

## **INFORMATION BULLETIN**

### **June 2006**

**\*New\***

## **Safety Issues Protocol (SIP)**

### **Developed Between RCMP and CCWS**

For many years front-line anti-violence workers have highlighted the need for a consistent next step when concerns about police practice affecting women's safety cannot be addressed at the local level. They have talked about situations where they have used the only formally available step and submitted a formal complaint, resulting in irreparable damage to their relationship with the local detachment.

We are proud to announce a new protocol we have developed with the RCMP "E" Division as a way to provide a more direct means for possible intervention in situations that pertain to safety and that need to be addressed in a timely manner. This new protocol involves assistance from the CCWS Regional Coordinators to address the concerns at the district (regional) level.

Together, we have developed this innovative new protocol that builds on decades of work to support communities in addressing issues at the local level.

#### **HOW DOES THE PROTOCOL WORK?**

1. A community responder has a concern that relates to the RCMP and is affecting safety for women.
2. The community program has attempted to address the concerns at the local level by every means possible. (For support or help to find ways to address concerns, please call either of the CCWS Regional Coordinators.)
3. The community responder contacts a CCWS Regional Coordinator and completes the SIP Request for Review form (see attached).
4. The SIP provides for CCWS to bring issues that concern victim safety to the attention of the RCMP District Officer and request that s/he look into the issue. There are four regional District Officers who are responsible for detachments in their area and they have been notified of this procedure.
5. The District Officer will investigate the concern and will get back to CCWS in writing as per the outcome.
6. The CCWS Regional Coordinator will in turn communicate with the community responder and the matter will proceed from there.
7. When the matter requires a review of policy or is provincial in scope, the CCWS Program will bring it forward to "E" Division and/or the CCWS Provincial Working Group.

## **Why SIP?**

- ◆ In the past, where issues have been irresolvable at the local level, workers and clients have been forced to go through a formal police complaints process. This is a cumbersome and lengthy process, and can damage the relationship with their local detachment
- ◆ The SIP process is straightforward and can be enacted quickly. With the first use of the protocol, clarification went out to RCMP members within less than a week and there was a policy amendment shortly thereafter.

## **What if the issue relates to a lack of policy, or need for change to a policy?**

- ◆ If the question/concern is systemic or relates to provincial or divisional policy, CCWS will bring it forward for review and resolution by “E” Division and/or the CCWS Working Group.

## **WHAT HAS TO HAPPEN FIRST?**

Building relationships is the key to addressing issues at the local level. Before enacting a provincial or regional response it is vital to have explored all the local options first.

### **At The Local Level:**

Communicating directly with the front-line officer is an important place to start. Begin by asking questions and starting a dialogue. Use this as a “teachable moment” and a start to building a working relationship.

If you are unable to reach an understanding with the front-line officer, or if there have been repeated concerns about the same issue throughout the detachment, then speaking or meeting with the supervising officer would be the next step. This is usually the Watch Commander.

The next link in the chain of command after the Watch Commander is usually the Detachment Commander. If you have worked through the issue (s) at all of these levels and are still seeing safety issues arising from VIR policy/practice, it would then be appropriate to contact CCWS to talk about a SIP process.

## **PROACTIVE RELATIONSHIP BUILDING**

Ongoing communication with members of your detachment sets the groundwork for positive relationship building. Many Community-Based Victim Assistance Programs make a point of connecting with individual officers about positive experiences. This helps to build a relationship well before problems arise, and may assist officers to be more receptive if concerns are raised. Some programs have a letter template that they can quickly format and send to individual officers with a copy going to their supervisor when an officer does exceptional work.

In some communities, particularly those with coordination initiatives such as Violence Against Women In Relationships (VAWIR) Committees, an officer is designated to be the liaison for violence in relationship files. It’s important that this officer have

authority within the detachment or have a direct reporting relationship with an officer in the detachment with authority, such as the detachment commander. The advantage of a designated officer is that there's one key person to build a trusting relationship with, and that officer is positioned to ensure that concerns are followed through at the local level.

**What if I live in a small community with few members on staff?**

There are some communities with very small detachments, some with only two or three RCMP members on staff.

Relationship building is just as important in this situation, perhaps even more so. With few members, these detachments are often fairly busy and it can be difficult to connect with the officers in person. Developing an email or phone message relationship is sometimes the only way to build and nurture relationships in small communities.

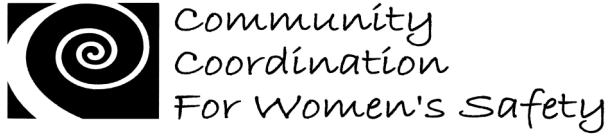
In this case the process would be the same; begin with meeting with the individual officer (this may be the detachment commander because in this case the commander may also be a front-line officer). When safety issues arise in small detachments there may not be as many avenues for local resolution thus requiring the use of SIP sooner in the process.

The RCMP VIR policy is available on our website at [www.endingviolence.org](http://www.endingviolence.org). To receive print copies call 604-633-2506, ext. 15.

For further information on implementing the Safety Issues Protocol, or for help with your work at the local level:

**Contact Community Coordination for Women's Safety:**

Call our Vancouver office at 604-633-2506 ext. 15 or go to [www.endingviolence.org](http://www.endingviolence.org) and click on Community Coordination for Women's Safety.



## **Violence in Relationships Request for Review of File**

**For completion by Community Coordination for Women's Safety:**

Detachment involved: \_\_\_\_\_

Date/Time of offence: \_\_\_\_\_

File number: \_\_\_\_\_

Member assigned: \_\_\_\_\_

Brief circumstances surrounding the original complaint:

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Efforts made to resolve at local level:

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It is requested a review of this file be conducted as it is believed there were some issues that were open to question. Specific question(s) to be addressed:

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Matter is urgent \_\_\_\_\_

