

PRIORITY FOR ACTION: Continuous Access to Education for Children in Shelter



Prairieaction
FOUNDATION

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Prepared by Kate Woodman, PhD., ACWS Researcher



Alex Taylor School
9321 Jasper Ave.
Edmonton AB T5J 3T7
P: 780-456-7000 F: 780-456-7001
voice@acws.ca www.acws.ca

A Canada Fit for Children:

We in Canada will continue to ensure quality learning for children regardless of where they live and the particular challenges they face. . . We will continue to foster and promote learning environments that are safe, accessible, supportive and caring, and based on the principles of respect, diversity and inclusion. Working together, we will build on individual, family and community assets, strengthening their capacities to provide quality-learning opportunities. (p. 35)

*Federal government report to the UN, 2004.

Background

Alberta Council of Women's Shelters (ACWS):

The ACWS is a province-wide, voluntary organization supporting Alberta's 41 women's shelters and their partners through education, research and services for the benefit of abused women and their children. Our focus areas are issues of family violence and breaking the cycle of inter-generational violence, through effective interventions, research and public awareness. To that end, ACWS works toward:

- ✿ Serving as the collective voice of the member organizations
- ✿ Fostering networking and information sharing
- ✿ Assisting in acquiring adequate resources for member shelters
- ✿ Fostering professional development within the sheltering movement
- ✿ Influencing public policy and systems
- ✿ Increasing public awareness of issues related to family violence

ACWS work for the member shelters has been diverse and far-reaching. Incorporated only 23 years ago, the services provided to the shelters have evolved and expanded dramatically, especially over the past five years. Key areas of focus are shelter training and board support, mounting public awareness campaigns, research and advocacy.

Provincial Demographics:

The results of ACWS's focused effort are well-needed; Alberta leads provincially in domestic violence indicators, such as assault, stalking, homicide-suicide and is second in domestic homicide. As well, the RCMP has released 2005 homicide statistics for their jurisdictions; of 49 homicides in Alberta, 31 were domestic related. Generating a community, collaborative response to these grim numbers, along with joint problem-solving to resolve the domestic violence situation in this province, are key action points for ACWS.

To that end, ACWS shelters are committed to a comprehensive data gathering process that results in a province wide aggregate of accurate and important information.¹ For the 2005 – 2006 fiscal year ACWS statistics indicate:

¹ ACWS member shelters use the Canadian Outcomes Research Institutes' HOMES database system to securely collect data.

- ✿ Over 12,000 women and dependants were resident in shelter
- ✿ Over 20,000 women and dependants requested shelter space and were unable to be accommodated
- ✿ Emergency shelters had a 33% increase in calls to their crisis lines, over the last fiscal year
- ✿ 51% of women in emergency shelters self-identify as Aboriginal
- ✿ 76% of women resident in emergency shelters are at high or serious risk of further violence (in keeping with Canada's national rates, as reported in the 2006 YWCA national study, *Effective Practices in Sheltering Women*)
- ✿ Upon leaving shelter, 95% of women feel they are more able to keep themselves and their children safe; over 93% know more about the effect abuse has on their children

These numbers are dismal. Yet they also foreground the fact that clearly the women's shelters in Alberta are working hard and achieving excellent results. And they are doing this in an environment of chronic shortages. Shelters lack sufficient space, beds, staffing, outside supports—in short, they lack sufficient funding. The stress shelter staff are working in is further exacerbated by the demographics that are Alberta's current reality. In the last quarter of 2005, Alberta's population growth rate was 5 times the national average, as reported by Statistics Canada. The enormous wealth generated by the energy sector has resulted in the influx of people, the current labor shortages, the skyrocketing housing prices, the lack of rental space and the flow of people and wealth. The shadow side of these growth facts? The consequences are homelessness, a social infrastructure that cannot keep pace, and over-burdened communities with limited resources. Alberta is facing a serious crisis from which it will take years to recover. Because of this situation, shelter directors predict that women will be staying longer in shelter because it is becoming nearly impossible to find them alternate housing.

In consonance with the above is yet another tough reality for shelters in today's Alberta: staff and volunteer retention. Especially in Northern Alberta, salary potential and labor shortage have created a job market in which it is nearly impossible for shelters to compete. Provincially funded, their contracts have not kept pace with the changes and the temptations to work elsewhere, under less stress, and for more lucrative wages, is hard to resist. Further, lack of benefits and pension packages have made the situation increasingly untenable for women living in a province where the price for everything keeps increasing. Shelter directors are working very hard to create work environments and team cohesion to attract and keep the qualified staff they need.

