

# Breaking the Children Exposed to Woman Abuse Cycle Of Violence

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would like to thank:*



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*for generously providing funding for this initiative.*



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## A Resource Guide for Parents and Service Providers

Developed by:  
The Peel Committee Against Woman AbuseA

April 2006

## CHILDREN LEARN WHAT THEY LIVE

If children live with criticism,  
they learn to condemn.

If children live with hostility,  
they learn to fight.

If children live with ridicule,  
they learn to be shy.

If children live with shame,  
they learn to feel guilty.

If children live with tolerance,  
they learn to be patient.

If children live with encouragement,  
they learn confidence.

If children live with praise,  
they learn to appreciate.

If children live with fairness,  
they learn justice.

If children live with security,  
they learn to have faith.

If children live with approval,  
they learn to like themselves.

If children live with acceptance and friendship,  
they learn to find love in the world.

If you would like additional copies of this booklet,  
please contact:

The Peel Committee Against Woman Abuse  
1515 Matheson Blvd. East, Suite 103  
Mississauga, Ontario L4W 2P5

Telephone: (905) 282-9792

Fax: (905) 282-9669

E-mail: [pcawa@pcawa.org](mailto:pcawa@pcawa.org)

Web Site: [www.pcawa.org](http://www.pcawa.org)

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Breaking the Cycle of Violence: Children Exposed to Woman Abuse

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**Family Transition Place**

**Peel Health Department**

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# WHO SHOULD READ THIS BOOKLET

Although the detrimental impact of children's exposure to woman abuse has received some attention over the past decade, it still remains an issue that is often overlooked or ignored. In January 2000, a subcommittee of *The Peel Committee Against Woman Abuse (PCAWA)*, identified the need for a comprehensive booklet on the issue of children exposed to woman abuse. The committee felt that people living in the Region of Peel would benefit from a booklet highlighting current information, educational materials and resources for women and their children. Please note that this booklet only provides a brief outline of the detrimental impact of children's exposure to woman abuse and the current resources available in the community for addressing this issue. We encourage readers to use the booklet as a starting point to further research this issue.

This booklet was developed for women who have experienced violence in their family. It is designed to provide women and their families with:

- information on the impact of their children's exposure to woman abuse
- strategies for helping children cope with abuse
- strategies for improving parenting skills
- educational resources parents can use with their children
- a list of community agencies that will provide support to women and their families

This booklet may be helpful for professionals working with families in many capacities, such as caregivers (i.e., babysitters/nannies), family physicians, public health nurses, paediatricians, obstetricians, social workers, psychologists, teachers and guidance counsellors, child and youth workers, child protection service workers, children's mental health workers, staff and volunteers working directly with children (i.e. Boy Scouts, Girl Guides, Big Brothers, Big Sisters), day care workers, women's advocates and many other professionals. The booklet provides a quick review of information and resources to which they can refer their clients.

We recognize that woman abuse can occur in a variety of relationships, including same-sex relationships, extended family relationships, dating, acquaintance and peer relationships. Men can also be abused by an intimate partner. However, this booklet focuses specifically on woman abuse. Statistics tell us that violence against women by men is by far the most common form of abuse in our society.

# WHAT IS WOMAN ABUSE?

Woman abuse is a widespread societal problem. It is a form of power and control. Woman abuse can take many forms, including verbal, emotional, psychological, financial, spiritual, sexual and physical abuse, and stalking. Women from all ages, racial and ethnic backgrounds, sexual orientations, socio-economic classes, religions, ability levels, and professions experience abuse. In Canada, woman abuse is considered a criminal act.

## FORMS OF ABUSE

Verbal Abuse: insults, shouting, swearing, put-downs, and degrading language

Emotional Abuse: threatening behavior (i.e. threats to harm or murder the woman and/or children, threats to take away the children, threats to commit suicide and/or murder-suicide)

Psychological Abuse: inducing fear, accusations, excessive suspicions of the woman's actions, isolating and undermining a woman's self-esteem

Financial Abuse: controlling the family finances to disempower the woman

Spiritual Abuse: degrading another person's spiritual beliefs, withholding means to practice, forcing adherence to a belief system

Sexual Abuse: any act of sexual nature that is unwanted

Physical Abuse: slapping, shoving, hitting, torture, stabbing, beating, assault with a weapon, and/or murder

Stalking (Criminal Harassment): persistently following someone, harassing telephone calls, threatening someone

Research shows, the most dangerous period of time for a woman in an abusive relationship, is the first 3 - 4 months after separation. This is when most women are severely abused and most murders occur.

## STATISTICS

- 1 in 4 women will experience abuse in an intimate relationship in their lifetime (Statistics Canada, 1993)
- 38% of sexually assaulted women were assaulted by their husbands, common-law partners or boyfriends (Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women, 1993)
- 21% of women abused in an intimate relationship, are abused during pregnancy (Statistics Canada, 1993)
- 42% of women with disabilities have been or are in abusive relationships (DisAbled Women's Network, 1989)
- Only 26% of woman abuse incidents are reported to the police (Statistics Canada, 1993)
- In an average year, 78 women are killed by their husband or partner (Statistics Canada, 1996)

# WHAT IS CHILDHOOD EXPOSURE TO WOMAN ABUSE?

Children exposed to woman abuse see, hear and are aware of violence against their mother. They may see, hear or know about incidents that range from verbal, emotional, psychological, spiritual, sexual, financial and physical abuse. Their environment may cause them to feel tense, anxious and fearful.

