

PART D: INTERVENTION

Abused Women

Children

Abusers

Intervention With Women

The Role Of Intervention

The intervention section of the protocol is intended to provide guidelines to counsellors who are trained and qualified to work with abused women and their families and it is not intended to serve as a primary source of information to counsellors who are not qualified. Counsellors must have the necessary training and supervision to work with and understand the unique issues of abused women, the children exposed to the abuse, and the abusers.

Intervention may consist of assessment and treatment to abused women and/or to the children exposed to the abuse and/or to the abusers. With children, intervention may also include protective services.

- Woman abuse is a crime. It is important for counsellors to understand the legal system sufficiently and work collaboratively with this system to coordinate services for abused women.
- Intervention does not necessarily follow immediately after an abusive episode.
- The impact of abuse can be experienced for many years after the abuse has stopped.
- Abused woman must be able to access interventions at any time.
- Counsellors must understand the nature of trauma and how this impacts the service they are providing.
- It is the abused woman's choice to stay or leave her partner. It is important that counsellors support the woman in whatever choice she makes and resist imposing their position on her.
- Although an abuser may seek treatment, it does not excuse the abuser from the legal consequences of the abusive behavior.
- Treatment does not mean that an abuser has stopped the abusive behavior.
- In counselling, some abusers may not provide indicators that they are abusive, and, in a large percentage of cases, they may present with an opposing persona and display calm, pleasant, and charming characteristics.
- It is important that community agencies that do not offer programmes specific to woman abuse have procedures in place to assess the woman's safety and if she has

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children, her children's safety. Procedures should also effectively address the woman's immediate disclosure of abuse.

- All services with respect to the provision of services for abused women are confidential. However, counsellors must inform women of the limits to their confidentiality.
- It is not recommended to conduct couple counselling when woman abuse is occurring.

Interventions For Abused Women

In York Region there are four main interventions that abused women may access:

- Crisis Support
- Individual Counselling
- Groups
- Transitional Support Program

All four share the assessment of (a) determining the level of danger; and, (b) the development of a safety plan.

Abused women can expect the following when accessing *Crisis Support, Individual Counselling and Groups*:

- Enhancing her sense of self and sense of empowerment
- Information regarding her rights
- Dispelling the myths of abuse, such as blaming the victim
- Listening, acknowledging, and supporting her feelings.

In addition to the above, abused women may also expect the following when accessing the *Transitional Support Program*:

- The provision of information about community resources, such as housing, counselling and group services, children's programs, mental health supports, income support, legal support, and food and clothing programs.

In York Region, transitional support is the responsibility of Sandgate, Women's Centre of York Region and Yellow Brick House.

Intervention With Children Children's Aid Society

Important Information about the Children's Aid Society

- The primary role of the CAS is to investigate and, if need be, protect children (under the age of 16 years) who may have been physically and/or emotionally harmed or are at serious risk of being harmed;
- The CAS is available 24 hours a day (7 days a week) for both consultation and investigation purposes;
- Anyone may contact the CAS for a consultation, or present a hypothetical case to request information and direction on the case;
- Referral to the CAS may be done on an anonymous basis, should you prefer.

If there are ever any doubts about the child's safety, consult the Children's Aid Society.

The Role of the CAS, Specifically In Woman Abuse Cases

To determine the appropriate role, the CAS has an obligation, when receiving calls related to woman abuse to ask for the following information:

A. Identifying information of the child(ren)

Could include the following:

1. Name of child(ren) – D.O.B., address of child, name of school, grade.
2. Name of parent(s) – is surname different?
3. All relevant telephone numbers of parents and/or caregivers; this would include emergency telephone number of person to contact.
4. Address of parent(s) if not same as child(ren).
5. Religion.
6. Primary language spoken by child? Parent?
7. Any other persons? i.e. step-parent; grandparent – custody.

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B. Information regarding the concerns of the incident that precipitates reporting to the Children's Aid Society

Could include the following:

1. What was seen by whom?
2. What was heard by whom?
3. What is the present physical, emotional, condition of the child(ren)?
4. What questions were asked of the child(ren)?
5. What has been told to the child(ren), action taken prior to the reporter contacting the CAS.
6. Child's level of function? (i.e. disabilities, special needs)
7. Are the parents aware of the referral to the CAS?

C. Does the reporter have knowledge of the relevant incidents/ prior incidents or concerns?

D. Relationship of alleged offender to the child(ren) if not family

Please provide any information you can.

Please note that it is NOT NECESSARY to have all of the above information prior to reporting/consulting with the CAS. DO NOT DELAY THE REFERRAL. However as much information as possible at the time of the referral would be helpful in determining a response/action plan.

