



Toronto West
Local Immigration Partnership
Community Collaboration at Work

Women Against Violence Action Group Presents

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE



FIRST RESPONSE
TOOLKIT FOR
FRONTLINE STAFF

Fifth Edition - June 2021

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YMCA

North York Women's Centre

Toronto East Quadrant Local Immigration Partnership

Toronto North Local Immigration Partnership

Toronto South Local Immigration Partnership

Toronto Newcomer Office

Watch the [#StrongerThanYouThink video](#)

This video was developed by the Toronto West Local Immigration Partnership (TWLIP) Women Against Violence (WAV) Action Group in collaboration with Toronto Quadrant LIP's and Toronto Newcomer Office. The goal is to raise public awareness of domestic violence and encourage victims to seek support.

In order to ensure the quality and relevancy of this toolkit, your feedback is important to us. Please take a few minutes and complete the First Response Toolkit Survey in the link below:

<https://bit.ly/wavtoolkitsurvey>

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Mission Statement

Women Against Violence is an Action Group of the Toronto West Local Immigration Partnership (TWLIP) that aims to promote the message that gender-based violence is everyone's issue to address. The Action Group supports local community organizations in enhancing knowledge and building capacity to address this issue.

Purpose of Toolkit

This toolkit has been prepared to help frontline staff:

- Respond to clients and situations with sensitivity
- Increase victim/survivor safety
- Provide information on resources and options
- Make effective, timely referrals to specialized services and supports
- Encourage victim/survivor to take action to end the violence and begin to take steps towards positive changes in their lives.

Note:

This guide is intended to support an agency's existing policies, procedures and guidelines.



Global estimates published by WHO indicate that about 1 in 3 (35%) of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime. Most of this violence is intimate partner violence. Worldwide, almost one third (30%) of women who have been in a relationship report that they have experienced some form of physical and/or sexual violence by their intimate partner in their lifetime.

Picture Source: Amnesty International

Key facts Source: WHO (World Health Organization)

What is Gender-Based Violence?

Gender-based violence (GBV) includes any form of violence that is based upon an individual's gender, gender expression or gender identity and is intended to control, humiliate or harm the individual. GBV includes various forms of violence such as domestic violence, physical violence, intimate partner violence, sexual violence, forced labour, human trafficking, femicide, cyber-violence and emotional and psychological violence (Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services).

Facts

Emerging data shows an increase in calls to domestic violence helplines in many countries since the outbreak of COVID-19. (UN Women, 2020)

Just over 54% of respondents of victim services reported an increase in the number of victims they served during this time. (Statistics Canada Covid -19, 2020)

An estimated 9.7% of women and 2.3% of men have been **stalked by an intimate partner** during their lifetime. (CDC, 2017)

A total of 87,000 women were intentionally killed in 2017. More than half of them (58 percent)—50,000 — were killed by intimate partners or family members. (UNODC, 2018)

Approximately 15 million adolescent girls (aged 15 to 19) worldwide have experienced **forced sex** (forced sexual intercourse or other sexual acts) at some point in their life. (UNICEF, 2017)

Immigrant and refugee women are more vulnerable to gender-based violence due to language barriers, isolation from their family, precarious work and uncertain legal status. (Status of Women Canada, 2015)

Transgendered people are almost 2X as likely as cisgendered women to experience intimate partner violence. (Nadine, MacGregor & MacQuarrie, 2015)

Indigenous women experience violence at a rate that is **2.7X** higher than that which is reported by non-Indigenous women (Statistics Canada, 2017) and report more severe forms of violence. (Statistics Canada, 2013)

