



Profile of the Community Coordination for Women's Safety Program

CCWS Program Mandate

Community Coordination for Women's Safety works with violence against women responders in communities across the Province of BC, and at the provincial level, to support the development of an integrated, coordinated response to gender-based violence. CCWS aims to increase the safety of women who have experienced violence across BC. To this end, we:

- provide consultation, information, analysis and training to rural and isolated communities to help them develop and maintain cross-sector community coordination on violence against women;
- support the development of solutions and strategies at local, regional and provincial levels that address sexual and domestic violence and increase women's access to justice and other systems.

The CCWS program, now funded by the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General includes a Provincial Working Group made up of senior police and RCMP members, representatives from provincial ministries, major provincial non-profit organizations and members of the civil and criminal bar. It also includes members who represent women with disabilities, Aboriginal women and immigrant and refugee women. Working Group members provide technical expertise and liaison between their sector and the program. Specific local or regional concerns that have broader implications are also addressed by the Working Group.

Managing Partner: The Ending Violence Association of British Columbia (EVA BC) (Formerly the BCASVACP)

The Ending Violence Association of British Columbia provides support and training to over 200 anti-violence programs across BC; Community Based Victim Assistance Programs, Stopping the Violence Counselling Programs, Sexual Assault Centres and STV Outreach Programs. The mandate of EVA BC is to provide support and training, undertake research, conduct analysis of policy and legislation, develop and distribute resources and tools, educate the public (including government bodies) on the needs of victims of violence, develop and maintain standards for the provision of service and work to foster the development of relevant intersectoral initiatives across BC.

History of the Community Coordination for Women's Safety Program

Since the 1990s, EVA BC has played a leadership role in supporting coordination initiatives at the local and provincial level. In 2001, with funding from the Law Foundation of BC, the Association was successful in developing and launching Community Coordination for Women's Safety (CCWS). Now funded by the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, the program supports coordination initiatives in communities across BC, and women who are marginalized within those communities.

This multi-faceted, intersectoral program works effectively throughout BC, developing tools, training and other supports to enhance coordination and has developed a solutions focused, action oriented model to mitigate barriers to women's safety at the provincial level.

BC now has over 50 local Violence Against Women coordination initiatives. They involve representatives from a cross-section of community-based and system-based agencies addressing violence against women.

The Case for Coordination

In the last ten years in BC there have been a number of dramatic and tragic deaths of women and children as a result of domestic violence. This includes Sherry Heron and Anna Adams in Mission, Lorraine Moon in Alert Bay, and Denise Purdy in Nanaimo. In Quatsino, Sonya Handel's six children were killed by her estranged husband who was troubled and abusive. In 2007, in Oak Bay, Christian Lee, his mother Sunny Park and her parents were killed by her estranged husband who had a history of abusive behaviour.

Recommendations from Coroners' inquests and/or local inquiries have identified what may have helped prevent tragic deaths like the one experienced by Sunny Park and her family: a coordinated response system, a network that could identify and address risk and provide specialized support in a coordinated and pro-active way, involving a variety of systems. This finding echoes similar inquest outcomes in Ontario.

Since the Vernon massacre involving the murders of 9 family members of the Ghakhal/Chahal family and the shooting of Sharon Velisek in 1995/96, much progress has been made in the area of violence against women. A firm foundation has been built, resulting from a Ministry of Attorney General enquiry chaired by Justice Josiah Wood. Sadly, more recent tragedies remind us that more needs to be done.

Major reports and much of the research on violence against women have demonstrated that coordinating the work of various response systems is crucial to keeping women safe:

Specific initiatives will continue to have limited impact without a coordinated consistent broad-based policy response across sectors. It is recognized that the justice system cannot, and should not, address this problem on its own. **Uncoordinated efforts will continue to result in waste of scarce resources, duplication of effort, disillusionment of staff working within systems, unmet public expectations and, most detrimentally, compromised victim protection.**

It is recommended that jurisdictions support and strengthen, with senior level commitment, coordination of initiatives to respond to family violence within and outside departments of justice that include multiple government and community stakeholders. –*Final Report of the Ad Hoc Federal-Provincial-Territorial Working Group Reviewing Spousal Abuse Policies and Legislation, 2002*

All the women involved in the recent domestic violence tragedies in BC faced particular barriers that made it more difficult for them to access critical support systems. Sherry Heron suffered from physical disabilities related to injuries to her head and pelvis. Lorraine Moon was Aboriginal and living on reserve. Denise Purdy was an immigrant woman of colour. Sunny Park was an immigrant woman. The experiences of Heron, Moon, Purdy and Park reflect the reality of many women in our culturally and geographically diverse province. The work of Community Coordination for Women's Safety addresses this reality by providing for pro-active outreach to assist women with disabilities and Aboriginal, immigrant and rural women.

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Access to Resources

On the EVA/CCWS website at www.endingviolence.org you will find information on legal and policy issues as well as tools, templates and other resources to help operationalize a local coordinated response.