This list of information may be seen as a guideline for reporting to the CAS and provide some assistance in collecting information.

REMEMBER reporting suspicion of child protection must be done forthwith. (See guidelines related to DUTY TO REPORT as stated in the Amended Child and Family Services Act s.72(1), s.72(2), s.72(3):

CFSA s.72(1)

If a person has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection, the person must promptly report the suspicion and the information upon which it is based to a children's aid society.

CFSA s.72(2)

The duty to report is an ongoing obligation. If a person has made a previous report about a child, and has additional reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection, that person must make a further report to a children's aid society.

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CFSA s.72(3)

The person who has the reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection must make the report directly to a children's aid society. The person must not rely on anyone else to report on his or her behalf.

Following the Referral to the Children's Aid Society

A report of woman abuse in a family with children under the age of 16 years will result in:

1. If the child(ren) are reported to have been abused prior to, during, or after an incident of woman abuse, the CAS will determine the level of intervention required, up to and including an immediate investigation as required by the CFSA and the Ministry Standards and guidelines:
 - when CAS determines an investigation is warranted, a child protection worker may visit the child(ren)'s home, interview the child(ren), interview the abused woman, collateral contacts such as teachers, counsellors, who may be able to provide additional information about the child(ren)'s functioning;
 - the alleged abuser may also be interviewed by the child protection worker, however, in those instances whereby the Police and CAS are jointly investigating the matter, the Police will determine the process by which the alleged abuser will be interviewed. In some cases Police will interview the alleged abuser, and will provide the CAS with information coming from the interview.
2. If there is no evidence to indicate that the child(ren) have been abused or in need of protection, the CAS will support the woman towards considering options available to her.
3. The child protection worker may:
 - Contact the woman to provide her with support and information (e.g. – Police have an obligation to lay charges where reasonable and probable grounds exist).
 - Provide the woman with information about community resources (e.g. counselling, shelters, Legal Aid, where to apply for financial support).

The role for the children's aid society to ensure safety of the children when a woman has been injured as a result of abuse:

In abusive situations where the woman has been severely injured leaving her incapable of caring for her child(ren), and the alleged abuser has been charged with assault and detained in custody, the CAS is responsible to ensure a safe and viable plan for the children is in place to ensure their safety. The CAS protection worker may consider:

- With parental consent, the child(ren) may be placed with a third party (e.g. family friend, relative) where the child(ren) will be safe from harm during the period of investigation, or until their mother's recovery.

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- When the alleged abuser is being detained in custody for a bail hearing, the CAS protection worker may notify the Police of CAS involvement, and may make recommendations regarding the alleged abuser's ongoing contact with or without access to the child(ren) – (e.g. the need to have supervised contact between the child(ren) and alleged abuser or parent).
- When the alleged abuser has been charged, but not detained in custody, the CAS worker will assess the safety of the child(ren) to determine if the child(ren) are safe to remain under the alleged abuser's care when the woman is unable to care for her child(ren) (e.g. due to injury, hospitalization).

Interventions for children exposed to woman abuse:

It is recognized that children exposed to woman abuse may suffer from behavioural, social, and emotional problems that warrant treatment. The possibility that the child may also be a direct victim must be investigated and the priority when working with children is their safety.

Programs for children are essential and fundamental.

In York Region, the primary intervention for children exposed to woman abuse is “*Let's Talk*”. This is a program specifically designed for children and is a group model. It offers concurrent groups for children and their mothers.

The children's group helps them to understand the cycle of abuse and deal with their feelings. The program aims at providing children with a safe and supportive environment where they can talk about their experiences and participate in a variety of activities aimed at assisting them work through their feelings.

The mother's group offers women a chance to discuss how having experienced violence affects their children. They will have the opportunity to connect with other mothers, share resources and learn about the content of the children's program. In addition, they will learn strategies to help support and validate their child/ren, as well as exploring safety issues for their children.

“*Let's Talk*” is offered in collaboration with other agencies in York Region who serve abused women and their children and operates under the guidance of the *York Region Child Witness Program Advisory Committee*. Program Managers may be contacted at Sandgate Women's Shelter and Yellow Brick House.

Intervention With Abusers

General Principles of Practice

- The safety of abused women (and their children) is the first priority of any intervention with abusers.
- Abusive behaviour is a choice and therefore, abusers must be held responsible and accountable for their abusive behaviour.
- Intervention programs for abusers must work as part of a collaborative, intersectoral response with other services and the criminal justice system to enhance accountability.
- Abuse is the sole responsibility of the abuser and therefore, couple counselling is not an appropriate intervention as a response to woman abuse.
- Group intervention is recommended above individual.
- Abusive behaviour is not an anger management problem; therefore, anger management programs are not an appropriate intervention as a response to woman abuse.
- Intervention programs for abusers recognize the right of (ex)partners/survivors to information about their philosophy, content, structure and limitations.
- Intervention programs for abusers must not be used to mitigate the consequences of the criminal justice system.