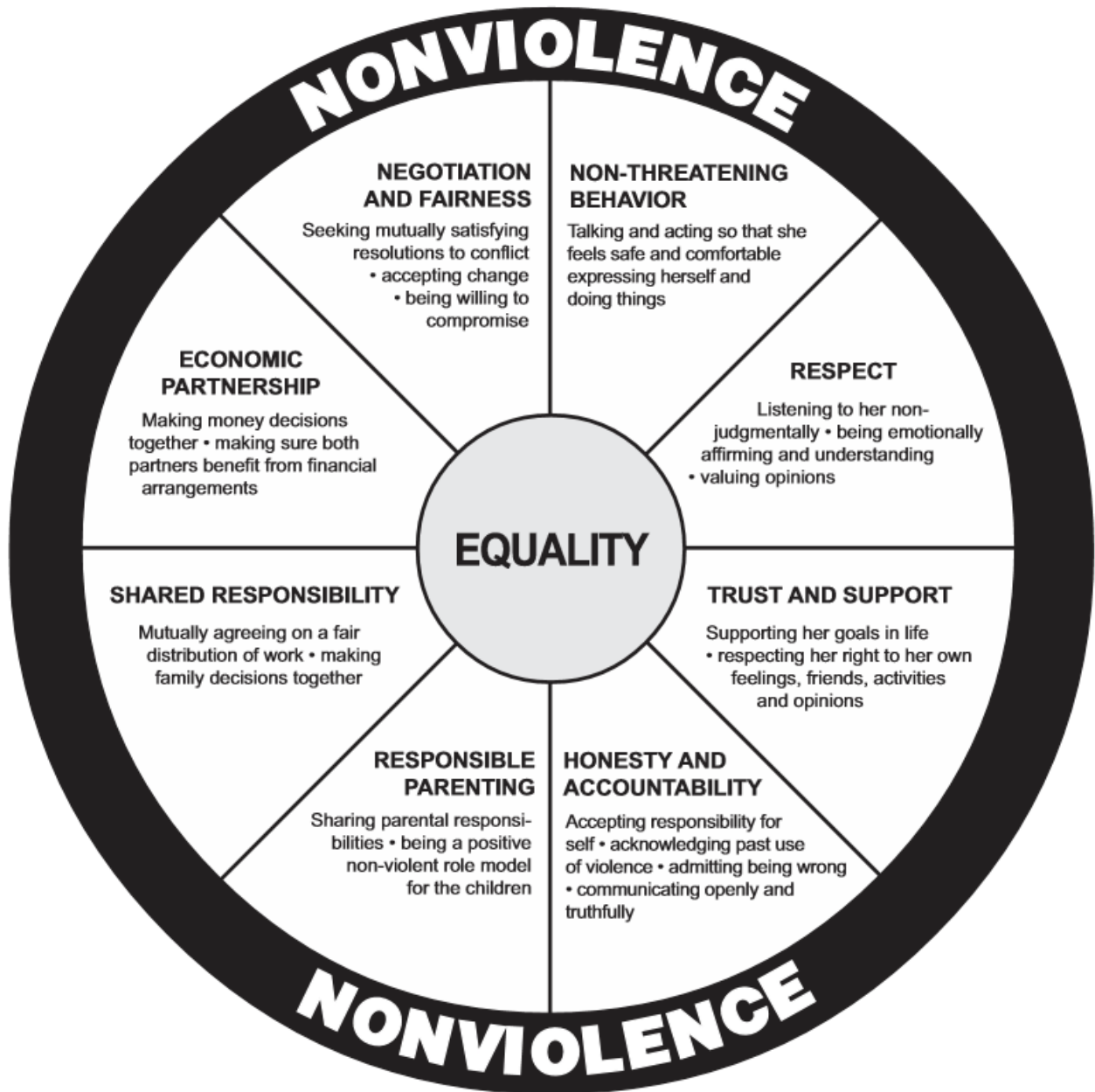
POWER AND CONTROL WHEEL

Violence within adult relationships involves intentional and systematic tactics of abuse which are used to establish power and maintain control over the thoughts, beliefs, and conduct of a partner. These tactics can include, but are not limited to, the examples below:



DOMESTIC ABUSE INTERVENTION PROGRAMS
202 East Superior Street
Duluth, Minnesota 55802
218-722-2781
www.theduluthmodel.org