This situation affects other aspects of shelter life, as well. Governed by volunteer boards, shelters are hard pressed to find people willing to undertake board responsibilities in the competitive environment for community work.

Children Exposed to Family Violence (CEFV):

Into this situation is added the growing awareness in Alberta and across Canada that children resident in shelter are not simply add-ons to the woman fleeing domestic violence. With their mothers, the majority of these children have fled to shelter to escape serious family violence. These children are at high risk and need immediate and diverse services.

Children who have been exposed to domestic violence are facing their own set of special needs and are in legitimate need of direct intervention. Shelters are providing effective service through crisis workers and women are learning and willing to learn how to keep themselves and their dependants safe. Yet the impact on the lives of children who have been exposed to or have experienced domestic violence results in victim behavior with short and long-term impacts. Yet not every shelter in Alberta has the capacity to offer continuous service by specialist child support workers.

Best practice research supports that for a child, observing, hearing or being directly affected by family violence threatens their sense of stability and security. Exposure to family violence may result in:

- ✿ increased emotional and behavioral difficulty
- ✿ traumatic stress reaction
- ✿ physical injury
- ✿ sexual abuse
- ✿ triangulation (claiming the child's behavior resulted in the assault on the parent, etc.)
- ✿ ambivalence toward violent parent
- ✿ imitating violent behaviors
- ✿ desensitization to aggressive behavior

Responding to the needs of children in shelter with direct programming is an effective and much needed service. Evaluations conducted on a CEFV program provided by an Alberta shelter indicate that: "children in treatment groups significantly decreased their anxiety, improved their attitudes and response to anger, and decreased their sense of responsibility for both their parents and the violence."² It is important to note that CEFV interventions must be both age and gender appropriate. CEFV programs must also address the needs of older children. Recent joint research by ACWS and the Alberta Association of Sexual Assault Centers showed that in a study of 1600 adolescent sex offenders, 63% had witnessed family violence during childhood. Further, in Canada, the rates of sexual offending are highest amongst males age 13 – 17, with the highest rate for 13-14 year olds.³

Children in shelter are children at risk and in need of preventative intervention. Stability and security are key indicators of childhood health. In the midst of all the changes a move to shelter entails, children need a response that both helps them recover from victimization and restores some normality to their daily experiences. Providing continuous access to education is one touchstone with potential to reassure the child their needs are being met and their lives are valued.

Leading research in the area of CEFV has provided adults with tracking information to be alert to children's needs. Please see *CEFV in the Classroom* below, which has been developed by Linda Baker, for some of the potential impacts of violence on school aged children. Children do not leave the affects of family violence in the home. It travels with them into the classroom or the shelter.

² See p. 11 of the YWCA study, *Turning Points: An analysis of YWCA violence against women shelters and family violence programs*. 2005.

³ Presentation, "Identifying Potential for Collaboration." ACWS and AASAC, May 2006.

CEFV in the Classroom

Potential Impacts of violence on children: School-aged Children (6-11 years)	
Key Aspect of Development	Potential Impact of Domestic Violence
Increased emotional awareness of self and others.	More awareness of own reactions to violence at home and of impact on others (e.g., concerns about mother's safety, father being charged).
Increased complexity in thinking about right and wrong; emphasis on fairness and intent.	Possibly more susceptible to adopting rationalizations heard to justify violence (e.g. alcohol causes violence; victim deserved abuse).
Academic and social success at school has primary impact on self-concept.	Ability to learn may be decreased due to impact of violence (e.g., distracted); may miss positive statements or selectively attend to negatives or evoke negative feedback.
Increased same sex identification.	May learn gender roles associated with intimate partner abuse (e.g., males as perpetrators – females as victims).

*Linda Baker, et. al., *CEFV: A Teacher's Handbook to Increase Understanding and Improve Community Responses*, Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System (CCFJS), 2002, p. 8.

The outcome of these realities upon a child's development is enormous. CEFV present with a number of problems, from simple physical complaints such as stomachaches and tiredness, to post-traumatic stress disorder, suicidal thoughts and substance abuse. However, the results may be more subtle, as Baker observes: "Some students may cope by intently focusing on academics, sports or social activities. They describe blocking out the troubling events at home with life at school. These young people may appear as if they have *not* been affected by the domestic violence. It may be more accurate, however, to view them as children and adolescents whose coping strategies foster success at school" (p. 10). In either case—whether the child becomes a passive success or active in disorderly behavior—they are a child in need of intervention. When CEFV are resident in shelter, their needs are many.