The following are some examples of children's experiences:

- Becky sees her mom's face full of bruises at breakfast after hearing an argument the night before
- Dad brings Jorge into the bedroom and makes Jorge watch him while he beats his mother with a baseball bat. He tells Jorge that this is what you have to do when women do not listen and obey
- Ling hears her dad accusing her mom of having an affair and hears her dad raping her mother
- Mike hears his dad swearing at his mom and calling her names
- Amir hears his dad telling his mom that she should feel lucky to have him because no one else would want her
- Jonelle hears her dad saying he will kill himself if mom leaves
- Charles witnesses his dad throwing the dog across the room and telling his mom that she will be next
- Dad tells Sophie that he will kill mom if she leaves him

**Often children believe their parents are fighting because they are bad - that the violence is their fault.**

**Research shows that unless some form of intervention occurs, the abuse will escalate in frequency and severity.**

The following are three stories from group facilitators that show children's experiences when they get help:

*Maria was a quiet and withdrawn ten-year old when we first started working with her. Her father was abusive and eventually left. Her older sister Teresa became rebellious and began to pick on Maria. Maria said that things were always*

*tense and stressful. No one was quite sure of how much Maria saw in her house and all that she went through. She started to attend a support group with children her age. With the support of others who have also seen too much, Maria was eventually able to start opening up and letting the world in again. After a few months she was actually able to join in with her friends and joke around a little. Hopefully, her sister will also be able to get the support she needs and deserves.*

\* \* \* \*

*Pardeep was a high school student who had seen a great deal in his first fifteen years of life. He was repeatedly sent to counselling by the principal for fighting. After we got through the tough exterior, Pardeep told me about his abusive father. He told me how he felt helpless and fearful because his father would push his mother around and yell and swear at her. His father would hit him if he tried to defend her. Pardeep was put on probation a year later for an assault. Pardeep still struggles with his own rage. I saw him a few years later pushing a stroller. I wonder if things will be different in that family. I'm not entirely sure what will happen to him.*

\* \* \* \*

*Ben is an energetic 5-year old who loves Pokemon. At this age, Ben should not have a care in the world, but he does. He is struggling to make sense of his world. He believes he is at fault for not stopping his dad from hitting his mom. "I tried to push my dad away...I was not strong. I really try to be good." Ben is showing his anger by swearing and hitting others. His mom is worried and does not know how to talk to him about the abuse, and the hurt.*

*Ben and his mom came to the "Helping Our Mothers and Children Survive Abuse Together" program for eight weeks. Ben learned to share his feelings with his mom as well as others in the group. In this program, Ben learned that other children know what it is like to live in a world where dad hurts mom, and that children are not at fault for abuse.*

## **HOW MANY CHILDREN ARE EXPOSED TO WOMAN ABUSE?**

- In Canada, it is estimated that 800,000 children are exposed to woman abuse each year (Jaffe, Poisson, October 1999)
- Other studies estimate that between 60% and 80% of children in families where woman abuse occurs witness the abuse, either by seeing or overhearing it (Jaffe, Wolfe, Wilson, 1990)
- Between two and six children in each classroom have witnessed some form of woman abuse in the past year (National Clearinghouse on Family Violence, 1990)
- Children witnessed violence in more than half of the cases in which women feared for their lives (Statistics Canada, 1993)
- Often, children exposed to woman abuse experience direct or indirect physical abuse themselves
- Children are physically assaulted in 12% of the incidents they witness (Education Wife Assault, 1993)

## **HOW ARE CHILDREN AFFECTED BY EXPOSURE TO WOMAN ABUSE?**

Children depend upon their parents for their physical and emotional needs and for security and protection. Abuse against a parent creates an environment that is tense, fearful and unhealthy. When children see their mother being abused by her partner, they may learn that:

- violence is okay
- violence is a way to resolve conflict
- violence is an effective way to gain power and control over others
- violence is a normal part of a relationship

Children can be directly or indirectly affected by seeing their mother being abused:

- They may also be directly abused by the abuser - verbally, physically, emotionally, and/or sexually
- They may be abused if they are trying to intervene and protect their mother
- They may be placed in the middle by one of the parents, which can be confusing and difficult
- Being exposed to the abuse, even if they are not directly harmed, is a form of abuse

Children exposed to woman abuse are affected on many levels:

- Emotionally (i.e. anxiety, anger, depression, low self-esteem)
- Physically (i.e. difficulty sleeping/eating, health problems)
- Socially (i.e. poor social skills, peer rejection)
- Cognitively (i.e. development delays, poor school performance)
- Behaviourally (i.e. aggression, tantrums, immaturity)

**Serious behaviour and emotional problems are 17 times higher for boys and 10 times higher for girls who observed woman abuse, than children that did not have the experience.**  
(Jaffe, Wolfe, Wilson, 1990)

The impact of abuse on a child may be affected by:

- the age of the child
- the developmental stage of the child
- how long the abuse has been happening
- how serious the abuse is
- the support the child receives

## **THE CYCLE OF VIOLENCE**

Children who are exposed to abuse have an increased chance of being abused and/or being abusive as an adult. Boys whose fathers abused their mothers have 1000% greater likelihood of abusing their partners as adults, than sons of non-violent fathers. (Strauss, Gelles, Steinmetz, 1980). Children may learn that violence is an acceptable way to resolve conflict in the family and in relationships. It is important to recognize that not all children who are exposed to woman abuse become abusive or get involved in an abusive relationship as an adult, however the likelihood is greater. Many factors, such as support and professional intervention, can help break the cycle.

## **TYPICAL LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF WOMAN ABUSE ON CHILDREN BY AGE**

Each child will be affected differently by his/her exposure to woman abuse; however, the chart on the next page outlines some of the common effects. The behaviours are not exclusive to any one category and may be seen across the age groups. Various factors will determine children's behaviour such as whether or not they have an effective support system, their personality, whether they are experiencing additional stress in their life and whether there was effective intervention.

