

Canada's Family Violence Initiative: Partnerships

Parceria na Iniciativa Contra a Violência Familiar no Canadá

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Under Canada's four-year, \$136 million Family Violence Initiative, the federal government is calling upon all Canadians to work in partnerships towards the elimination of family violence — child abuse, violence against women, and elder (senior) abuse. Family violence is a complex problem and requires the efforts of all Canadians to resolve it. One of the key themes of the Initiative — a multidisciplinary approach to the problem of family violence — is reflected in the selection and development of projects. Activities funded by the seven federal departments and agencies involved in the Initiative emphasize partnerships with the professional, voluntary, corporate, non-government and government sectors.

Key words: *Family Violence; Partnerships; Multidisciplinary Approach*

INTRODUCTION

In 1991, the Canadian government announced a four-year, \$136 million Family Violence Initiative involving seven federal departments and agencies working together: Health, Justice, Solicitor General, Human Resources Development, Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Canadian Heritage, and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

Through this announcement, the federal government called upon all Canadians to work in partnerships towards the elimination of family violence. Family violence is a complex problem and requires the efforts of all Canadians to resolve it. The federal government made a commitment to work in collaboration with community groups, professional associations, front-line workers, and provincial and territorial governments in the prevention of family violence — child abuse, violence against women, and elder (senior) abuse.

There are seven key program elements to the Initiative:

- increasing public awareness and community action in preventive action;
- strengthening the federal legal framework for dealing with family violence;
- establishing services on Indian reserves and in Inuit communities;
- strengthening criminal justice, health and social service intervention and treatment services for victims and offenders;
- increasing longer term housing alternatives for victims of family violence and continuing to make available emergency shelters;
- enhancing national information on the extent and nature of family violence; and,
- sharing information and solutions across Canada.

Recognizing the value of working in partnership with others, the Initiative was developed utilizing the recommendations of earlier consultations, reports and funded activities egs., two rounds of formal provincial/territorial consultations (1988 and 1990); a national report on child sexual abuse, **Reaching for Solutions** (1990); and projects funded under the federal Child Sexual Abuse (1986-91) and Family Violence Initiatives (1988-92).

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Given that it is important to address family violence from a multidisciplinary perspective and that various aspects of family violence fall within the mandates of many federal departments, an interdepartmental approach was designed at the federal level. Fourteen federal departments and agencies (funded and/or interested) work together under the leadership of Health Canada. The Family Violence Prevention Division of Health Canada coordinates a series of interdepartmental committees as well as all federal actions on family violence prevention. Formal interdepartmental committees meet regularly to facilitate communication and avoid overlap. Strong working relationships are forged within these committees and there is a positive sense of cooperation and shared goals among the departments.

The term “family violence” suggests a broad range of abusive behaviours and so the federal government has adopted a working description for it: Family violence is a concept which includes intra- and extra-familial abuse of children and youth, and of older persons; and abuse of women by their male partners. It can take a number of forms in addition to physical assault, such as intimidation, mental or emotional abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, deprivation and financial exploitation. The term “family” refers to a grouping of individuals who are related by affection, kinship, dependency or trust.

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MAJOR COLLABORATIVE ACTIVITIES

Family Group Decision Making: New Roles for “Old” Partners in Resolving Family Violence

In 1993, the Ministers of Health, Justice and Solicitor General approved a federal

contribution toward this project. Sponsored by Memorial University School of Social Work, this two-year demonstration project is testing an innovative model in which child abuse situations are addressed by bringing together parents (or other caregivers) and extended family members to work out an agreed-upon plan for protecting the victims and stopping the abuse. This is important in stopping abuse, curbing inter-generational transmission of violence, reducing the impact of violence on the community, and alleviating the court process. This process also includes the involvement of the child welfare worker, the police, and the crown prosecutor. It is an excellent example of interdisciplinary collaboration as well as an example of utilizing the experiences of another country i.e., New Zealand. The project will be implemented in three different communities in order to identify important regional and cultural adaptations: rural (Port au Port Peninsula), urban (St. John’s), Inuit (Nain). The results will be shared nationally for others to duplicate.

Community Action on Violence Against Women

The YWCA of/du Canada with financial support and advice from Health Canada and the non-governmental sector developed a resource kit entitled *There’s No Excuse for Abuse/Il Faut Dire non à l’Agression* for Canadian communities to become involved in addressing violence against women. This kit has been distributed widely across Canada. At present the YWCA is developing a media kit on “Getting the Message Out” to facilitate the efforts of local communities in promoting their work with the media. The YWCA project will convey the message that all Canadians must be concerned about violence against women.

