



What You Can Do About *Family Violence* in Your Community

Information Sheet

“In the majority of cases [of family violence deaths], there were several risk factors that family, friends or co-workers could have identified. Had they understood the significance of what they were seeing, they might have been able to inform the person who became the victim of the risk or they may have been able to intervene with the abusive man.* We want to change public attitudes so that everybody, whether a friend, neighbour or a family doctor, will look at this issue differently and respond.”¹

Get Help

If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, call 911.

If you suspect that a child is being abused or neglected by a parent or guardian, report your suspicions immediately. Call the police, your local Child and Family Services authority or the 24-hour Child Abuse Hotline: **1-800-387-KIDS (5437)**.

For help in your community or for more information, please call the 24-hour Family Violence Info Line toll-free at **310-1818** or visit **www.familyviolence.alberta.ca**.

Alberta Children and Youth Services is proud to lead Alberta's Prevention of Family Violence and Bullying Initiative.

Communities are where differences are made

Families and community members can play a key role in preventing family violence. People impacted by family violence usually turn first to those they trust. This is usually extended family, friends, neighbours, co-workers or spiritual leaders. After that, people may reach out to a service agency or seek out government services such as police, courts and child protection.

Families dealing with violence are often not aware of the wide range of services that could help them. If they do know, they may hesitate to come forward. Other community members can help support them to connect to sources of help.

Community members who can make a difference include men, women and youth who understand the:

- power and control dynamics of family violence
- safety risks of violence in the home
- connection between violence in the home and bullying on the playground and in the streets.

What individuals can do

- Learn the family violence warning signs, what to do and where to get help. Visit **www.familyviolence.alberta.ca** or phone the 24-hour Family Violence Info Line at **310-1818** toll-free in Alberta to learn more.
- Help a local shelter or sexual assault centre as a volunteer, board member or fundraiser.
- Ask local businesses to display family violence information in their stores.
- Encourage your local public library to carry magazines and books about family violence.
- Submit regular articles about family violence to your local newspaper.
- Ask the local health clinic to provide information about abuse of older adults in waiting areas and examining rooms.
- Collect toys, books and toiletry items from your neighbours to donate to your local youth, seniors' or women's shelter.
- Encourage your county, town or city council to declare November as Family Violence Prevention Month.

What communities can do

- Encourage a community standard that family violence and bullying are wrong.
- Create an interagency committee or working group to formalize your commitment to end family violence in your community.

* Both men and women can experience family violence, and both men and women can be abusive. However, in this comment, Dr. Jaffe was referring to cases of family violence death investigated by the Ontario Domestic Violence Death Review Committee. All of the homicide victims were female and all of the offenders were male.

- Mobilize your community by facilitating a community action planning process involving key agencies and organizations in your community. Six Community Action Planning Process Modules are available for download at www.familyviolence.alberta.ca.
- Proclaim November as Family Violence Prevention Month each year and encourage individuals, agencies and businesses to participate in awareness activities.
- Coordinate a Family Violence Prevention Month Campaign.
- Plan a public forum on family violence.
- Develop a listing of services available in the community for those impacted by family violence.
- Identify and address family violence service gaps in the community.
- Help make services easier to reach and use, and more accountable to community needs.
- Start a support group for victims of family violence.
- Distribute family violence awareness materials to businesses, employers, medical professionals and faith organizations in your community. Publications can be downloaded or ordered free of charge from www.familyviolence.alberta.ca.

What schools can do

- Help children learn non-violent ways of dealing with conflict.
- Educate young people about dating violence and all other forms of abuse.
- Place posters in the school and provide family violence information sheets for students. Posters can be downloaded or ordered free of charge from www.familyviolence.alberta.ca.
- Give copies of a dating safety checklist to all students on registration day.
- Include information about dating violence in the school newsletter.
- Develop a student led anti-violence or anti-bullying campaign.
- Coordinate a family violence prevention poster and slogan contest for students.
- Honour students who work to reduce violence and bullying.
- Organize an event to collect teddy bears, quilts and other items to donate to a shelter for comforting children and youth.

What employers can do

- Promote attitudes and actions that foster healthy and respectful relationships in the workplace.
- Organize training sessions on family violence and ensure supervisors are aware of family violence warning signs.
- Host a series of brown bag lunches with guest speakers and include family violence as a topic.
- Keep family violence information readily available for staff, families and volunteers. Information sheets and booklets can be downloaded or ordered free of charge from www.familyviolence.alberta.ca.
- Display information in your workplace about family violence and resources that can help victims.
- Show support for employees who may be dealing with family violence issues.
- Work with community organizations to provide funding for programs and services to help families impacted by family violence.
- Sponsor an event to raise awareness of family violence.

"I am forever grateful to the friend who said, 'Whatever you decide is okay with me. If you leave, that's okay. If you don't leave, that's okay. If you leave and go back, that's okay. No matter what, you don't have to be embarrassed.'"²

"We have to move past talking about family violence. We have to start talking about peace and harmony in our families and in our communities. We have to talk about what we do want, and create that vision. That is when magic happens."³

Resources for communities

- **Family violence materials for community groups** can be ordered online. Visit www.familyviolence.alberta.ca and click on "Materials and Resources".
- **A Community Resource Kit** has been developed by the Alberta Elder Abuse Awareness Network (AEAAN). Visit www.albertaelderabuse.ca.
- Connect with your **Regional Family Violence and Bullying Prevention Coordinator**. Visit www.familyviolence.alberta.ca for more information.

¹ Quote is from Dr. Peter Jaffe, Professor, University of Western Ontario and Academic Director for the Research on Violence Against Women and Children as cited on the "Neighbours, Friends and Families" website.

Neighbours, Friends and Family (2007). Main page. Message posted to Neighbours, Friends and Family archived at <http://www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.ca/eng/main.php>

² Quote is from a survivor of an abusive relationship who was interviewed during the development of *Family violence it's your business: Community resource guide*.

Alberta Children and Youth Services (2005). *Family violence it's your business: Community resource guide*. Edmonton: Queen's Printer. Retrieved February 20, 2009 from http://www.child.alberta.ca/home/images/familyviolence/FVP_CommunityResourceGuide_20080528.pdf

³ Quote is from a rural Alberta community member who was interviewed during the development of *Family violence it's your business: Community resource guide*.

Alberta Children and Youth Services (2005). *Family violence it's your business: Community resource guide*. Edmonton: Queen's Printer. Retrieved February 20, 2009 from http://www.child.alberta.ca/home/images/familyviolence/FVP_CommunityResourceGuide_20080528.pdf