## TYPICAL LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF WOMAN ABUSE ON CHILDREN BY AGE

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INFANTS	PRESCHOOL CHILDREN	ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AGE 5-12 YEARS	EARLY ADOLESCENCE 12-14 YEARS	LATER ADOLESCENCE 15-18 YEARS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disruption in eating and sleeping routines</li> <li>• Fearful reactions to loud noises</li> <li>• Excessive crying</li> <li>• Physical neglect</li> <li>• Delays in Development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low self-esteem</li> <li>• Frequent illness</li> <li>• Poor concentration</li> <li>• Eating and sleep disturbances</li> <li>• Post-traumatic stress*</li> <li>• Fear</li> <li>• Separation anxiety</li> <li>• Anger and aggression</li> <li>• Clinging</li> <li>• Withdrawing</li> <li>• Hitting, biting</li> <li>• Inappropriate sexual behaviour</li> <li>• Cruelty to animals</li> <li>• Destruction of property</li> <li>• Problems in pre-school/day care</li> <li>• Pleasing behaviour</li> <li>• Regressive behaviour (thumb sucking, bed wetting)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low self-esteem</li> <li>• Frequent illness</li> <li>• Poor concentration</li> <li>• Eating and sleep disturbances</li> <li>• Post traumatic stress*</li> <li>• Fear</li> <li>• Anxiety and tension</li> <li>• Anger and aggression</li> <li>• Withdrawing</li> <li>• Bullying</li> <li>• Alcohol/Drug Abuse</li> <li>• Depression</li> <li>• Inappropriate sexual behaviour</li> <li>• Self-harm</li> <li>• Perfectionism</li> <li>• Destruction of property</li> <li>• Problems in school</li> <li>• Pleasing behaviour</li> <li>• Peer relationship problems</li> <li>• Disrespect for females</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low self-esteem</li> <li>• Frequent illness</li> <li>• Poor concentration</li> <li>• Eating and sleep disturbances</li> <li>• Post traumatic stress*</li> <li>• Fear</li> <li>• Anxiety and tension</li> <li>• Anger and aggression</li> <li>• Bullying</li> <li>• Being abused or becoming abusive</li> <li>• Depression</li> <li>• Alcohol/drug use</li> <li>• Self-harm</li> <li>• Suicidal behavior</li> <li>• Inappropriate sexual behaviour</li> <li>• Perfectionism</li> <li>• Running away from home</li> <li>• Pleasing behaviour</li> <li>• Problems in school</li> <li>• Peer relationship problems</li> <li>• Disrespect for females</li> <li>• Feeling over-responsible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low self-esteem</li> <li>• Frequent illness</li> <li>• Poor concentration</li> <li>• Eating and sleep disturbances</li> <li>• Post traumatic stress*</li> <li>• Fear</li> <li>• Anxiety and tension</li> <li>• Anger and aggression</li> <li>• Bullying</li> <li>• Being abused or becoming abusive</li> <li>• Depression</li> <li>• Alcohol/drug use</li> <li>• Self-harm</li> <li>• Suicidal behavior</li> <li>• Inappropriate sexual behaviour</li> <li>• Perfectionism</li> <li>• Running away from home</li> <li>• Pleasing behavior</li> <li>• Problems in school</li> <li>• Peer relationship problems</li> <li>• Disrespect for females</li> <li>• Feeling over-responsible</li> </ul>

\*Post Traumatic Stress: Symptoms include nightmares, intrusive thoughts or images, flashbacks, fear, anxiety, tension, hyper-alert, easily startled, irritability, outbursts of anger and aggression.

This chart was adapted from Health Canada: A Handbook for Health and Social Service Providers and Educators on Children Exposed to Woman Abuse/Family Violence, 1999.

## A CHILD'S SAFETY PLAN

This plan was developed to help mothers teach their children some basic safety planning. It is based on the belief that the most important thing that children can do for their mothers and their families is to protect themselves. Although children often try to stop the violence by distracting the abuser or directly interfering in the abusive episode, they cannot stop the abuse. It is important to tell the child that the best and most important thing to do is to keep themselves safe.

Developing a safety plan may depend on your children's age and developmental ability. Children who are exposed to woman abuse can be deeply affected. It is very frightening for them to witness violence, whether it is directed at them or at someone they love. Personal safety and safety planning are extremely important. Children should learn ways to protect themselves. Below is a list of things you can do to develop a safety plan for you and your children.

- Tell your children that the most important thing is for them to be safe. Children should know that it is not their responsibility to make sure that their mother is safe
- The first step of any plan is for the children to leave the area where the abuse is occurring. Have your children pick a safe room/place in the house, preferably with a lock on the door and a phone
- Teach your children how to call for help. It is important that your children know not to use a phone where they can be seen by the abuser. This puts them at risk. Talk to your children about using a neighbour's phone or a pay phone if they are unable to use a phone at home. If you have a cell phone, teach your children how to use it
- Teach your children how to call for help
- Make sure that your children know their full name and address (rural children need to know their concession and lot #)
- Role play with your children and practice what they will say when they call for help

For example:

Dial 911.

An operator will answer and say:

*"Police, Fire, Ambulance."*

Your child should say:

Police.

Then your child should say:

My name is \_\_\_\_\_.

I need help. Send the police.

Someone is hurting my mom.

The address here is \_\_\_\_\_.

The phone number here is \_\_\_\_\_.

- It is important for children to leave the phone off the hook after they are finished talking, otherwise the police may call the number back for verification. This could create an even more dangerous situation for you and your child/children
- Pick a safe place to meet your children, out of the home (i.e. known neighbour, fire or police station), after the situation is safe for you and for them (so you can easily find each other).
- Teach your children the safest route to the planned place of safety for them

(Excerpt from Creating a Safety Plan. Peel Committee Against Woman Abuse.)

## **SUPPORTING MOTHERS WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED WOMAN ABUSE**

This booklet focuses on supporting children exposed to woman abuse. However, it is important to understand some of the issues that a mother who has experienced woman abuse may be dealing with. In supporting the mother through some of the issues she is dealing with, you can more effectively help her support her children. The following are some of the issues that a mother may be facing, while trying to support her children. She may be:

- experiencing abuse or the threat of abuse
- fearful for her safety and her children's safety and need to develop or follow a safety plan
- dealing with the emotional and physical impact of the abuse she has experienced and need support
- dealing with practical problems such as finding housing, financial support and/or employment
- in the process of criminal and family law proceedings
- feeling isolated and/or overwhelmed
- feeling helpless and/or hopeless
- feeling guilty because she has been abusive to her children
- fearful of being an outcast in her community or family
- fearful of losing her children because of their exposure to the abuse
- accused of being an unfit mother

As a support person, you can assist a mother by:

- believing her
- not judging her
- validating her feelings
- helping her develop coping strategies
- helping her find the support she needs
- helping her create a safety plan
- helping her start legal proceedings
- helping her become financially secure
- helping her find suitable and affordable housing
- encouraging her to take care of herself

# HOW PARENTS CAN SUPPORT THEIR CHILDREN

- **Let** your children know that the violence is not their fault. Children often feel that their behaviour caused the violence and/or separation. They need to be told that it is an adult problem and they did not cause it.
- **Reaffirm** your unconditional love for your children. They may fear that their behaviour will cause you to leave or divorce. Let them know that you will always love them no matter how they behave. Remind them that when parents make mistakes it does not mean that they do not love their children.
- **Promote** your child's self esteem. Try to spend time with them. Express love and affection. Notice what they are doing right. Encourage them to be children.
- **Allow** your children to express different types of feelings. When parents separate, children may feel sad, angry, ashamed, guilty, afraid, confused, relieved, or worried about who will take care of them. These are all natural reactions you can expect from your children.
- **Help** your children find safe ways to express their feelings. Build your child's self esteem by trying to notice and comment on what your children are doing right.
- **Reassure** your children that they will be okay. Explain that there have been many changes.
- **Help** them understand that their family is not the only family that has had this experience, and that other families have made things better.
- **Encourage** your children to talk about what they saw and/or heard. It may be hard to hear what they experienced, but everyone needs the chance to express their feelings - especially feelings of anger, hurt, pain or fear.

- **Allow** your children time to express these feelings and accept them. Children need to know it is also okay to share their feelings with others.
- **Acknowledge** the mixed/confusing feelings children may have toward their parents. It is okay to love someone and feel angry at the same time.
- **Reassure** your children that you don't expect them to look after you. They may feel responsible for keeping you or their siblings safe. The priority is to keep everyone safe. Give children skills to help them stay safe. Brainstorm a list of people they can go to if they need help, as well as a safe place in the home.
- **Encourage** and give your children permission to be children, and not a friend, or a confidant to you. Develop a support system for yourself, independent from your children. You deserve to be able to express and share your feelings.
- **Remember** that your children's anger may not be directed at you - it is often about other things. Sometimes the anger has been brewing for a long while, and the child now feels safe enough to let it out. This is a good thing.
- **Understand** that there is a reason for your children's behaviour. Acknowledge this in words they can understand. Unless you discuss what is going on, your children will work out reasons of their own for the problems and will often blame themselves.
- **Redefine** the word "family". Often women who have been abused feel guilty and blame themselves for the change in circumstances. Do not try to make up for it in other ways. A spotless home won't create a perfect family. Nor will toys. Create a home where the emotional needs of you and your children are nurtured.
- **Create** a method of discipline that is respectful and does not humiliate your children. Do not abuse your children.

- **Remember** your children are not the abuser. Do not tell them that they are “just like” the abuser, especially when they are having trouble controlling their anger. Their relationship with you is different. You are the adult who must provide them with safety and security.
- **Children** can respond differently to stressful situations. Some may have more problems coping than others. The way children cope depends on factors such as their ability to handle stressful situations and their support system.
- **Mention** to your children’s teachers or daycare staff that there have been changes in your family. It helps when your children are understood and supported by other adults. If there is a change in your children’s behaviour, others will then be better able to help them.
- **Be clear** with your children about what is happening in everyday life. Children who live with abuse need information ahead of time about where they will be, and how long they will be staying there. If your children have a hard time separating from you, reassure them that you will be safe and let them know when you will be back.
- **Get support** for yourself. It takes a lot of patience to cope with your children, especially when they have been exposed to abuse.

(Adapted from: B.C. Institute Against Family Violence. Volume 6, Issue 2, Summer 1999.)

# TOP 10 QUESTIONS PARENTS ASK

**1. *If my children are exposed to abuse, how will they be affected?***

**All children are affected by exposure to woman abuse.** When children witness abuse, they may learn that violence is an acceptable and normal way to resolve conflict, or a way to gain power and control over someone else. However, not all children respond to trauma in the same way. Your child may be behaving in some of the ways identified in the section *Long Term Effects*. They may also be more likely to accept excuses for abusive behaviour and/or to behave aggressively. Studies have shown that boys exposed to woman abuse are more likely to grow up to become abusive in an intimate relationship, while girls may grow up to accept abuse. It is important however, to recognize that not all children will grow up to be abusive or abused. Many factors contribute to whether the cycle of violence will continue into adulthood, such as how children respond to trauma, their coping styles, stressors in their life, support systems, and whether or not you and your children get involved in family and/or group counselling to talk about what has happened in your family.

**2. *If my children do not see my partner hurting me, will they be affected?***

Children do not have to see abuse to be affected by it. Your children will be affected through hearing the abuse or seeing its results (i.e. bruises, broken household items, parents being physically and/or emotionally unavailable to their children, police intervention, fathers being removed from the home, and/or going to a shelter). Sometimes hearing abuse may be more difficult for children, as they may create their own stories and/or fantasies around the incident. It should be remembered that children feel the tension in their environment and are often confused because they worry about their own safety. They may also feel responsible for the safety of other family members.

**3. *How can I talk to my children about what has happened?***

It may be difficult for you to talk with your children about what has happened in your family. As a parent who has lived through the situation, you have your own feelings about the abuse. Talking with your children involves recognizing that you have been abused. This may be hard to accept. Choosing not to talk about what has happened will not make your children better, nor will it make their negative feelings go away. It is important to give your children permission to talk and express their feelings about what has

happened in their family so that they may begin the journey of healing. If you need some assistance in this process, you may choose to connect your children and/or family to agency supports in the community. (Refer to the section on *How Parents Can Support Their Children* for additional resources)

**4. *I feel angry and I am afraid that I may become abusive towards my children. What should I do?***

As a result of your experience of abuse, you may find that you have difficulty with problem solving and coping with parenting. You may react to your children's behaviour in inappropriate ways such as physical punishment and/or verbal putdowns. Parents need to be responsible for their behaviour and how they respond to their children. You may need to consider counselling and/or group programs to learn more productive parenting techniques and strategies. Your behaviour can change and your interactions with your children can become more constructive.

