

Chilliwack
Violence Against Women
in
Relationships
Coordinating Committee

Terms of Reference

~ MISSION STATEMENT ~

The Chilliwack VAWIR Committee works to ensure a collaborative community and justice response to those impacted by violence in relationships.

Collaboratively developed by:

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Where did we come from?

In November 1992 a one day consultation was organized in Chilliwack to generate ideas about how communities could develop a coordinated response to domestic violence. This was followed up by a panel discussion including 87 participants from around the province, who developed the following questions:

1. How do we create a community that will promote zero tolerance to wife assault?
2. How can we create a coordinated response between existing services?
3. Are there any gaps in service?
4. What are the obstacles for creating a response?
5. How can we overcome these?

In March 1993 a committee was formed and called The Relationship Violence Task Force. The goal of the group was to include key stakeholders in the community to develop a coordinated response to relationship violence and to oversee the Attorney General's policy on wife assault.

Today the committee, now known as the Chilliwack Violence Against Women in Relationships Committee (VAWIR) meets bi-monthly and includes a variety of key community players: victim services, transition houses, healthcare, MCFD, alcohol and drug, RCMP, Crown Counsel, and Community Corrections.

Who is the CCWS and what is its relationship to the Chilliwack VAWIR?

The Community Coordination for Women's Safety (CCWS) program aims to increase the safety of women who have experienced violence, with a focus on rural and isolated communities across B.C. To this end they:

- 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 increases women's access to justice and other systems.

The CCWS program 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 project. Specific local or regional concerns that have broader implications are also considered by the Working Group.

OBJECTIVES

1. To be **inclusive** and **advocate equal treatment** for all people accessing services while being sensitive to the challenges of race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, and/or abilities of individuals.
2. To establish and maintain an efficient forum for **communication and information sharing** between community and justice system agencies who respond to violence against women in relationships.
3. To **foster consistent implementation** of the Chilliwack VAWIR Committee's Protocol, the B.C. Attorney General's Violence Against Women in Relationships Policy and the RCMP Violence in Relationships (VIR) Policy.
4. To identify and seek **solutions** to **barriers** that prevent or impede full access to community and justice systems for all those affected by the issues of violence against women in relationships.
5. To identify **problems** and **gaps** in services and seek to **address** them.
6. To **communicate** the work of the Chilliwack VAWIR Committee to our own agencies and to our community.
7. To **support** training on the dynamics of violence against women in relationships.
8. To **increase public awareness** of the dynamics of violence against women in relationships.
9. To review our Terms of Reference bi-annually to maintain effectiveness.
10. To utilize **funding** as appropriate to enhance the work of the Chilliwack VAWIR committee.

Grounding Assumptions

1. This committee will be focused on **violence against women** in relationships.
2. We recognize a small percentage of **men** experience violence in relationships. We recognize violence also occurs in **same sex** relationships.
3. Violence is:
 - ~ any **physical** or **sexual** contact intended to harm, control, or intimidate
 - ~ any **unwanted** physical or sexual contact
 - ~ any **psychological** or **behavioral tactics** or **threats** used to control and instill feelings of fear, intimidation, powerlessness, degradation and isolation.
4. In most aspects of our society women are not in equal positions of power to men. This **power imbalance** reinforces violence against women in relationships.
5. Violence against women is a **crime** and we support and encourage a criminal justice system response.
6. Violence against women is a **pervasive social problem** and requires a coordinated social service response.
7. Violence against women in relationships is an unacceptable **choice of behaviour** by the perpetrator for which the perpetrator has sole responsibility.
8. Women remain in or return to abusive relationships for a **variety of reasons**: love, children, cultural values, religious beliefs, socio-economic conditions, intimidation, low self-esteem, isolation and fear of escalating violence if they did leave the relationship.
9. Violence against women in relationships occurs across all **ethnic, socio-economic and religious** boundaries. Initiatives to address violence against women must be inclusive and sensitive.
11. Violence against women in relationships has a **destructive** and **long lasting impact** on individuals, children, families and communities.
12. It is the **violence** that is responsible for the breakdown of the relationship.
13. **A woman is the expert** when it comes to making decisions about her relationship. We respect and honour her decisions.
14. A coordinated response works to ensure the **safety of women**.

Purpose

The purpose of the Violence Against Women in Relationships Committee is to:

1. **bring together** criminal justice system representatives and agencies involved with intervention in cases of violence against women in relationships;
2. develop a **coordinated** systems response that is consistent and reliable;
3. **monitor** the implementation of the coordinated systems response in order to evaluate and make recommendations as necessary;
4. **facilitate** inter-agency participation to enhance collaboration.

Membership Criteria Statement

1. VAWIR membership may include all agencies or bodies specifically referred to in the Attorney General's Violence Against Women in Relationships Policy:
 - ~ Police
 - ~ Crown
 - ~ Corrections
 - ~ Victim Assistance Programs
 - ~ Service providers to victims and offenders.
2. Requests for membership are submitted to the Committee.
3. All members of the VAWIR committee shall accept and abide by this Terms of Reference document.

How We Function

1. **Agenda/Meeting Preparation:**
 - ~The Agenda will be developed with input from the membership and will include business arising from previous minutes as well as new items.
 - ~Agenda items to go to the Chair two weeks prior to the meeting if possible.
 - ~One week before meeting, Chair will forward agenda to the membership
 - ~Members are expected to review minutes prior to the meeting
 - ~Members are asked to bring their own copy of agenda and minutes to the meeting.
2. **Absence:** Any member unable to attend a set meeting will notify the chair.
3. **Minutes:** Rotational basis typed and emailed to Chair within one week following the meeting. The chair will then immediately forward to membership.

Consensus Decision Making Model

The consensus process is the process which the group works through to reach unity. It does not necessarily mean that all members must agree with all decisions.

The key is **TRUST**, working together in the best interest of the group, and being **client centered**.

There are four critical ingredients:

1. Group of people willing to work towards the common purpose as outlined in this document.
2. Problem/Issue that requires a decision by a group.
3. Trust (Belief) that there is a solution.
4. Open minds and perseverance to find the truth.

Values/Beliefs and Principals:

1. Each person has some part of the truth (realities and possibilities). No one has it all.
2. A better decision will be reached if we take into account everyone's ideas.
3. All persons are trustworthy.
5. All persons are equal and thus have an equal voice.
6. Respect for all persons involved in the decision making process.
7. All members agree with the grounding assumption of the committee.

Quorum:

If critical representatives (those directly impacted by a decision to be made by the group) are unable to attend, the decision should be postponed if at all possible. When this is not possible, members should voice their perspective to the Chair. Absent representatives agree to abide by the decisions of the group wherever possible.

For issues requiring decisions quickly and/or between Committee meetings, a "Fast Track Decision Making Process" may be developed.

Confidentiality Agreement

As a member and/or guest of the VAWIR Committee, I promise to abide by this Confidentiality Agreement:

Committee members and guests will not disclose any information pertaining to or derived from Committee operations without the express consent of the source. This includes information about clients, agencies, individual members and guests.

I am aware that any breach of this agreement will result in a review by the committee, which may request my resignation from the VAWIR Committee.

Signature

Organization

Date