Shelters work hard to provide effective interventions. In Alberta, the provincial government provides minimal funding for child support. Eligibility for funded child support is dependant upon the number of beds in shelter. However, federally funded shelters (INAC) receive no funding for this position. Yet, given the fact that children across the full spectrum of ages are resident for 24 hours/ day for up to 21 consecutive days, the amount of programming and intervention that can be provided is limited. Additionally, children resident in shelter may well be foreign language speakers, have special needs and health issues that intersect with their educational needs.

Providing services to children resident in shelter is a complex issue. In light of the above, it came to the attention of shelter directors that focused research was needed on the educational needs of children resident in shelter, as one important aspect of providing for their care. The Social and Legal Issues Committee of the ACWS board was tasked with the

responsibility to undertake a short research project in order to assess current practice and identify recommendations for the membership. The results of this province-wide environment scan would be made available to the membership and presented to representative provincial government departments.

Meeting the Many Needs of Children Resident in Shelter

Needed programs (age and gender appropriate): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ CEFV intervention groups ➤ child support ➤ court support & child witness programs ➤ parenting support ➤ education provision ➤ supervised playtime ➤ play therapy ➤ babysitting ➤ counseling ➤ group work ➤ outreach/follow-up programs ➤ special needs interventions 	Needed facilities and staffing (age and gender appropriate): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ outdoor play space ➤ play resources ➤ CEFV intervention resources ➤ Educational resources ➤ age specific beds ➤ quiet space ➤ specialist staff ➤ tutors or education specialists
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Methodology

Project goals:

- to identify education service provisions for children resident in Alberta's women's shelters
- to identify current best practice in providing education service for children resident in Alberta's women's shelters

Data gathering:

Quantitative:

- education service provision survey of 41 Alberta women's shelters
- education service provision survey to 10 provincial sheltering associations across Canada
- public awareness survey of 4th year education students (40) at the University of Alberta

Qualitative:

- education service provision questions to 41 Alberta women's shelters
- education service provision questions to 10 provincial sheltering associations across Canada
- focus group with 7 representative Alberta women's shelters

Literature review:

- publications, articles and resources were reviewed for information regarding issues of education service provision for children resident in women's emergency shelters and education institution policies.

Profile of Current Practice: Education Intervention

ACWS member shelters and stakeholders were surveyed in order to determine current practice and needs for education service provision for children resident in shelter.

ACWS Member Shelters:

The response rate for the general shelter survey was good: 28 of 39 women's shelters participated in the survey.⁴ Coverage included key urban centers (Edmonton and Calgary) as well as urban and all five on-reserve shelters.

Concerning education services, the following quantitative data was collected:

ACWS Member Shelters

Education service provision	#
Children attend their own school	21
Other	16
Local school with usual classroom/teacher	13
In-house teacher	3
Specialized school/location used as school outside of shelter	3
Local school with sequestered classroom/teacher	2

ACWS Member Shelters

Satisfaction with partnership	#
Excellent	12
Good	5
Neither good nor difficult	1
Difficult	3
Very difficult	0

Concerning who provides the education interventions, the shelters indicated a wide range of options: local teachers; specialist teachers; shelter child support or childcare worker; parent tutoring.

The following qualitative data was submitted, by theme:

Funding:

There is a wide range of funding provisions to shelters across the province. In some cases the local school will send a substitute teacher for a day to meet with the mother and child, in shelter. In other cases, the shelter's in-house teacher is completely funded by the local school district. Only two school boards provide shelters with sequestered "one-room schoolhouse" kind of classrooms in the local school for children grades 1-6. In other cases,

⁴ ACWS has 41 member shelters: 39 are women's emergency and second stage; 2 are senior's shelters and they do not provide residence for children.

the only funding shelters receive are free bus passes to assist the children with transportation needs.

Shelter Initiatives:

Alberta women's shelters are working hard to provide for the educational needs of the children resident in their programs. Shelters are connecting with the neighborhood school to provide teachers with tours and orientations, in order to increase their awareness of the situations shelter children are facing. This effort is meeting with a good response from teachers and school administrators. In some cases shelters are designating a staff person as the "school liaison" to manage the networking as well as to encourage the parent to be involved. One shelter has set up a protocol with the local school. Overall, this teamwork approach works well, garnering respect from the schools for the work the shelters do.