**5. *My child is angry. How do I respond?***

Anger is a common response for children exposed to woman abuse. It is usually a cover-up for other emotions. For example, your children may be feeling a sense of responsibility, frustration, confusion, sadness and/or worry. If your children are not comfortable talking with you, encourage them to find someone who can appropriately support them. Depending on their age, you may find other ways to explore how your children are feeling such as through artwork, games, and videos. Get help from someone you trust so that you do not have to deal with this situation alone.

**6. *If my partner was abusive to me, will he be abusive to my children?***

Being exposed to woman abuse is a form of child abuse. Whether or not your partner is abusive to your children, it is still an unhealthy situation for them to be exposed to violence.

**7. *What should I do if my children start to act like their father?***

It is important to know the difference between normal age-appropriate behaviour and behaviour that imitates the abuse that was witnessed in the home. You may need to look at the emotions that are causing your children's behaviour. It is also important to remember that how you respond, may reinforce your children's behaviour. Keep in mind that children are not mirror images of their parents. Avoid statements such as "You are just like your father". You may need to explore new ways to respond to one another that are violence-free. Talk with other people and/or professionals.

Remember that there are many supports and resources within your community. You do not have to cope with this problem alone.

**8. *My children really want to see their father. What do I do?***

After a separation, children may experience both positive and negative feelings about their father. It is important for you to remember that as a parent you must not put your child in the middle of the problems that you and your partner may experience. It is important for you to understand the legalities. If you choose to leave your partner, you need to secure custody of your children. Consult with a lawyer to learn your legal rights and to determine access and custody issues. If your children are visiting their father, you need to think about a safe way for them to do it. Refer to the *Safety Plan* inside this booklet and talk with your children about your family's safety plan.

**9. *If I tell someone that I am being abused and I have children, will they contact the Children's Aid Society?***

A child's safety is a primary concern and value in our society. The Children's Aid Society plays an important role in making sure that children are safe and that families have the community resources that they need. It is important for you to know that people have a legal responsibility to report child abuse. **If someone knows that a child's safety is at risk, they must report it to the Children's Aid Society. If you are unsure whether or not to report a case, you can contact the Children's Aid Society anonymously to discuss the matter.**

**10. *What can I do to make my children feel safe?***

If you are safe your children will feel safe. Taking steps to ensure the safety of the family will make your children feel safer. Refer to the *Safety Plan* inside this booklet and use it as a tool to create an individualized safety plan for your family. Remember that safety includes the emotional and the physical well-being of your children. Talk with your children about what has happened and connect them with appropriate support within their school and/or your community. We need to ensure that they are safe in order for them to have a positive childhood.

# WHAT CAN I DO AS A SERVICE PROVIDER?

- Educate yourself on the issues of children exposed to woman abuse and the impact on children
- Become informed of the services available in the community for women, children and their families
- Connect with community organizations addressing the issue
- Raise the issue at your staff meetings and share information with your colleagues
- Organize ongoing training for staff who may have contact with children as well as mothers who are survivors of abuse
- Distribute information on the issue and make the information accessible to people who may want to access the information discretely
- Support women, children and their families when they disclose experiences of violence. Refer them to the appropriate services
- Be aware of the changes to the Child and Family Services Act with regard to children exposed to woman abuse and your role in reporting cases. Contact the Children's Aid Society if you are unsure whether you need to report a case
- Advocate for effective community and legal responses to woman abuse and children exposed to woman abuse
- Advocate for adequate funding to support programs for woman-abuse survivors, their children and their families
- Support violence prevention initiatives and attend anti-violence events
- Work with your community and organizations to create an effective community response to children exposed to woman abuse

# EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES FOR PARENTS AND THEIR CHILDREN

## VIDEOS

**“Break the Cycle”** (Espirit Films Ltd., 1991)

This 25 minute video addresses issues related to wife battering. The film includes interviews with a battered woman, a violent husband and several teenagers who witnessed violence against their mother. To order call (416) 685-8336.

**“Bullies and How To Help Them”** (United Learning, 1997)

To order call (416) 538-6613 or 1-800-263-6910

**“Make A Difference: How to Respond to Child Witnesses of Woman Abuse”** (London Coordinating Committee to End Woman Abuse, 1995)

This 20 minute video depicts the feelings and problems of two children who live in a home where their mother is a victim of wife assault. To order call (519) 455-9000.

**“The Crown Prince”** (The National Film Board of Canada, 1989)

This 37 minute video depicts the feelings and problems of two children who live in a home where their mother is a victim of wife assault. Available at the Brampton Public Library and Mississauga Public Library.

**“Tulip Doesn’t Feel Safe”** (Kinetic Inc., 1993)

This 15 minute video through animation teaches children aged six to eight how to deal with various unsafe situations, specifically wife abuse. To order call (416) 963-5979.

**“Seen But Not Heard”** (B.C/Yukon Society of Transition Houses, 1993)

This 29 minute video examines the effects on children witnessing woman abuse at home. To order (416) 538-6613 or 1-800-263-6910.

**“What About Us”** (B.C/Yukon Society of Transition Houses, 1993)

This video examines the importance of group therapy/counselling for child witnesses of woman abuse. To order call (416) 538-6613 or 1-800-263-6910.

**Preventing Family Violence: A Catalogue of Canadian Videos on Family Violence.** To order call 1-800-267-1291.

## LITERATURE

**A Handbook for Health and Social Service Providers and Educators on Children Exposed to Woman Abuse/Family Violence.** M. Sudermann and P. Jaffe (Health Canada, 1999)

To order through the National Clearinghouse on Family Violence 1-800-267-1291.

**ASAP: A School-Based Anti-Violence Program.**

M. Sudermann, P. Jaffe, E. Schieck. (London Family Court Clinic. 1993)

Provides a comprehensive and evaluated plan to implement violence prevention programs in schools with a special emphasis on violence in relationships. It is designed for teachers, students and parents and includes a curriculum on violence prevention. To order call (519) 679-7250.

