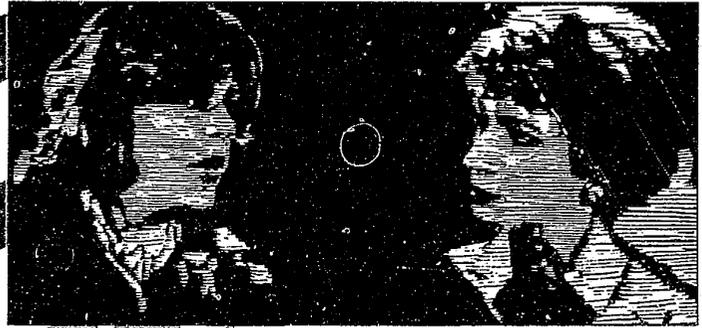
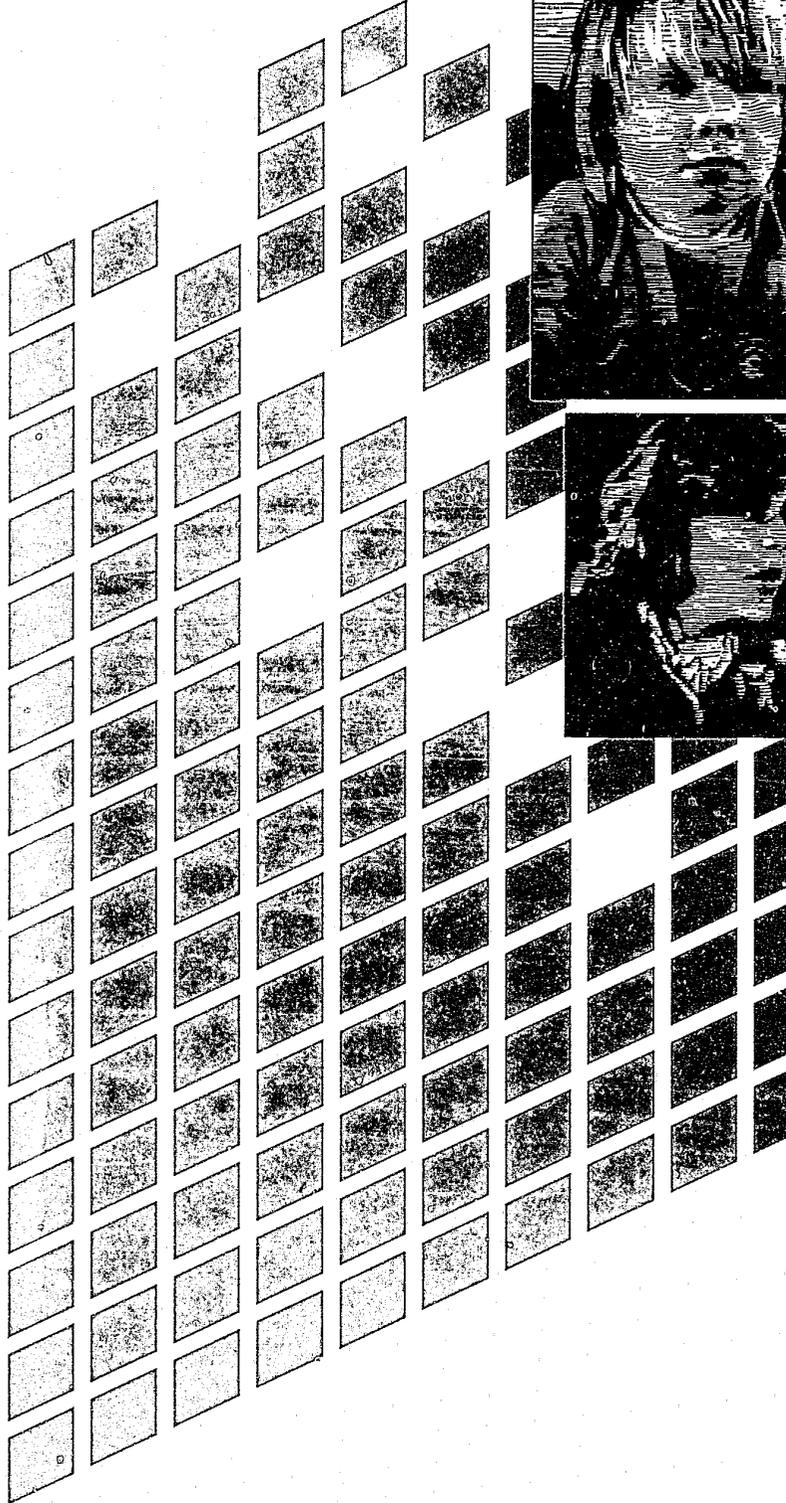


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# BREAKING THE PATTERN

**HOW ALBERTA  
COMMUNITIES  
CAN HELP**



This is one of a series of booklets called  
*Breaking the Pattern.*

Numerous Albertans have contributed ideas, experience and materials to the development of this series, in the hope they could help people in their own and other communities.

*How Alberta Communities Can Help* describes a process which individuals or groups could follow in responding to family violence in their communities. Examples of the needs of individuals in violent homes are included to suggest ways in which you could intervene at or near the crisis stage.

For information on how you could prevent abuse from occurring, refer to another publication available from the Office for the Prevention of Family Violence entitled *Stopping Abuse Before It Starts: Thoughts on Prevention.*

In that spirit of helpful cooperation, readers are encouraged to photocopy and distribute any or all portions of this booklet.

Copies of this and other booklets are available free of charge from:

Office for the Prevention of Family Violence  
11th Floor, South Tower  
10030 - 107 Street  
Edmonton, Alberta  
T5J 3E4

(403) 422-5916

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**U.S. Department of Justice  
National Institute of Justice**

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Family Violence

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## BREAKING THE PATTERN:

### HOW ALBERTA COMMUNITIES CAN HELP

You wouldn't have opened this book if you were not concerned about family violence.

You are not alone.

Thousands of Albertans are already working in their communities (maybe your community) to understand family violence, to change attitudes, to help those caught in abusive relationships.

This booklet gives you basic information about how communities can address the problem of abuse in families:

- What help might be needed.
- What one person can do.
- How a group of concerned citizens can work together to ensure that "what's needed" becomes available in their community.

You may want to focus on one particular type of family abuse — for example, wife abuse, child abuse (including child sexual abuse), or elder abuse. The *process* suggested in this booklet can be applied to help reduce any form of abuse in families.

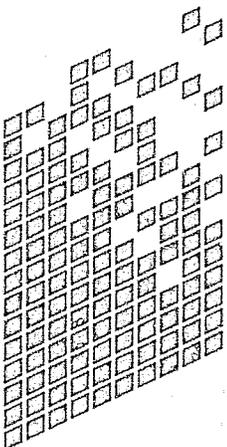
At the back of this booklet is a listing of other sources of information.

We wish you well.

NCJRS

OCT 19 1994

ACQUISITIONS





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## HOW ALBERTA COMMUNITIES CAN HELP

### FAMILY VIOLENCE IS A COMMUNITY ISSUE

Family violence affects us all. We may have experienced it personally or know someone who has. It may be a factor in the work we do or it may be affecting life in our community.

Family violence is a complex problem. To understand it, we must look beyond the family to community systems and society's values and attitudes.

*No act of violence is simply the pitting of one individual against another; each contains deep cultural and psychological meanings.*

*At the same time, no act of violence is merely the expression of a social problem (or a culture) such as poverty or unemployment or male dominance; each is also the personal act of a unique individual.*

— Breines and Gordon

### A DEFINITION

In this booklet, we use the terms "family violence" and "family abuse" interchangeably.

Family violence is any behavior by one family member against another which may endanger that person's survival, security or well-being. This may include behavior between individuals in a close, on-going relationship.

Family violence or abuse may take many forms:

- *Emotional or psychological abuse* — putdowns, criticisms, intimidation, isolation, controlling with fear, or any behavior that undermines the mental or emotional well-being of another.
- *Economic abuse* — controlling, exploiting or limiting another person's access to financial resources; misuse of another's funds; cheating or stealing from a family member.
- *Physical abuse* — the intentional application of physical force to a family member.

- *Neglect* — an act of omission which causes significant emotional or physical harm to a family member for whom one is responsible.

What most forms of family abuse have in common is that they represent an *abuse of power* and the *violation of a position of trust*.

### WHY FAMILY VIOLENCE HAPPENS

#### Sometimes stress is a factor

Sometimes family violence happens as a result of overwhelming stress. When the personal or material resources of the family members become overloaded, despair and frustration sometimes trigger violent or abusive behavior.

This kind of abuse could happen in any family. However, it does not usually persist and become part of the family's ongoing pattern.

To reduce the type of family violence which is *not* typical of the family's "normal" relationships, we might help family members to deal with stressors, or expand the family's sources of support and resources.

#### In some families, abuse is persistent and part of an on-going pattern

In this booklet, we focus on family abuse which continues over an extended period of time, and which is part of the family members' "normal" pattern of relating to one another.

Most family violence which is persistent and part of the family's ongoing pattern occurs in two quite different types of families.

1. *Families in which extreme control* is exercised by one or more persons; where intimidation or force are used to make other family members do what the controlling person(s) wants.

2. *Families in which there is little consistent structure; where chaos and instability are typical, and where abuse is used by any or all family members as an expression of anger or means of controlling other family members.*

### **The family's environment may not help**

*Communities* may contribute to family violence if they believe that families should be self-sufficient and therefore offer little support for them, or if the community believes that privacy of the family is more important than the safety and well-being of individual family members.

*Society's attitudes* contribute to family violence when they support the use of force to control people.

### **WE'RE MAKING PROGRESS**

In the past decade, the people of Alberta — the provincial government and individual communities in Alberta — have developed many services to help victims and perpetrators of family violence.

The Office for the Prevention of Family Violence was established in 1984 to provide support and leadership in developing an effective approach to the problem of family violence in Alberta.

New legislation and policies have been developed to respond to family violence, and some existing policies are being enforced more consistently.

Many individuals have been helped to deal with the impact of family violence, and to live a life free from abuse.

### **WE STILL HAVE NEEDS**

Services may be available at the time when long-term family abuse becomes known to someone outside the family. However, we know that much family abuse happens secretly, behind closed doors.

Outsiders do not know of the abuse, and so cannot offer help. Family members in an abusive situation may not be aware that services are available, or may be too fearful to reach out for help. And so the abuse continues, taking its terrible toll.