School Administration:

Shelters report that typically the school administrator provides good help, assisting with the integration of the child into their school. In one case, the school arranges for a "buddy" for the shelter child, who begins attending by the 3rd day in shelter. Shelter staff experiences the administrators as authentically concerned about the children and supportive. A good working relationship between the local principal and the shelter is important to providing education service to the child in shelter.

Parents:

Shelters report that it is often the case that schools have difficulty staying in contact with the moms. Mothers needing shelter services are facing enormous stresses and dealing with many institutions (health, law, police, employment, etc). If the shelter is not able to provide a school liaison, the child's education needs may well fall out of focus. Shelters encourage parents to develop links with the teachers and the schools, but with the 21 day length of stay, the child may only be at the local school for 3 weeks, and then be either moving back to the place of original registration (if mom returns home) or relocated when new housing is found. These variables may create very stressful situations for all the stakeholders.

Transportation:

Transportation provisions vary greatly for children resident in shelter. In some cases, bus passes are provided to the child for free; more often this is an expense that shelters underwrite. In other situations, the local school bus will stop at the shelter, but this can be problematic. It creates stress for the child and security may be at issue. Some shelters arrange for staff to drive students to school, but many do not have sufficient staff to provide this service.

School Work:

It is most common for the school to arrange for class work to be sent to the shelter, whether it is the local school or the child's normal place of enrollment. In one case, where the shelter provides a school based program, they have an in-house teacher who monitors the child's work.

High Risk Situations:

Children at high risk do not attend school. Schools either fax work to the shelter or the children miss out.

Senior Grade Students:

Older students do not have any special arrangements made for them. They stay enrolled in their own school and either do not attend or find their way there. In some cases the school jurisdiction will provide them with bus tickets. Shelters face difficulties in keeping these students from falling behind in their programs of study.

[The] local school does not work well. It is too disruptive for the child—and not great for the school, either. As a result the children fall behind.

– Provincial Shelter Director

On-reserve Shelters in Alberta Face Unique Issues:

Funded by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), on-reserve shelters face unique issues. In remote, small communities, security and confidentiality are pressing matters. For instance, if using the local school bus, it is immediately known to all other children when a stop is made at the local shelter. These children are vulnerable to feelings of shame and may be derided by others. Walking long distances to school is not simply a matter of the time it takes; providing security for the child along the way is another issue. These shelters simply do not have the funding or staffing to drive the children to school.

All five on-reserve shelters indicate that the best help for them would be adequate funding to enable them to hire a child support worker, or a teacher, in shelter. This would enable them to support the children with their schooling.

An in-house tutor and teacher [would improve education provision at shelter] so that the children do not have to worry about being seen getting on the bus from the shelter. They also are transient as a result of abuse and keeping them in a stable environment while learning would be most beneficial in enhancing learning.

-On-reserve Shelter Director

Sheltering Associations Data Across Canada:

During a recent meeting of the Canadian Association of Women's Shelters (CAWS), a short questionnaire was distributed among the directors of the provincial and territorial organizations. The response rate was good: 11 surveys were completed.

National Sheltering Responses

Education service provision	#
Children attend their own school	7
Local school with usual classroom/teacher	5
In-house teacher	3
Other	1
Specialized school/location used as school outside of shelter	0
Local school with sequestered classroom/teacher	0

National Sheltering Responses

Satisfaction with partnership	#
Excellent	0
Good	5
Neither good nor difficult	2
Difficult	4
Very difficult	0

Provincial sheltering organizations across Canada were happy to participate in this ACWS research. The need to provide children resident in shelter with continuing education is seen as a priority service. The results from the report indicate that the situation in Alberta is not unlike circumstances across the country. Most frequently, children resident in shelter continue to attend their own schools. The second choice for Canada (and third for Alberta) is to place children in the local school for the duration of their shelter stay. While there is general satisfaction across Canada with the current education provision, shelter directors and provincial coordinators do identify barriers and opportunities in this situation.

Thoughts From Across Canada

“Well trained shelter childcare workers try and make themselves available to various teachers and are able to assist troubled children.”

“The schools are across the street, so we have developed a close relationship with the schools and teachers.”