**A Volcano in My Tummy - Helping Children to Handle Anger.**

E. Whitehouse and W. Pudney (B.C: New Society Publishers, 1996)

**Breaking the Cycle: A Parenting Guide for Single Mothers of Children Who Witnessed Domestic Violence.**

J. Ericksen, A. Henderson, M. Davidson, S. Ogden (Feminist Research, Education, Development and Action Centre, 1997)

**Children of Battered Women.**

P. Jaffe, D. Wolfe, S. Wilson. (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1990)

Provides information on the effects of wife abuse on the children who witness it, and includes information on group programs for children.

**Ending The Cycle of Violence. Community Responses to Children of Battered Women.**

E. Peled, P. Jaffe and J. Edleson, eds. (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1995) Includes information on assessment, child custody, advocacy and prevention. Available at the Brampton Public Library and Mississauga Public Library.

**Groupwork with Children of Battered Women. A Practitioner's Manual.**

E. Peled and D. Davis. (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1995)

**Just Because I Am. A Child's Book of Affirmation.**

L. Murphy-Payne. (Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing Inc., 1994) Available at the Mississauga Public Library.

**Project Child Recovery. Group Interventions for Child Witnesses of Family Violence.**

D. Yawney and B. Hill. (YWCA of Lethbridge, Alberta, 1993)

**The Heart of Parenting: Raising an Emotionally Intelligent Child.**

J. Gottman and J. Decleare. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997)

**The Scared Child: Helping Kids Overcome Traumatic Events.**

P. M. Siegal and B. Brooks. (New York: John Wiley & Sons Inc., 1996)

**Thumbs Down - A Classroom Response to Violence Towards Women.** Canadian Teacher's Federation (Ottawa. 1990)

This manual is a violence prevention program for Kindergarten to Grade 12, which encourages classroom discussion and age appropriate activities.

## **CHILDREN'S BOOKS**

**A Family That Fights**

S. Bernstein. (Illinois: Albert Whitman and Co., 1991)

**All Kinds of Families.**

N. Simon. (Illinois: Albert Whitman and Co.. 1976)

Available at the Brampton Public Library and Mississauga Public Library.

**Hands are Not for Hitting**

M. Agossi. (Free Spirit Press, 2000)

**Hear My Roar: A Story of Family Violence**

T. Hochban and Vladyana Krykorka. (Toronto: Annick Press Ltd., 1994)

This book is for children five and up who live in a family where there is wife abuse. It provides a framework for discussion with a child who witnesses woman abuse at home. Available at the Mississauga Public Library.

**I Love My Dad But...**

L. Wright. (Toronto: Is Five Press, 1991)

**I Wish The Hitting Would Stop: A Workbook for Children Living in Violent Homes**

S. Patterson and D. Softing-Freed. (North Dakota: Crisis Centre of Fargo-Moorhead, Red Flag, Green Flag Resources, 1987)

**Just Because I Am**

L. Murphy-Payne. (Free Spirit Press, 1994)

### **Never, No Matter What**

M. Otto. (Toronto: Women Press, 1988)

Available at the Brampton Public Library and the Mississauga Public Library.

### **Something Is Wrong at My House.**

D. Davis (Seattle: Parenting Press Inc., 1984)

This book is about feelings and ways to cope when living in a violent home. Available at the Brampton Public Library.

### **Today I Feel Silly**

Jamie Lee Curtis. (Harper Collins, 1998)

### **When Mommy Got Hurt**

I. Lee and K. Sylvester. (Kidsrights, 1996)

### **Why Do You Love Me?**

Dr. Schlesinger. (Harper Collins, 1999)

## **GAMES**

**“Let’s Go Fish A Memory”** (Blue Heron games. Vancouver, B.C.)

This game can be used to enhance a child’s ability to identify and express feelings. Both listening and speaking skills are emphasized.

**“The Dragon Game”** (Blue Heron Productions, Nelson, B.C.)

This game encourages story telling about different experiences of anger as well as other closely related feelings such as anxiety, frustration and embarrassment.

**“The Hero’s Journey”** (Victim Services of Peel, Mississauga, ON.)

This game is an expressive arts resource designed for working with 6 - 12 year old children who have been affected by family violence). To order contact Victim Services at (905) 568-1068.

## **OTHER RESOURCES**

**“Building Blocks Resource Kit for Violence-Free Play and Learning” A free book and toy for Region of Peel Parents and Caregivers with Children 0-6 years old.**

(Peel Committee Against Woman Abuse/Peel Committee On Sexual Assault)

This resource is a fun interactive tool that comes in the form of a resource guide book and a set of toy blocks to promote violence-free play and learning. To order contact PCAWA at (905) 282-9792 or PCSA at (905) 273-4100

## **WEB-SITES**

**Education Wife Assault** - [www.womanabuseprevention.com](http://www.womanabuseprevention.com)

**London Family Court Clinic** - [www.lfcc.on.ca/](http://www.lfcc.on.ca/)

**National Clearinghouse on Family Violence** - [www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/familyviolence/index.html](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/familyviolence/index.html)

[www.Parentbooks.com](http://www.Parentbooks.com)

# COMMUNITY SERVICES FOR PARENTS AND THEIR CHILDREN

## EMERGENCY SERVICES

Peel Regional Police.....	911 or 453-3311
Caledon O.P.P.....	911 or 584-2241
Caledon/Dufferin Victim Services .....	1-888-743-6496
Victim Services of Peel.....	568-1068
Trillium Health Centre*.....	848-7600

\*regional site for gathering forensic evidence for sexual assault and domestic violence cases

## MEDICAL/HEALTH SERVICES

Credit Valley Hospital .....	813-2792
Dufferin-Caledon Health Care Corporation... 1-519-941-2410x2214	
Health Line Peel (8-5pm).....	799-7700
(Healthy Babies and Children; Sexual Health Clinics)	
Trillium Health Centre	
Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Services	
Counselling Services.....	848-7493
Medical Services (24 hrs.).....	848 7191
William Osler Health Centre .....	796-4492

