

## ACWS POSITION ON CROSS TRAINING

ACWS believe that cross – training of all individuals in the various sectors involved with family violence is essential to an effective, community based, collaborative response strategy to family violence prevention and intervention. ACWS supports the principles that effective training and cross-training must be an on-going function rather than a one-time occurrence; that it is as much about assessing and developing capacity as it is about providing information; and that it should be done at the local level to build on resources available in the community. <sup>1</sup>

Family violence is far too common in our society. Its impact resonates across families, generations and communities. It devastates lives and has enormous financial and human costs attached. To work toward a society free from violence and abuse requires immediate and long-term strategic response.

In Alberta, at both the provincial level and in communities across the province various programs, services and initiatives exist to meet the needs of individuals and families impacted by family violence. However, experience suggests that the various parts of the system often operate in isolation from each other<sup>2</sup>. For example, in Alberta, there are 18 different ministries responsible for one or another aspect of family violence – a situation that presents real obstacles for persons seeking services and support in the face of family violence and, in fact, endangers lives.

While there is no single service that can prevent the violence and abuse or mitigate the consequences for all victims and their families, evidence suggests that a coordinated, collaborative, community-based response is the preferred approach.<sup>3</sup> Cross training is a key element to successful collaborations <sup>4</sup> (together with the establishment of a structure for ongoing communication, consultation and collaboration across the systems; and the integration and coordination of services). Cross training is one mechanism for overcoming the current fragmentation of the systems involved.

- Cross training is an essential concept and necessary practice for an effective community response to domestic violence.<sup>5</sup>
- Cross-training brings together the expertise from various disciplines and services needed to better serve battered women and their children.
- Cross-training allows for the expertise of each system to be shared across the other systems and can deepen understanding among agencies.

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<sup>1</sup> Final Report of the Ad Hoc Federal-Provincial-Territorial Working Group on Spousal Abuse Policies and Legislation, pg. 81

<sup>2</sup> Achieving a Violence-Free Alberta is Everybody's Business: Regional Workshop Guide and Workbook. Government of Alberta, 2004

<sup>3</sup> A coordinated, collaborative approach is one in which the various programs and agencies work together to share information and expertise and take concerted actions to address the problem

<sup>4</sup> "Domestic Violence in the Context of Child Abuse and Neglect" – Lesley Laing .Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse [http://www.austdvclearinghouse.unsw.edu.au/topics/topics\\_pdf\\_files/child\\_protection.pdf](http://www.austdvclearinghouse.unsw.edu.au/topics/topics_pdf_files/child_protection.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Child Custody and Domestic Violence: A Call for Safety and Accountability" Peter Jaffe, Nancy Lemon, Samantha Poisson, Sage Publications, 2003

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- Cross-training can be a powerful vehicle for alleviating the mistrust and knowledge gaps that exist among agencies and service providers about their respective roles, responsibilities, limitations and services.
- Cross-training increases staff knowledge of community services available to clients

Cross training curricula need to be developed to effectively allow for the expertise of each system to be shared across other systems. For example, cross training curricula for battered women's advocates and child protection workers should be designed to increase the knowledge and skill levels of professionals in both child protection and battered women's agencies and to promote and plan for collaborative strategies to better serve all clients.<sup>6</sup> Through cross training, workers in both systems have the opportunity to come together to critically view their own systems and to build bridges toward collaborative relationships on behalf of battered women and their maltreated children.

Cross-training is a key component to a coordinated, collaborative approach to family violence. The knowledge and experience of shelter workers must be recognized as important to any cross-training initiatives on family violence.<sup>7</sup> Cross training initiatives should be encouraged at an interagency level and should receive provincial funding as a demonstration that interagency coordination and collaboration is a priority of senior decision-makers.

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<sup>6</sup> Children Exposed to Domestic Violence, Geffner, Jaffe, Suderman, 2000 pg. 356

<sup>7</sup> ACWS Submission to the Child Welfare Act Review, pg. 9

## **A short list of who needs what in terms of training?**

Politicians need access to accurate, current data and information about the extent and nature of domestic violence in order to make good policy decisions, effect good legislation and increase services for domestic violence victims.

Religious organizations need to provide training for seminarians, clergy and church personnel on domestic violence issues. Pastors should be encouraged to preach on the issue and provide support services for victims.

Police officers, court workers, legal counsel and the judiciary need similar training in order to appropriately respond to domestic violence situations through the implementation of risk and danger assessments, making arrests, providing legal counsel, making appropriate custody and access decisions, etc. based on a true understanding of family violence and the devastating impact it has on people's lives.

Health care providers – physicians, dentists, nurses, social workers, physician assistant, emergency medical technicians, nurse practitioners – are in good positions to detect the possible presence of abuse in the people they see and can help if they are informed about how to identify family violence and how to provide assistance. They should be given training on how to detect signs of domestic violence and must develop protocols for dealing with it.

Teachers and educators need to be encouraged to access expanded domestic violence prevention training in schools and develop protocols for handling disclosure. The province, as well as local school districts, should fund programs for domestic violence prevention.