Premier's Action Committee
on Family Violence Prevention

Comité d'action du premier ministre
sur la prévention de la violence familiale

Strategies for Addressing Family Violence in Prince Edward Island

Premier's Action Committee on Family Violence Prevention
December 2015

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INTRODUCTION

Premier's Action Committee Family Violence Statement

The Premier's Action Committee on Family Violence Prevention (PAC) works from the following statement about family violence:

> *Family violence affects, or will affect, all people in Prince Edward Island. Family violence is connected to abuse of power and control, and to injustice based on sex, race, age, class, sexual orientation, and physical or mental ability. Individual history, family history, and current circumstances play a role in family violence.*
>
> *Family violence is known by many names: child maltreatment, child abuse, incest, child exposure to domestic violence, intimate partner violence, spousal violence, woman abuse, domestic violence, sibling abuse, parent abuse, elder abuse, and abuse of older adults.*
>
> *Family violence can affect anyone, from any demographic: cultural, national and ethnic origin, socio-economic status, education, gender, age, and physical or mental ability.*
>
> *Family violence can take many forms: harassment, verbal abuse, threats, financial abuse, psychological abuse, emotional abuse, spiritual abuse, neglect, damage to property, injury to pets, physical abuse, sexual abuse, and homicide.*
>
> *Family violence can happen between: current and former intimate partners (married and unmarried couples, including same-sex couples, and dating partners); a legal guardian or parent and child; blood, marriage or adoptive relatives; and a live-in caregiver and care recipient.*

The Role of the Committee

The Premier's Action Committee on Family Violence Prevention was first appointed by the premier of Prince Edward Island in December 1995. The mandate of the committee is

- to coordinate the implementation of the provincial Family Violence Prevention Strategy;
- to ensure integrity of community participation is maintained;
- to ensure an evaluation component is in place;
- to develop a work plan;
- to promote the importance of resource allocations necessary for implementation of the strategy; and
- to communicate initiatives to ensure a high public profile for family violence prevention is maintained across the province.

BACKGROUND

Building on Past Strategies

The purpose of this strategy is to develop a framework for action for the next five years. The strategy is based on past consultations involving many Islanders and the continuing work of the Premier's Action Committee on Family Violence Prevention (PAC) and its members. It builds on two previous strategies.

Early in the 1990s, government established a family violence prevention position as government's formal commitment to addressing family violence. The work of the family violence consultant, in collaboration with others, laid the groundwork for establishment of the Premier's Action Committee several years later.

Hon. Marion Reid

The first five-year family prevention strategy was approved and released in 1995. To implement the strategy, the Premier appointed the Premier's Action Committee on Family Violence Prevention, a working committee of community and government officials, with Hon. Marion Reid as chair. The committee's work has been supported by the family violence office and in-kind and monetary contributions by individuals, businesses, community organizations, and various levels of government.

A 2002 strategy carried over many similar issues and actions. It followed public consultations to affirm the work of the Premier's Action Committee on Family Violence Prevention. The consultations revealed an increased understanding and awareness of the issue of family violence by the public and a continuing commitment to work together towards ending family violence.

The 2002 strategy was reviewed and reaffirmed

Dr. Philip Smith

in 2009 for another five-year mandate of PAC, Chaired by Dr. Philip Smith. Also at that time, the family violence consultant position was revised and became the family violence prevention and community development coordinator. The 2009 to 2014 mandate of the Premier's Action Committee identified five priority areas for action and established the following sub-committees:

- Parenting support and education
- Social marketing
- Linking civil and criminal justice issues and systems
- Adopting a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner program
- Youth education and engagement

Ann Sherman

In 2014, a new five-year mandate of PAC began, chaired by Ann Sherman. The renewed list of PAC members continues to include representatives from government, community, and police.

In June 2015, the full PAC membership met for a collaborative, facilitated strategic planning day. Together, PAC members discussed the issues, goals, and strategies reflected in Strategies for Addressing Family Violence in Prince Edward Island.

This strategy, PAC's third in its history, is aimed at continuing actions that have resulted in success, introducing new initiatives, and addressing gaps. It places an increased emphasis on public engagement, diversity and inclusion, research,

and evaluation. It allows for actions to promote identified needs such as healthy relationships, services for victims and offenders, engaging diverse communities for leadership on family violence prevention, and interventions for sexual violence. Some of these have been consistent over the years and across PAC strategy documents; some are new and emerging areas of focus. The Premier's Action Committee on Family Violence Prevention uses these strategic directions as the foundation for coordinating responses to family violence.

