

**VIOLENCE PREVENTION INITIATIVE**

**ACTION PLAN 2002 - 2003**

December, 2002

## Priority Policy/Legislation Issues for Departments **2002-2003**

One of the main goals of the Violence Prevention Initiative is to improve legislation, policy, and services related to victims of violence. The critical issues for each partner department of the VPI were identified during the Provincial Strategy Against Violence and are well known by all partners to the VPI. It is important that Government continue to seek solutions to all of these issues and incorporate solutions into the respective strategic and operational plans of departments.

For the 2002-2003 year the PCC has decided to recommend one priority issue for each department. The recommendation is that each department will develop a specific action plan and objectives for the year on the issue which has been identified. The PCC will provide input to the draft action plans developed.

There are two underlying principles to this approach of identifying priorities. Firstly, identifying single issue priorities for the year does not mean that work will not continue on other long-standing issues, but it will provide a strong momentum to address a specific issue in this fiscal year if possible. Secondly, while the issues selected are deemed to be priorities as of June 2002, it is possible that unforeseen policy changes or developments in the community may require a shift in priorities for the PCC.

### Justice

- Objective: To develop an action plan for the year on establishing protocols on family violence related to internal actions and interdepartmental/agency/board actions.
- Action: 1. A working group of senior managers in relevant divisions within Justice will be formed to review, update, and publish the coordinated criminal justice system response to family violence. The results to be produced electronically and in print. (December - March 2003)
- Outcome: Enhanced knowledge, access, and awareness of justice services and protocols for all levels of personnel in the Department of Justice and the public.

### Health & Community Services

- Objective: To develop an action plan for the year on the following priorities for the Department in relation to violence:
1. Enhancement/development of regional health board policies;
  2. Shelter programming particularly as it relates to standards

3. Group home programming for young offenders, and,
4. Continuation of VPI training for health board staff.

### Human Resources & Employment

Objective: To implement recommendations in *Moving Forward: Responding to the Needs of Victims of Violence*, including training for front line staff.

- Action: 1. Complete and evaluate pilot on start-up allowance (Sept - Mar)
2. Finalize Service Agreements with Transition Houses (Sept - Nov)
  3. Develop and distribute to all district offices a policy manual to guide implementation of the recommendations of the Moving Forward report. (Aug - Oct)
  4. Have 50% of staff participate in Violence Awareness Action Training (Oct - Mar)
  5. Develop plain language fact sheets on departmental programs and services (Jan - Mar)
  6. Appoint HRE ex-officio representatives to Boards of Directors for Transition Houses (Jun - Nov)
  7. Address outstanding issues related to Comforts Allowance, in cooperation with the Department of Health and Community Services (Oct - Nov)
  8. Develop workshop jointly with HCS to focus on addressing gaps identified in client service delivery (Sep - Nov)

### Education

Objective: To develop an action plan for the year on integration of violence awareness into the school curriculum K-12.

- Action: 1. The Department's resource *Policy, Guidelines and Resource Guide on Discipline, Violence and Safe Schools Teams*, which guides school and district planning in this area, will be re-distributed to all districts.(October)
2. Planning sessions will be held with the at least 5 key educators from each school district who are responsible for moving safe and caring schools initiatives forward. These sessions will ensure that violence prevention is a prioritized goal in their strategic plan, with an action plan. (October)

3. By March, each school district will have:
  - A District Safe & Caring Schools Committee
  - A District Policy on Safe & Caring Schools
  - A professional development plan around violence prevention for every school, integrated through the school development process
  - Identified relevant community partners and begun the process of strengthening links with these.
  - Resources committed to this area (e.g., substitute time, priority for school closeouts, materials, etc)
  - Evidence of programming with respect to violence prevention in every school in the district.
4. The Department will review existing resources related to bullying and provide a comprehensive resource to every school. Schools may choose to implement this resource or to use it as a supplementary resource to another program. (December)
5. The Department will compile existing resources related to violence prevention to be shared with districts/schools for use with students. (October-March)
6. The Department will provide professional development to districts and schools and assist with related initiatives. (October - March)
7. The Department has been working in partnership with the other Atlantic provinces in developing an Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation (APEF) resource and professional development package titled, *Meeting Behavioural Challenges: Creating Safe and Caring Learning Environments*, that will be printed. (March).
8. The Department will increase public awareness through newsletters, bulletins, marketing their web site, media clips, etc. (October-March)

Outcome: Minimum standards are set for violence awareness/education in schools.

#### Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs

Objective: To develop an action plan for the year to undertake an analysis to identify the key issues respecting violence in aboriginal communities in the Province.

Action: 1. Hold informal discussions with Aboriginal groups on process to identify issues. (

November 15- 30, 2002)

2. Send letter seeking formal participation and input of key stakeholders - (December , 2002)
3. Collate information from process by February, 2003
4. Distribute draft for comment in February with final analysis completed by march 31, 2003.

Outcome: An identification of priority issues respecting violence in the aboriginal communities within the Province.

#### Youth Services and Post-Secondary Education

Objective: To dialogue with colleges and the university with respect to ways to increase education on violence prevention, both for curricular and student support services perspectives.

- Action: 1. Request item be placed on agenda of Council of Higher Education Meeting (December 2002)
2. Hold meetings with owners/operators of private training institutions (December 2002 - January 2003)

Outcome: Awareness programs on violence prevention in public and private post-secondary institutions and new curriculum incorporating education on violence prevention.

#### Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation

Objective: To evaluate the effectiveness and impacts of NLHC's Victim of Family Violence Policy with regard to:

- a. The immediate and long term impacts on women and children
- b. Program accessibility to victims of abuse, as well as referring agencies
- c. Inclusion of all potential populations, i.e. Seniors

## Priority Process Issues for all VPI Partners - 2002-2003

The Provincial Coordinating Committee of the Violence Prevention Initiative has identified process objectives for 2002-2003 which apply to all VPI partners. These objectives fall under four main areas: Communications, Community-Government Collaboration, Training, and Evaluation.

### COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC AWARENESS

Improving communications continues to be one of the greatest challenges to partners of the VPI. It relates to victims receiving clear information about their rights and eligibility for services, to service providers understanding and correctly interpreting policies and protocols for victims of violence, and to communication between headquarters and regional offices of government. Poor communications has resulted in victims not receiving services to which they are entitled, regional government staff not receiving the support they need to take part in violence prevention activities, and confusion among various levels of government and the community on roles and responsibilities.

Under public awareness more emphasis has to be placed on public education which focuses on each individual's responsibility in the process of preventing violence. This includes making better use of the media and developing provincial awareness campaigns similar to the national campaign, *Participation*.

- 1     **Objective: To improve communications on existing services, policies and initiatives, within and outside of government**
- 2     **Objective: To develop pro-active, coordinated public awareness and education on violence prevention**
- 3     **Objective: To develop a communications plan for the VPI to include regions, departments, provincial organizations and Regional Coordinating Committees**

#### **Outcomes:**

- A comprehensive list of policies, services and initiatives that affect victims of violence
- A communications plan which includes all partners of the VPI
- A coordinated public awareness and education strategy

### PROCESSES FOR COMMUNITY-GOVERNMENT COLLABORATION

True collaboration with the community is pivotal to the process of improving structures, legislation, policy and services affecting victims of violence. The recent process used by the Department of Human Resources and Employment to produce its *Moving Forward: Responding to the Needs of Victims of Violence* is seen as one positive model for community collaboration which could be duplicated by other departments and agencies. Implementation of such processes will provide the community with consistent, long-term access to government decision making which is not tied to special initiatives or programs. The other side of the coin is to ensure that the community has the ability and support to participate and that all groups and agencies have an opportunity to contribute.

