

## PS-2 Collaborative, Cooperative, Community Response



### POSITION ON COLLABORATIVE, COORDINATED, COMMUNITY-BASED RESPONSE

ACWS believes that a collaborative, coordinated, community-based response model is the most effective vehicle for addressing the issues of family violence from prevention & intervention through protection, outreach and follow-up. The primary goals of a coordinated community response are victim safety, offender accountability, and changing the climate of tolerance toward violence in the community.

"The reduction of domestic violence is an outcome of a coordinated comprehensive community-wide system."<sup>7</sup>

Violence within families is everybody's business. It is an important social issue with severe and negative consequences for the victims, their families and society at large. The cost to Canadian society, both directly and indirectly, of violence against women, is over \$4.2 billion (1995) making the true cost to the public purse even higher.<sup>8</sup>

The present system of numerous provincial ministries and regional authorities fragments a complicated service delivery network<sup>9</sup> for victims and their families. Funding of services, availability of programs and basic awareness and understanding of family violence issues are inconsistent across the province. While there are many programs, services and initiatives underway across the province, experience suggests that these initiatives often operate in isolation from each other.<sup>10</sup> This situation does not contribute to ensuring the safety and protection of victims of violence and the practice of responsible caring.

Because there is no single service that can prevent the violence or mitigate the consequences for all victims and their families, a collaborative, coordinated response that covers the continuum from prevention and intervention through protection, outreach and follow-up is required. Best practice research supports the need for such an approach in which the various programs and agencies work together to share information and expertise and take concerted actions to address the problem.

ACWS supports the development and implementation of an approach that would include:

<sup>7</sup> Domestic Violence – Everybody's Business, Multnomah County pg. 11

<sup>8</sup> Achieving a Violence Free Alberta is Everybody's Business: Regional Workshop Guide and Workbook, Government of Alberta, 2004 pg. 16

<sup>9</sup> ACWS Position on Family Violence Commission, January 2004

<sup>10</sup> Achieving a Violence-Free Alberta: Regional Workshop Guide & Workbook, Alberta Government, 2004

- ✿ Establishing a provincial body responsible for the coordination and delivery of all family violence related prevention programs and services throughout the province
- ✿ Developing and implementing appropriate policies and practices, dedicated, first and foremost, to the protection and well-being of survivors, victims and children who have been exposed to family violence. and
- ✿ Designing and delivering services at a community level in ways that reflect, respect and acknowledge the diversity and uniqueness of communities.<sup>11</sup>

Partners in developing and implementing a collaborative, coordinated community response must include shelter providers, the police, the courts, lawyers, judges, treatment providers, health care providers, educators, child abuse intervention advocates, faith communities and local governments. These partners need to work together to develop and implement policies and procedures that improve interagency coordination that will result in more uniform responses to incidents of family violence.

While the coordination can take many forms, “at the core of any such effort is a commitment of the participants to develop:

- ✿ A shared philosophical framework on violence against women;
- ✿ An understanding of each other’s roles; and
- ✿ A plan to improve the response of different institutions and agencies to violence against women”<sup>12</sup>

ACWS is pleased that the Ministry of Children’s Services in Alberta is an advocate of the collaborative, coordinated, community response model as an essential component of any effective response to the complex multitude of issues involved in family violence that would “cover the continuum of required services from prevention and intervention through protection, outreach and follow-up.”<sup>13</sup> We will continue to promote this response model and seek its implementation throughout the province.

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<sup>11</sup> Achieving a Violence Free Alberta is Everybody’s Business, Regional Workshop Guide and Workbook, Government of Alberta, 2004

<sup>12</sup> “Assessing the Justice System Response to Violence Against Women: A Tool for Communities to Develop Coordinated Responses” July, 1998 [www.vaw.umn.edu](http://www.vaw.umn.edu)

<sup>13</sup> Achieving a Violence-Free Alberta: Regional Workshop Guide & Workbook, Alberta Government, 2004 pg



## **8 Characteristics and Activities of an Effective Collaborative, Coordinated Community Response**

The Domestic Abuse Intervention Project in Duluth, Minnesota has identified 8 characteristics and activities of an effective coordinated community response. These are summarized below:

1. Developing a common philosophical framework. The community and practitioners should agree on a common understanding about battering and the complicated dynamics of domestic violence. This helps create an atmosphere conducive to holding offenders accountable and avoiding victim blaming.
2. Creating consistent policies for intervening agencies that respect the efforts of other agencies and incorporate the goals of intervention.
3. Monitoring and tracking individual cases to ensure practitioner accountability. Each agency must have a clear understanding of its role and the role of other agencies in responding to domestic violence.
4. Coordinating the exchange of information and inter-agency communications. (See "Assessing the Justice System Response to Violence against Women: A Tool for Communities" located at [www.vaw.umn.edu](http://www.vaw.umn.edu))
5. Providing resources and services to victims.
6. Ensuring sanctions, restrictions and services for offenders
7. Working to protect children
8. Evaluating the coordinated justice system response from the victims' perspective.