If we are going to make a long-term difference, we need to continue developing services. We also need to find ways to reach family members whose abusive situation is not yet known to others, and we need to deal with the environment in which abuse occurs.

That means planning how to help those who are most likely to be in contact with the troubled family. It means taking into account the factors that contribute to family abuse (see chart on next page).

And it means taking preventive action, to reduce the possibility that abusive behavior is even an option among family members.

A lot to do? Yes, but not impossible if we work together.

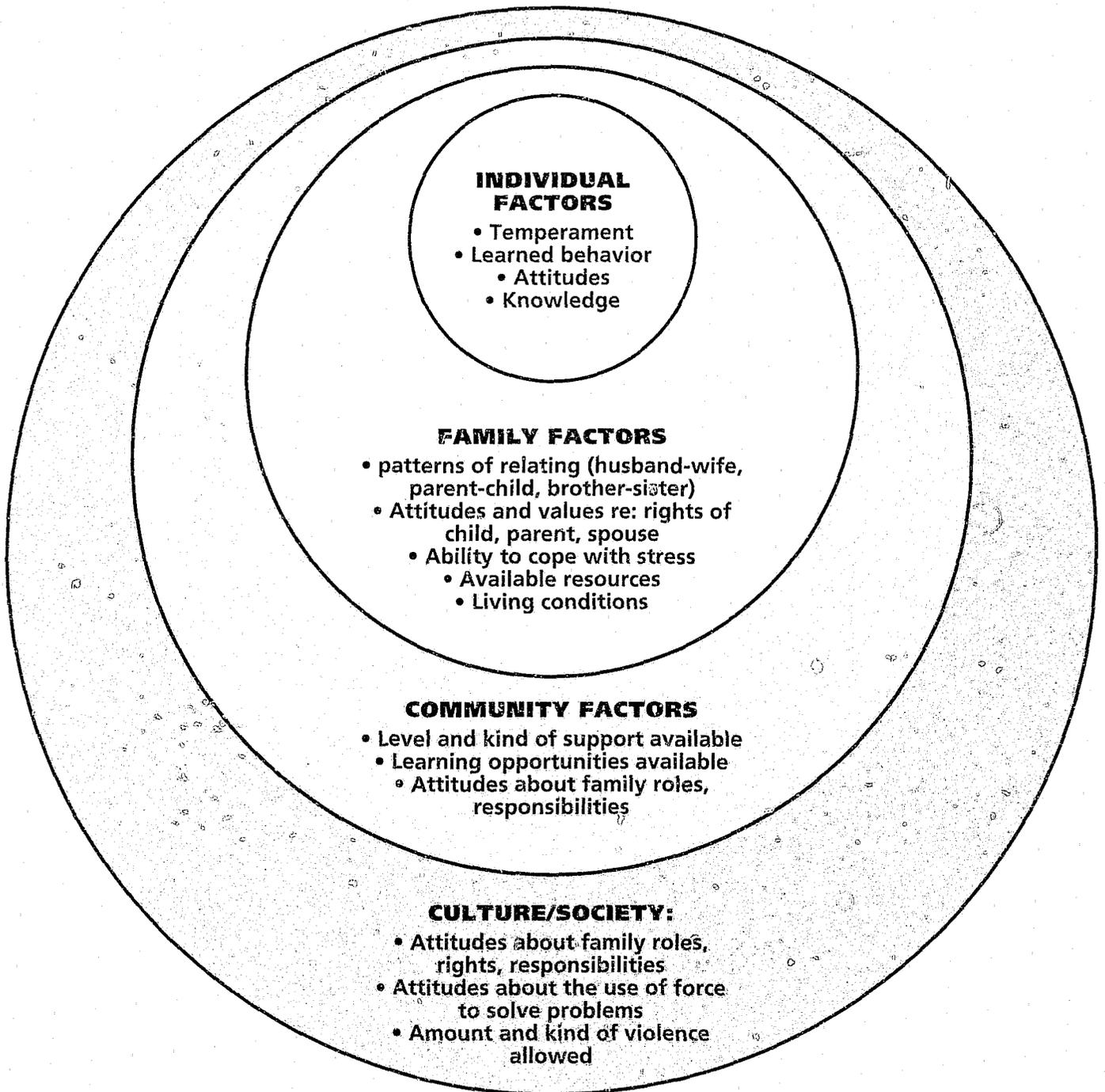
Though you might want to focus on one form of family violence, the ideas and steps in this booklet can be applied to help reduce all types of family abuse.

The next section of this booklet describes steps you might take to ensure that "what's needed" becomes available in your community.

After that, this booklet suggests what sort of help might be needed by the people in abusive family situations and by those around them. A summary page illustrates how it all fits together.

By working together in our communities, we can help to reduce family violence.

## FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO FAMILY VIOLENCE



To reduce family violence in your community, you might use many different approaches:

- Approaches to help individuals and families — services or approaches which influence attitudes, behaviors, skills and resources of family members;
- Approaches which influence the community and societal environment — level and types of support available; public attitudes and knowledge, and public policies.

## HOW ALBERTA COMMUNITIES CAN HELP

### TAKING COMMUNITY ACTION

#### ONE PERSON CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Yes, one person can make a difference.

When one person is concerned, becomes informed and talks to other people, positive things begin to happen.

You've already taken the first step. You must be concerned or you would not be reading this booklet. Some other things you can do are listed below and on the following pages.

Our purpose is not to prescribe "the answers" for you and your community. Rather, the following are steps you can take and a process you can adapt, so you and your community can find the answers that will work for you.

#### Become Informed

##### Read

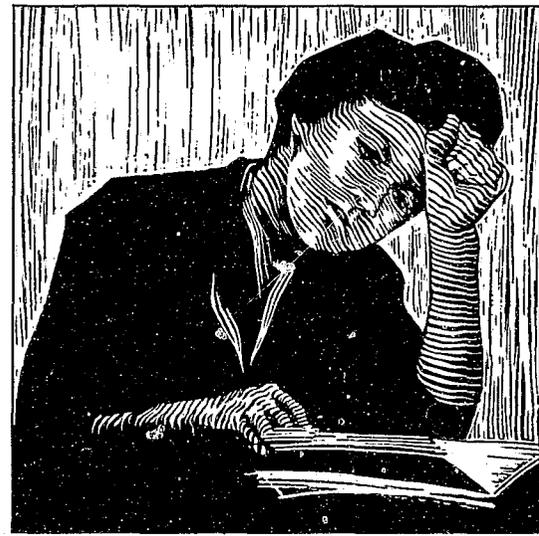
The Office for the Prevention of Family Violence has information about all types of family violence. Call or write them for the specific information you need.

You can also contact the National Clearinghouse on Family Violence for information and resources. The address is at the back of this booklet.

Many excellent books have been written about family violence. Your local library may have some, or may be able to get specific books for you through inter-library loans.

Once you start looking for information, you'll notice that newspapers and magazines often have news items and articles about family violence. (Media attention is an encouraging sign that the public is beginning to care about the problem.)

Resource information is also contained in the back of this booklet. A variety of resources will be helpful to you and your community as you work together to address this problem.



##### Watch

Many videos and films about family violence are now available. Check with the National Film Board, the Provincial Film Library and other film libraries for lists of films and videos you can rent or borrow.

##### Listen

As you think and learn about family violence, you may notice that your sensitivities change. You now hear comments you would not have noticed before, as reflections of the attitudes that foster family violence.

##### Feel

As you learn more about family violence, your emotions will likely be touched. You may be shocked at some of the things you learn, or troubled to discover that you can identify with some aspects of abusive relationships. Thinking about family violence may bring back memories of difficult times in your own life.

Don't be afraid of your emotions. They are normal and valuable. Having a "feel" for what abusive relationships are about will make you a more empathetic and effective helper, help you be realistic about how to approach the problem, and more able to make a difference in your community.

## Talk

Talk to whomever you have contact with — friends, people you work with, people in community organizations.

You can tell them how you feel as you learn about family violence. You can talk about discovering that family violence happens in your community. You can talk about some of the things you are learning. You can describe some of the approaches that might help.

You can comment on examples of actions or attitudes that contribute to family violence. You can demonstrate non-abusive responses and healthy communication.

In your conversations, you will be accomplishing three things:

- You will be getting emotional support for your reactions to what you are learning;
- You will be sharing information, so others become informed;
- You will be helping other people care about the problem.

## Find a Group

A group of people concerned about family violence may already exist in your community. Here are some ways to find out:

- If your community has a Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) or Community Services program, the office staff may know if there is a citizens' group for the prevention of family violence, or a group working to reduce some form of abuse in families.
- If your region has a women's shelter, the shelter almost certainly has a board of directors who may be concerned about other issues related to family violence.
- Existing organizations (e.g. a church group, a service club, an interagency council) may be willing to form a sub-committee to explore an area related to family violence, or a specific type of family abuse.

- Watch your local newspaper for news items or advertisements that indicate other people are concerned about family violence.

## Start a Group

If you are unable to find an existing group of people concerned about family violence, you may want to start your own group. Here's how:

### Identify a few interested people

During your conversations with other people, you probably met some who seemed to be concerned too, or who were receptive to what you talked about.

Start by approaching them individually, to ask if they are interested in getting together with some people to talk about family violence. Four to six concerned people are enough to start a group.

### Get together

When you have found four to six people who say they are interested in talking to other people about the problem, invite them to an informal get-together.

The location should be comfortable and informal — a kitchen, living room or small office would be appropriate.

First, make sure everyone is introduced to everyone else.

Then, explain that you've become concerned about family violence and that you thought they might be concerned, too. Invite others to tell why they agreed to attend.

When you've heard everyone's particular interest, the group members can decide:

- Do they want to learn more about the problem, together? (They could start by sharing copies of this booklet and other publications about family violence).
- Do they want to get together again?

- Do they want to start a process to get others in the community concerned? (The next section of this booklet suggests steps to follow).
- Do they want to involve other people?

The group members may decide they just want to have a conversation, and not pursue the issue further. That's not a waste of time. People talking will mean more people in the community are informed and interested.

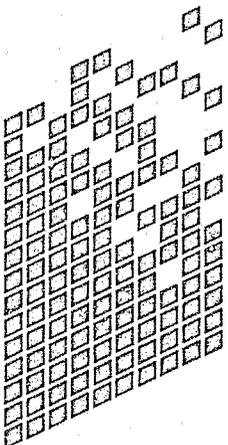
However, if the group decides to get together again, you could handle the next get-together as follows:

### The second get-together

Again, choose a comfortable, informal location. If there are new people, make sure everyone is introduced and explain what happened at the first get-together. Give everyone a chance to tell why they are there, so everyone understands everyone else's motivation.

