should include a gender analysis, an analysis of power-based crimes and a diversity analysis.

THE CONTEXT

- Training on violence against women has taken place and continues to take place across all sectors, including police, Crown counsel, corrections, court services, health care, social services, shelters, child protection, counselling and victim services.
- Significant funds are in place at the Ministry of Community Services (MCS) and Victim Services and Crime Prevention Division of the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General (MPSSG) for training of community-based victim support services for women and children who are victims of violence. However, given the number of programs, the increasing cost of training, the fact that the legal, policy, procedural and practice environment is constantly changing, and the fact that new programs have been implemented, funds currently dedicated to training for community-based anti-violence services are insufficient.
- While some training on violence against women has been incorporated into ongoing sector-specific training, most has taken place on a time-limited, course-specific basis.
- While some sector-specific training has involved participation of front-line, community-based service providers and representatives of diversity groups, most of it has not.
- A number of government departments, educational institutions, hospital programs and victim support organizations have developed training initiatives on violence against women, utilizing many of the approaches outlined here. These include: Victim Services and Crime Prevention Division of MPSSG; Centre for Leadership and Community Learning at the Justice Institute of BC; BC Association of Specialized Victim Assistance and Counselling Programs and Community Coordination for Women's Safety Program; BC/Yukon Society of Transition Houses; BC Institute Against Family Violence; and the Sexual Assault Service and Woman Abuse Response Program of the BC Women's Hospital and Health Centre, all working with a range of diversity partners. The Justice Institute, in particular, has played a pioneering role in developing and delivering innovative training in this area, and in facilitating strong working partnerships among relevant sectors. These organizations, with proven track records, have much to contribute to ongoing development and implementation of training on violence against women.

SUGGESTED ACTIONS

- All sectors, including police, Crown, corrections, court services, the judiciary, victim support services, child protection, MCS and health care, should take formal steps to ensure that training on violence against women:

- Is adequately funded for both system-based staff and contracted organizations and is built into budgets on an ongoing basis, using Victim Surcharge Special Account funds as appropriate
- Is delivered in basic training and in the colleges, universities and professional schools that train future service providers and responders to violence against women, as well as in-service
- Is developed and delivered cross-sectorally, wherever appropriate, and involves those who will be expected to work together, including community-based service providers
- Stresses the importance of proactive coordination and collaborative working relationships *as a key safety issue*
- Incorporates a diversity analysis and involves representatives of diversity groups
- Includes a gender analysis and an analysis of power-based crime

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