



**REVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS OF THREE
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE PLEI PUBLICATIONS
RELATING TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Department of Justice routinely informs Canadians about the statutes and regulations that are under its responsibility, particularly when new ones are enacted or existing ones are amended. In addition, the Department has, since the early 1980's, played an important role in a national program of public legal education and information (PLEI) through the funding and promotion of a network of PLEI organizations across the country, and its own participation as an active member of the network. The efforts of the PLEI network have led to a wide range of activities, including the production and distribution of informational pamphlets and booklets, school programs, training programs for intermediaries working with specific populations, dial-a-law information services, major issue-specific promotions, and adult education classes. Increasingly PLEI programs are being delivered electronically via distance learning programs, computer-based school programs and the internet.

While the Department maintains an on-going program of PLEI activities, it also attaches a PLEI component to most specific policy or program initiatives it undertakes. The Department has been a major player in the 1990's in the federal government's family violence initiative, and through that period it has produced (in cooperation with the network of PLEI organizations) a number of publications relating to family violence.

The three publications examined in this report include: *Abuse is Wrong in Any Language*(1995) *Stalking is a Crime Called Criminal Harassment*(1996) and *Peace Bonds*(1996). The *Abuse is Wrong* brochure was adapted for a national audience from a New Brunswick publication of the same name. Its purpose is to provide immigrant women with information about what constitutes abuse and how and where they can get assistance if they are being abused. The *Stalking* pamphlet was developed to provide the public, in particular victims of criminal harassment, with information about the then new legislation dealing with Criminal Harassment. The *Peace Bonds* pamphlet was also produced to provide information about the law regarding Peace Bonds and how a person could go about obtaining one if needed. At the time, each publication was produced, they were the only national materials available on these issues.

In the summer of 1999, the Department decided to assess the effectiveness of these three publications. As this was the first time that such a study had been conducted, there was no known precedent upon which to develop a methodological approach. Thus, the study became an exploratory one and as a result, lessons were learned about issues that should be considered for future studies.

The study was undertaken to inform decisions on whether or not the publications should be reprinted and whether the Department should continue to develop similar products. The study was therefore designed to:

1. assess the effectiveness of distribution methods used to disseminate the three publications; and
2. to assess the quality and effectiveness of the publications themselves, and the appropriateness of these types of PLEI materials for informing their intended targets.

The study design recognized that such publications are only one potential influence among many in the lives of people affected by domestic violence, and that it would not be possible, or reasonable, to evaluate the effectiveness of the publications against the behaviour of people who had been exposed in one way or another to the materials. While no explicit objectives were established for the publications, the approach taken in this study has been to assume several reasonable and limited objectives:

- to disseminate the publications as widely as possible, through the provincial/territorial PLEI organizations and directly by the Department, to individuals and agencies that work with victims and potential victims of domestic violence, family and friends of victims, and abusers;
- to inform both intermediaries and the ultimate target audience according to the information contained in the publications; and,
- to help equip the target audience to make more informed decisions relating to domestic violence.

This report presents the findings of the review, and makes some recommendations intended to help guide the Department's future activity related to the production and dissemination of PLEI publications. First, we will describe the methods used to assess the publications.

2. METHODOLOGY

As mentioned in the introduction, at the time of this study, there were no known methods that could be replicated. Therefore, the Department and the contractor decided to follow the methodology described below. It was recognized that there would be some limitations with this process. The review involved three major research elements: an assessment of the extent and breadth of distribution of the publications and dissemination strategies; a qualitative assessment of the publications; and, testing of the effectiveness of the publications with potential end-users. Each of these elements is discussed below.

2.1 Dissemination of the Publications

The assessment of the distribution of the three publications, and of dissemination strategies for such publications by the Department of Justice and the PLEI organizations, included the methods described below.

- A canvassing of PLEI organizations in all provinces and territories to find out how many of the publications had been received and distributed by those organizations, and in what manner the distribution had taken place.
- Interviews with Justice PLEI officers and with PLEI organizations in British Columbia, Saskatchewan and New Brunswick to obtain more detail about general dissemination strategies and the distribution of the three publications in question, to discuss alternative approaches for the development and dissemination of PLEI materials by the Department of Justice, and to obtain lists of agencies and individuals most likely to have received copies of the three publications, or to have a direct interest in such materials.
- Interviews with 15 “key” agencies involved in domestic violence in those three provinces (as identified by the PLEI organizations), to inquire about their awareness of the three publications, to what extent and how they may have been used by themselves and by clients. The interviews were based on a structured interview guide that identified the issues to be raised, but that encouraged open discussion of the issues and the raising of additional

relevant issues. Where possible they were conducted in person, but in a small number of cases availability or distance meant that telephone interviews were required.

- Telephone interviews with almost 200 agencies in the three provinces, for the same purpose as the interviews described above. These interviews were briefer and more structured than the in-person interviews, but still allowed ample opportunity for respondents to raise issues and elaborate on their views.

2.2 Qualitative Assessment of the Publications

To obtain the views of interested and informed observers about the quality and usefulness of the publications, we included the following methods:

- Interviews with “key” agencies involved in domestic violence in those three provinces (the same 15 agencies as for the dissemination assessment), to obtain their views on the appropriateness and quality of the publications, and the usefulness of such national publications relative to other approaches.
- Telephone interviews with almost 200 agencies serving victims of domestic violence in the three provinces, for the same purpose as the interviews described above.

2.3 Effectiveness of the Publications

Evaluations of publications intended for recipients of social services are typically restricted to obtaining the opinions of intermediaries who work with the “end-users”, or of communications experts. Where end-users are included in the evaluation, it is usually in a focus group setting, where they discuss the merits of the publications. It was decided for the three publications in this study to try to go beyond these methods to attempt to test their effectiveness by administering a series of questionnaires about the issues discussed in the publications (as opposed to the publications themselves) to groups of end-users.

It was recognized in the research design that there were limitations to what we could expect from the test results. First, we would not be attempting in any way to draw conclusions about whether the publications resulted in any change in behaviour by the reader. It was recognized that the publications would be only one of many influences, and that it was not reasonable to expect a reading of one of the publications, in itself, to change in any major way the readers’ behaviour.