If the group decided at its first get-together that it wanted to learn more about the problem, compare notes about what each person has learned since the last gathering, or have a special presentation.

At the end of the get-together, ask "where do we go from here?" as you did at the end of the first one.



### Turning point

As a group continues to meet informally, some changes are likely to occur:

- Even if the group started with a very low-key purpose ("Let's just get together and talk"), at some point a few people are likely to decide, "Let's try to *do* something in our community." The point at which four to six people say, "I'm concerned and I want to *take some action*," is the point at which you have a different kind of group.
- The group may experience a bit of tension as it begins to change its focus from informal sharing to action.
- The membership of the group is likely to change:

- Some people will get what they want from the informal conversations or from the learning activities and will drop out.

- Other people will invite friends to join the group, so you will have new members, too. Each time new people join, make sure they are introduced to everyone and filled in on what has happened so far.

The group will likely experience a "groping" stage as it adapts to new members and tries to define its new purpose.

To this point, you have learned more about yourself, helped others become informed, shared thoughts and feelings and increased the understanding of a few people in your community. You have already accomplished something.

Once you have a group of people who want to take action, you are ready for the next stage: to make a more visible difference in your community.

How to approach the task?

Well, the "letter" on the next page synthesizes the experiences of many Alberta volunteers.

And after the "letter," are suggestions for a longer-term community process . . .

## A COMMUNITY PERSON'S EXPERIENCE

We started working on this project about four years ago. I got involved because I was appalled by what I read about wife abuse, and I thought if there was something I could do, I'd like to help.

Besides, I couldn't say "no" when I was asked to sit on a committee! But I must confess I felt naive when I started. I thought I was out of my depth.

My husband had mixed feelings about me being involved in something for abused women. We've always been active in the community, but he wasn't totally comfortable with me being connected with this project. He was only partly joking when he said maybe I shouldn't go skiing for a while because if I fell and broke my leg or came home with bruises people would wonder if I was an abused wife!

Our group has certainly had frustrations, both inside and outside the committee. For one thing, we're

I almost wished they hadn't. Trying to get information turned out to be a frustrating exercise. It was months before we learned about a central place to get information. We had a terrible time finding out how much of what kinds of family violence were going on in our community, or what services were already available.

A lot of different people had something to do with the problem — police and social workers and doctors and counsellors and judges — but none of them wanted to talk to us.

We also wanted to talk to some families who had the problem, to find out what **they** thought might help, but part of the problem is that they don't want anyone to know they have a problem, so that was difficult. A women's shelter in a different community put us in touch with some people who had broken out of a violent situation, and those people helped us understand what was needed.

Sometimes our committee would get so distracted by details that we'd lose sight of our purpose. At one point, we spent months debating whether we should be registered under the Societies Act and then spent more months trying to write a constitution so we could be. Another time we spent a couple of months arguing with our town council over zoning so we could build a women's shelter. Then we realized our community couldn't support a women's shelter anyway.

Trying to get the community interested in helping us was another problem. A lot of people didn't want to admit that family

violence could happen in our community, or if they knew, they didn't want to talk about it. One of our committee members gave a talk to a service club and we heard later that some of the club members didn't want anything to do with us because they thought we were trying to make wives leave their husbands.

We knew from talking to groups in other communities that there was a definite danger of backlash against our project. In a small community — or even a big one — talking about family violence is pretty threatening compared to, say, children's playgrounds.

The service club incident made us stop and think how we could minimize the possibility of generating community hostility that might set us back years.

... Continued



such a varied collection of people — some agency representatives and some ordinary interested citizens like me — and we had very different ideas about how to go about doing something. It took us a while to learn to work together. And "family violence" is such a horrendous problem, we weren't sure where to start. Finally, we decided to focus on the problem of wife abuse.

I thought we should find out more about the problem before we took any action, but some of the committee members wanted to start a fundraising campaign right away. As far as I was concerned, we didn't know enough at that point to know what we would raise funds **for** but we had a lot of "discussions" (arguments!) before the others began to agree with me.

We made sure all the influential people were kept informed about what we were thinking and doing. We bounced ideas off them whenever we could; and we went slowly and carefully. If any committee member heard negative comments from the community, we made that an agenda item and talked about how we could neutralize the message.

When I think of where we started and where we are now, I'm proud of what we've accomplished.

We've done a lot of public education and it's beginning to pay off. Nobody says any more (at least not in my hearing) that, "it couldn't happen in our community." And more people understand what a complex problem family violence is.

We've sponsored professional training sessions so the people who have first contact with family violence can recognize the signs and know how to help.

We are now supported by town council and most of the service clubs and church groups (they don't dare criticize us in public anymore!). Agencies are talking to each other and trying to work together.

We've talked to police and lawyers and even judges (gently and respectfully, of course) about enforcement of laws to do with assault in cases of wife abuse. It helps that Alberta police have been directed to lay charges in all cases of domestic violence if there is evidence of assault.

We've made sure that families in crisis have a volunteer that stays with them and helps them

understand legal and administrative processes as well as providing emotional support for at least a year.

Our self-help groups have helped abused women get enough self-confidence and skill to change destructive relationships.

Our next project is to figure out a way to provide treatment groups for abusers. And we want to see that our community has longer-term help for the children in violent families. We know those children are more likely to grow up to be abusers — or abused wives — and we'd like to help stop that cycle.

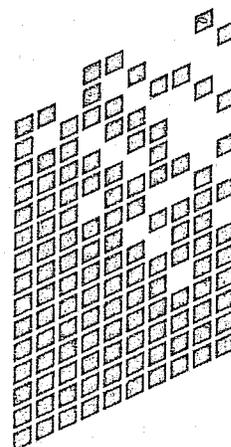
Last week I was privileged to be invited to attend a self-help support group for women who have been abused. We normally never get to meet the people who use our services, so it was a very special event.

I listened to the stories. After four years, I am still shocked by what some people have had to survive. But what affected me more was the strength, the humour and the power in that group.

Several women and their families are beginning to get back on their feet, are dealing with the issues that face them, are healing their physical and emotional pain. Gradually they are building a new and more positive life for themselves and their children — and helping others along the way.

I was gratified that our services had been part of it.

I know we — and those incredible women — have other struggles ahead of us, but I also know it will be worth it. We'll make it!



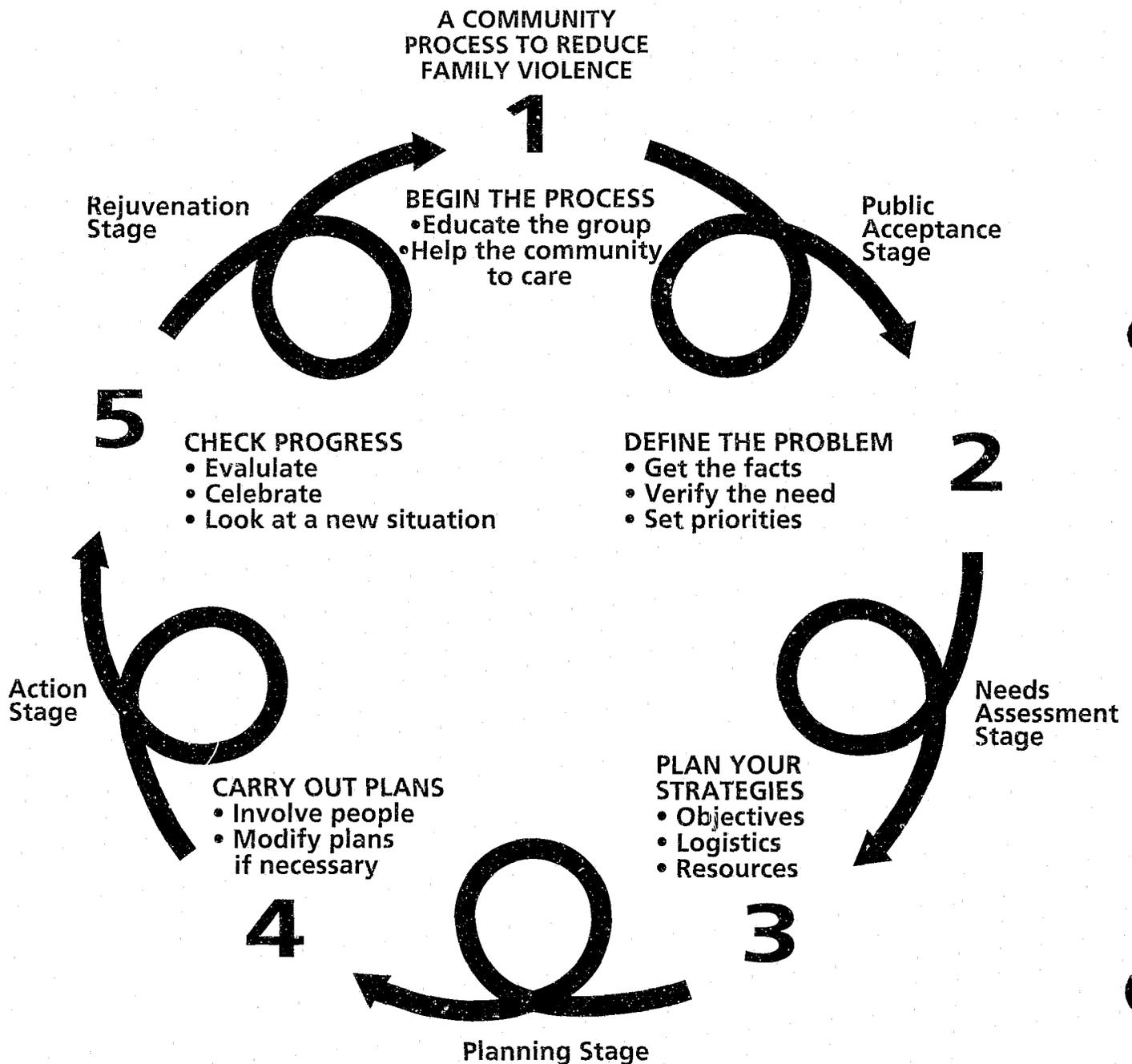
## WORKING AS A COMMUNITY

A community group can help ensure that "what's needed" to help reduce family violence becomes available in their community, by following a community process. The next section of this booklet explains more about the process.

Family violence is not the easiest community issue to work on. Few if any community groups have had a completely smooth process. If your group has difficulties from time to time, that only means you're normal.

As the curly arrows in the diagram illustrate, the process is not necessarily smooth. Sometimes it's one step forward and two steps back.

