

Family Violence in Prince Edward Island

Background Information

October 2001





What Is Family Violence?

*Family violence is any violence by one family member against another. It includes **but is not limited to** violence by one partner against another, by a parent against a child, a child against a parent, between brothers and sisters, or involving grandparents.*

It is an abuse of power within relationships of family, trust or dependency. It always involves someone using their power over another person in a way that is hurtful. This abuse takes many forms including psychological abuse, emotional abuse, physical violence, sexual abuse, financial abuse, and neglect or abandonment.

Abuse occurs in all income and educational levels,
and in all religious, racial, cultural groups and genders.



Once a pattern of abuse has been established,
it is very difficult to stop it without outside help.



Abuse has a devastating ‘domino’ effect.
Children who experience or witness abuse often repeat the behaviour
or become the subject of abuse themselves.



Alcohol and drugs may contribute to abuse, but they do not cause it.



Violence against men, women, children and older adults can be criminal offences.
Criminal harassment or stalking is against the law.



Help is available.

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Introduction

Community forums are being conducted by the Premier's Action Committee on Family Violence Prevention, a community government partnership committed to working together to prevent family violence.

The purpose of the forums is to seek public input on provincial family violence prevention priorities for the next five-year period, and to encourage Islander communities to talk about the issue and create ways to prevent this crime.

All Islanders are welcome and encouraged to attend the public forums.

Committee members will be pleased to meet privately with people who don't feel safe coming to the forums. Islanders can provide written input anonymously through postage-paid addressed envelopes now available at Access PEI centres. Comments can also be provided online at www.gov.pe.ca/hss/familyviolence.php3

For more information on the forums or for other assistance, please contact a community outreach worker in your area, or Cindy Ferguson at 902 368 5967, cferguson@gov.pe.ca

Community Forum Schedule

Montague	Monday, November 5 Montague High School, 7 to 9 pm
Souris	Wednesday, November 7 Souris High School , 7 to 9 pm
Charlottetown	Wednesday, November 14 Carrefour de l'Isle-Saint-Jean, 7 to 9 pm
Summerside	Monday, November 19 Athena Consolidated School, 7 to 9 pm
Abram-Village	Wednesday, November 21 École Evangéline, 7 to 9 pm (En français.)
Elmsdale	Wednesday, November 28 Westisle Composite High School, 7 to 9 pm

How will the community forums be conducted?

Information on family violence in Prince Edward Island will be presented at the community forums by Honourable Marion Reid, Chair of the Premier's Action Committee on Family Violence Prevention; Rona Brown, Provincial Family Violence Consultant; and a panel of community and government representatives.

A resource panel discussion will follow with Corporal Richard Thibault of the RCMP; Joanne Ings, Transition House Association and the Premier's Action Committee on Family Violence Prevention; and Patsy MacLean of the Attorney General's Office.

During small group discussions, participants can express their concerns about family violence, identify how the issue is now being addressed, and make suggestions on what further action is needed at the community and provincial levels.

People attending the forums should come prepared to address three main discussion questions:

- 1. What are your concerns about family violence?**
- 2. How is family violence being addressed now in your community?**
- 3. What needs to be done about family violence in your community, and in the province?**

How are Islanders affected by family violence?

Family violence is a serious concern in PEI, as indicated by the following statistics reported during the year 2000:

- Over 8,000 calls were received by Transition House Association.
- 1,647 women and children received direct services from Transition House Association.
- 751 new cases were opened at Victim Services including 87 cases of sexual assault, 236 for wife assault, and 44 for other family abuse issues.
- Over 1,600 reports of child abuse/neglect were investigated by Child and Family Services.
- Approximately 115 emergency protection orders were granted since the *Victims of Family Violence Act* was proclaimed in 1996.
- 105 sexual assaults were reported on PEI in 2000 (Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 2001). Since it is known only one in 10 assaults is reported (Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 1996), the actual number of assaults that occurred is likely close to 1,050.
- Over 60 per cent of the people who call the PEI Rape / Sexual Assault Crisis Centre's crisis line are adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse.
- Between 85 and 90 per cent of the people who access services at the PEI Rape / Sexual Assault Crisis Centre are survivors of childhood sexual abuse.