Also, to identify the power of the publications to influence behaviour as against other influences was far beyond the scope of the research, so testing effectiveness in this sense was not possible. Rather, the rationale for using this approach was that the publications could reasonably be expected to inform readers on the subjects they address, and help the readers to distinguish between facts and common myths or misconceptions. With this information, they would be better equipped to make decisions about how to deal with situations addressed in the publications. What we were testing was the publications' effectiveness in imparting their key messages so that readers could understand and remember them for a period of time.

A second limitation was that there are a lot of variations among potential readers of the three publications that could influence their effectiveness, including language and culture, education, immediate personal circumstances, and whether or not the reader has someone (a service provider, friend or family member) with whom to discuss what she has read. A common testing mechanism administered at a specific point in time with groups of readers could expect those factors to influence test results in unpredictable ways. However, this is a problem faced by the publications themselves. They are not disseminated into a homogenous and controlled environment any more than our test would be. Our challenge was to try to select readers for the test that would not be skewed too heavily in any direction according to those factors.

This was difficult to accomplish first and foremost because we were relying on the assistance and goodwill of organizations working with women in abusive relationships, or women in vulnerable situations. It was not a case of selecting from a wide range of available readers, but rather working to obtain permission and assistance from certain organizations to have access to their women clients for research purposes. Also, of course, it is not possible to assess in an objective way all the above factors, and to weigh their relative strengths in influencing the readers' likely experience with the publications. What we were able to do was attempt to ensure that the participants met certain basic criteria:

- They could read English sufficiently to be able to read the publications. For this we relied on assessments from the intermediaries who worked with the participants.
- They had not previously read the publications.
- They had access to some professional support to enable them to follow-up on any information in the publications that interested or confused them.
- They fit the profile of the target audience for the publications

A third limitation was that we were limited by the project budget to a total of six testing groups. This meant that we would be analysing responses from a relatively small number of readers. However, this was deemed to be a reasonable limitation to accept, given the fact that this was a first attempt for the Department at this type of “end-user” evaluation of publication effectiveness. It was recognized that this would serve as a test of the approach as well as the publications themselves, and that further testing of a similar nature with larger samples could be conducted with other publications in the future.

Two groups of tests were conducted for each of the three publications. In the case of the *Peace Bonds* and *Stalking* booklets, the tests involved participants in group counselling sessions for women in abusive domestic relationships, all in Saskatchewan. A total of 19 women participated in the testing for each publication. For the *Abuse is Wrong* booklet, the test was with two groups of immigrant women (a total of 37) who were associated with organizations whose purpose was to provide support for immigrant women, and to work to protect their rights and interests. Those women attended regular meetings at these organizations, and it was at those meetings that the testing was conducted. They were not necessarily women involved in abusive domestic situations, but were considered appropriate because they fit the intended target group for the booklet, which was immigrant women. One group was located in the Vancouver area in British Columbia, and one group was in Fredericton, New Brunswick.

The testing involved the participants answering, individually, a small set of questions based on some key messages that the publications were trying to deliver. For each question the participant chose one response from a choice of three. One response was the correct one, based directly on the material in the booklet. The other two were incorrect, but some of them were designed to reflect common misconceptions that the booklets were trying to address.

The testing had three phases:

- questions asked prior to the participants’ having read the booklet;
- the same questions, with the responses scrambled, asked immediately after the participants read the booklet, in a controlled setting with a supervising person present; and,
- the same questions asked approximately four weeks after the reading of the booklet, as well as a few additional questions relating to the participants’ views of the usefulness of the booklets.

The responses were then analysed according to their correctness and for any changes in responses that occurred (the assumption being that, ideally, we would like to see an improvement in the accuracy of the participants' understanding of the key messages being delivered in the booklet).

At the end of the sessions, the participants were encouraged to talk about the booklets, to discuss their strengths and weaknesses, and to discuss the issues the booklets raised.

3. FINDINGS

3.1 Distribution

The three publications were produced by the Department of Justice, and distribution was done both directly by the Department through its Communications and Public Affairs Branch, and through the PLEI organizations. As well, some larger organizations were informed about the publications, and ordered copies for distribution either internally, or to their own network of agencies. Our review arrived at the following findings.

- The PLEI organizations were seen by the Department as the primary distribution points for the publications, and essential to disseminating them as widely as possible. In practice, however, distribution through the PLEI organizations was minimal. While the PLEI organizations were informed about the availability of the three publications as they were published, and were sent at least a small number of copies (some ordered larger volumes of certain publications), there was no formal arrangement made for those organizations to disseminate the publications, and no understanding on the part of the PLEI organizations that active promotion of the publications was expected.
- In general, the approach of the PLEI organizations is to promote their own publications and any publications they produce (or contribute to) for other organizations, but not to actively promote other publications such as those produced by the Department of Justice. In some cases the DOJ publications go on the PLEI organizations' lists of available materials which can then be ordered by interested agencies and individuals. In most cases, however, the PLEI organizations simply respond to any unsolicited requests for DOJ materials.
- In the case of the three publications in question, *Abuse is Wrong in Any Language* (along with the accompanying handbook for intermediaries) was actively promoted in New Brunswick because the PLEI organization in that province was contracted to produce the publications. Similarly, the Peace Bonds booklet was promoted in Saskatchewan because that province's PLEI organization was contracted to produce it. In no other case that we are aware of were any of the three publications actively promoted or distributed by the PLEI organizations.
- The Department of Justice distributed some copies of the publications directly to agencies

and individuals in response to letters received by either the Communications and Public Affairs Branch or the Programs Branch, which administers the PLEI program. In some cases PLEI organizations received requests for larger numbers of the publications, or for publications of which they had no remaining copies, and passed those requests on to the Department.

- The Department does not keep on-going records of the numbers of each publication that has been sent out, and to whom (or to what type of organization) each has been sent. It maintains a paper file of letters requesting copies.
- Table 3.1 summarizes the available figures on distribution of the three publications. They almost certainly underestimate the actual total numbers distributed. For “Abuse is Wrong”, at least 100,000 copies were printed (including English, French, Spanish, Chinese and Punjabi versions). For “Peace Bonds” and “Stalking”, an estimated 50,000 copies of each were printed (two-thirds in English, one-third in French). The distribution figures are low in part because most PLEI organizations do not keep on-going records for publications other than their own, and therefore could provide only estimates. In some cases they could not recall receiving or distributing the publications, although they thought it likely that they had received at least a few over the last 3-4 years and had distributed them upon request to other agencies. In addition, the Department of Justice does not keep records on the dissemination of its publications.