## 24 HOUR CRISIS LINES

Assaulted Women's Helpline.....	(416) 863-0511
or.....	TTY: 1-866-863-0511
Caledon/Dufferin Victim Services .....	1-888-743- 6496
Distress Centre Peel.....	278-7028
Family Awareness and Drug Education Halton Peel Centre.....	
.....	1-800-713-8990
Family Transition Place .....	1-800-265-9178
Interim Place I.....	676-8515
Interim Place II.....	271-1860
Kids Help-line.....	1-800-668-6868
Parent Help-line .....	1-888-603-9100
Salvation Army Family Life Resource Centre .....	451-6108
Sexual Assault/Rape Crisis Centre of Peel .....	273-9442
Tele-care Brampton .....	459-7777
Victim Services of Peel .....	568-1068

**(all area codes are 905 unless otherwise listed)**

## **SHELTERS**

Armagh (second stage) .....	855-0299
Family Transition Place .....	1-519-941-4357 or 1-800-265-9178
Interim Place I.....	403-0864
Interim Place II.....	676-8515
Our Place Peel (ages 16-21) .....	238-1383
Salvation Army Family Life Resource Centre .....	451-4115

## **PROGRAMS FOR WOMEN**

African Community Services of Peel .....	460-9514
Caledon Community Services .....	951-2300
Catholic Cross-Cultural Services	
Brampton .....	457-7740
Mississauga .....	273-4140
Catholic Family Services of Peel-Dufferin.....	1-888-940-0584
Brampton .....	450-1608
Mississauga .....	897-1644
HEAL Network.....	450-1608 ext. 118
Family Services of Peel	
Centralized Intake .....	453-5775
Brampton .....	453-7890
Mississauga .....	270-2250
Family Transition Place .....	1-800-265-9178
India Rainbow Community Services	
Brampton .....	454-2598
Mississauga .....	275-2369
Malton Neighbourhood Services.....	677-6270
Merge Counselling and Educational Services .....	855-7544
Muslim Community Services	
Brampton.....	790-8482
Mississauga.....	828-1328
Punjabi Community Health Centre	
Mississauga.....	301-2978
Salvation Army Women's Counselling Centre .....	820-8984
United Achievers Community Services.....	455-6789
Vita Manor.....	858-0329

Many of these agencies offer a variety of programs for women who have experienced abuse, including individual/group counselling, legal and housing information, and services in different languages.

**PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN EXPOSED TO WOMAN ABUSE**

**Catholic Family Services of Peel-Dufferin .....450-1608**

Offers individual and family counselling for children who have seen and heard abuse toward their mother. Services are offered in collaboration with HEAL Network. Services may be accessed in several languages.

**HEAL Network (Helping End Abuse for Life) .....450-1608 ext. 118**

A collaboration of 15 social service agencies dedicated to helping children and youth deal with their exposure to woman abuse. All programs are free. HEAL Programs include: Helping Mothers and Children Survive Abuse Together (HMCSAT) - A 10 week closed group for women and their children ages 0-12 who may have been impacted by their exposure to woman abuse. Language specific groups are available; The Lunch Group - A 12 week closed group that is available for children 7-10 years of age that takes place in a school setting. This group reaches out to children who may be exhibiting serious behavioral and/or emotional difficulties, possibly due to their exposure to woman abuse. In conjunction with this group, there are two workshops offered to parents in the school setting; Alternative Intervention Program - This program is for families who may require some counselling in order to prepare them for the HMCSAT group or for families who have completed a HMCSAT group and may have some additional issues to work through. This program consists of 6 counselling sessions. This program is available to women and their children 0-6 years of age; and Breaking Down Walls: A Group for Teens Exposed to Woman Abuse in their Families - A 10 week closed group for youth 13-16 years of age, who have been exposed to woman abuse. The focus is to assist youth to explore the violence they were exposed to and assist them in learning how to use non-violence conflict resolution strategies to live violence-free.

**Family Services of Peel .....453-5775**

Offers individual and family counselling for children who have witnessed abuse. A school-based psycho-educational group is also offered through the HEAL Network of which we are a participating member.

**Interim Place.....403-9691**

.....Crisis lines: 403-0864 or 676-8515

Serves abused women and their children in the Region of Peel. Services include: a safe shelter, referrals, support groups for children 0-16 years of age, individual counselling (boys 4-16 and girls 4-18 years of age), advocacy and support for all women and their children. Services available in multiple languages.

## **PROGRAMS FOR ABUSIVE MEN**

**Catholic Family Services of Peel-Dufferin** ..... 450-1608 ext. 124  
Offers individual and group counselling to abusive men. Man to Man is the group counselling and education program for men who abuse their partners. Services available in Brampton, Mississauga, and Orangeville. Services available in several languages.

**Family Services of Peel** .....453-5775  
Offers individual and group counselling to abusive men. Services are available in Brampton and Mississauga.

**Merge Counselling Services** ..... 855-8028  
Offers group counselling and education to abusive men. Services are available in Mississauga. Programs also available for teenage boys between 16-19 years of age.

**Punjabi Community Health Centre** .....301-2978  
Offers an educational group for Punjabi male batterers. Services are available in Brampton.

## **FAMILY PROGRAMS**

**Associated Youth Services of Peel (AYSP)** .....890-5222  
Provides community based programs to children, youth and their families. AYSF programs are either court ordered (phase 1 young offenders) or funded by the Peel Children's Aid Society/MCSS. Services offered in multiple languages.

**Caledon Parent-Child Centre** ..... 857-0090  
Albion/Bolton Community Centre. Provides informal counselling, educational workshops, support and referral services. Services offered in multiple languages.

**Catholic Cross-Cultural Services** .....  
.....457-7740 (Brampton) or 273-4140 (Mississauga)  
Assists immigrants and refugees who face linguistic and cultural barriers in their settlement, adaptation and integration into Canadian society. Services for 16+ age group. Services offered in multiple languages.