But many groups have found that following the process gives them the greatest possible chance of reducing family violence. The process will increase the likelihood that your group gets the help you need to find appropriate answers for your community.

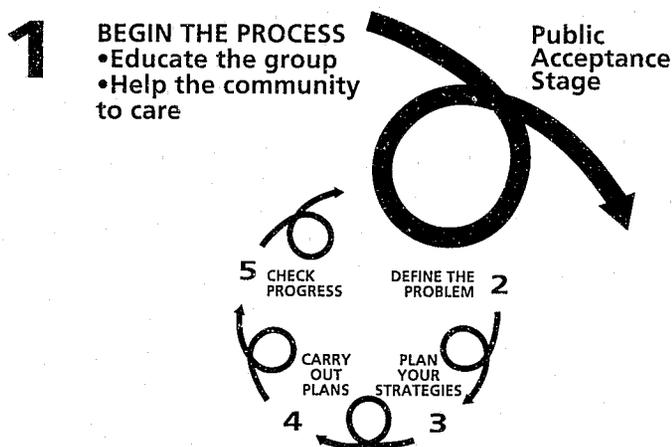


To help increase your chances of reducing family violence, carry out a community process that has worked for many groups. Adapt the process to your situation to help you find answers that will work in your community.

**FOLLOW ALONG** while we outline . . .

- The **TASK** at each of the five stages;
- **WHY** this stage is necessary;
- **HOW** a group might accomplish the tasks at this stage;
- What **BARRIERS** might be encountered;
- What **REWARDS** a group can expect.

We've also included examples of activities carried out by Alberta communities at each of the five stages of the community process.



## 1. HOW TO BEGIN

### The Task

The first task of your group is two-fold:

- **EDUCATE YOUR GROUP**  
Group members should be familiar with how and why family violence happens.
- **HELP THE COMMUNITY TO CARE**  
At this stage you are not asking any member of the public to do anything. But you do want the public to be aware:
  - that family violence exists in the community;

- of how and why it can happen;
- that it matters.

### Why the **BEGINNING** stage is necessary

Group members need a basic understanding of the problem so they will be realistic in their approaches. If group members do not understand family violence, they may come up with inappropriate actions and solutions later on.

Preliminary public education is necessary to generate public interest and public support for whatever action your group eventually takes. If the community does not believe it matters, your group will not get the community help it's going to need.

### How to carry out the **BEGINNING** tasks

#### Ideas to educate the group

##### *Written or audio-visual information*

- Have every group member read material to help them understand the problem they will be addressing.
- Contact the Office for the Prevention of Family Violence and ask for other background information to be sent to your group. Ask one or two people to summarize the main points and present them at a meeting.
- Watch a video or film at a meeting.

##### *A speaker*

- Invite a social worker, counsellor, therapist, police officer, representative of a women's shelter or other person who has contact with family violence to talk to your group. (You could invite others to this meeting, too, and be educating the public as you educate your group).
- Call someone who is knowledgeable and ask that person to suggest an appropriate speaker for your group.

- If you know a person who has been in a violent relationship but has broken out of it and is willing to talk about the experience, invite that person to talk to your group.

Provide time at meetings for members to talk about the feelings they experience as they learn more about the topic of family violence. This will provide emotional support to your group members and also help the group anticipate what reactions they might get from other people in the community.

### Ideas to help the community to care

- **IMPORTANT STEP:** *Identify key people* in your community — those who are respected by many people, who influence others' opinions, whose support might be valuable in the future. Key people are those whose good opinion helps the community feel a particular project is legitimate and worth supporting. Decide who will talk to each of the key people, to discuss what you are learning, and to tell the key people what your group is doing.

(Key people like to know what is going on in the community. If they do not believe the problem exists, or that it matters, their lack of support may block your group later.)

- *Have conversations* about what you are learning about family violence. (If you have seven group members and they each talk to three people, that's 21 people in the community who will have exposure to the ideas.)

**NOTE:** *You are not asking for anything at this stage. You merely want the public to know the problem exists and it matters.*

- As your group becomes better informed, offer to *give presentations* to church groups, service clubs or other groups.

- *Sponsor information sessions* about family violence. Extend personal invitations to key people and other potentially interested citizens. Use films, speakers, panel presentations, followed by question and answer sessions, to help explain violent relationships.

- If your local papers run columns by agency representatives, ask the agency representatives if they would do *a column on family violence*.
- *Ask local media* to run news items about your activities. Provide your local paper, radio station or community TV channel with information about what you are doing. (Note: be careful that your media coverage is not distorted! Spend time with the local editors/reporters to be sure they have accurate information.)

**NOTE:** *As your group moves through subsequent steps, remember to keep key individuals and the public informed about what you are doing.*

### Barriers you may encounter during the BEGINNING stage

#### Group Impatience

Some of your group members may be restless about educating themselves and the community. They may be anxious to "get busy and do something" rather than take the time to become better informed.

Learning about some of the damage done by community groups who jumped in before they understood the problem may help restless members realize that taking time to become well-informed is not a waste of time.

Sponsoring public awareness events — a concrete action — may help restless members feel they are doing something.

## HOW TWO ALBERTA COMMUNITIES HANDLED THE BEGINNING STAGE

IN A MID-SIZED ALBERTA CITY, an agency social programs coordinator became concerned about the number of children she was seeing who appeared to be neglected or badly treated by their parents.

It seemed to her that the parents weren't intentionally setting out to harm the children, but were unaware of how damaging their insults, slaps and lack of support actually were.

The coordinator spoke to others in her agency about her impressions, and found that many of her co-workers agreed.

Between them, the people at this agency agreed to talk to other agencies, to see if they shared the same views.

Eventually (after following the other steps in this process) these conversations grew to the point where a parent resource centre was opened, offering courses, skill development and support for parents, to help them become better able to deal with their children.

IN A SMALL RURAL COMMUNITY, a woman became concerned about wife abuse.

She talked to some friends, one of whom was from a neighboring community which had a Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) program.

The friend talked to the FCSS Director, who did some quiet checking with social workers and police. This preliminary check revealed that wife abuse did indeed exist in the district.

The FCSS director met with the woman and three of her friends. The group decided the issue was too big for one community to tackle.

They came up with a list of contacts in five communities in the district, and in the next few months found opportunities for conversations in which they let others know the problem existed.

Eventually their conversations led to the formation of a regional committee to assist victims of wife abuse.

### Community resistance

As soon as you begin talking about family violence, you may encounter community attitudes such as "It doesn't happen in our community," "Women ask for it," or "It's none of our business what happens within a family." The group should discuss how it will respond to these attitudes.

Hearing from someone who has experienced the problem may have enough emotional impact to help shake some of these attitudes. In-person presentations, written anecdotes, video or film could be used to help people experience what family violence really means.

*In small communities*, people may be particularly reluctant to acknowledge that family violence could exist among their neighbors and friends. If they are aware of violence in specific families, they may be even more uncomfortable about "opening up a can of worms" and might prefer that nobody talked about family violence.

Helping them understand that violence happens in all communities and that help is possible may make it easier for them to acknowledge the problem.

*In large communities* it will be harder to identify key individuals, or to reach the community at large.

It will probably be necessary to break the "community" into smaller target groups and decide how to reach each target group.

### Rewards from the BEGINNING stage

#### You'll be realistic

Your group will be better informed about family violence and thus more realistic in its approaches to solving the problem. Taking time to become informed will avoid costly mistakes later on.

#### Increased possibility of community support

As a result of your low-key and informal conversations, and letting others know what you are learning, the community will gradually be more receptive to acknowledging that family violence exists and that it matters. You are paving the way for community support when your group takes action later.

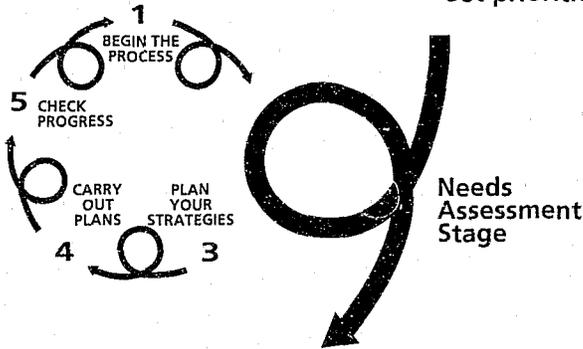
#### Long term preventive possibilities

Increasing public awareness and understanding of the problem will also contribute to long-term prevention of family violence.

# 2

## DEFINE THE PROBLEM

- Get the facts
- Verify the need
- Set priorities



## 2. DEFINE THE PROBLEM — NEEDS ASSESSMENT STAGE

### The Task

Having educated your group members about the nature of family violence, and begun the process of raising public awareness, you are ready to find more specific information. During the needs assessment stage, you have three tasks:

1. **GET THE FACTS:** — about family violence in your own community: the extent of the problem, the needs of those in violent relationships, the resources that already exist, gaps that may exist.
2. **VERIFY THE NEEDS** — verify your conclusions with your sources of information, with key people in the community with the public.
3. **SET PRIORITIES** — decide what needs your group will focus on.

### Why **NEEDS ASSESSMENT** is necessary

Your group needs to **GET THE FACTS** about family violence in your specific community in order to:

- know what is specifically needed in your own community,

- provide a basis for your planning,
- help set priorities.

Getting specific information helps provide a “reality base” for the group’s actions.

Your group needs to **VERIFY THE NEEDS** in order to:

- be sure you understand the situation,
- be sure key people and the public believe there is a problem.

Verifying the needs will help establish the group’s credibility with the community.

Your group needs to **SET PRIORITIES** about what aspect of family violence needs it will address, because no group can do everything. Better to develop a focussed, effective effort than to scatter your energy and not accomplish much of anything.

### How to carry out the **NEEDS ASSESSMENT** tasks

#### Get the facts

In the Beginning stage of your community action process, you gathered general information about family violence — how and why it happens, and what might be needed. Your task was to increase general understanding of violent relationships.

In the Needs Assessment stage, you want to find out more specific information about family violence in your community:

- **THE PROBLEM:** how much family violence is known to occur in your community? What types of family abuse?
- **NEEDS:** what are the needs of people in violent relationships? The needs of those trying to help? What community attitudes affect those in violent relationships?
- **RESOURCES:** what services, expertise, and funding sources already exist to meet the needs? Who is doing what for whom?
- **GAPS:** what is left to be done to help reduce family violence in the community?

ASKING is really the only way to gather information about the extent of the problem, the needs, the resources and the gaps in regard to family violence in your community. A variety of methods — interviews, information conversations, surveys, checking statistical records — are all variations of ASKING.