Table 3.1
Distribution of the Three DOJ Publications to Date

Publication	Copies Dist. By PLEI Organizations	Copies Sent Directly to Non-profit	Copies Sent Directly to Government	Copies Sent Directly to Police/Court	Total Copies Distributed
Abuse is Wrong.	2,348	4,536	1,386	589	8,859
Peace Bonds	3,038	none	6	200	3,244
Stalking.	1,197	150	1,065	none	2,412

- Besides distributing the publications to agencies that request them, the PLEI organizations report using the publications to some extent if they are relevant to other activities being undertaken. For example, if they are participating in a workshop on domestic violence, they may bring copies of the publications and make them available to participants. If the subject of the workshop (or other activity) is directly associated with, for example, peace bonds, stalking, or domestic violence in immigrant communities, the publications may be referred to directly in workshop sessions, and information may be taken from the publications for use in

presentations. Justice officials also disseminate the publications in a similar fashion.

- There is a huge discrepancy between the numbers of publications printed and the number recorded as having been distributed. This would suggest that the lack of systematic recording of distribution by the Department and the PLEI organizations and other secondary distributors means that large numbers of the publications have been disseminated, but we simply have no idea where. Thus, such a circumstance makes it virtually impossible to conduct a meaningful follow-up to assess dissemination, and therefore usage, of the publication. Keeping the above factors in mind, the next section describes as much as possible, the extent of dissemination of the publications.

3.1.1 Extent of Dissemination

Our assessment of the extent to which the publications were disseminated is based on about 200 in-person and telephone interviews. The interviewees were selected from lists of organizations who had received the publications or who were to have a direct interest. These lists were provided by the PLEI organizations in BC, SK and NB. The coverage is only in those three provinces, and undoubtedly does not include all of the relevant organizations in those provinces. Based on discussions with the PLEI organizations in other provinces, however, it seems safe to assume that dissemination was not significantly wider or more extensive in any other. In fact, since the three publications were produced under contract in those three provinces, it would be more likely that the results in the three provinces would overestimate the experience in Canada as a whole. Also, given that the PLEI organizations are well connected with a wide range of the most active government and community-based social service agencies, we can expect that the organizations provided for BC, Saskatchewan and New Brunswick will be at least as likely as other agencies not on our lists, and perhaps more likely than others, to have received the publications.

Interviews were conducted with the people identified in the organizations as being familiar with publications from both an administrative and substantive perspective. If there was a clerk in charge of administering the distribution of publications, we ensured that he or she was also in a position to understand how and to what extent the publications were being used, and to be able to comment on the quality of the publications in relation to the agency's clients.

It is possible that the publications were received in small quantities soon after publication, but have not been in the office for some time, and staff changeover could result in current staff not having seen the publications even though they were there at one point in time. The interviews are a more reliable indicator of current availability and use of the publications. However, if the publications were popular with staff and/or clients and were used with some regularity in the last three years, it would be reasonable to expect that staff would remember them and have some familiarity with them.

The table below describes the extent of familiarity with, and availability of, the three publications among the agencies with whom we consulted.

Table 3.2
Familiarity With and Availability of the Publications

	Abuse is Wrong	Peace Bonds*	Stalking
Agencies familiar with publication	43%	42%	34%
Agencies now having copies of publication	27%	32%	22%
Agencies had copies in the past	14%	9%	10%
Agencies ever having copies of publication	41%	41%	32%

*Figures for Peace Bonds in Saskatchewan were significantly higher (between 50% and 60%) than in the other two provinces, presumably because the publication was actively promoted by the provincial PLEI organization, which produced the booklet on behalf of the Department of Justice.

The figures indicate that fewer than half of the agencies have received the publications. On the one hand, this means that a significant number of agencies have received the booklets at some time and may have distributed them to clients. On the other hand, this can be viewed as a low degree of dissemination given the fact that we contacted only those organizations identified by the PLEI organizations in the three provinces as being most directly interested in the subject matter, and most likely to have received them. We can expect that a wider canvassing of relevant agencies would produce a lower rate of distribution success.

Agencies were also asked how they used the publications. In general, there was little differentiation in how they used each of the three publications—how they used them depended more on their way of operating and their way of providing information to clients, than on the

nature of the specific publication. Table 3.3 below describes how agencies used the publications, looked at together. Some agencies used them in more than one way, so the totals do not add up to 100%.

Table 3.3
Use of the Publications

Way Publications Are Used	% of Agencies
Available for clients to read in the office	71%
Hand out to clients directly	52%
Distribute to resource people	17%
Include in info packages sent to clients	16%
Available at workshops, meetings, displays	15%
Discuss contents with clients	8%
Other uses	1%

These figures indicate that while placing the booklets on a rack in the office reception area is the predominant mode of dissemination, a significant number of agencies gave these three booklets directly to clients, increasing the likelihood significantly that they would be perused at least, and perhaps read. In a few cases (8%), intermediaries discussed the contents of the booklets with clients. This latter approach is considered among intermediaries and the readers we consulted to be the most effective, particularly for subject matters that can be complicated, such as stalking and peace bonds.

3.2 Quality of the Publications

The quality of the publications was examined in broad terms to include the relevance of the contents to client needs, the appropriateness of the level of writing and contents for the intended clients, and the effectiveness of the presentation. The findings are based on interviews with representatives of about 200 service providing agencies working with the intended target readership of the publications, and on consultations with the end-users in conjunction with the testing of the publications' effectiveness.

Responses from telephone interviews included both answers to standard questions and detailed comments. Questions about the quality of the publications were also asked during in-person interviews with “key” agencies and the PLEI organizations in the three provinces.

All three publications, and *Abuse is Wrong* in particular, are rated highly in terms of overall quality. They are described as either excellent or very good by a substantial majority of the agencies familiar with them. Ratings were even higher for all three publications on specific elements of quality. Table 3.4 below provides a breakdown of the responses from the telephone interviews.