- 1      **Objective: To develop model process for government and the community to come together to identify issues and develop strategies to resolve them at the departmental level**
- 2      **Objective: To provide support to RCCs so they can better facilitate regional problem solving and implementation of VPI goals**
- 3      **Objective: To clarify the role of pan-provincial organizations with respect to the VPI**

**Outcomes:**

- A model for community-government collaboration
- A process to identify regional issues and solutions
- Clear roles for RCCs and provincial organizations
- Support mechanisms for community to participate

## **TRAINING**

Training in violence awareness is a third priority for all partners of the VPI. It involves taking a variety of approaches at different levels for those who are either working in close contact with potential victims of violence or those who are involved in developing policy which affects victims. Improvements to existing training includes providing more professional development for those working in government and agencies through the on-going delivery of Violence Awareness and Action Training (VAAT) and other training programs. It also includes enhancing educational programs at colleges and universities so that graduates are better prepared to both work with victims and engage in violence prevention.

- 1      **Objective: To further develop the provincial training plan for the VPI - Violence Awareness and Action Training Program**
- 2      **Objective: To integrate violence awareness and other related training into the on-going training plans of all departments**

**3 Objective: To provide post-secondary students with more opportunities for education on violence awareness**

**Outcomes:**

- A model for training in violence awareness
- A provincial training plan
- On-going delivery of VAAT in the regions
- Violence awareness included in on-going training plans of VPI partners

## **EVALUATION FRAMEWORK**

The last priority under process issues is the implementation of the evaluation framework for the VPI. In order to gauge the impact the VPI has upon the delivery of services to victims and on overall prevention, it is necessary to access base-line data on programs and services. This has been a challenge for all partners of the VPI and will be a priority for the future. A Framework for Evaluation of the VPI has been developed with data sources identified to measure the following: increased levels of awareness; inter-agency coordination; integration of violence prevention into departmental mandates; and the successful implementation of the Initiative. Base-line data is already being collected from RCCs and service providers, and a public attitudes survey on violence in Newfoundland and Labrador was completed in March 2002.

**1 Objective: Implement Framework for Evaluation of VPI**

**Outcomes:**

- Improved data collection models in each department with regular reports
- Better indicators of violence
- 2003 Mid-term evaluation of VPI
- 2005 follow-up public attitudes study
- 2005 Final evaluation of VPI



## Emerging Issues

The objectives identified in the VPI Action Plan for 2002-2003 resulted from a process in which all partners on the Provincial Coordinating Committee (PCC) (government department and agencies, six regional coordinating committees, four provincial organizations) were asked to select priorities from the issues which were identified during the Provincial Strategy Against Violence (1995-2000), and which departments continue to address over the long-term.

This process also provided an opportunity for all partners to identify new regional and provincial issues for consideration by the PCC. Items were submitted with the understanding that they would be discussed at the provincial level for consideration for inclusion in next year's action plan. The following items were submitted from members of the PCC.

### Neglected Adults Welfare Act

The Seniors Resource Centre has raised a concern that the proposed revisions to the Neglected Adults Welfare Act of 1973 may not address the need for guidelines for supporting adults who may be vulnerable to various types of abuse due to their dependant status but who are deemed competent.

### The impact of poverty and its relationship to violence

There is an inherent link between poverty and the incidence of violence. It is necessary to go beyond providing special policies on income support for victims of violence. This issue was raised in connection to the need to review income support rates for low-income victims.

### Restructuring of Health & Community Services and Human Resources and Employment

Two needs were identified related to the restructuring of H&CS and HRE. The first is the need to improve internal and external communications on the services provided by both departments. This information should be made available to the public in simple, clear language. The second is the need to identify any gaps in services to clients resulting from the restructuring of the two departments.

### Focusing on prevention

In addition to departments seeking to improve coordination of existing services and interventions, it has been recommended that departments develop pro-active violence preventive policies.

### Safety for victims of violence and their families

911 emergency numbers are not available in most rural communities in Newfoundland and Labrador. There needs to be a thorough analysis on the impact the absence of emergency numbers has upon victims and alternatives developed where needed.

### Long-term funding for anti-violence initiatives

The VPI was established for a five year period as a continuation of the Provincial Strategy Against Violence. Some of the key players in awareness and prevention of violence, such as the Provincial Association Against Family Violence, the NL Sexual Assault Crisis and Prevention Centre, and the VPI regional coordinating committees lack core funding. The funding they are receiving is tied to the life of the VPI which has approximately two and one half years remaining. Plans need to be put in place for the continuation of the VPI and the work of its partners.