WHO should you ask? Three groups:

- **AGENCIES AND PROFESSIONALS** who may have contact with family violence, such as:
  - teachers
  - health units
  - home care services
  - services for seniors
  - police
  - Alberta Family and Social Services — Child Welfare
  - clergy or ministerial associations
  - rural home economists
  - counselling agencies
  - mental health services
  - doctors and other health professionals
  - hospitals
  - information or crisis lines
  - courts, Legal Aid, lawyers
  - parole and probation officers
  - nearby women's shelters (may get referrals or calls from your area)
  - addictions counsellors
- **THOSE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED** violent relationships but are now distanced enough to have perspective about their experience. They can tell you more about what was or what would have been helpful to them and what was missing.
- **KEY INDIVIDUALS** and other members of the public. Getting their views about the problem, the needs, the resources and the gaps will not only give you another perspective of the community situation, it will help you anticipate what community attitudes you may have to deal with later.

As you get the facts about the problem, keep in mind the needs, the resources and the gaps in your community.

- *You'll need to establish your credentials, i.e. what right you have to ask questions.* Agencies and professionals in particular will want to know who you are and how you plan to use the information before they share their information and plans.
- *Your group may find it difficult to estimate the extent of the problem in your community.* We know the abused and abusing person try to keep the violence a secret. A violent relationship often continues for a long time before it becomes public. As well, not every agency in contact with family violence recognizes occurrences of violence or keeps records of these.
- *You'll want to know the quality as well as the type of services that exist.* Your community may have existing services that **could** help those in violent relationships, but at the moment their staff lack specific expertise.

When your group looks at the information you've gathered you will probably see things missing in your community — preventive, crisis or follow-up services that would be of value to those in abusive relationships.

This becomes the preliminary basis for defining what needs you will address and what your group's priorities will be.

But before you make hard decisions about future action, the group must **VERIFY THE NEEDS . . .**

### Verify the Needs

Having gathered information, you now want two things to happen:

- people outside the group to verify that you have correctly identified the needs and gaps;
- the public to accept that the need is real.

## SOME WAYS TO VERIFY THE NEEDS:

- *Go back to all the people you talked to in the information gathering stage.* Let them know what you have found out, your preliminary conclusions, the gaps you've identified. (Gaps could include lack of public or professional education, non-existence of services, or existing services not specifically geared to family violence.)

Check: do the people you talked to agree with your findings? If not, re-assess and perhaps revise your information.

**Caution: be sure your information is credible before you go public. More than one Alberta group has run into barriers because their information was discredited. The public didn't believe the information and so didn't believe the problems were real. It slowed down the process by several years.**

- *Make sure the "key individuals" (those who influence opinions) are well informed about your findings.* Give them copies of your reports; have conversations with them. Be sure you understand their responses to your information — their response might reflect the community's response.
- *Once your information has been verified and accepted by people outside your group, let the public know.*

Group members can have another round of information conversations with whomever they are in contact;

Give presentations to community groups;

Issue news releases to explain what you've done and how you've verified your information;

Hold public information meetings.

### Set priorities

By now, your group will have a sense of the problems, the needs, the potential resources and the gaps in the community. This is a turning point for the group. It is moving from exploratory activities to concrete action.

Some groups ask an outside person — a facilitator — to help them examine the issues and decisions the group must handle at this stage.

In light of the information you now have, the group has a major decision to make: of all the issues you could address, which issue(s) will the group focus on? The group has to decide:

- **THE GROUP PURPOSE** or reason for existence:

Should the group have a **broad purpose** (e.g., "to reduce family violence in the community")? OR

Should the group have a more **specific purpose** (e.g., "to ensure victims of child sexual abuse have specialized counselling available")?

Having made that decision, the group should now look at itself with new eyes. Past ways of operating may no longer be appropriate as the group moves from an exploratory to an action stage. It needs to review:

- **STRUCTURE**, or how the group is organized — Should the group be an **informal**, loosely-knit organization? OR, should the group be **legally incorporated**? (If the group expects to handle money, it should incorporate. For information on who to contact about incorporation, see the last page of this booklet.)
- **THE MEMBERSHIP** or who belongs to the group — In light of the community needs to be addressed and the purpose of the group, should other people be invited to join?

Many groups find it useful to include:

- one or two people who have experienced violent relationships and worked through them;
- agency and professional representatives;
- people who have credibility in the community at large.

## Barriers you may encounter during NEEDS ASSESSMENT

### Barriers to getting the facts

- Agencies may not have information on family violence or may be unwilling to share information. Thus, it may be difficult to estimate the extent of the problem. (Be honest about the limitations of your information.)
- Information about available services is sometimes hard to find.
- You may find a discrepancy between the services theoretically available and those actually provided. (Be careful not to alienate agencies who could help, but who won't if they feel you are attacking or criticizing them.)

### Barriers to verifying the needs

- Outside people may challenge your information. (Make sure you can explain how you got your figures, how you identified what resources are available and how you came to your conclusions about what is needed.)
- Others may not agree with your interpretation of the information. (Listen to them and check your conclusions — after all, you could be wrong.)

## Barriers to setting priorities

- Thinking broadly — prevention, intervention, follow-up — may be hard in the face of pressure to “get a shelter” or some other crisis service.
- Different group members may strongly disagree on what the purpose of the group should be. You may lose some members.
- The group may not wish to examine its purpose and structure. If it doesn't, there may be problems later when group members try to accomplish incompatible goals, or the structure no longer helps get the job done.

## Rewards from the NEEDS ASSESSMENT stage

- *You'll have a credible basis of information* (make sure it is credible) on which to base future action.
- *The community will believe the needs are real.* Your conversations with many people have laid the groundwork for future collaboration.
- *You'll have a clear sense of direction, a structure to get the job done and the most appropriate members to achieve the purpose.*

### HOW TWO ALBERTA COMMUNITIES HANDLED THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT STAGE

IN A MAJOR CITY, a committee of citizens was concerned about abuse of elderly people.

Once the members of this group had educated themselves on the seriousness of this problem, they needed to get more facts from their own community.

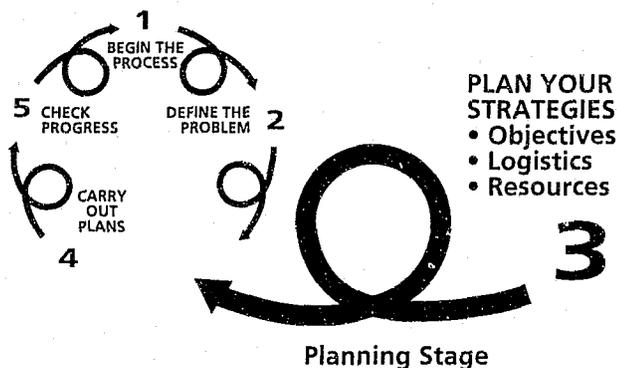
Through a cooperative effort, this committee received a grant to oversee a project to determine the services already in place and what was still needed to address the problem of elder abuse in their city.

IN A LARGE RURAL REGION, a group of people from communities in six counties banded together because of a mutual concern about the issue of child sexual abuse.

Each community knew the problem existed, but none were sure exactly how to deal with the situation.

They wanted to know exactly how many cases were documented in their region: were other people in the region concerned about the problem; what services were already in place; what services were needed; and how could services be made accessible to the children who really need them in such a wide and sparsely-populated geographic area?

In order to answer all their questions, and to determine the best way to provide assistance to victims of child sexual abuse, this committee raised the funds necessary to hire a consulting firm to do an in-depth need assessment and feasibility study specific to their area.



### 3. PLAN YOUR STRATEGIES

#### PLANNING Tasks

Three tasks must be accomplished during the planning stage:

1. SET GOALS AND OBJECTIVES;
2. ORGANIZE LOGISTICS;
3. GATHER RESOURCES.

#### Why the PLANNING stage is necessary

If you don't know where you're going (goals and objectives) you may end up somewhere else. If you don't know who's doing what (logistics) it may not get done. If you don't have the help you need (resources) you may not be able to help those in abusive relationships.

Planning will give your group a sense of direction and accomplishment, and help you focus your energy. Planning increases your chances of making a difference in your community.

#### How to carry out PLANNING tasks

##### Set goals and objectives

In light of community needs and gaps, and the group purpose, identify:

- what specific needs the group will address (these will become the group GOALS) and
- what will be accomplished in regard to each goal (these will be the OBJECTIVES).

#### EXAMPLE:

**COMMUNITY NEED:  
FOLLOW-UP FOR ABUSED PERSONS**

**GOAL:** to ensure abused women in crisis have on-going support, encouragement and practical assistance for at least one year after the crisis.

#### OBJECTIVES:

- to develop a network of trained volunteers to stay in touch with women for one year after they leave an emergency shelter or refuge.
- to encourage service agencies (e.g. public housing, counselling, employment training) to be aware of the special needs of abused women.

#### Organize Logistics:

Work out what must be done to accomplish the objectives: **who will do what, by when and how will you know it is done?**

#### Gather resources:

Identify what resources the group needs (time, expertise, facilities, publicity, money) and how it will obtain these.

At this stage, many groups devote a great deal of energy to "grantsmanship" and fundraising.

#### Barriers you might encounter at the PLANNING stage

- Sometimes people are reluctant to spend time identifying goals and objectives. They'd rather jump into action without any planning.
- Even though the group agrees on its objectives, it may disagree on how to accomplish the objectives. There could be friction within the group.

## HOW TWO ALBERTA COMMUNITIES HANDLED THE PLANNING STAGE

IN A LARGE URBAN AREA, quiet conversations, research and study had identified a high percentage of Native children who had been victims of abuse and sexual abuse.

Based on the results of their study, the group began to formulate strategies for addressing this need.

With an overall goal of providing treatment to Native children who had been victims of abuse, and working towards lowering the incidents of abuse in their inner city community, the group formulated some specific objectives.

Their first objective was to create a facility that could provide intensive treatment to Native children who had been victimized.

Along with this immediate treatment, the need for long-term counselling and support of victims was identified as an objective.

As well, group members determined that providing counselling, information and support services to other family members would assist in the victims' recovery, as well as lower the incidence of abuse in the future.

IN A SMALL CITY, a local Society for the Prevention of Family Violence had researched their community

needs and determined that crisis intervention, awareness, information and support were needed for members of their community who had been involved in abusive relationships.

Immediate short-term crisis intervention was available through a women's shelter located 25 miles away, so rather than create their own facility the community group's first objective was to establish a transportation network that could get victims of violence to a safe place.