The commitment to work collaboratively and the collective efforts of many people have resulted in increased awareness of the impacts of family violence and ways to improve responses. This work has prompted leadership efforts from diverse sectors, such as private business, municipalities, and service organizations.

The goals and strategies in this document are not designed to prescribe actions or priorities; rather, they are designed to foster and encompass a wide variety of activities, projects, programs, and services to prevent family violence.

The Role of the Chairperson

The Chairperson of the Premier's Action Committee on Family Violence Prevention is appointed by government as recommended by the Premier. The Chairperson serves as PAC's official representative in numerous areas of responsibility related to the organization, community, and government.

The Chairperson of PAC is responsible for chairing meetings and leading decision-making processes at the PAC table. The Chairperson acts as PAC's official spokesperson in the media, at public events, and in speeches and presentations. Additionally, the Chairperson brings PAC's voice to the Premier and to government. As PAC's designated representative, the Chairperson has a special role in maintaining a strong relationship and open lines of communication between the Premier and the Premier's Action Committee.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chairperson works with the Family Violence Prevention and Community Development Coordinator to ensure that PAC acts on the directions of the PAC membership and meets its mandate.

What Makes This Strategy Important for Prince Edward Island

This strategy is important to people who live in Prince Edward Island for a number of reasons. Most significantly, it is the primary mechanism for government and community to work together towards family violence prevention. PAC fosters development and implementation of prevention activities across the levels of prevention, with the long-term goal of preventing family violence from occurring.

This strategy provides a pathway for family violence prevention because it shines a light on the significance of prevention efforts. We, as a society, need to value prevention work. Society's efforts have tended to focus on reactions and interventions after violence has occurred, rather than focus on root causes. Effectiveness of prevention efforts can be difficult to measure, and society tends to call for reactions, such as arrests and lengthy sentences, as opposed to preventions, because they are much more tangible and visible. But preventing violence from happening in the first place is extremely important. It is vital for the work to continue.

This strategy provides a mechanism from which family violence prevention policies, programs, and measures can be created, implemented, and sustained. This strategy provides a framework that members of the Premier's Action Committee on Family Violence can advocate for healthy environments where individuals, families, and communities in Prince Edward Island can live safely and securely.

VISION AND PRINCIPLES

The vision statement represents the long-term ideal – it is an image of success. The vision is intended to challenge and inspire people to work together in a common direction. The principles complement the vision, set the parameters for action, and serve as criteria to assess future action toward reaching the defined vision.

Vision Statement

A society where all individuals are safe, respected, and valued; where any form of violence is unacceptable; and where children, women, and men have opportunities to reach their full potential and contribute to the overall wellbeing of all families and communities.

Guiding Principles

- Any form of violence in relationships is not acceptable.
- All people and families are valued.
- Everyone is entitled to a safe and secure environment, personal well-being, dignity, and respect.
- Everyone, including victims, survivors, witnesses, and offenders, is entitled to accessible and appropriate high-quality service and information which is consistent and respectful.
- All persons are equal regardless of race, religion, creed, colour, age, sex, gender identity or expression, marital status, sexual orientation, physical or mental ability, and ethnic or national origin.
- Preventing and responding to family violence is a shared responsibility.
- The knowledge of survivors is important in the design and delivery of services.

What Do We Mean by Prevention?

Family violence affects, or will affect, all people in Prince Edward Island. Preventing family violence is everyone's responsibility. The Premier's Action Committee on Family Violence Prevention acknowledges that preventing violence includes every level of society – from an affected individual, to all of us together. PAC relies on a model that recognizes that we act within a complex web of relationships – a human "ecology." Prevention experts call this the "ecological model of prevention."

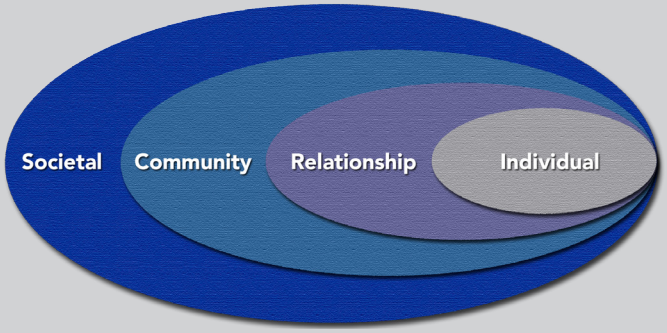
A number of factors influence how people behave. It is not enough to address an individual's violence if their family, friends, and partners still use violence, if their community still condones violence, or if their society creates a climate where violence is the norm. Violence exists within a context, where individuals, relationships, communities, and society all play a role.

