

## Safety Lens: Increasing Safety for Immigrant, Refugee & Non-Status Women Leaving Abusive Relationships

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## Workshop Goals

- Safety of Immigrant/ Refugee and Non-Status Women Project
- Policies & Practices Impacting Safety
- Recommendations and on-going work

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## Challenges facing Immigrant and Refugee women:

- Language barriers
- Myths
- Re-victimization

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## Language Barriers

- Lack of accessible material and resources in victim's language
- Lack of qualified interpreters
  - Family members being used as interpreters
  - Lack of training in cultural sensitivity

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## Myths

- Victims with permanent resident status being told they can be deported.
- This results in some women remaining in their abusive relationship

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## Re-victimization

- Of non-status women
- Of women sponsors
- Of women who are sponsored
- By systems that operate in vacuums

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## Re-victimization of Non-Status Women

Women are without status or fall out of status due to:

- Sponsorship applications being severed due to family violence
- Visitor or student visas expired
- Legal Option available to women

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## Re-victimization of Non-Status Women

- Real risk of deportation
- Shelters are not immune to CBSA enforcement
- H & C process is time consuming and access to benefits is very limited to non-existent
- There are some options for those who are victims of human trafficking

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## Using A Safety Lens

As a result of EVA BC, MOSAIC and Vancouver Lower Mainland Multicultural Family Support Services Project (2011) we recommended:

- Expedited H & C process
- Temporary Resident Permit
- Removals be deferred or delayed pending
  - H & C application
  - Decision on custody matters

For more information on the project visit [www.endingviolence.org](http://www.endingviolence.org)

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## Re-victimization of Women Sponsors

- Sponsorship Undertaking for spouses is 3 years
  - The undertakings are a contractual obligation on the sponsor to repay any monies paid to their sponsored relative in the form of social assistance.
  - The collection may be held off if "the default is the result of abuse" but resumed once "circumstances have changed"
- The net effect is that some women choose to remain in the abusive relationship

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## Re-victimization of Sponsored Women

- A sponsored woman who leaves an abusive relationship is often living in marginalized circumstances
- 2 Year Conditional Permanent Residence – effective as of October 25, 2012

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## Re-victimization Arising from Systems Operating in Vacuums

- Immigrant women without status are facing many systems simultaneously:
  - Immigration
  - Family Law
  - Criminal Justice System

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## Recent Immigration Changes/ Proposals

- 5 year sponsorship bar
- 2 year conditional permanent resident status
- Super Visa requires minimum income and private Canadian Health-care Insurance
- Refugees

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## Income Assistance

- As of Oct 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012
- Sponsored women with children can receive IA upon leaving abusive relationships
- Situations not addressed:
  - Sponsored women without children
  - Sponsored women with non-Canadian children

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## Solutions

- The need to view the issue of domestic violence involving immigrant/refugee women through a safety lens
  - Ensure that safety of women is the paramount concern
- Ensure a coordinated response to women's safety
- Make appropriate referrals for safety planning

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## Breaking Down the Silos

- The end result we all wanted is the safety for women and their children
- Collaboration with the other service providers in providing legal information and support
- Communicating with those persons and levels of government that have the ability to create change
- Accepting the other persons point of view

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## Safety Planning:

It is critical that safety planning be done in a way that acknowledges and builds on a woman's strengths and her own knowledge of her unique situation

Treat every situation as a potential lethality until you know otherwise

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## Coordination and Referral

- Research shows: coordinating the work of response systems is crucial to keeping women safe \*
- A woman's safety will be jeopardized if institutions / community resources responding to her requests for aid are inaccessible, unresponsive and/or uncoordinated
- It is important to make appropriate referrals in DV and SA cases
- Everyone has a critical role to play

\*Gamache, D., J.Edleson and M. Schock, "Coordinated police, judicial and social service response to woman battering..."

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## Refer to Specialized Services

- Extensive Network
- Community Based Victim Service Programs
- Transition Houses
- STV Counselling Programs
- Women's Centres
- Coordination Initiatives - EVA's Community Coordination for Women's Safety Program

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## Victim Services and Community Programs

- Crime Victim Assistance Program (CVAP)
- VictimLINK (1-800-563-0808)
- Over 400 programs delivered through non governmental agencies, some in partnership with police
- Victim Safety Unit
- [www.MultilingoLegal.ca](http://www.MultilingoLegal.ca)
- Youth Against Violence Line (1-800-680-4264)

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## VictimLINK 1-800-563-0808

- Victims in need of immediate crisis support on issues relating to family and sexual violence, or a referral to a local victim service program as well as community and government resources, can call **VictimLINK**.
- **VictimLINK** is a province-wide telephone service available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week in 130 languages, including 17 North American Aboriginal languages.



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## Going Forward

- Much more work needs to be done for marginalized women
- Numerous deaths in BC of immigrant women suggest making appropriate referrals, more training, standards, access to interpreters is needed

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Discussion

Questions

Comments

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