- In a study conducted for Mann House, researcher Janet Marshall found 83 per cent of women on PEI seeking addiction treatment are survivors of sexual abuse.
- Anderson House has reported that 80 per cent of their residents were also victims of childhood sexual abuse.
- There has been an increase of reports of date rape over the past couple of years to the PEI Rape / Sexual Assault Crisis Centre.

What do Islanders believe about family violence?

The results of the Family Violence Survey 2000 indicate that:

- 87 per cent of Islanders are concerned about family violence.
- 97 per cent believe if family violence happens once, it will usually happen again.
- 75 per cent believe that education and awareness will help prevent family violence.
- 81 per cent think of family violence as child abuse, 80 per cent partner abuse and 10 per cent elder abuse.
- 92 per cent believe family violence happens when there is too much drinking of alcohol.
- 37 per cent believe physical abuse of a woman often starts during pregnancy.
- 74 per cent believe that elder abuse often happens in PEI.
- 40 per cent of those surveyed would go to Social Services, 32 per cent to the police, 15 per cent to medical people, 11 per cent to Transition House Association, and 11 per cent to clergy for information about an issue related to family violence.
- 90 per cent of people believe that penalties for family violence are not strict enough.

What can Islanders do to help?

Right now people are experiencing family violence in every Island community.

Whether people know it or not, people close to them may be trying to cope with this devastating problem — maybe a relative, a friend, a co-worker or a neighbour. For many reasons, it is often difficult for victims to admit that someone is hurting them.

There are many signs to watch for that may indicate that something is wrong — perhaps there are unexplained injuries, or the explanations don't quite make sense . . . perhaps a child is upset a lot and won't say why . . . plans are cancelled at the last minute without explanations . . . or individuals seem afraid of making their partner angry.

If a relative, friend, co-worker, or neighbour is being abused, then help and support may be needed — and it is up to all of us to lend a hand.

What can Islanders do? There are many ways to help.

- First, **become informed**. Learn all you can about family violence so that you will be able to understand the issue and the many dynamics of violence within relationships of dependency and trust.
- Find out what services are available in your community so that you can pass this information on, if necessary. On PEI, Anderson House provides emergency shelter to women and children, and operates a 24-hour crisis line at 1-800-240-9894. They can also tell you about the Outreach Worker in your area who can provide local support. You may also want to call these services to get support and direction for yourself.
- **Listen — without judging**. Victims of family violence often believe their abuser's negative messages. Victims feel responsible, ashamed, inadequate and may be afraid of being judged.
- **Believe in the victim**. Let the person know that you support and care about their situation, that they are not responsible for the violence, that only the abuser can stop abusive behaviour, and that there are steps that can be taken to protect oneself and one's children.
- Explain that **abuse in relationships is never acceptable. There are no excuses**. Explain that physical assault is a crime and protection can be sought from the justice system. Victim Services can help and the office numbers are 368-4582 in Charlottetown, and 888-8217 in Summerside.
- **Make sure individuals know they are not alone** — that millions of people from every ethnic, racial and socioeconomic group suffer from abuse and that many find it difficult to leave abusive relationships.
- Emphasize that when ready, an individual can make a choice to leave an abusive relationship, and that **help is available**.

- Encourage the individual to have an **emergency plan** in mind — a plan about what to do and where to go if in danger. Make a list of important phone numbers. Establish a code with family and friends in case an emergency arises.
- **Be sure the individual is informed about his or her rights.** Educate people about Prince Edward Island's new *Victims of Family Violence Act* which contains provisions that may include granting exclusive occupation of the residence to a victim, removing an abusive person from the residence and providing protection for the victim.
- **If you see or hear family violence in progress, call the police immediately.**
- If a person remains in the relationship, continue to support him / her and be supportive, while at the same time, firmly communicating that she / he and their children do not deserve to be in this abusive relationship.
- Most importantly, **do not give up on the person.** Adults alone, as victims of family violence, may make choices that you do not agree with, but they still need your support, encouragement and strength. When children are involved, however, it is different and the law says that you must report to Child and Family Services when children are living in situations where there is domestic violence. Children have a right to be protected and that is the responsibility of every adult.

Premier's Action Committee on Family Violence Prevention

Established in 1995, the Premier's Action Committee on Family Violence Prevention is a 23-member committee consisting of 18 community representatives and five government representatives.