Table 3.4
Assessments of the Quality of the Publications

Element of Publication Quality	Abuse is Wrong (% of agencies)	Peace Bonds (% of agencies)	Stalking (% of agencies)
Overall quality rating	35% excellent 44% very good 17% good 4% fair 0% not good	20% excellent 43% very good 31% good 6% fair 0% not good	29% excellent 41% very good 27% good 3% fair 0% not good
Publications written at appropriate level?	93%	80%	81%
Publications relevant to client needs?	100%	93%	100%
Publications’ presentation effective?	100%	86%	93%

While the publications in themselves were very highly regarded, there was concern expressed both in the telephone interviews and in the more extensive in-person interviews about the fact that the publications are national in scope, whereas the information that is of greatest use to clients tends to be province-specific. In some cases it was noted that terminology is used that is not common to all provinces. The most frequent example given related to the Peace Bonds publication. Even though the *Criminal Code* has a section that refers to Peace Bonds, in most provinces that provision is usually grouped together with other types of restraining orders for purposes of description to clients, and the terminology varies. There was concern expressed that the Peace Bonds publication might confuse readers (both end-users and some intermediaries) about what actions are available and how to avail themselves of them.

In the case of the Stalking publication, it was pointed out that the extent to which the Criminal Harassment provisions of the *Criminal Code* are used by police and the Crown varies considerably. As well, police were reported to apply different standards to the kind of evidence required for them to take action, and the kind of information they provided to people reporting harassment about what would constitute sufficient evidence for the police to act. Therefore, it was felt that while the publication may be applicable in some areas, in others it may mislead readers about what to expect from the police and the courts.

The fact that the publications were not widely and actively disseminated by the PLEI organizations relates closely to this concern about the value of producing publications that are national in scope, when provincial variations can be significant and important in terms of how best to guide clients in need of information. In some cases, there were already similar materials available that had been developed provincially, and that were considered by the PLEI organizations to be more applicable and useful. In others, the Justice publications were not adopted and promoted even though no comparable provincial material was available, simply because the “national” material was viewed as being too broad and not sufficiently useful.

The point was made frequently in both in-person and telephone interviews that a critical function of pamphlets, booklets and other small informational materials on domestic violence is to refer readers to local organizations such as shelters, police victim service units, and community social service agencies, by providing specific names, addresses and telephone numbers. In this light, materials produced federally were seen as less useful unless they provided agencies with a place in which to print or stamp local reference information.

Among the PLEI organizations it was agreed that it would not be possible, given the large number and variety of organizations that produce small PLEI-related materials such as pamphlets, to eliminate duplication. However, there was also agreement in principle that it should be possible to coordinate federal and provincial activities such that duplication of PLEI materials on issues like domestic violence can be avoided.

An overwhelming majority (96%) of respondents to the telephone interviews believe that written materials such as the three booklets in question are a useful way to get information out to people who may need help in relation to domestic violence. However, many pointed out that the distribution of such materials is not sufficient on its own, and that the best way for the materials to be used is in conjunction with individual or group counselling.

As well, there remains the problem of how to get the materials to people who are less likely to be in the offices of social service agencies, or who have chosen not to tell anyone about an abusive situation they or a friend or family member is involved in. To that end, it was suggested by a number of respondents that several approaches, taken together, are needed. One is to use public service announcements on television and radio, and via the internet, to inform people in a general way that domestic violence is not acceptable behaviour in Canada, and that there are places they can contact if they need help. The second is to make the distribution of small, easy to read pamphlets as wide as possible, particularly in smaller urban and rural areas where public information tends to be less available, to maximise the likelihood that people in need will have an opportunity to see the information and pick it up. The third is to work with agencies in ethnic communities to develop avenues through which information can be communicated to people who need it.

The end-users participating in the testing were asked if they thought that reading the booklets helped them to understand the subject matter (for example, domestic abuse) better. Table 3.5 shows the range of responses, which suggest that few readers find the booklets of no help, and that of the three booklets *Abuse is Wrong* was most likely to have helped a lot (52% of readers). In the case of the *Stalking* booklet, about one-third of readers said it helped a lot, but 56% said it helped a bit. For *Peace Bonds*, 44% said it helped a lot, 33% said it helped a bit, and 22% said it did not help.

Table 3.5
Extent to Which the Publications Help Readers Understand the Subject

Publication Helped?	Stalking	Peace Bonds	Abuse is Wrong
Helped a lot	33%	44%	52%
Helped a bit	56%	33%	42%
Did not help	11%	22%	6%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Eighty-two percent of participants said the booklets were a useful way to get information across to people like themselves who need help. The main concern with the booklets from their perspective was the fact that they were not readily available, and that in general this kind of information is not readily available, especially to people who need it the most (i.e. those not participating in social service programs and who have little or no support).

There was a consensus among participants that such materials would be best placed in grocery stores and other places where abused women can hope to go unaccompanied by their abuser. As well, they thought that simple messages focussing on what to do and where to go for help were the most useful—once help has been found, more detail can be provided in a supportive setting.

3.3 Effectiveness of the Publications

The test of effectiveness of the three publications was restricted to the extent to which the publications enabled readers to better answer basic questions arising from the material in the booklets. The questions were intended to reflect key messages that the booklets sought to deliver to readers. In the case of the *Stalking* booklet, participants answered six questions, each dealing with a separate issue raised in the booklet. For the *Peace Bonds* and *Abuse is Wrong* booklets, seven questions were asked. As we described in the Methodology section of the report, the questions were asked prior to the participants reading the booklet, then immediately after reading the booklet (within a half-hour of the first set of questions), then again several weeks later (the time varied between three and four weeks). The order of the possible responses was scrambled between the first and second testing to help minimize any tendency to pick the same response just for the sake of consistency.

What we hoped to achieve by conducting these tests was to assess the extent to which participants were more likely to answer the questions correctly as a result of having read the booklet, and the extent to which they were likely to remember the information they had read for a period of several weeks.

The questions used in the tests are provided in an appendix to this report. A few examples for each of the three publications are provided below. For each question, participants were asked to choose the best answer.