**Catholic Family Services of Peel-Dufferin**.....1-888-940-0584  
.....450-1608 (Brampton) or 897-1644 (Mississauga)  
Offers individual, couple, and family counselling. Group counselling programs include: groups for women who have experienced abuse in

adult intimate relationships, and women who have experienced childhood abuse. Services offered in collaboration with the HEAL network. Please see HEAL Network program listing under “Programs for Children Exposed to Woman Abuse.” Services offered in multiple languages.

**Family Education Centre** .....452-0332  
Provides workshops and courses for parents and children to build skills and improve relationships.

**Family Services of Peel** .....453-5775  
.....453-7890 (Brampton) or 270-2250 (Mississauga)  
Offers an integrated response to woman abuse. Women and their families have “quick access” to a drop-in-group, an abused women’s group, legal support, and through our IIS (Immediate Intervention Service), a free of charge, time limited counselling and referral service. Women and their families also have access to related services including individual, couple, and family counselling. Services offered in multiple languages.

**Family Transition Place, Orangeville & Bolton**.....  
.....(519) 941-4357 or 1-800-265-9178  
Provides safe shelter, support and counselling for abused women and their children. Services for adolescents 16 years and older include individual, group and telephone counselling, psycho-education and support groups, educational workshops and legal support. All services are free. Services offered in English and French.

**India Rainbow Community Services of Peel**.....  
.....454-2598 (Brampton) or 275-2369 (Mississauga)  
Provides support and counselling for abused women and their children. Services also offered for youth and parents. Services offered in multiple languages.

**Learning Disabilities Association of North Peel** .....791-4100  
Provides services for individuals with learning disabilities & attention deficit disorder/hyperactivity and their families.

**Merge Counselling and Educational Services**.....855-7544  
Offers a support group for women living in anger and a program for teenage boys between 16-19 years of age.

**Muslim Community Services of Peel**.....  
.....790-8482 (Brampton) or 828-1328 (Mississauga)  
Provides crisis support, one-to-one and group counselling to individuals, families, and abused women. Services available in Brampton and Mississauga.

**Punjabi Community Health Centre**.....  
.....301-2978

**Rapport Youth & Family Counselling** .....455-4100  
Provides individual and family counselling to adolescents (12-20 years) that respects the autonomy of the adolescent and integrity of the family. Services promote healthy social and emotional functioning and include anger management groups for teens, individual counselling, family counselling.

**Salvation Army Women’s Counselling Centre**.....820-8984  
Offers services to women 16 years of age and over. Services include crisis counselling, individual and group counselling (including life skills seminars) as well as advocacy and court support. All services are free. Services offered in English and Spanish.

**Victim Services of Peel** .....568-1068  
Offers 24 hour crisis response services for victims of crime and tragic circumstance. Services include telephone counselling, crisis intervention & debriefing, scene attendance, witness assistance, educational workshops, resources, Mentoring for Change, and the Supportlink/DVERS emergency response safety program. Services offered in multiple languages.

**CHILDREN’S PROGRAMS**

**Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Peel** .....457-7288  
Provides one to-one matching with a screened adult volunteer as well as group recreational programs for boys and girls aged 6-16, who are experiencing some stress and difficulty in their lives and who can benefit from friendship and guidance.

**Brampton Neighbourhood Resource Services** .....452-1262  
Provides information, support and educational programs to individuals/families. Services include a variety of preschool programs, in various Brampton locations.

**Centralized Intake for Children’s Services** ..... 451-4655  
This is a central intake number to be used when accessing services from Peel Children’s Centre (0-18 years), Peel Collaborative Services (0-18 years), Trillium Hospital's Child and Youth Mental Health Program (0-19 years) or Nexus Youth Services (12-24 years). These services include counselling for children and families.

**Mississauga Parent-Child Resource Centre** ..... 822-1114  
Drop-in play centre for parents and caregivers of babies, toddlers, and pre-school children. There are 5 Mississauga locations.

**Peel Children’s Centre - Child Witness Preparation Program of Peel-Halton** ..... 795-3500 x2224  
Provides education and support to all child witnesses who must testify in court, or live in Halton and Peel. Services include support groups, and individual preparation for court.

**Peel Preschool Speech and Language Services** ..... 820-7111  
Provides speech and language services to children from 0-5 years of age.

**YOUTH PROGRAMS**

**E.C.L.Y.P.S.E.** ..... 790-7707  
Youth resource and activity drop-in centre operated by Rapport at Bramalea City Centre. Serves youth aged 12 to 30, walk-in career awareness services, social recreational activities, and counselling available for youth 12 to 20.

**Square One Youth Centre** ..... 566-1883  
Provides services for youth, ages 12-24, including individual and family counselling. subject to availability of volunteers

**The Dam Youth Program** ..... 826-6558  
Youth 13-19 are welcome to drop in during lunch, afternoons and evenings. Support groups and informal counselling for mothers under the age of 25 are available.

## **ADDICTIONS PROGRAMS**

**Family Awareness Centre** .....271-4200  
Offers addiction assessment, counselling, individual case management, brief solution-focused therapy, and other mental health and recovery services to anyone whose life is influenced by addictions.

## **FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

**Social Assistance** ..... 793-9200

## **LEGAL & COURT SERVICES**

**North Peel & Dufferin Community Legal Services** ..... 455-0160  
**Caledon/Dufferin Victim Services** .....1-888-743-6496  
**Mississauga Community Legal Services** ..... 896-2052  
**Ontario Legal Aid** ..... 453-1723  
**Victim Services of Peel**.....568-1068  
**Victim Witness Assistance Program** .....456-4797  
(criminal court support services)

## **CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES**

**Peel Children’s Aid (24 hrs)**.....363-6131  
Children’s Aid Society provides service to children and families to ensure child well-being and safety. Service can be provided in various languages and all efforts are made to provide supports and services to promote and maintain family stability.

## **FOODBANKS**

**Foodpath Foodbank** ..... 270-5589  
**The Salvation Army Foodbank**  
    **Brampton** ..... 451-8840  
    **Mississauga** ..... 279-2526

*Please note: agency programs are subject to change. The agencies listed in this section reflect the services available at the time this booklet was developed.*