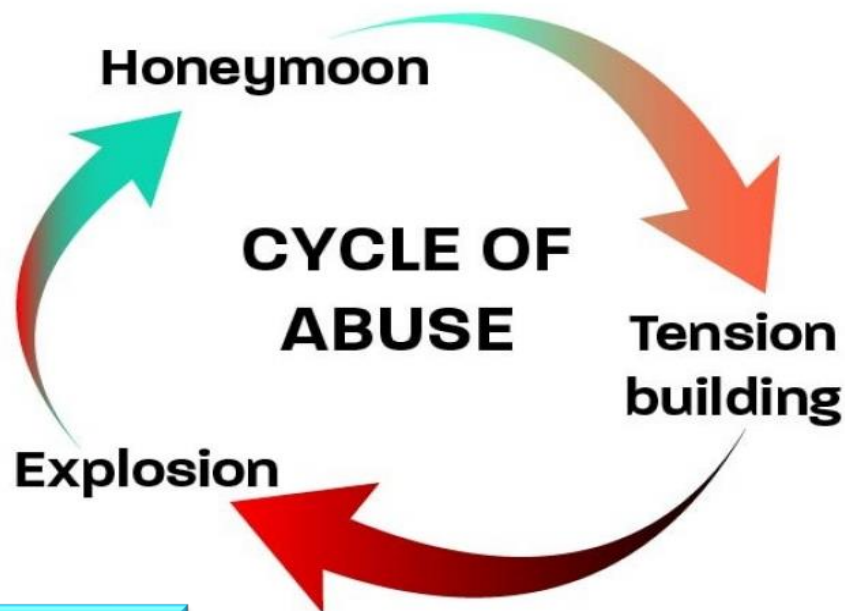
EQUALITY WHEEL



DOMESTIC ABUSE INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

202 East Superior Street
Duluth, Minnesota 55802
218-722-2781
www.theduluthmodel.org

BEHAVIOURS TYPICALLY DISPLAYED DURING THE CYCLE OF ABUSE



Honeymoon

- Apologetic
- Respectful
- More attentive
- Improved communication
- Helps around the house
- Promises to change
- Gives gifts and compliments

Tension

- Insults
- Threats
- Sarcasm
- Jealousy
- Accusation
- Fault finding
- Controls what she does
- Sudden mood changes
- Emotionally distant

Explosion

- Intimidating body language
- Will not allow her to leave
- Throws things
- Slams doors
- Silent treatment
- Physical assault
- Name calling
- Yelling & swearing

Source: *Health care for women subjected to intimate partner violence or sexual violence (2014) pg. 16&89*
www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/violence/vaw-clinical-handbook/en/index.html

First Response Steps

Please note that this is a framework with strategies to support a client through a disclosure of abuse. However, each response must be adapted to support a client's individual concerns, needs and goals.

A. Identifying Abuse

As a worker, you may suspect an individual is experiencing abuse. They may not want you to call them at home or leave messages. They may cancel meetings at the last minute or appear socially isolated, sad, afraid or withdrawn. This person may initially present to your agency asking questions about various possible outcomes and may speak in hypotheticals. They may say that they are gathering information on behalf of an individual they know who is experiencing abuse.

If you suspect that an individual you are working with may be experiencing violence or abuse, it is imperative to respond supportively and remember that they are the expert of their own experiences. They may not identify their experiences as abuse, and they may not choose to discuss the topic further.

If they should choose to identify the abuse, it is extremely important to provide them with opportunities to tell their own story through their own words.

Practice LIVES

Listen	Listen closely with empathy not judgement
Inquire about needs and concerns	Assess and respond to their needs and concerns – emotional, physical, social and practical
Validate	Show that you believe and understand the client
Enhance safety	Discuss how to protect them from further harm.
Support	Help them connect to services, social support

Initial open-ended questions you could ask to encourage the client to discuss it with you:

- **(Victim/survivor's name)** you have told me a little bit about **(abusive person/type of relationship/abuse tactic)**. Can you tell me a little about what happened the last time this occurred?
- How often does this behavior happen? How do you feel when **(abusive person)** behaves like this?
- What type of behaviors would scare you if **(abusive person)** acted against you?
- Has **(abusive person)** ever threatened you or hurt you? Physically, emotionally, financially?
- Do you have concerns about your safety? Your children's safety?
- Are you concerned about the impact of your partner's behavior on your children?
- Do you feel safe to go home after our meeting today?