Abuse of Elders by Caregivers: An Intervention Model and Evaluation of Outcomes Study

With funding from Health Canada, the homecare team of the CLSC Notre-Dame-de-

Grâce in Montreal in collaboration with Concordia University has developed and is now testing an intervention model with abused seniors. The community of Notre-Dame-de-Grâce has one of the highest percentages of elderly people in the province of Quebec, seventeen percent. The intervention team includes an abuse coordinator, a social worker, physician, nurse, homemaker, and empowerment and volunteer coordinators, as available. The team acts as a consulting body for the abuse intervenors and any global home care team. The members meet to brainstorm about difficult cases, discuss intervention strategies, and help to evaluate and re-evaluate the success of the strategies.

Elder abuse is a complex problem that needs to be addressed on many fronts. This innovative model is therefore being documented so that it may be replicated by other multi-disciplinary intervention teams throughout Canada. The program is being subjected to a quantitative outcome evaluation using standardized measures. A secondary tool is also being developed for the recruitment and training of volunteers, particularly seniors. A detailed manual will be produced to enable the replication of the intervention model and will be disseminated on a national scale through a structured workshop, flyers to agencies, as well as journal articles.

Speak Out Against Violence/La Violence ne Restons pas Indifférents

Six federal departments (Canadian Heritage, Justice, Solicitor General, Health, Human Resources Development, Defence) co-funded a national public awareness campaign on violence in society including violence on television sponsored by the Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB). The project has produced a series of television and radio spots and a guide to be used by approximately 500 private broadcasters across Canada. Members of the CAB are providing \$10M worth of air time during 1994-95 for the public service announcements (psa's) and will use the guide

entitled *Idea Swap/1001 idées* for suggestions on how they can promote the prevention of violence in their respective communities.

Interdisciplinary Project on Domestic Violence

With funding from the Departments of Justice, Solicitor General and Health, eight national associations developed a resource kit to improve the capacity of professionals to respond to the real needs of domestic violence survivors and perpetrators and to effectively address the whole issue of violence within families. The sponsors produced *The Mountain and Beyond: Resources for a Collaborative Approach to Domestic Violence/Au Delà de la Montagne: Ressources de Concertation sur la Violence Familiale*, a multi-media resource kit on collaboration. It is being distributed through 82 sponsoring organizations in each province and territory and 160 facilitators are presenting the kit to groups over the coming years. There are two target audiences for the kit: the professional or student who has some understanding of domestic violence, is interested in interdisciplinary approaches, but needs support to become more collaborative in practice; and the professional who has less knowledge of domestic violence and so the kit will increase awareness and understanding of the issues as well as encourage a collaborative approach. Evaluation involves a short-term descriptive analysis of the distribution of the kit, information on completed and planned activities resulting from implementation and critical feedback by the targeted audience on the content and presentation of the material in the kit. To date, over 220,000 individuals have been offered training through this project.

Family Violence and Violence Against Women Research Centres

In 1992, Health Canada and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada established five research centres on family violence and violence against women. The five centres are located in Fredericton,

Montreal/Quebec City, London, Winnipeg, and Vancouver. Each receive \$500,000 over five years to promote on-going collaboration between community workers, researchers, policy makers, and other parties with regards to research skills and to develop action-oriented research on family violence and violence against women. The nature of this programme, with its emphasis on partnerships, requires a comprehensive and imaginative vision of research. The research agenda of each Centre includes action oriented examination of the underlying causes of violence to produce knowledge which must be directly applicable to communities. The needs of aboriginal people, residents of remote and rural parts of the country, members of ethnocultural minorities and people with disabilities have been taken into account.

Fredericton

The Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research is a collaboration between the University of New Brunswick and the Muriel McQueen Fergusson Foundation involving St. Thomas University, the Université de Moncton, the provincial government and community groups. The Centre is developing a longitudinal study of the cycle of violence. Current research projects include family violence in the farm and rural community, factors influencing women to leave, remain outside or return to an abusive relationship, counteracting media portrayals of violence, the role of religion in the prevention of family violence, violence toward women in secondary school dating relationships, the effect of family violence on the workplace and issues related to immigrant women.