The mandate of the committee is to:

- implement a five-year strategy on family violence prevention for Prince Edward Island, and
- report directly to the Premier on all issues related to the implementation of the strategy, and all related issues of family violence prevention and intervention on Prince Edward Island.

The mandate of the committee has recently been renewed. New and returning members are being asked to serve five-year terms, and the provincial family violence prevention strategy is now being updated.

The provincial family violence prevention strategy receives annual funding of \$250,000, which is provided to Transition House Association, the PEI Rape/Sexual Assault Crisis Centre, and to fund the provincial family violence consultant position.

Premier's Action Committee on Family Violence Prevention Members

Citizen at Large and Chair	Honourable Marion Reid, Stanley Bridge
Resource Person	Rona Brown, Sherwood
Association of Nurses of PEI and PEI Aboriginal Women's Association	Marilyn Sark, Lennox Island
PEI Teachers Federation	Ed Kilfoil, O'Leary
L'Association des Femmes Acadiennes	Leona Arsenault, Abrams Village
The Medical Society of PEI	Dr. Christine MacNearney, Stanley Bridge
PEI Seniors Federation	Olive Bryanton, Hampshire
Transition House Association	Joanne Ings, Charlottetown
PEI Rape Crisis Centre	Lorna Hutcheson, Charlottetown
Eastern Kings Family Violence Prevention Committee	Anne Nicholson, Montague
RCMP	Cpl. Richard Thibault, Stratford
Community Legal Information Association	Ann Sherman, Charlottetown
Womens Interministerial Secretariat	Sandy Bentley, New Glasgow
Department of Education	Sherren Morrison, Charlottetown
Office of the Attorney General	Dave O'Brien, Q.C., Summerside

What has the committee accomplished?

During the first five years of the strategy, the Premier's Action Committee on Family Violence Prevention has:

- provided increased funding for the establishment of community outreach workers and additional resources for Anderson House and for the treatment and support of adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse and sexual assault through the Rape and Sexual Assault Crisis Centre;
- assisted in the implementation of the new *Victims of Family Violence Act*;
- supported the annual purple ribbon campaigns to raise awareness of violence against women and children in partnership with the PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women;
- conducted public presentations and published brochures, resource and public education materials;
- implemented social marketing campaigns to change attitudes toward family violence;
- provided training for front-line service providers on the identification, detection, investigation and interventions required to effectively respond to victims of child abuse, domestic violence and elder abuse;
- participated in research initiatives with other community agencies and government departments;
- partnered with community and government organizations in related projects, including a partnership with the Reproductive Care program to develop and implement a prenatal psychosocial assessment program for pregnant women, and assisted with training for nurses and physicians to implement the assessment;
- developed and implemented woman abuse protocols for hospital emergency rooms, income assistance and justice related services; and
- coordinated initiatives for workplace promotion of violence prevention.

Historical overview of family violence prevention activities in Prince Edward Island

Prince Edward Island's Family Violence Prevention Strategy builds on the work of the previous 20 years, and it is a formal response to a series of significant events which have occurred in this province. These events include:

- 1981, a private members motion to the House of Commons addressed the issue of family violence for the first time in Canada;
- 1981, Anderson House opened;
- 1982, 24-hour Child Abuse Line established;
- 1983, Police Mandatory Charging Policy established;
- 1983, West Prince Inter-agency Committee on Family Violence began;
- 1983, 24-Hour Rape and Sexual Assault Crisis Line established, individual and group support offered soon after;
- 1984, Turning Point Program for Men Who Batter established;
- 1988, Provincial Victim Services Program established;
- 1988, *Adult Protection Act* proclaimed;
- 1988, Child Sexual Abuse Needs Assessment conducted;
- 1989, Inter-ministerial Committee on Family Violence Prevention established;
- 1989, Child Sexual Abuse Inter-agency Committee established;
- 1989, Report on Sexual Assault and Sexual Abuse of Women and Children presented;
- 1990, Specialized crown attorneys to prosecute sexual assault offences appointed;
- 1990, Full time therapist hired at the Rape and Sexual Assault Crisis Centre;
- 1991, Partners for Prevention Committee established and community consultations on Family Violence held across PEI;
- 1991, McQuaid Inquiry conducted into Police and Department of Justice Policies and Procedures in cases of Inter-Spousal and Intra-Family Violence;
- 1991, Provincial Family Violence Coordinator position created;
- 1992, Eastern PEI Family Violence Prevention Committee established;
- 1993, RCMP sponsored training on Family Violence;
- 1993, Child Sexual Abuse Rural Intervention Model Project begun;
- 1993, Sexual Offences Against Children and Youth PEI court data analysed;
- 1994, RCMP sponsor ongoing multi-disciplinary training on child sexual assault investigation and assessment;
- 1994, Partners for Prevention presented final report;