Source: *Health care for women subjected to intimate partner violence or sexual violence (2014) pg. 16&89*
www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/violence/vaw-clinical-handbook/en/index.html

B. Responding to a Disclosure

If the victim/survivor does disclose abuse, the front-line worker should keep in mind that their response must be sensitive to the client. The frontline worker should:

- Remain calm and remind the client that the abuse they are facing is not their fault.
- Listen with no judgement, validating and believing what the client is saying.
- Respect how much or how little context of the abuse the client is willing to share (VAW-informed interpreters should be used whenever necessary).
- Assess and mitigate the level of risk the client is facing, while supporting whatever decision they choose to keep themselves safe.
- Get the victim/survivor's permission before taking action on their behalf and respect their right to make their own choices.
- Be transparent as you explain confidentiality, along with the limitations of confidentiality when issues of child protection arise.
- If children are involved or witnessing abuse, you have to let the victim/survivor know that you have a duty to report to Children's Aid Society (Visit <http://www.oacas.org/childrens-aid-child-protection/duty-to-report/> for more information on your duty to report)

Tips for managing the conversation

- ✓ Choose a private place to talk, where no one can overhear (but not a place that indicates to others why you are there).
- ✓ Assure the client that you will not repeat what they say to anyone who doesn't need to know. If you are required to report their situation, explain what you must report and to whom.
- ✓ First, encourage them to talk and show that you are listening.
- ✓ Encourage them to continue talking if they wish, but do not force them to talk ("Do you want to say more about that?").
- ✓ Allow silences. If they cry, give them time to recover.

Remember: Always respect the wishes of the victim/survivor.

Questions you might ask?

- *Are you afraid of your partner?*
- *Has your partner or someone else at home threatened to hurt you? If so, when?*
- *Has your partner threatened to kill you?*
- *Does your partner bully you or insult you?*
- *Does he try to control you – for example not letting you have money or leave the house?*

Source: Health care for women subjected to intimate partner violence or sexual violence (2014) pg. 16&89
www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/violence/vaw-clinical-handbook/en/index.html

c. **Basic Safety Planning**

A **safety plan** is created in collaboration with the client that includes actions and strategies they have found effective in keeping themselves safe. The plan can include new resources that they are willing to employ to increase their safety.

A safety plan can include potential action plans, a list of resources or referrals specific to the client's needs, or a safe escape plan, should they ever consider leaving the abusive situation. If the client discloses that they are in immediate danger (i.e. of being assaulted onsite/during the current meeting) and you as a worker are at risk as well, prioritize safety and call emergency services (911). If they have stated that they are in danger and are seeking supports, determine:

- If they have any immediate medical injuries that need to be addressed. If they give consent, support them to seek out medical assistance for physical ailments. If possible, accompany them to this emergency visit.
- If the client would like to call 911 to report the abusive incident, support them with that call. Advocate for any necessary language interpretation services they may need.
- If they need additional counselling services or need to connect to specialized VAW services, provide them with crisis numbers to call. Note: a list of available crisis resources is located on page 16 of this kit.
- If they do not feel safe to return home, brainstorm safe places where they can stay. This could include a relative, trusted friend, neighbour, VAW women's shelters, or safe community spaces such as a church.
- If they are in need of a shelter space, call Assaulted Women's Helpline (AWH) at 416-863-0511 or toll-free at 1-866-863-0511
- Create a list of crisis supports, community resources, personal support and emergency contacts they can keep to access services. If possible, keep a copy in the client file.
- If the client chooses not to access alternative housing and wishes to remain in the relationship, provide them with referrals to specialized VAW resources to create a more in-depth safety plan.
- Encourage them to keep a copy of all important documents with them or in another location for safe keeping. If possible, keep these photocopies in the client file with your agency.

Signs of Immediate Risk of Gender Based Violence

- ✓ Worsening Violence
- ✓ Threatened with a weapon
- ✓ Tried to strangle them
- ✓ Beat them when pregnant
- ✓ Constantly jealous
- ✓ Victim feels perpetrator could kill them



Child Safety Plan

This plan was developed to help someone in an abusive situation to teach their children basic safety planning. It is based on the belief that the most important thing that children can do for their families is to get away from the area of violence! They cannot stop the abuse, although they often try by distracting the abuser or directly interfering in the abusive episode. It is important to tell the child that the best and most important thing for them to do is to be safe. Children who experience domestic violence can be profoundly affected. It is very traumatic for them to be faced with violence directed at them or at someone they love. Personal safety and safety planning are extremely important and necessary for children whose families are experiencing violence. Children should learn ways to protect themselves.

There are several ways to help you develop a safety plan with your children.