To prevent violence requires goals, strategies, and actions to address violence at all of these levels, understanding that these levels overlap and interrelate.

PAC fosters development and implementation of prevention activities across the levels of prevention with the long-term goal of preventing family violence from occurring as well as holding those responsible for family violence accountable for their actions.

The Ecological Model of Prevention

The Ecological Model of Violence Prevention describes four social levels determined to influence behaviour:



- **Individual Level** means biological and personal factors. These can increase the likelihood of becoming a victim or perpetrator of violence.
- **Relationship Level** means a person's friends, partners and family members. They can influence a person's behaviour.
- **Community Level** means places where social interactions occur including schools, workplaces, and neighbourhoods. Characteristics of these places can be associated with becoming victims or perpetrators of violence.
- **Societal Level** means general social factors that help create a climate in which violence is encouraged or inhibited. These factors include social and cultural beliefs as well as the health, economic, educational and social policies.

Engaging interacting levels of society requires a range of strategies and actions. Prevention activities need to correspond to different levels. Activities may target or include the everyone, a selected group that faces particular risks, or the individuals most directly affected. Prevention can take the form of

- **Universal activities** that focus on the general population in order to try to stop violence from occurring in the first place.
- **Selected activities** that focus on people at-risk of experiencing violence, such as those with anger or substance use problems, in order to prevent violence from occurring.
- **Indicated activities** that focus on people who have already experienced violence in order to reduce the trauma and long-term effects, and to break the cycle of violence.

Research worldwide has shown that the most effective violence prevention strategies focus at least some activities at each prevention level.

Prevention can also focus on:

- **Increasing Protective Factors** – building up characteristics in the population that can increase resiliency, increase resistance to risk, and help reduce the likelihood of violence.
- **Decreasing Risk Factors** – reducing characteristics in the population that can increase the likelihood of someone experiencing violence.

For more information on the Ecological Model and levels of prevention see the World Health Organization, http://www.who.int/topics/violence/en/.

FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION TO PREVENT FAMILY VIOLENCE

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AWARENESS, EDUCATION, AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

In the past 20 years since the Premier's Action Committee on Family Violence Prevention was established, much of the work to prevent and address family violence has focused on public *awareness*. Awareness can increase the number of people who seek help for themselves, their family, friends, and neighbours. However, the public will continue to benefit from more *education* to change behaviours, to respond to family violence, and to reduce family violence. Public education should address historical patterns of violence as well as new patterns and emerging issues. Education should encourage victims and offenders and their families, friends, and neighbours to seek help. Because family violence affects all of society and family violence prevention is everyone's responsibility, it is important to go beyond awareness and education to *engage* members of the public from all walks of life. Many individuals and groups want to get involved in preventing violence.

Goals

- Province-wide awareness and sensitivity about the extent, impact, and nature of family violence
- Improved access to information relating to family violence
- Communities and specific groups (such as men and boys, trans people, youth, seniors, Aboriginal people, people with disabilities, or newcomers to Canada) engaged in work for family violence prevention

Strategies

1. Coordinate activities for the provincial awareness-raising Family Violence Prevention Week, including themes, communications, and activities.
2. Promote awareness, education, and engagement about family violence prevention through Neighbours, Friends, and Family resources.
3. Work with government agencies and community groups to incorporate information on healthy relationships, abuse, and resolving conflict into existing learning opportunities.
4. Coordinate the development and distribution of family violence information.
5. Act on opportunities to connect key PAC messages with local, regional, and national events and initiatives.
6. Encourage that essential materials for awareness and engagement are available in both official languages and additional languages when possible.
7. Support the development of projects, campaigns, or resources that promote awareness, education, and engagement among men and boys, and encourage male leadership in ending family violence.
8. Support and encourage development of local leadership in organizations, sectors, and institutions (such as municipal, faith groups, corporate, non-profit, and education institutions) to encourage a holistic approach to family violence prevention that includes social, economic, and health and well-being effects.
9. Identify groups that are vulnerable, under-represented, or less visible in PAC's work and work with them to respond to their needs for awareness, education, and engagement.