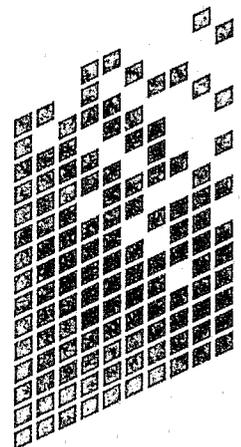
On a more long-term basis, the group decided to focus on community strategies that would help victims and perpetrators learn from their experiences and achieve a non-violent lifestyle.

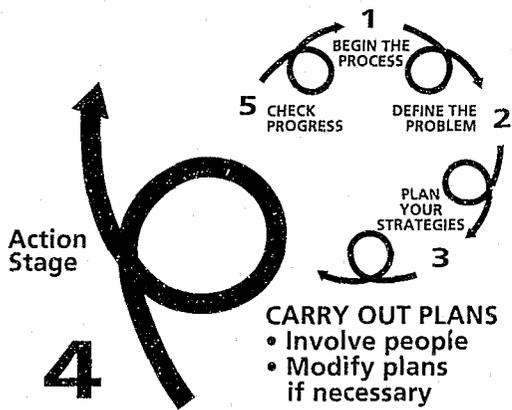
With this in mind, the community group decided to focus on providing information on all forms of family violence, through a resource centre. They also set objectives for the formation of support groups for victims, (both adult and children), as well as anger management groups for perpetrators of violence.

They took their objectives to the community, and received immense support which enabled them to open a resource centre.

### Rewards of the PLANNING stage

- You'll have a sense of direction and achievement.
- You'll know you've thought out the best way to accomplish your objectives.
- Good planning increases your community credibility.





#### 4. CARRY OUT PLANS — ACTION STAGE

##### The task

At last, your task is to carry out the plans to achieve your objectives.

#### How to carry out ACTION plans

- *Ensure that all relevant people are involved in your activities.* For example, if you are dealing with "emergency transportation" cooperate with other groups in the community who have a connection with transportation.
- *Ensure that "key individuals" are informed of your plans and activities.* If key individuals have objections, discuss them at your next meeting.
- *Ensure the public is informed of what you are doing.* If you encounter resistance, go back and work some more on public awareness and make sure you really have involved all the appropriate people.

#### HOW TWO ALBERTA COMMUNITIES HANDLED THE ACTION STAGE

IN A LARGE CITY, a community group had set objectives to increase awareness of family violence issues.

They wanted to increase awareness and understanding of various types of family violence among a wide range of age groups and interests. The group also wanted to do something "different" from the normal public presentation, something that would be high impact.

With those objectives in mind, this group developed a series of dramatic presentations on family violence that could be presented as "theatre" in local schools, church groups, or community forums.

The group wrote their own scripts, based in part on the experiences of some of the young actors.

The experience of developing the shows helped some of the young people understand and heal their own lives. Through drama, they could express what they had not been able to put into words.

Though the shows could be presented as "entertainment," they were also extremely useful in helping people understand the issues surrounding family violence.

Hundreds of people have seen the productions, and the group is now making itself available to go to rural communities.

IN A SMALL CITY the board of the local women's shelter identified the need for increased funds from their community, to help in providing education and

other programs that weren't covered by their funding source.

Along with the funding issue, this group wanted to make the community more aware of the shelter's services, its high level of use and the incidence of violence in today's society. They also wanted to do something different than "the usual".

With those objectives in mind, the shelter board created a "Women in Jail Raising Bail" campaign, to be staged during Family Violence Awareness Month.

They contacted some of the most high profile women in the community and surrounding areas, and asked them to spend some time in a "jail cell." Each of the women was responsible for getting "bail money" — donations from individuals, businesses, and family members.

The "jail cell" was set in the middle of a local shopping mall on a Saturday. Charged with nonsense offenses, each woman had a mock trial — in public view — and members of the public flocked in to "bail them out". While there, they saw displays, video presentations and learned more about the activities of the shelter, and about family violence in general.

The one-day event was supplemented by weeks of advance press coverage that talked about the campaign, about how women were "imprisoned" in violent relationships. The event also generated lots of conversation among the women who were to be in the cell.

In one day, the group raised a total of \$16,000.

- At each meeting, check to see how the plans are progressing. If an action doesn't work out the way you expected, modify the plans.

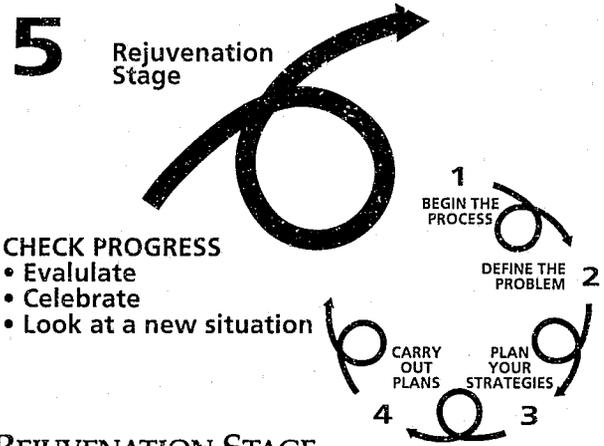
### Barriers you may encounter during the ACTION stage

Every group has its stories of snags and roadblocks. Common sources are:

- Different understandings among group members about what the group is trying to accomplish; different values and goals;
- Lack of involvement by other significant people;
- Lack of public support (this may translate into backlash against the project, or the public being unwilling to supply necessary resources);
- Inadequate planning; details overlooked;
- Misunderstandings about who is responsible for what;
- Poor communication among people carrying out the tasks.

### Rewards

- Getting the job done! Helping to reduce family violence in your community.
- A sense of accomplishment.



### 5. REJUVENATION STAGE — EVALUATE AND CELEBRATE

At regular intervals — every few months in the early stages and at least once a year later on — a group should assess and celebrate its progress, decide “How can we do it even better?” and “Where do we go from here?”

Following a community process has greatly increased your chances of ensuring that “what’s needed” to reduce family violence in your community becomes available.

At a minimum you have raised community awareness, become better informed yourselves and learned many new skills. At best, you have changed community attitudes, helped the community provide support to those in violent relationships and to those who work with them, and you have helped reduce family violence in your community.

Congratulations!

### HOW TWO ALBERTA COMMUNITIES HANDLED THE REJUVENATION STAGE

A POLICE DEPARTMENT undertook a child abuse prevention campaign in local schools.

Before the campaign, the Police Department documented the number of child abuse cases they and the Social Services office had been dealing with.

Then they began making visits to classrooms at all grade levels, talking about child abuse — what it is, who it might happen to, and that nobody needs to stay in a place where it’s happening to them.

The police also began doing presentations for community groups.

After the campaign began, their evaluation showed that the number of child abuse disclosures began to rise significantly. Children were calling, parents were calling, teachers were calling. Some of the calls were

also to find out more information — just in case.

Community interest and knowledge were raised, and children were removed from abusive situations — a successful campaign.

A WOMEN’S SHELTER board wanted to thank all the people who had helped make their service possible.

They sent special invitations to an Open House, at which they presented certificates of appreciation to major funders, and to their numerous volunteers.

Of course, during the coffee and goodies, all the people who attended toured the facility and looked at displays. The event generated good will, and was one more opportunity to provide education about family violence.

## **HOW ALBERTA COMMUNITIES CAN HELP**

### **UNDERSTANDING WHAT MIGHT BE NEEDED**

The community process described earlier can be adapted to help your community address any form of family violence. The process describes HOW you might respond to family violence.

Much of your thinking will also be about WHAT responses you might develop in your community — what approaches, services or programs would help to reduce family violence.

All forms of family violence have some common characteristics, but each form also has unique characteristics. This section highlights three types of family violence — wife abuse, child abuse, and elder abuse.

There are other forms of abuse, for example husband abuse and adolescents abusing younger children or their parents. Less is known about these forms of abuse. Therefore, specific needs and how they might be addressed have not been included in the examples in this section.

The information below may generate ideas about WHAT types of help might be needed in your community.

We strongly recommend that, before you begin working on family violence in your community, you review additional information. Sources are suggested on the inside front cover and at the back of this booklet.





### If a Woman is Being Abused by her Husband or Male Partner

#### WHAT THE ABUSED WOMAN MIGHT NEED:

##### At any stage she might need:

- To understand the dynamics of wife abuse so she is more aware of what she is dealing with.
- To believe that she does not deserve to be abused; that the abuse is real, even though she would like to deny it.
- To have contact with people who recognize the signs of an abusive relationship, and can help her begin to talk about her situation.
- To know that even though she may care for the person who abuses her, she is not responsible for his actions, and she does not cause the violence.
- To build self-esteem and confidence.

##### During the times of extreme abuse or violence she needs:

- Physical safety for her and perhaps her children; knowledge that she is not alone.
- Medical and/or psychological help.
- Financial support.
- Knowledge of her legal options.
- To receive patience and understanding of her ambivalence about staying or leaving the relationship.

##### After she has reached out for help she will need:

- Physical safety.
- Patience for her confusion and ambivalence.
- Help to assess the reality and safety of her situation.
- Time to heal; emotional support.
- Respect for her decisions (to stay or leave the relationship).
- Affordable housing (if she chooses to leave).
- Help to explore longer-term issues: employment, rebuilding her life.

#### SOME OF HER NEEDS MAY BE MET THROUGH:

- Easy access to information about abusive relationships.
- Access to experiences which build self-confidence and self-esteem.
- Being treated with respect by others.
- Being believed when she describes what is happening.
- Support and assistance from professionals or lay people who understand the dynamics of wife abuse.
  
- Police or other protective services to stop the violence.
- Emergency shelter.
- Child care services.
- Social assistance or financial support.
- Someone to stay with during the crisis.
- A supportive and knowledgeable physician.
  
- Legal or police protection from violence.
- Help with legal issues and practical day-to-day living.
- Self-help groups or opportunities to meet others in similar situations.
- On-going counselling.
- Assistance to re-locate, if she chooses to leave.
- Employment training or career planning.

## If a Man is Abusing his Wife or Female Partner

### WHAT THE ABUSIVE MAN MIGHT NEED:

#### At any stage he might need:

- To learn that abuse is not acceptable.
- To believe that he does not need physical power to be a worthwhile man.
- To know that he is responsible for his own actions.
- To know it is okay to ask for help; to know about community resources.
- To examine control issues (impulsiveness; controlling or manipulative behavior).
- To learn to recognize the feelings of self and others.
- To develop self-esteem.
- To understand how society's attitudes influence his behavior.