“There is a designated childcare worker (who is fantastic), who comes to the shelter, interviews the parent/child, walks the child to school on the first day and is the contact for the child/school at the shelter.”

“[Some] regions will *not allow* children from shelter to attend [the school] without a permanent address.”

Focus Group with Alberta Shelters:

In the framework of this research, seven shelters agreed to participate in a 1.5 hour focus group session to work through issues arising from the previous questionnaire. The group addressed the following questions:

- 🐾 What do you identify as the best case scenario in providing education resources to children resident in shelter?

- ✿ What do you identify as key safety issues for education service provision to children resident in shelter?
- ✿ Do you see value in having protocols of understanding signed with local schools, identifying them as community collaborative partners?
- ✿ What processes are in place to assist women resident in shelter with the education needs of their dependants?
- ✿ Are you aware of the education policy and its implementation, of your local school board concerning children in shelter?
- ✿ What barriers do you see to providing education service to children resident in shelter?
- ✿ What barriers are faced by shelters/outreach workers in facilitating education service to children resident in shelter?
- ✿ Other issues for discussion?

Each of the focus group shelters manages the education needs of children resident in a different way. Although each of them works with a local school, the range of service is broad: from half days in a local school that provides only three core subjects, to full days. As well, some have less connected relationships with the school, whereas another shelter hosts an annual “school appreciation” event to thank the teachers and administration for their supportive help.

The following issues emerged as central and achieved consensus in the group:

- ✿ Transportation: funding for buses or taxis is needed
- ✿ Safety: collaboration between the shelter and the school is needed to keep the children safe
- ✿ Engaging the moms: supporting moms and schools to connect for child pick-ups, etc (with father, other family member)
- ✿ Documents: this is a key issue if the woman is from out-of-province and the local school will not accept the student without documents or a permanent address

Looking Ahead: Response from Faculty of Education Students

During a recent presentation at the University of Alberta, with fourth year education students, the subject of school provision for children resident in shelter was directly addressed (January 2006). The forty students in attendance answered a brief questionnaire. The return rate was 100% and the results from the graduating students were revealing:

- ✿ 63% state they *have* received information about family violence in the course of their studies;
- ✿ 33% felt they were aware of the work of women’s emergency and second stage shelters;
- ✿ 18% were briefed on school policy for CEFV, while they were student teaching;
- ✿ 25% of the schools hosting their practicum had a safety plan for children at risk:
 - 12% of the students were briefed on this policy, while student teaching;
- ✿ 65% feel prepared to have children resident in shelter in their classrooms; and
- ✿ **70%, because of the information received during the ACWS presentation, think they are better able to respond to a child who discloses to them about family violence**

When asked about what could be done to increase awareness, among education students, about family violence and children exposed to family violence, the students stated they needed more information. They would like to see: more focused information included in the curriculum; school administrators to include briefing sessions during their practicum and have guidelines for response; guidance offices to have pamphlets and information about domestic violence; the option to visit a shelter; more special sessions/speakers on the subject made available; collaboration between social workers and teachers.

Education Students Speak Up

“What are the warning signs for CEFV? I feel helpless to respond properly.”

“How do I help students to relate to the child from the shelter?”

“How do I report if a child discloses?”

“This subject [of family violence] scares me. It is full of extremely surprising facts.”

What the Research Discloses

Barriers: Blocking Children from the Education they Need

- 🦋 Transport: accessibility and costs
- 🦋 School attendance can be stressful for the child but staying in shelter all day is also not necessarily a good thing
- 🦋 Short term stays are disruptive to the school classroom
- 🦋 Children from outlying communities do not attend school when in shelter
- 🦋 Children often experience bullying and isolation when in the school
- 🦋 Lack of special needs teachers for shelter children requiring this service
- 🦋 Teachers report that shelter children often have a very hard time fitting in or staying on task, due to stresses

Best Practice: Partnership in Action

🦋 Shelters and Schools

- Shelter did a session with the local school on safety planning that was well received by the teachers and administration
- Shelter hosts annual “school appreciation” event to thank school for collaboration
- Shelter provides tours for administrators and teachers to help them understand their work

🦋 In-house Shelter Provisions

- “School liaison” Terms of Reference for shelter staff person
- Access to designated shelter teaching professional
- Work with moms to help them connect with the school
- Quiet space for children to do homework