COORDINATION AND TRAINING

The Premier's Action Committee on Family Violence Prevention plays a *coordinating role* among its members, who represent government, community, and police. This coordination is important, because an effective response to family violence requires individual and collective contributions to create violence-free relationships and communities. Much of the success to date in addressing family violence can be attributed to creative partnerships among organizations. These partnerships are informed by the voices of survivors and service providers, and they share mutual commitments to improve coordination of programs and services. These collaborative efforts have resulted in considerable progress and can be expanded. *Training* relates to opportunities for the public and for service-providers to learn practical approaches to help prevent, respond to, and reduce family violence. The following goals and strategies are designed to coordinate family violence prevention networks and to encourage training opportunities for those working in services.

Goals

- Strong coordination among community, government, and police towards ending family violence
- Ongoing training and increasing understanding for those responding to family violence

Strategies

10. Promote effective coordination among community, government, and police partners in all areas related to family violence prevention and intervention.
11. Promote the integration of training on preventing and addressing family violence into provincial strategies on community safety and/or that relate to social determinants of health.
12. Promote professional education and training for front-line responders to family violence.
13. Ensure training includes information on children's needs and the impacts of family violence on children.
14. Promote supportive work environments for those responding to family violence.
15. Promote training materials and training opportunities in preventing and addressing family violence for workplaces across all sectors.
16. Promote the recommendation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC Recommendation #57) for professional development and training for public servants on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, and incorporating training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism.

INTERVENTIONS AND SERVICE DELIVERY

A network of service providers delivers needed services for family violence prevention. Many components of that network have provided services for years, and many are working well. However, past consultations and ongoing work continue to reveal inconsistencies and gaps in the delivery of family violence services and programs. The most current hopes for service delivery are more services for children and youth, trauma-informed and culturally sensitive services, and gender-sensitive services for all genders.

It is important to recognize that services can only exist with adequate resources and that increased public education and awareness may generate increased demand for services.

Past consultations clearly highlighted that children must be a priority in order to break the cycle of family violence. It is critical to provide timely and supportive help for children suffering from abuse. If children are not able to work through abuse, then as adults they may live out this abuse in different ways. There are a lot of adults who suffered abuse as children and are still in need of services because they never received the appropriate help.

Language, culture, ability, finances, and/or geographic location can all create barriers to accessing programs and services. Services need to go beyond initial contact and recognize that healing is a long-term process.

The following goals and strategies set out a framework to promote a continuum of programs and services designed to:

- place the safety of victims as a priority;
- improve the level of programs and services for children;
- increase the accessibility of programs and services for all Islanders;
- break the cycle of family violence;
- reduce the level of trauma, risk and re-victimization for victims;
- promote healing;
- provide support through transitional periods; and
- provide appropriate services to offenders in order to reduce the risk of re-offending and increase accountability.

In all cases, the Premier's Action Committee will seek to promote programs and services that are high quality: for example, programs and services that are based on evidence, that are already established as best practices, or that are emerging as promising practices elsewhere.

Goals

- High-quality and accessible services across the province, addressing the full spectrum of needs of victims, survivors, families, offenders, and communities
- Effective responses to family violence from community, government, and police agencies
- Adequate resources to provide front-line services

Strategies

17. Encourage service delivery that is trauma-informed, culturally sensitive, and sensitive to differences such as age, gender, race, ability, and language.
18. Encourage a range of services in government and the community that address families' and individuals' complex needs.
19. Promote the design, delivery, and expansion of programs and services for children, women, and men across the Island.
20. Promote a range of options for services to assist families to resolve conflict.
21. Promote the establishment of programs that address the distinct needs of people who have been witnesses to and/or were exposed to family violence, especially children.
22. Promote the implementation and monitoring of family violence protocols and intervention models for childhood sexual abuse and sexual assault.
23. Explore and, where appropriate, promote the implementation of multi-disciplinary interventions to respond to family violence.
24. Promote programs and services that reduce recidivism (repeat offenders).
25. Encourage coordination, collaboration, and information-sharing among services and sectors to meet complex needs of victims and offenders.
26. Advocate for adequate resources to enable service providers to consistently and effectively respond to service demands across the province.
27. Advocate for supports for service providers to deal with vicarious trauma that arises from their work and work environment.