- 1994, Provincial Sex Offender Program established;
- 1995, Child Sexual Abuse Protocol endorsed by Government and PEI Police Services;
- 1995, Outreach Worker hired for Eastern PEI;
- 1995, Rape and Sexual Assault hired second therapist;
- 1995, Cabinet approved 5-year strategy on Family Violence Prevention;
- 1995, Child Sexual Abuse awareness Guide published by RCMP;
- 1995, permanent Family Violence Consultant position created;
- 1995, Premier appointed 23 members to the Premier's Action Committee on Family Violence Prevention;
- 1996, PEI *Victims of Family Violence Act* proclaimed;
- 1996, Outreach Worker position created in Queen's region;
- 1997, Atlantic Canada provinces proclaimed a designated week each February re Family Violence Prevention;
- 1998, Family Violence Prevention Inventory of PEI conducted for CLIA;
- 1998, Factors Associated with Police Response to Domestic Violence - monitoring study re *Victims of Family Violence Act*;
- 1999, Evaluation conducted of Rape and Sexual Assault and THA;
- 1999, Abuse of Older Adults workshop held;
- 2000, Prince Edward Island Family Violence Survey conducted;
- 2000, Victims Roundtable on Criminal Justice established;
- 2000, Justice System Response to Family Violence;
- 2000, Professional Attitudes of Abuse and Neglect of Older Persons;
- 2001, Woman Abuse Protocols established;
- 2001, Evaluation of *Victims of Family Violence Act* conducted;
- 2001, Justice Options for Women established;
- 2001, Herstory of Woman Abuse on PEI presented;
- 2001, Abuse of Older Persons Provincial Consultations conducted;
- 2001, PEI Rape / Sexual Assault Crisis Centre Needs Assessment established;
and
- 2001, Premier renewed five year mandate of Premier's Action Committee.

Family Violence Resource Guide

Emergency Services

Police and Hospital Emergency 911

Crime Stoppers 1-800-222-8477 (TIPS)

If you are being abused or know of an abusive situation, you can call Crime Stoppers. You will be assigned a code number. We do not require your name. We guarantee that you will remain anonymous.

Anderson House (toll free) 1-800-240-9894
Charlottetown 892-0960

24-hour service for physically and emotionally abused women and their children. Emergency shelter, food and clothing, crisis telephone service, counselling, emotional support, information and referral. Wheelchair accessible. Women are not admitted if they are under the influence of alcohol or non-prescription drugs, if they exhibit psychiatric problems beyond the staff's capability, or if their need is for shelter only.

Transition House Outreach Services

West Prince: Valerie Smallman 859-8849
East Prince: Norma McColeman 436-0517
Eastern PEI: Gwyn Davies 838-0795
Queens County: Gloria Dennis 566-1480

A free and confidential service providing emotional support for women victimized by family violence.

Child Abuse Line (toll free) 1-800-341-6868

Child protection services for abused children. After-hours calls concerning child abuse are screened and, if necessary, referred to workers on call across PEI.

PEI Rape and Sexual Assault Crisis Centre (toll free) 1-800-289-5656
Charlottetown 566-8999

24-hour crisis line for victims of rape and sexual assault including incest and spousal rape. Trained volunteers answer calls and provide information, advocacy and support. Individual and group therapy for survivors of sexual assault and childhood sexual abuse. Speakers, literature and workshops for public education.

Victim Services

Charlottetown 368-4582
Summerside 888-8217

Assists victims of crime across the province. Services include: information and referral, short-term counselling, assistance through the court process, victim impact statements and criminal injuries compensation.

Community Legal Information Association (toll free) 1-800-240-9798
Charlottetown 892-0853

Provides basic legal information including free pamphlets on a wide variety of legal topics to the general public.

Lawyer Referral System (toll free) 1-800-240-9798