Shelter-School Policy Best Practice

When students are living with their mother at a shelter:	
Make necessary allowances around school assignments.	➤ It may be difficult to complete assignments because of circumstances at the shelter (e.g., lack of quiet space) and the student's emotional state.
Cooperate with the safety plan that may have been developed in conjunction with the non-offending parent.	➤ Children and adolescents may have helped develop a plan that may include where they must go when transported to school (e.g., office or yard) and what to do if the abusive parent comes to the school. It is important for every staff member at the school to be ware of this plan. This may involve protocols established with the shelter and police for crisis situations (e.g., hostile parent without visitation rights demands to see the student).
Be aware of any school policies and procedures in case a crisis situation occurs.	➤ Policies that include procedures for dealing with these difficult and distressing situations are helpful (e.g., who will call the police? Who will stay with the student? Where will the student be taken until the police arrive?). The goal is to maximize the safety and minimize the emotional distress of all students, parent(s), staff members and school visitors.

* Linda Baker, et. al., *CEFV: A Teacher's Handbook to Increase Understanding and Improve Community Responses*, Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System (CCFJS), 2002, p. 15.

Recommendations

- ✿ Dedicated funding to shelters: Shelters need flexibility to administer their own program, responsive to children's needs and shelter location. A funding formula needs to cover educational programming, including staff resources, materials, facilities and transportation.
- ✿ Policy and Practice changes: Alberta Learning and ACWS work to develop shelter best practices, identify core learning values, service standards and outcomes for children in shelter. This will limit disruption to the learning process, and provide continuity and stability to enhance or increase a child's learning. This might include:
 - Individual tutoring for children while in shelter
 - An in-shelter education program that is limited to one or two core subject areas (i.e., Language and Math)
- ✿ Increase Post Secondary Awareness: Advanced Education lead an initiative with Education Faculties in colleges and universities to provide the necessary information and resources on domestic violence issues in their course content; and in there placements.

Current Alberta Government Policy

The responsibility for the delivery of education services in Alberta rests with school boards. The provincial government sets out the powers and responsibilities of school boards in the ***Alberta School Act***.*

The provincial government also provides funding to school boards and school boards must use these resources to meet their responsibilities. Recently a Renewed Funding Framework was introduced in the province which provides school boards the opportunity to use the resources as required and as set out in their own policies. Previously much of the government funding was 'enveloped' and boards had to spend funding only in the areas for which it was provided.

If you are interested in discussing what support services are provided to children and students in different parts of the province you would need to review the policies of the local school boards.

Email from Sandra Shepitka-Boyle, Government of Alberta

* Access a copy of the Act by going to the Queen's Printer site at www.qp.gov.ab.ca.

Conclusion

While women's shelters provide a safe haven for women and children, most do not have the resources nor facilities necessary to run a school program for the children resident in their shelters.

With few resources and in the face of many barriers, Alberta's shelter directors came together in the framework of this research to capitalize on found assets and strengths by sharing the successful strategies. They are very conscious of the one specific need of every child in Canada: continuous access to education. The strategies and networks they have developed to provide for this human right to education is laudable. Collaboration with local schools has proved to be the most cost-effective and user-friendly solution and it goes forward on the strength of the shelter staff and teachers who make it work. It should be noted that neither sector—shelters or schools—crisis workers or teachers--have sufficient financial resources. Both groups have suffered under Alberta's social policy.

But this solution of either working with the local school or continuing the child's attendance at their own school, does not apply to every child's situation or every shelter. And there is one significant weakness: providing adequate safety for a child at high risk from a violent perpetrator. In these cases, all agree the child must not leave the security provided by the shelter.

And so many shelter directors, not only in Alberta, but across Canada, representing urban, remote, provincial and on-reserve shelters, agree that for the government to fund adequate space, resources and provide an in-house teacher would be the best possible solution to meeting the needs of the children in their care. This is not just the stuff dreams are made of—some shelters have managed to advocate for such programs. The task, now, is to make

it available to every shelter that sees it as the best solution to providing the educational needs of resident children.

In Canada's plan of action, outlined in *A Canada Fit for Children*, a priority for action is children exposed to family violence. Canada promises to "continue to support strategies in the home, in out-of-home care, and in our communities that promote the healthy development and well being of children, and assist those who have been maltreated."⁵ In order to achieve this vision, adequate and immediate funding of child support programs in shelter must be acted upon now!

⁵ *A Canada Fit for Children*, p. 28. It is important to note the report also states: "exposure to family violence is increasingly being recognized as a form of child maltreatment" (p.28).

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