#### During times of extreme abuse or violence he needs:

- External restraint to stop the violence.
- Understanding that any form of abuse is not acceptable.
- Understanding that hitting a family member is assault — it is a crime.
- Understanding that nobody "makes" him be violent — he is responsible for his own actions.

#### After an incident of abuse or violence he will need:

- To overcome denial and minimizing of the abuse.
- To accept responsibility for his actions.
- External restraint from repeat violence or abuse.
- Help to deal with the sources of his abusive behavior.
- To learn new ways of behaving.

### SOME OF HIS NEEDS MAY BE MET THROUGH:

- Public awareness; public discussions about violence being unacceptable — even at home.
- Spouse, neighbors, parents, friends holding him accountable for his actions; not "covering" or making excuses for him (might need education for them).
- Self-confidence or communication courses; learning other ways to express anger; learning to have empathy.
- Group therapy or courses to examine values and attitudes which perpetuate violence.
  
- Police or other intervention to stop the violence.
- Being physically separated from family members (different location, restraining order, etc.)
- Being charged with assault.<sup>1</sup>
  
- Being convicted of assault.<sup>1</sup>
- Family, friends, legal system holding him accountable (might need education for them.)
- Longer-term treatment to help deal with the sources of his violence (for example, values, impulsive behavior, need for control)
- Training in effective communication, anger control or anger management.
- Self-help or support groups after formal counselling/treatment.

<sup>1</sup> Studies in Canada and the United States show that when abusers are charged and convicted of assault, they are 40% to 70% less likely to repeat the offense.

## If a Child is Living in a Violent or Abusive Environment

### WHAT THE CHILDREN MIGHT NEED:

#### **At any stage children might need:**

- To understand that they are not responsible for the violence or for their parents' unhappiness.
- To know they are loveable and worthwhile.
- To understand that violence is not "normal family behavior."
- To understand that they are not the only children to have this experience, and that others have recovered from the trauma.

#### **During times of extreme violence or abuse they need:**

- Physical safety.
- To know they will be looked after.
- To know and understand the crisis is not their fault.
- Stability and regular routines, for example, stay in the same school if possible.
- To know their parents love them, even though their actions may not make it obvious.

#### **If the family separates they will need:**

- As much stability as possible.
- Information about what is happening and how it will affect the child.
- Opportunities to have fun.
- To learn non-violent ways to behave.
- Help in overcoming the trauma.

### SOME OF THEIR NEEDS MAY BE MET THROUGH:

- Stories, books, films in children's libraries, schools.
- Contact with supportive adults who understand the situation (for example, a teacher or an adult who grew up in an abusive home but has overcome the problems).
- Counselling with other children from violent homes; support groups (when ready).
- Church, school or youth groups which focus on positive, nurturing behavior.

- Protective services.
- Emergency housing, if necessary.
- Child care: adults who can ensure regular routines, school attendance.
- Someone to talk to; a supportive adult friend who can help children understand they are not responsible and they are worthwhile and loveable.

- Adults who can ensure regular routines.
- Someone to talk to.
- Play therapy, counselling, "feelings" activities.
- Opportunities to learn non-violent ways to behave.



## CHILD ABUSE

### If a Child is Being Abused by a Parent or Other Adult in a Position of Trust

#### WHAT ABUSED CHILDREN MIGHT NEED:

##### At any stage children might need:

- To understand what abuse is.
- To understand that they are not responsible for the abuse; to talk to someone who will clarify to them that they are not to blame.
- To be physically safe; to be free from fear.
- To know they are worthwhile human beings.
- To develop self esteem.
- To receive emotional support and affection.
- To know that help is available and where to get it.
- To be supported with patience and understanding of their behavior; to live in an environment which supports them, and sets limits in a healthy way.
- To be exposed to healthy families, healthy adult-child relationships; and adults who support rather than punish the child.
- To experience normal childhood activities.
- To overcome the impact of abuse; to learn non-abusive and/or non-victimized ways to relate to others; to learn to trust others.

##### At the time abuse becomes public, children might need:

- Freedom from intimidation by abuser; freedom from blame for what is happening to the family.
- To be informed and consulted about what is happening and how they will be affected.
- Basic understanding, at an appropriate age level, of Child Welfare, police, legal and/or court systems.
- To know they will be cared for.
- Stability — regular routines, school, etc.

#### SOME OF THEIR NEEDS MAY BE MET THROUGH:

- All the ways mentioned to assist children who live in violent or abusive environments (see previous chart)
- Protective Services.<sup>2</sup>
- Places and people for children to go for support if they are being abused and are not involved with Child Protective Services.
- Community support for children — for example, recreational activities, family support programs, opportunities for children to spend time with healthy and caring adults.
- Counselling or treatment by those who are knowledgeable about the dynamics and impact of child abuse.
- Easy access to information about child abuse.
- Group counselling with other children who have been in similar situations (when the child is ready for this step).
- Counselling for other non-offending members of the family to overcome their trauma and also help them understand the abused child is not responsible for the abuse and the disruption in the family.

- Special "children's advocates" to be with them if they are involved with Child Welfare, police or court systems.
- Trusted adults who understand; someone to talk to; adults who model healthy behavior and who can help children learn to feel safe.
- Skilled caregivers.
- A safe, loving environment.
- Foster homes if deemed necessary by Child Protective Services.

<sup>2</sup> Alberta's Child Welfare Act states that any person who has reasonable grounds to believe that a child is in need of protective services shall report the matter. Child Protective Services of Alberta Family and Social Services investigates such reports and determines what action, if any, may be necessary in order to protect the child.

## **If a Parent or Caregiver is Abusing a Child**

### **WHAT ABUSIVE ADULTS MIGHT NEED:**

**At any stage they may need:**

- To learn about normal child development and what expectations are realistic: to learn about non-abusive discipline methods.
- Someone to identify problems or at-risk situations early and offer support.
- Opportunities to build self esteem and grow as a parent as well as personally.
- Acceptance and inclusion by the community.
- Time out from parental duties.
- To know it is okay to ask for help; to know about community resources.
- More resources to meet family needs.
- Someone to help the family through the system; a family advocate.
- Counselling to assist in overcoming the effects of early traumas;
- To know community and society do not condone abuse of children.
- To understand that, regardless of circumstances, they are responsible for their own behavior, and for the consequences of their behavior.

**If it's an adult family member who is sexually abusing a child, the abusive adults need:**

- To know that the abuse is harmful to a child, and that sexual abuse is a crime.
- To understand that he or she is responsible for behavior; to change attitudes about exploiting others to meet own needs.
- Help to overcome the effects of past traumas.

**If it's a parent whose partner is sexually abusing a child, the non-abusing partner needs:**

- Someone to listen and help in decision-making.
- Help to understand that the abuser is solely responsible for his/her behavior, and that the behavior will not stop without intervention.
- Counselling alone and with the child.

### **SOME OF THEIR NEEDS MAY BE MET THROUGH:**

- Parent education provided various ways:
  - simple, concise written information;
  - parent education for teens in school curriculum;
  - media messages that parenting is important; it can be difficult and parents have much in common with each other;
  - tools for parents to use in monitoring their own behavior;
  - use accessible and non-threatening settings;
  - provide babysitting and transportation when offering programs.
- Self help groups; parent help lines; family resource centres where parents can drop in.
- Babysitting cooperatives, crisis nurseries or other child care when parents need a break or when there is risk of abuse.
- Welcoming groups that do more to integrate families into the community.
- Support programs such as Surrogate Grandparents, Adopt a Family.
- Protective and legal services to protect children and reinforce that abuse is not condoned.
- Protective and legal systems to reinforce that sexual abuse is a crime and is not condoned.
- Specialized counselling and/or treatment programs.
- Support and self-help groups.
- Specialized counselling and/or treatment programs for non-offending parents.

## ELDER ABUSE

### If an Elderly Person is Being Abused

#### WHAT THE ABUSED PERSON MIGHT NEED:

At any stage the abused person might need:

- To understand what elder abuse is and why it happens.
- To know his or her rights.
- To talk to someone who can understand the situation and be empathetic.
- Physical and emotional safety.
- To know about community resources.
- Respect from caregivers and others; the right to make their own decisions.
- Assistance in considering and arranging alternative living arrangements (if that is the decision of the elderly person).
- Ways to improve self esteem.
- Whether the abused elderly person is a man or a woman, many of the needs are the same as those of an abused woman.

#### SOME OF THEIR NEEDS MAY BE MET THROUGH:

- Easily accessed information about elder abuse, the aging process, specific conditions of elderly people, rights of elderly people, community resources.
- Information and referral lines.
- Professionals who come in contact with elderly people knowing indicators of abuse, and being familiar with community resources.
- Safe places for abused persons to go for short periods; services to arrange alternative living arrangements.
- Friendly visitors; outreach services to families; assessment and mediation services.
- Support groups for elderly persons who are abused.
- Opportunities for counselling to overcome effects of abuse and improve self-esteem.



## WHAT THE ABUSING PERSON MIGHT NEED:

### At any stage the abusing person might need:

- To know and respect the rights of elderly family members.
- To understand aging, and conditions which affect the elderly person.
- Help to address personal problems that may contribute to abuse (compulsory if necessary).
- To get help in caring for elderly people.
- To learn ways to improve self esteem, communication skills, non-abusive methods to handle conflict.
- To know the community and society do not condone abuse of elderly people.
- To take responsibility for their actions and the consequences of the violence or abuse they inflict.
- To know it is okay to ask for help and to know what community resources are available.
- To have more access to community resources.
- In cases of abuse of older women by their spouses or partners, the needs of the abusers may be the same as those described on page 26.

## SPECIAL NEEDS OF THOSE WHO CARE FOR DEPENDENT ELDERLY PEOPLE:

### They need:

- To understand the aging process, and particular conditions or diseases which affect elderly people.
- To receive validation, support and appreciation.
- To take opportunities for meeting their own needs.
- To get temporary relief from their caretaking role.

## SOME NEEDS MIGHT BE MET THROUGH:

- Legal and protective sanctions to stop abusive behavior.
- Information about aging and particular conditions which affect elderly people.
- General information about family violence.
- Counselling or treatment services related to personal problems of abusers (e.g., substance abuse, anger management, unresolved family conflict.).
- Respite care, in home or elsewhere.
- Seniors drop-in centres, social clubs.