Partner Abuse Response (PAR) Program

Description and Purpose

The PAR Program has been designated by the Victim Services Unit of the Ministry of the Attorney General to be the provider of counselling services in situations of domestic violence in York Region. The PAR Program is committed to meeting the Partner Assault Response Program Standards developed by the Ministry in consultation with service providers across the province. PAR programs receiving Ministry funding are expected to incorporate certain principles, procedures and program content in terms of the group program and partner contact to ensure program consistency, effectiveness and the safety of victims.

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In addition to Ministry funding, the PAR Program is supported by client fees paid on a sliding fee scale basis by offenders who attend the program. The income generated from the fees will be designated for direct service delivery in terms of increased resources for partner contact or programming for offenders.

The PAR Program operates in conjunction with the Domestic Violence Court at the Newmarket courthouse. The PAR Program is supportive of its blending of the early intervention and coordinated prosecution models. Integral to the domestic violence court process is the 16-week group counselling program offered by the PAR Program that offenders attend as a condition of bail (early plea) or probation (coordinated prosecution).

Four key objectives of the Domestic Violence Court prosecution process include:

- Early intervention in situations of domestic violence.
- Vigorous prosecution of offenders who are charged with the offence.
- Support and advocacy provided to victims of abuse.
- A coordinated and integrated response between all sectors involved.

PAR Program Format and Content

The 16-week psycho-educational group program offers education and counselling to its participants on the many different aspects of partner abuse. The core components of the program are:

- definitions of abusive and non-abusive behaviour;
- abusive behaviour as purposeful and intentional;
- the effect of abuse on partners and children;
- the role of personal beliefs and attitudes in supporting/justifying abusive behaviour;
- respectful beliefs as the long-term source of alternatives to violence;
- responsibility/accountability;
- practical methods of acting non-abusively and treating partners with respect.

Other topics covered are:

- the right of abused partners to express their experience of the abuse;
- responding respectfully to a partner's anger;
- the differences between consent and submission;
- self-care;
- alcohol/drug abuse and its relationship to abusive behaviour;
- costs and benefits of abuse;
- parenting skills;

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- positive and negative self-talk;
- anger management skills;
- communication skills;
- family of origin issues;
- the connection between partner abuse and other relationships of oppression, such as racism.

Referral Process

Referrals to the program include those offenders attending the Domestic Violence Court who meet the criteria for the Early Intervention Program. As well, Probation Officers from the Ministry of Correctional Services direct offenders to contact the PAR Program. Self-referrals are also accepted from voluntary clients. Both men and women who have offended against a partner qualify for the PAR Program.

Interpretive services are available to offenders and partners who do not speak English.

Partner Contact

The safety of partners and how their experiences of abuse have impacted them is of critical importance to the PAR Program. The Outreach Counsellor contacts the victim and current partner (if the current partner is not the victim of the offence for which the offender has been referred to the program) of all offenders in the program. This contact is for the purpose of offering partners information, support, safety planning and referrals to community resources. Partners are not charged fees for any of the services they receive from the program.

The PAR Program is the responsibility of the Family Life Centre (Richmond Hill, Newmarket, Bradford).

Sex Offender Group Intervention

Sex Offender Group Intervention is offered to men age 16 years and over who have sexually offended against children/youth where there was a relationship of trust. Each group runs from September to June for two hours on a weekly basis. Groups are offered in the evenings in Newmarket and are available to men living in York Region and the surrounding areas where interventions are not available.

The primary goals of group intervention for sex offenders are:

- Relapse prevention and safety planning

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- Acknowledgement of offenses without minimization.
- Education around experience of victims they abused
- Empathy for those victims
- Examination of own history of abuse
- Social skills and interpersonal development with appropriate peer/age group
- Assertiveness training and self responsibility
- Cognitive restructuring- (e.g. cognitive distortions)
- Elimination and /or control of their sexual offending behaviour

Referral Process

- Adult offenders must be clinically assessed prior to beginning in the group program
- Group Intervention must not be provided for offenders who are currently living with their victim. During the course of intervention the offender may be at risk of re-offending and therefore the victim may be at risk. In circumstances where an offender is living with their victim(s) a child protection agency, probation or a treatment facility must be involved and that agency must provide an assessment of risk factors and monitor the situation throughout the duration of treatment
- Offenders who have been charged with sexually offending should only be considered when all court proceedings are completed
- Community risk factors must be balanced with offender's support.
- Referrals can be made by calling the agency that offers sex offender group treatment.