- ✓ Have your child pick a safe room/place in the house, preferably with a lock on the door and a phone. The first step of any plan is for the children to get out of the room where the abuse is occurring.
- ✓ Stress the importance of being safe, and that it is not the child's responsibility to make sure that his/her parent is safe
- ✓ Teach your children how to call for help. It is important that children know they should not use a phone that is in view of the abuser. This puts them at risk. If you have a cell phone, teach your children how to use it. Teach them how to contact police by dialing 9-1-1
- ✓ Ensure that the children know their full name and address. Rehearse what your child will say when they call for help.

Example of Calling the Police:

Dial 9-1-1

The person answering the phone will say "Police, Fire, Ambulance."

You say "Police"

Then your child says: My name is _____. I am _____ years old. I need help. Send the police. Someone is hurting my mom/dad.

The address here is _____.

The phone number is _____.

- ✓ It is important for children to remain on the line with police as long as possible and while safe to do so.
- ✓ Pick a safe place to meet your children, out of the home, after the situation is safe for you and for them so you can easily find each other
- ✓ Teach your children the safest route to the planned place of safety for them.



Sample of Violence Against Women Incident Form

DATE: _____

CLIENT NAME: _____

PREFERRED PRONOUNS: _____

STAFF SERVING: _____

D M Y TIME: _____ A.M

DATE AND TIME OF DISCLOSURE: |__| |__| |__| _____ P.M
(Record within 24 hours)

D M Y TIME: _____ A.M

DATE AND TIME OF MOST RECENT |__| |__| |__| _____ P.M

ASSAULT:

Is this the first report for this client? _____ If not, this is report no. _____

Description of disclosure, incident or suspected incident: (please use full name, do not use general terms such as “their husband” or “their boyfriend”) Include witnesses, where the assault took place, parts of the body injured and type(s) of assault.

Actions Taken: (include referrals and follow-up information)

Follow up/ Resources (Check the referrals provided, with worker names):

Service Referred

Organization

Staff Name

☐ **Medical Services** _____

☐ **Children's Services** _____

☐ **Police Services** _____

☐ **Legal Services** _____

☐ **Housing Services** _____

☐ **Financial Services** _____

☐ **Interpreter Services** _____

☐ **Support Group** _____

Other Relevant Information:

Staff Signature: _____

***Please note: Keep the original document in your file and send copy to a Manager and
Executive Director without client's name to ensure confidentiality***

This sample is adapted from COSTI's "Wife Assault/Woman Abuse" Protocol Prepared by Marina Morrow June 1993

Referral Chart

What to refer for	Where/ who to refer to	Contact Information	Responsibility for follow- up
Shelter/Housing			
Crisis Centre			
Financial Aid			
Legal Aid			
Support Groups			
Counselling			
Mental Health Care			
Primary Care			
Child Care			

Source: *Health care for women subjected to intimate partner violence or sexual violence (2014)* pg.32
www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/violence/vaw-clinical-handbook/en/index.html

Toronto West Local Immigration Partnership

Women Against Violence Action Group

Crisis Lines & Resources Covid-19 (1st Edition)



Crisis Phone Lines

- Police: 911
- Victim Services Toronto Crisis line: 416-808-7066
- Victim Support Line 416-314-2447 or 1-888-579-2888
- Assaulted Women's Helpline: 416-863-0511, Toll-Free 1-866-863-0511
- Distress Centre: 416- 408-4357
- Toronto Rape Crisis Centre: 416-597-8808
- Women's College Hospital Domestic Violence Program: 416-323-6040
- Human Trafficking Hotline: 1-833-999-9211
- Canada Suicide Prevention Service: 1-833-456-4566, TXT: 45645
(Text support available from 4pm – 12 am)
- National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233 and TTY 1-800-787-3224
- Toronto Seniors Helpline: 416-217-2077
- Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868 or TXT 686868
- Children's Aid Society of Toronto Reporting Neglect/ Abuse: 416-924-4646
- Disaster Distress Help Line: 1-800-985-5990 or TXT TalkWithUs to 66746