“Abuse is Wrong”

If you call the police to report that your husband or boyfriend has hurt you:

- a. The police will investigate right away, and may arrest that person
- b. The police will warn the person to stop the abuse right away
- c. The police are unlikely to do anything unless you’re badly hurt

If you and your family are permanent residents (landed immigrants) or refugees in

Canada:

- a. The person abusing you could be deported if the abuse has been serious enough
- b. Reporting abuse could result in your being deported
- c. You are not eligible for assistance from the police

“Peace Bonds”

If a person breaks a peace bond:

- a. That person can be charged with a criminal offence
- b. That person will be put in jail
- c. That person will be given just one more chance to keep the peace bond

Once you have a peace bond:

- a. You are protected from any contact by the other person
- b. You can sue the other person if they break the peace bond
- c. The police can arrest the person right away if they break the peace bond

“Stalking”

Stalking or harassment become a crime when:

- a. It happens repeatedly and it makes you afraid for the safety of you or someone you know
- b. There is a direct threat made against you or someone you know
- c. The police warn the person to stop and the behaviour continues

To prove criminal harassment:

- a. You have to be able to show that the person has hurt you in the past
- b. The police must catch the person in the act of stalking or harassing you
- c. You have to convince a judge that you had a good reason to be afraid of the person’s behaviour

For all three publications a significant number of questions were answered correctly before the booklets were read (75% for *Abuse is Wrong*, 79% for *Stalking*, 62% for *Peace Bonds*). This may reflect the amount of basic information that is available through the mass media, or the kind of information that is provided through helping agencies the participants have been in contact with over time. Whatever the source for the information, it is to be expected that readers will

already know some of the information contained in the booklets. Indeed, if readers were faced with a booklet that contained no information they already knew, it could well reduce their willingness or ability to read it in any depth. It is a debatable point as to what is the desirable level of new information that the average reader should be faced with in this kind of booklet. The issue is greatly complicated by the fact that readers' knowledge levels and reading and comprehension abilities will vary greatly. To what extent can booklets such as these be tailored to a population within a narrow range of knowledge and reading capability? These are not questions addressed by our research, but they are raised by our findings and merit consideration in the planning of future booklets.

The rate of correct responses in the pre-reading test may also indicate that the questions posed were too easy. Certainly an effort was made in selecting the questions to draw out the dominant messages in the booklets, based on the degree of emphasis placed on them through their placement and the use of headings and bold, large or alternative type faces, and the extent to which they were repeated in various ways. All three booklets contained information not covered by our questions, and the questions could have tested a more thorough reading and understanding of the material. The decision was deliberately made to focus on the most emphasized (and presumably most basic and important) messages. A more elaborate testing program involving the pre-testing of a wide range of questions would be desirable to further explore this issue in future studies of this type.

Even with the relatively high rate of correct pre-reading answers for the *Abuse is Wrong* and *Stalking* booklets, there was ample room for participants to improve their rates of correct responses in the post-reading tests. The responses were assigned to patterns representing their flow of responses through the three test phases. The proportion of cases falling into each pattern is provided in Table 3.6. For analytic purposes it is useful to group the patterns into the four groups below.

1. All Correct Responses - Cases in which individual questions were answered correctly at all three phases fall into this group, and they represented the highest proportion of cases overall, in keeping with the high proportion of questions that were answered correctly prior to the booklets being read. Correct answers at the first phase did not necessarily result in correct answers at the subsequent phases, however, so these proportions are not as high as for the first phase only.

2. Improved Responses Post-Reading - Two of the pattern categories in Table 3.6 (patterns 3 and 4) represent cases in which the answer was incorrect prior to reading the booklet, but correct immediately after reading. These are the cases we would consider to be desirable, from the point

of view of the effectiveness of the booklets in delivering their key messages. They suggest that reading the booklet provided the participant with information he or she did not previously have. We cannot be sure that this is the case, because some responses may be guesses, and some correct answers may simply be reconsiderations of the question being asked. In the latter case the reading of the booklet still may have influenced the response, even if the participant did not remember reading the correct answer. In any case, it is reasonable to assume that in many cases a change from an incorrect answer to a correct one after reading the booklet would be a result of the information in the booklet being successfully conveyed.¹ Overall, the percentage of responses that “improved” after the booklets were read were 20% for *Peace Bonds*, 17% for *Abuse is Wrong*, and 13% in the case of *Stalking*.

In most cases the change to a correct answer at phase 2 led to a correct answer several weeks later at phase 3, but in a small number of cases the answer at phase 3 reverted to an incorrect one. This was true in 4% of cases for the *Abuse is Wrong* and *Peace Bonds* booklets, and did not occur at all for *Stalking*. These cases can be attributed to two possible outcomes: either the information was successfully conveyed to the reader and was subsequently forgotten; or, the information was never conveyed from the booklet in the first instance, and the correct answer at phase 2 was a guess or was based on a temporary notion of what might be correct, but without sufficient foundation (such as having it read in the booklet) to establish it as knowledge. To the extent that the former explanation is true, it can be seen as a drop-off in knowledge that can be interpreted as meaning that the booklet did not succeed in conveying the knowledge in a way that would endure. There were so few cases that it can be said with confidence that “drop-off” in knowledge does not appear to have been a problem for any of the three booklets, so it is not worthwhile here to try to develop an analysis of what factors may have contributed to the drop-off, except to say that many factors, including word of mouth and other less reliable sources of information, or simply the complexities of the participants’ day-to-day lives, may have led to the correct information being forgotten.

3. Correct Responses Changed to Incorrect - In pattern categories 5 and 6 in Table 3.6, there was a correct answer prior to reading the booklets, followed by an incorrect answer immediately after the reading. We know that the incorrect information was not in the booklets, but there are a few alternative explanations for this eventuality. One is that the booklet confused the reader either in the precise area of those questions, or in a more general way by providing a wide array of information all of which was not possible to absorb accurately. Another explanation is that

¹The participants were not told at any time how they had scored on the questions asked, and the issues raised in the questions were not discussed in the sessions until phase 2 was completed.

the initial correct response was a guess, or at least not well established knowledge, and that the subsequent incorrect response was also a guess, or at least not a deliberate change in response based on the reading. In either case, we can say that the booklet did not succeed in conveying the information it sought to convey for those particular questions with those readers. As Table 3.6 indicates, these cases represented between 11% and 13% of all the possible response patterns.