Montréal/Québec City

Le Centre de recherche interdisciplinaire sur la violence familiale et la violence faite aux femmes (CRI-VIFF) in Montréal and Québec City is a collaborative project involving the Université de Montréal, Cité universitaire (Laval), Relais-femmes and la Fédération des CLSC du Québec in association with the McGill University (School of Social Work).

The Centre's research focuses on precipitating factors of family violence and violence against women and evaluation and development of practical prevention programmes. Projects on a range of family violence issues are already under development or underway in association with the Centre.

London

The Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children in London, Ontario is a collaborative project involving the London Coordinating Committee to End Woman Abuse, Fanshawe College and the University of Western Ontario. The Centre's four main research themes are evaluation of intervention strategies, training and education, civil and criminal remedies and prevention. Current projects assess the effectiveness of London's integrated model of service delivery from the abused woman users's point of view and develop an evaluation template for male batterer treatment programmes.

Winnipeg

The Manitoba Research Centre on Violence Against Women and Family Violence in Winnipeg, Manitoba is a collaborative project among the University of Manitoba, Brandon University, the University of Winnipeg, the provincial government, and community groups including First Nations communities, seniors and people with disabilities. The Centre's themes are individual, family and community determinants, prevention of and intervention in violence against women and family violence. It focuses on appropriate multicultural and Aboriginal responses, the continuum of intervention, prevention and service delivery in rural, urban and northern communities, creative community prevention efforts, the impact of the state on protecting the vulnerable and treating offenders, and the causes of family violence and violence against women.

Vancouver

The British Columbia/Yukon Feminist

Centre for Action Research on Violence Against Women in Vancouver, British Columbia is a consortium of community and academic feminists. The Centre is developing a research agenda through consultation. Criteria applied to research priorities include: relevance/application to the work of front line groups; importance to First Nations women, women of colour, immigrant and refugee women, women with disabilities, women in isolated/rural communities, children, younger women, older women and lesbians; use to identify the need for policy changes; use to improve intervention services or prevention strategies; and use to examine factors which cause or perpetuate the violence. The Centre is currently restructuring.

Health Canada through the National Clearinghouse on Family Violence (an integral component of the Family Violence Prevention Division) has responsibility for tracking and disseminating findings arising out of activities including the above ones, funded by the seven departments and agencies under the Initiative.

Since its inception in 1982, the Clearinghouse has gathered, organized, and disseminated existing information, developed new information and provided consultation and expertise about prevention, treatment, training and research projects in the areas of child abuse, violence against women, and elder (senior) abuse.

With support and direction from the Clearinghouse's Interdepartmental Advisory Committee made up of representatives from the seven funded departments and agencies, the Clearinghouse is able to provide current resource materials and appropriate consultation and advice to its users. Clearinghouse services are available to front-line professionals working in social service, education, criminal justice and health systems, researchers, students, volunteers, the general public, the media, non-governmental organizations, universities, self-help and mutual aid organizations, and various levels of government.

An essential feature of the Clearinghouse is that it is positioned to maintain a two-way

flow of information. Each request for information represents an opportunity to obtain vital information regarding issues, and programs facing professional and grass-roots organizations across Canada. The Clearinghouse is in a unique position to respond to the requests as well as to identify gaps in the knowledge base. Thus it can take steps in partnership with others to develop and acquire materials to fill these gaps or to ensure that the federal government undertake activities, in partnership with others, to acquire practical cutting edge information on particular aspects of the issue.

From the above, it is apparent that by working together at the federal level, provincial and local level, Canada is moving forward in its goal of eradicating family violence. Governments cannot solve the problem alone — it requires the support and cooperation of individuals and organizations to make a difference in the prevention of family violence.

RESUMO

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Durante quatro anos, no Canadá, com uma iniciativa de 136 milhões de dólares canadenses, o governo federal está convocando todos os canadenses a trabalhar em parceria para a eliminação da violência familiar — abuso ao idoso. A violência familiar é um problema complexo e requer esforços de todos canadenses para resolvê-lo. Um dos temas-chave da iniciativa — uma abordagem multidisciplinar para o problema da violência familiar — se reflete na seleção e no desenvolvimento de projetos. Atividades financiadas por sete departamentos federais e agências, envolvidos na iniciativa, enfatizam a parceria com profissionais, voluntários, e setores governamentais e não-governamentais.

Palavras-Chave: Violência Familiar; Ação em Parceria; Abordagem Multidisciplinar