## SOME NEEDS MIGHT BE MET THROUGH:

- Educational opportunities, clearly written information, opportunities to consult with professionals.
- Informed employers who understand changing demographics and special needs required by those who care for elderly people.
- Support groups or contact with people in similar situations; opportunities to express feelings.
- Respite care — in home or elsewhere.

## PEOPLE WHO WANT TO HELP

### WHAT VOLUNTEERS MIGHT NEED

Friends, other family members,  
volunteer helpers or caregivers

- Information about community resources.
- Training to help them understand the contributing factors and dynamics of family violence.
- Training to learn specific intervention strategies.
- Opportunities to collaborate with professionals.
- Acceptance and respect for their valuable role in relationship to members of abusive families.
- Support to deal with the trauma of listening to victims recount their experiences with violence.
- On-going emotional support to help them deal with their own frustration when abusive families seem difficult to help.
- Sharing success stories.

### WHAT PROFESSIONALS MIGHT NEED

Doctors, police, social workers, lawyers,  
counsellors, teachers, or others who are  
in contact with or care for members of  
abusive families

- Training to help them understand the contributing factors and dynamics of family violence, and to learn specific intervention strategies.
- Information about laws and policies related to family violence.
- Knowledge of community resources.
- Knowledge of community politics.
- On-going emotional support to help them deal with their own frustration when abusive families seem difficult to help.
- Support to deal with the trauma of listening to victims recount their experiences with violence.
- Back-up protection to reduce the possibility of being physically endangered.
- Policies which allow them to be flexible and appropriate in their responses to family violence.
- Opportunities to work with those in other fields; operating procedures that enable inter-agency cooperation.
- Recognition and respect; appreciation that they are doing the best they can.
- Sharing success stories.

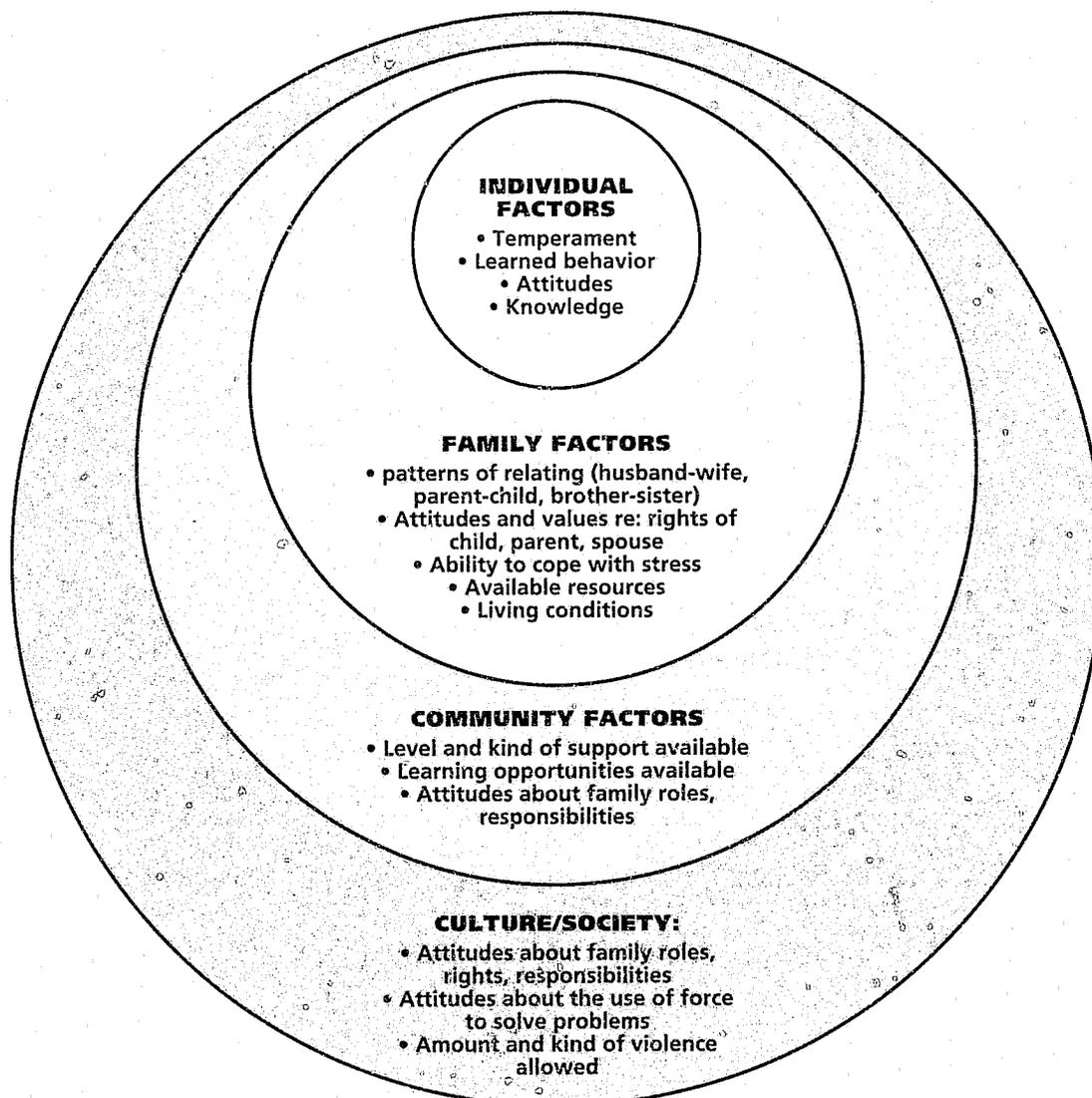


## WHAT THE COMMUNITY MIGHT NEED

People who want to initiate community responses to family violence; the public at large

- Information about the incidence of family violence in their own community.
- Public education to understand the contributing factors and dynamics of abusive families, and to dispel myths about family violence.
- Information about laws and policies related to family violence.
- Information about what actions are being taken, and what resources are available.
- Knowledge of community politics.
- Acceptance that family violence is a community responsibility.
- Understanding that family violence is in every community; theirs is not a "bad" community, just a "normal" one.
- Public awareness activities to influence attitudes about violence, the sanctity of the family and other prevailing issues.
- Public support for the enforcement of laws and policies related to family violence.
- Community legitimizers who support actions to address the problem of family violence.
- Opportunities for community-wide cooperation in responding to family violence.

## SUMMARY: A COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE ON WHAT MIGHT BE NEEDED



## SERVICES AND PROGRAMS FOR THOSE AFFECTED BY FAMILY ABUSE

### Emergency services

- Police, Child Welfare and/or legal protection.
- Emergency medical services.
- Emergency housing.
- Emergency transportation.
- Emergency child care.
- Crisis counselling.

### Support and treatment services

- Self-help groups, support groups, counselling, or other services for "at risk" families.
- Support groups, counselling and treatment services for each member of a family in which abuse has occurred.
- Volunteer advocates to stay with abused persons, or to help families work through various legal and administrative processes.
- Programs to allow family members to have contact with non-abusive families and individuals in nurturing relationships.
- Housing, financial support, education or employment training, or other services to help abused persons rebuild their lives.
- Support and appreciation for volunteers, friends, family members and professionals who work with abusive families.

## APPROACHES TO INFLUENCE THE SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT

### Awareness and education — influencing public attitudes

- Public awareness campaigns and public education to promote attitudes and values that foster nurturing relationships and families.
- Public awareness campaigns and public education about family violence.
- Professional education, especially for those who are most likely to be in contact with abusive families.

### Public policy

- Encouragement for all local and provincial bodies to have policies which forbid violence or abuse.
- Public support for enforcement of laws and policies related to family violence (examples: requirement to report suspected child abuse; pressing charges in cases of physical assault against a family member).

### Coordinated community-wide efforts

- Collaboration between professionals and volunteers, "helping agencies" and municipal councils, policymakers and administrators.
- Multi-disciplinary and interagency co-operation in developing and delivering programs and services.
- Co-ordination of agency services: police, medical, counselling, financial assistance, housing, etc.

## RESOURCES FOR COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

### ABOUT ALBERTA GROUPS WORKING ON FAMILY VIOLENCE

#### DIRECTORY OF FAMILY VIOLENCE INITIATIVES

This directory lists province-wide, regional and local organizations and services that have some direct involvement with family violence.

Available from:

Office for the Prevention of Family  
Violence  
11th Floor, South Tower  
10030 - 107 Street  
Edmonton, Alberta, T5J 3E4  
422-5916

### ABOUT RUNNING COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY ON MANAGEMENT OF NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS (1988)

Available from:

Voluntary Sector Management Program  
Grant MacEwan Community College  
Box 1796  
Edmonton, Alberta, T5J 2P2  
441-4624

### BOARD/STAFF WORKBOOK

This workbook is intended to help non-profit organizations administer their operations more effectively. It has useful information for organizations, whether or not they employ staff.

Available for \$6 from:

Edmonton Social Planning Council  
41, 9912 - 106 Street  
Edmonton, Alberta, T5K 1C5  
423-2031

### INCORPORATION

If your group wants to incorporate as a company, society or corporation or wants information on incorporation, contact:

Consumer and Corporate Affairs  
8th Floor, 10365 - 97 Street  
Edmonton, Alberta, T5J 3W7  
427-0430

### HELPING YOU HELPS ME: A GUIDE FOR SELF-HELP GROUPS (1987)

This is a practical guide to starting and maintaining a self-help group.

Available for \$3.50 from:

Canadian Council on Social Development  
55 Parkdale Avenue  
Ottawa, Ontario, K1Y 4G1  
(613) 728-1865

### HANDBOOK OF GRANTS AND SUBSIDIES OF THE FEDERAL AND PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS

Available for consulting at most public libraries.

### VOLUNTEER TRAINING

Most women's shelters in Alberta offer training programs to help potential volunteers understand the dynamics of wife abuse and how to be helpful to abused women and their families.

Many sexual assault centres offer training in understanding the dynamics of child sexual abuse.

A listing of Alberta women's shelters and sexual assault centres is available from the Office for the Prevention of Family Violence, address listed earlier.

## AUDIO VISUAL MATERIAL

Using audio-visual material is an excellent way to educate people about family violence.

Films and videos are available to borrow free of charge from the Provincial Film Library, the Alberta Family and Social Services Library and Native Counselling Services of Alberta. The National Film Board charges a small fee.

## CANADIAN INFORMATION

For statistics, research materials, information on programs and services available across Canada, please contact:

The National Clearinghouse on  
Family Violence  
2nd Floor North, Brooke Claxton Building  
Tunney's Pasture  
Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0K9  
1-800-267-1291 (toll free number)