Housing and Shelters

- Accessing Emergency Shelters: Central Intake 24/7 | 416-338-4766 or 1-(877)-338-3398
- Central Family Intake: 416-397-5637 or 416-338-4766
- VAW Shelters in Canada: www.sheltersafe.ca
- Housing supports for LGBTQ2S at 519: 416-355-6782
- Sistering: 416-926-9762
- Tenant Hotline (Mon-Fri, 8:30am-6pm): 416-921-9494
- Landlord & Tenant Board (Mon-Fri, 8:30am-5pm): 416-645-8080
- Rental Housing Enforcement Unit: 1-888-772-9277 (toll-free) or 416-585-7214
- Fred Victor: 416-644-1734



Legal Info/Advice

- Barbra Schlifer Clinic: 416- 323-9149
- Law Society Referral Services (LSRS): 416-947-5255, Toll Free: 1-855-947-5255, www.findlegalhelp.ca
- Local Community Legal Clinics, Specialty Legal Clinics: www.legalaid.on.ca/en/contact
- Ontario Legal Aid: <http://www.legalaid.on.ca/>
- Toll Free: 1-800-668-8258 (interpretive services available), www.legalaid.on.ca
- Criminal Injuries Compensation Board: www.sjto.gov.on.ca/cicb
- Ontario Legal Clinics: 416-979-1446 or toll-free 1-800-668-8258
- HIV & AIDS Legal Clinic Ontario (HALCO): (416-340-7790 / 1-888-705-8889)
- CLEO (Community Legal Education Ontario): www.cleo.on.ca
- Criminal Injuries Compensation Board: www.sjto.gov.on.ca/cicb

- Law Society Referral Services (LSRS): 416-947-5255, Toll Free: 1-855-947-5255, www.findlegalhelp.ca
- METRAC: 416-392-3135 (Information Regarding Legal Rights)



Services Directory

- Call 211 or for on-line search: <https://www.211toronto.ca/>



Safety Plans

- Emergency Escape Plan provided by The Redwood <https://www.torontowestlip.ca/wp-content/uploads/Escape-Plan.pdf>
- Victim Services Toronto, Safety planning tools and resources <http://victimservicestoronto.com/resources/#safety-planning>
- 3 Considerations for Supporting Women Experiencing Intimate Partner Violence During the COVID-19 Pandemic: <https://bit.ly/2YVKew9>



Other Information and Resources

- Police Escort Services: 416-808-2222
- Safe Pet: www.linktoronto.org
- Friendly Neighbour Hotline: 1(855) 581-9580, (Monday – Friday 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM)
- Partners for Access and Identification (PAID) Project: 416-691-7407, Monday to Friday, 9 am – 3 pm.
- Talk for Healing helpline for Indigenous women: 1 855 554 HEAL (4325)
- How to Access Support While Living at Home: <https://adobe.ly/2Z8HprZ>
- COVID-19: Seniors & Vulnerable People: <https://bit.ly/2Z3luAW>
- Domestic/Intimate Partner Violence Resources <https://bit.ly/3fKDQOa>
- Joining Hands: Reaching Out To Our Communities, Rexdale Women's Centre http://www.rexdalewomen.org/pdf/RWC_2011_NFF_lowres.pdf
- Opening Doors for Abused Women – A Collaborative Approach to Prevent Violence Against Women <http://www.rexdalewomen.org/pdf/NFF-Campaign-Opening-Doors-for-Abused-Women2014-15.pdf>
- What is Gender-Based Violence Training: <http://ocasi.org/gender-based-violence>
- Resources on Gender-Based Violence and the COVID-19 Pandemic: <https://bit.ly/3b4KUln>
- Housing Stabilization Fund: <https://bit.ly/2WOineO>
- Barbra Schlifer Resources: <https://schliferclinic.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Crisis-Resources-1.pdf>
- COVID-19 Resources for Non-Status Women: <https://schliferclinic.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Resources-for-Non-Status-Women-During-Covid-19-FINAL.pdf>
- www.toronto.ca (Search employment services to verify closest location to the client.)
Toll free: 1-888-465-4478