4. No Apparent Influence From Reading - The final group is comprised of the response patterns that show no apparent change resulting from the reading of the booklets. It includes cases in which all responses to individual questions were incorrect, cases in which a question was answered correctly prior to and after the reading, but incorrectly several weeks later, and cases in which responses to a question were incorrect through the first two phases, but correct at the final phase. For all of these cases, it can be said that the reading of the booklets had no apparent influence over the responses given by the participants. No improvement in knowledge was indicated in the areas addressed by the questions, and the reading had no apparent confusing effect. This group represented 30% of responses for the *Peace Bonds* booklet, 13% for *Stalking*, and 12% for *Abuse is Wrong*.

Table 3.6
Change Patterns of Responses Across the Three Test Phases

Pattern of Change in Responses in Three Test Phases	Stalking N=108	Peace Bonds N=126	Abuse is Wrong N=215
1. All 3 answers correct	63%	40%	58%
2. Correct, correct, incorrect	6%	12%	6%
3. Incorrect, correct, correct	13%	16%	13%
4. Incorrect, Correct, incorrect	0%	4%	4%
5. Correct, incorrect, correct	6%	5%	7%
6. Correct, incorrect, incorrect	6%	6%	6%
7. Incorrect, incorrect, correct	2%	8%	2%
8. All incorrect	5%	10%	4%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Analysing these results is not a simple, clear-cut exercise because there are no standards used by the Department or by the PLEI community in Canada as to the level of improvement in

knowledge that can be expected from publications such as these. As well, there are unknowns that are inevitable in this kind of testing, but which make interpretation of the results more difficult. For example, in a significant proportion of cases questions were answered correctly prior to and after the reading of the booklets. We may determine from this that the booklets were not useful to those readers, but in fact those readers may have drawn other valuable information from the booklets that was not addressed in the questions, or the booklets may have reinforced knowledge that was tentative. These would have to be considered benefits from the booklets. In analysing the results of the tests, it is necessary to focus on the specific, limited objective, which was to test whether the booklets succeeded in conveying certain key messages to their readers, and whether the knowledge gained remained with the readers for at least a period of several weeks after the reading.

One way of interpreting the results is to compare the proportions of cases in which knowledge was gained, with cases in which knowledge was not gained as a result of reading the booklets.² For this purpose, cases in Group 2 above would be those in which knowledge was gained, and the other three groups would be those in which knowledge was not gained. In this interpretation, the booklets tested as shown in Table 3.7.

Table 3.7
Knowledge Gained or Not Gained

Booklet	Knowledge Gained	Knowledge Not Gained
Peace Bonds	20%	80%
Stalking	13%	87%
Abuse is Wrong	17%	83%

Here, Peace Bonds appears to have been the most effective in conveying its key messages, and Stalking least effective. However, the differences are not great, and the more interesting question might be whether these results are acceptable, very positive, or insufficient. To assist in considering this question, it is helpful to remove from the figures those cases in which the correct answers were given at all three phases of the test; in other words, those cases in which knowledge gain was not possible in the first place, and in which the booklets cannot have been viewed as potentially confusing the reader into changing a response from correct to incorrect. When we do this, the proportion of cases in which knowledge was gained rises to 40% for *Abuse*

²As we noted earlier, the “cases” refer to one participant’s test scores for one question in the test, for the three phases.

is Wrong, 35% for *Stalking* and 33% for *Peace Bonds*. In this analysis, the “knowledge gained” figures are compared against two other groups; those in which the booklets may have contributed to some confusion for the reader (as indicated by a correct response changing to an incorrect one after the reading), and those in which there was no apparent change resulting from the reading.

Table 3.8
Knowledge Gained, Correcting For “All Correct” Cases

Booklet	Knowledge Gained	Knowledge “Lost”	No Effect
Peace Bonds	33%	18%	49%
Stalking	35%	33%	33%
Abuse is Wrong	40%	31%	30%

Looked at this way, there is some considerable knowledge gain from the reading of the booklets in areas where the readers did not previously have the knowledge. This has to be seen as a positive indicator of their effectiveness. However, there are also significant levels of what can be referred to as “knowledge loss”, in which the booklets may have confused the readers into forming incorrect understandings in the key subject areas. In the case of *Stalking* in particular, the figures cast some doubt on the effectiveness of the booklet in conveying the key messages. To the extent that confusion from reading the booklets did actually take place and result in the incorrect answers, this is a serious concern. However, it may well be that in many, or even most cases, the incorrect answers reflect a lack of certainty both before and after the reading of the booklets. To the extent that that is true, we can view the “knowledge gained” figures more positively because we can actually group the “knowledge lost” cases in with the “no effect” group for comparative purposes.

In considering the “confusion” factor, the question arises as to how important the key messages in the booklets were, relative to other information in the booklets, and whether or not the possible confusion in those key areas could have been avoided if the booklets contained considerably less information, and focused more deliberately on a small number of messages. This strategy would likely render the booklets no longer useful to some readers, but perhaps more effective for less informed readers.

Looking again at the original figures that included all cases, including the “all correct” ones, the question arises as to whether the large proportion of “all correct” cases means that the booklets are most appropriate for readers who have had little contact with service providers, and less

appropriate for those who have been to support groups or had previous contact with the police or other agencies, which may have passed basic information along to them. Given that there was a significant degree of knowledge gain among the test participants (who had had some degree of support or contact with service providers), it is probably more a question of recognizing that the greatest benefit in conveying the most basic, key messages of the booklets will come from targeting people who have not had contact with support, but that there is still benefit to be derived from the existing approach of targeting support-providing agencies for the distribution of the booklets.

The possible interpretations of our test findings do not provide us with an absolute verdict on the effectiveness of the three publications. However, they do indicate some significant benefit from the booklets in knowledge gained and in the durability of that knowledge for some readers. As well, they raise some important issues for those planning future publications of this type:

- What information (or what depth of information) is needed in a given publication, and what information is already readily available through other sources? This is tied, of course, to who the target readership is. It is important in light of our findings that many readers knew some of the information in the booklets before reading them, and that some of the less informed readers may have been confused by the amount of information in the booklets and not received some of the key messages.
- How much new information is desirable in a booklet? Are there benefits for the comfort level of readers in having some of the information already known?
- How wide a target group range is appropriate? Is it better to include less information in a booklet and target a more specific readership, or to include a range of basic and more detailed information, and expand the target readership?
- What level of knowledge gain is desirable? Acceptable? Is it possible to set some targets for specific readership groups, and to use testing of the type done for this evaluation to guide the development of booklets?
- What is the relative importance of the issues raised in a booklet? Can priorities be set to help guide decisions about what information to include, for what target readership?