Glossary of VAW Terms

Abuser/Abusive Partner	is a person who engages in a pattern of coercive, exploitative and violent tactics against an intimate partner in order to establish and maintain power, control and dominance over the partner.
Advocacy	includes the support that domestic violence programs offer to individual women, including 24-hour crisis line, shelter, food, clothing, transportation, general, legal and medical assistance, accompaniment to court and other services, information and referrals, assistance with rent and utilities, crisis intervention, support groups, men's re-education groups and childcare and children's programming.
Battered Woman/ Domestic Violence Victim/ Survivor	is someone who has experienced verbal abuse, financial abuse, physical abuse or sexual violence.
Child Support	means money that one parent pays to the other parent to help support their children financially after a separation or divorce. It is also sometimes called "maintenance."
Child Support Guidelines	are laws with rules and tables used to determine how much child support should be paid when parents separate or divorce. The Federal Child Support Guidelines are regulations under the Divorce Act and apply when parent's divorce. Provincial or territorial guidelines apply when there is no divorce.
Economic Abuse	includes, but is not limited to the withholding and/or restricting of money needed for food and/or clothing, denying the right to seek and/or maintain employment, taking personal money, denying independent access to money and/or excluding the victim from financial decision-making.
Electronic Violence	any kind of aggression perpetrated through technology. Examples include bullying, teasing, telling lies, making fun of someone, making rude comments, spreading false rumors or threatening comments. This can happen through e-mail, chat rooms, texting, social media profiles, blogs or pictures posted on websites or sent on smart phones. It can also include forms of cyber stalking and hacking of personal accounts.
Gaslighting	is a form of psychological and emotional abuse where the abuser manipulates situations to trick the victim into distrusting his or her sense of reality, memory and perceptions. Gaslighting techniques can look like withholding, countering, blocking, diverting, trivializing, forgetting and denial.
Gender- Based Violence (GBV)	is the general term used to capture violence that occurs as a result of the normative role expectations associated with each gender, along with the unequal power relationships between the two genders, within the context of a specific society.
Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)	describes physical violence, sexual violence, stalking and psychological aggression by a current partner, spouse or close family member. It can occur within heterosexual or same-sex couples and does not require sexual intimacy.
Physical Abuse	includes bodily harm, discomfort or injury including hitting, punching, slapping, kicking, pushing, burning, biting, torture, restraining, and assault with a weapon, withholding of food and/or medical care, and/or murder.

Psychological/Emotional Abuse	is any act that provokes fear, diminishes the woman's dignity or sense of self-worth, and/or intentionally inflicts psychological trauma as a means of exerting power and control over the woman. Psychological abuse can include criticism, degradation, humiliation, excessive possessiveness, threats (suicidal, homicidal, deportation, kidnapping children, harming family, friends and/or pets), controlling a person's daily activities, social isolation, and/or purposeful destruction of property and/or pets.
Sex Trafficking	is when someone uses force, fraud or coercion to cause a commercial sex act with an adult or causes a minor to commit a commercial sex act (Shared Hope International, 2021). It is fueled by an illegal global market and uses fear, violence, intimidation and threats to coerce victims. The common age of victims when they enter sex trafficking is 14-16 years old.
Sexual Abuse	includes any act of forced sexual activity, sexual harassment, unwanted sexual touching, the refusal to use protection from STD's or unwanted pregnancy during sex, and forced exposure to, or participation in pornography or prostitution.
Spiritual Abuse	includes degrading another person's spiritual beliefs, withholding the means to practice, and/or forcing adherence to a belief system.
Transphobia	is the fear, hatred or hostile response to perceived violations of gender norms and the gender binary by individuals or groups. It can manifest as sexual violence, physical violence or verbal harassment but extends to the systemic disadvantages against trans people sustained by society's promoting and rewarding of anti-trans sentiments.
Verbal Abuse	is the use of vexatious comments that are known or that ought to be known to be unwelcome, threatening, degrading, offensive, and/or embarrassing.
Violence against Women (VAW) / Woman Abuse	is directed at those who identify as women, through the actual or threatened physical, psychological, sexual, financial, verbal, or spiritual abuse by someone with whom she shares an acquaintance, intimate, familial, or romantic relationship. The United Nations General Assembly (1993) also defines woman abuse as "any act of gender-based violence that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty whether occurring in public or in private."
Women Abuse	is any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life. Using this definition as a point of departure, woman abuse is defined here as the actual or threatened physical, psychological, sexual, financial, verbal, or spiritual abuse of a woman by someone with whom she has or has had an intimate, familial or romantic relationship (United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, 1993).