Two important research questions were also raised by the test results:

- How can the most appropriate test questions be identified? What factors should influence decisions between questions that address the most basic, least complex issues, and questions that address more complex issues raised in the publications?

- How can the tests be designed to factor out, to the extent possible, the influence of “guesses” as a likely factor in the test responses?

4. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings presented above, the following conclusions can be drawn.

4.1 Conclusions Relating to Distribution

- There were no mechanisms in place to track the distribution of the three booklets, or to conduct any follow-up to ensure that the booklets are being made available to clients, and this appears to be the norm, at least for this kind of publication. The Department itself does not record and monitor distribution on an on-going basis, and the PLEI organizations, which are counted on as important distribution points for DOJ materials, only keep track of the distribution of materials they produce themselves. In short, the distribution strategy for these three publications was passive, and not well designed to maximize the dissemination of the booklets nationally.
- There is no agreement in place with the PLEI organizations to actively distribute DOJ PLEI materials. There is also no understanding on the part of the PLEI organizations that they are expected to do so under their funding agreements with the Department. They certainly expect to act as a distribution point for small quantities of DOJ publications if agencies request them, but DOJ materials are not included on the PLEI organizations' publications lists, and are not marketed in any way, unless they were produced by a particular PLEI organization under contract to the Department. This is contrary to the assumption being made by at least some Departmental officials that the PLEI organizations serve as a focal point for the distribution of the Department's PLEI materials.
- As a result of the weak distribution, the potential benefits of the booklets may not have been realized.
- Readers and intermediaries consulted for this evaluation also expressed the need for PLEI producers to develop more innovative approaches to the distribution of these kinds of booklets. Whereas now they tend to be distributed through agency offices and in courthouses, police stations and some other public institutions in larger centres, it was suggested that a great many people do not have access through these venues. Some

alternatives put forward included increased distribution in smaller urban centres and in rural areas, and distribution to more day-to-day locations such as grocery stores and malls, where women not in contact with support agencies may be more likely to see it and where some women may be able to look at it or pick it up without being noticed by their abusive spouse/partner.

- When agencies did receive the booklets, the booklets were frequently given directly to clients, and sometimes integrated into discussions with clients. These approaches are widely viewed as more effective ways of distributing written materials than simply making them available on racks along with other handouts. The passive “on the rack” approach is still predominant, though, and can in some cases be preferable, particularly where a woman wants a chance to obtain some information without disclosing her situation to anyone.

4.2 Conclusions Relating to the Quality of the Publications

- All three booklets received extremely high ratings from the intermediaries asked to assess their quality, in terms of relevance for client needs, readability, presentation and overall quality.
- There is a widespread concern that publications that are national in scope cannot be as relevant to clients as materials developed at the provincial and territorial level, and that they can at times confuse or mislead clients. At present publications that are national in scope, including the three under consideration here, are often not distributed actively at the provincial and territorial level for this reason, and there are often provincially-produced materials on the same subject matter as the national materials. At the same time, it is recognized that duplication of effort is to be avoided where possible, and that there is typically a substantial amount of information on any given subject area that is common to all provinces and territories. Future development of PLEI materials by the Department needs to be based on a recognition of these factors.

4.3 Conclusions Relating to Publication Effectiveness

- The three publications all helped to increase the knowledge of some readers in the key message areas involved in testing.
- The key messages in the three booklets were known by more than half of the readers prior to reading the booklets. Looking at the booklets separately, this was less the case with the

Peace Bonds booklet, where 40% of questions were answered correctly before participants read the booklet. In the case of the other two booklets, the proportion was in the 60% range.

- For a significant number of readers, reading the booklets may have contributed to some confusion, in that answers to test questions that were correct prior to reading, were incorrect after the booklets were read. This was particularly the case for the *Stalking* booklet, where this result was almost as frequent as a “knowledge gain” result (Table 3.8).
- The test results suggest that more specific targeting of readership may be needed in these kinds of publications, with the level and type of information geared either to readers who are in contact with service providers and have some support available, or to readers who have had little or no contact with service providers, and require the most basic information.
- Some refinements in testing methods should be considered in future research in this area, to target the testing more specifically according to the two categories of reader described in the previous conclusion above, and to try to factor out to the extent possible “guesses” in the test responses, in order to facilitate interpretation of the results.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are put forward for the Department's consideration.

1. There is a need for a more systematic approach to the distribution of Department of Justice PLEI publications. That approach should include the following:
 - an explicit agreement with the provincial and territorial PLEI organizations to actively promote and distribute the materials through their networks of government and community-based agencies. Such an agreement would have to take into account the costs associated with the promotion and distribution, and would have to recognize that most PLEI organizations have only limited space in which to house a considerable amount of written material. It may be that the PLEI organizations would handle only small orders, and that larger orders would have to be transmitted to the Department of Justice for mail-out from a central repository;
 - the systematic recording of orders by the Department and by the PLEI organizations to enable them to assess the nature of distribution and to target subsequent promotion efforts;
 - a follow-up strategy to ensure that the materials remain available to the intended readers, and to identify the need for reprints or updates as appropriate.

2. In light of the finding that national PLEI materials are often not as useful to readers as materials produced in the province or territory, the Department should consider some alternative approaches to its production of PLEI materials in the area of domestic violence. One possible arrangement for future publications would include the following:
 - publications would include some "core" information that would be relevant nationally, and space for provincial and territorial PLEI organizations to include any relevant provincial information;
 - the core national information would not necessarily govern the style of writing or presentation of the publications—that might vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction,

- particularly as between areas with major urban centres and those with a significant rural base. There may even prove to be a requirement for different versions for urban and for rural populations, or other such divisions, as opposed to strictly provincial and territorial differences;
- economies of scale for printing would be made use of to the extent possible, but it would be recognized that smaller print runs might be necessary to allow for provincial/territorial or regional versions of the same publication;
 - the electronic exchange of information and images would be used extensively to facilitate the coordination of publications and the sharing of text and graphics.
3. Planners of future publications of the type examined in this study should place a greater emphasis on establishing a target readership, and gearing the publications' content accordingly. In particular, there appears to be a need to distinguish between information for people who have access to support and have had some contact with service providers, and information for people who are still struggling with a domestic abuse situation on their own, and have had access to very little information.
 4. Future research on the effectiveness of the Department's PLEI publications should take advantage of the experience in this study to refine the testing methodology, and to build the research strategy into the overall planning of the publications so some specific targets and objectives can be tested.

APPENDIX A
Questions Used In the Testing of Publication Effectiveness

Questions About “Abuse Is Wrong”

1. **“Abuse” is a term used to describe:**
 - a. Injuring someone physically
 - b. Hurting or treating someone badly
 - c. Shouting at someone angrily

2. **In Canada:**
 - a. Repeatedly screaming at and insulting a family member is a crime
 - b. Abuse in the home is a family matter, not a crime
 - c. Physical abuse is a crime, no matter who is doing the abusing

3. **If you call the police to report that your husband or boyfriend has hurt you:**
 - a. The police will investigate right away, and may arrest that person
 - b. The police will warn the person to stop the abuse right away
 - c. The police are unlikely to do anything unless you’re badly hurt

4. **If you are being abused and need more information about what to do:**
 - a. You need to contact a lawyer
 - b. Your friends and neighbours will probably know what to do
 - c. Information is available through multicultural associations, women’s centres, and many other public locations

5. **When abuse occurs in the family:**
 - a. There are usually two sides to the story
 - b. It is nobody’s fault. It is to be expected when people live together
 - c. The abuser is to blame, not the people being abused

6. **If you leave the home to protect yourself from abuse:**
 - a. The father will get to keep the children because you have broken up the family
 - b. The court will decide who the children should live with, based on what will be best for them

- c. The children will be able to choose where to live
- 7. If you and your family are permanent residents (landed immigrants) or refugees in Canada:**
- a. The person abusing you could be deported if the abuse has been serious enough
 - b. Reporting abuse could result in your being deported
 - c. You are not eligible for assistance from the police
- 8. Since the evening that you first answered questions about the “Abuse is Wrong” booklet, have you read the booklet again?**
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. I’m not sure
- 9. Since that time, have you read or heard any other information about abuse that has helped you understand the problem better?**
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. I’m not sure
- 10. Would you say that reading this booklet has helped you to understand abuse better?**
- a. Yes, it has helped a lot
 - b. It has helped a bit
 - c. No, it has not helped
- 11. Do you think a booklet like this one is a good way for people to get information about abuse?**
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. I’m not sure

Questions About “Peace Bonds”

- 1. A peace bond is:**
 - a. A court order saying a person must not contact or harm you
 - b. An order from the police telling a person to keep the peace
 - c. A legal agreement between two people to stay away from each other

- 2. A peace bond is also:**
 - a. A penalty for committing a crime
 - b. A warning not to bother a certain person again
 - c. An agreement by someone not to bother a specific person again

- 3. To get a peace bond in Saskatchewan:**
 - a. You should seek help from a lawyer, or go to legal aid
 - b. You should go to the police
 - c. You should go to the court house

- 4. You will succeed in getting a peace bond if:**
 - a. The person bothering you is found guilty
 - b. The police have evidence that the person has been harming you
 - c. You convince the judge that you need protection

- 5. If you have a good reason to go for a peace bond:**
 - a. You will be able to get the peace bond within 24 hours
 - b. You can get it within a few days as long as the other person doesn't fight it in court
 - c. It will take at least two months before a court will hear your case

- 6. If a person breaks a peace bond:**
 - a. That person can be charged with a criminal offence
 - b. That person will be put in jail
 - c. That person will be given just one more chance to keep the peace bond

- 7. Once you have a peace bond:**
- a. You are protected from any contact by the other person
 - b. You can sue the other person if they break the peace bond
 - c. The police can arrest the person right away if they break the peace bond
- 8. Since the evening that you first answered questions about the Peace Bonds booklet, have you read the booklet again?**
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. I'm not sure
- 9. Since that time, have you read or heard any other information about Peace Bonds that has helped you understand Peace Bonds better?**
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. I'm not sure
- 10. Would you say that reading this booklet has helped you to understand Peace Bonds better?**
- a. Yes, it has helped a lot
 - b. It has helped a bit
 - c. No, it has not helped
- 11. Do you think a booklet like this one is a good way for people to get information about Peace Bonds?**
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. I'm not sure

Questions About “Stalking”

1. Stalking is :

- a. Repeatedly bothering or threatening a famous person
- b. Repeatedly following, watching or contacting a person against their wishes
- c. Following and then attacking another person

2. Stalking or harassment become a crime when:

- a. It happens repeatedly and it makes you afraid for the safety of you or someone you know
- b. There is a direct threat made against you or someone you know
- c. The police warn the person to stop and the behaviour continues

3. To prove criminal harassment:

- a. You have to be able to show that the person has hurt you in the past
- b. The police must catch the person in the act of stalking or harassing you
- c. You have to convince a judge that you had a good reason to be afraid of the person’s behaviour

4. If the person harassing you is someone close to you such as a former spouse:

- a. There is little chance that the person will be charged with criminal harassment
- b. They cannot be charged just for trying to maintain contact, as long as they don’t directly threaten you
- c. It doesn’t matter, because you have a right to end a relationship if you want to

5. If a person is harassing you by telephoning repeatedly, you should:

- a. Arrange with the phone company to keep a record of the calls
- b. Get an unlisted number
- c. Not answer the phone unless you are expecting a call from someone else

6. You should seek assistance if:

- a. You have clear evidence that a person is a threat to the safety of you or someone you know

- b. Your instincts tell you that the person's behaviour is a threat to you or someone you know
 - c. You know that the person harassing you has a history of violence
- 7. Since the evening that you first answered questions about the Stalking booklet, have you read the booklet again?**
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. I'm not sure
- 8. Since that time, have you read or heard any other information about Stalking that has helped you understand Stalking better?**
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. I'm not sure
- 9. Would you say that reading this booklet has helped you to understand Stalking better?**
- a. Yes, it has helped a lot
 - b. It has helped a bit
 - c. No, it has not helped
- 10. Do you think a booklet like this one is a good way for people to get information about Stalking?**
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. I'm not sure