POLICIES, PROTOCOLS, AND LEGISLATION

A variety of policies, protocols, and legislation set the agenda for how government responds to family violence. In past years, PEI has responded with legislative changes including the proclamation of the Victims of Family Violence Act in 1996. This marked an increased commitment on behalf of the provincial government and was a significant step in improving responses to family violence in this province. We also have family violence protocols in a number of sectors, including justice, health, and human services. These have also had an important effect. Past consultations have pointed to needs such as increased safety for women and children, removal of gaps and barriers in legislation and policy, increased appropriate information-sharing among involved parties, and protection of the best interests of children.

Goals

- Safety for all victims and potential victims of family violence
- Legislation, protocols, and policies that promote appropriate responses to family violence for victims, potential victims, and offenders

Strategies

28. Encourage the recognition of family violence issues in policy development and decision-making processes.
29. Promote the consistent use, application, and enforcement of existing criminal laws.
30. Remain informed on work of the federal/provincial/territorial working groups related to family violence.
31. Encourage linkages among criminal courts, family courts, and child protection systems.
32. Promote communication across sectors and tools in policies, protocols, and legislation that aid in that communication.
33. Promote mechanisms for resolving conflicts which arise in judicial custody and access directives where family violence is present.
34. Ensure that those responding to family violence and those providing services have appropriate policies and protocols in place reflecting the principles of this strategy.
35. Identify and work towards the removal of gaps and/or barriers in policy, protocols, or legislation relating to the prevention of family violence, provision of services, and accountability of action.
36. Advocate for policy, protocols, and legislation to fill identified gaps in provincial services.
37. Advocate for enhanced use of Gladue reports and culturally appropriate sentencing options.
38. Promote examination of and, where appropriate, advocate for options such as a family violence court option or a unified family violence court, a child advocate, consistent risk assessment tools, a family violence death review committee, and a child serious injury and death review process.

RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

Evaluation is an important learning and results management tool. Evaluations can also serve as a means of sharing information, incorporating a broad spectrum of perspectives and experiences, and communicating important messages. Evaluation results contribute to informed decision-making and continuous improvement in services. An effective feedback process between program implementation and evaluation contributes to a program's quality and sustainability. Evaluations have been conducted on various programs and services related to family violence and have helped to identify new initiatives or approaches when needed.

Monitoring and evaluation processes require improvements in the information collection process. This includes both access to data and evaluative research. Whenever possible, projects and initiatives designed by PAC should be based on data, targets, and timelines that can lead to measurable results

The committee recognizes that individuals and families exist within complex and dynamic communities and larger societies. Because the Premier's Action Committee is a partnership of multiple sectors and organizations, it is important to evaluate partnerships.

This strategy acknowledges that resources for evaluation are limited, both at the level of the Committee and the level of its organizations.

Goals

- Access to up-to-date, relevant, and accurate local data on family violence and family violence prevention, from a variety of standpoints (for example, health, justice, or economic resources)
- Monitoring and measurement of PAC's work towards its goals and strategies
- Access to locally relevant research on family violence, its effects, and promising services and interventions

Strategies

39. Collect data sets that are currently available as indicators of family violence and costs and benefits of collecting new/additional data.
40. Develop and implement a framework for evaluating PAC programs, activities, and partnerships.
41. Establish goals for partnership, including identifying gaps in our networks, priorities for partnership, and opportunities for mutual benefit and capacity building.
42. Promote work to identify gaps in provincial policy, protocols, legislation, programs, or services for family violence prevention.
43. Develop a framework for encouraging and supporting Prince Edward Island–based research on family violence.

IMPLEMENTATION

Applying the Framework for Action

Implementation of this strategy will be guided by the ongoing efforts of the Premier's Action Committee and its partners to establish priorities and identify resources and opportunities. Implementation will include work to promote new or expanded programs and services for family violence prevention to fill current gaps in systems. Implementation will also include continuing many programs and services already underway that are working well and serving the needs of Islanders. A number of efforts may require new, reallocated, or additional resources for existing services in order to improve accessibility.

The Committee recognizes that many service providers are currently struggling to address inconsistencies and gaps while operating with limited resources and uncertain budgets. Demand for services can be expected to increase as awareness increases. As a result, the committee believes that a review of existing needs assessments and the associated requests for resources is required, taking into consideration the strategy goals. This strategy recognizes the importance of evaluation and acknowledges the need for resources to support evaluation undertaken by the Committee and its member organizations.

Conclusion

This strategy, along with previous strategies, has come about through the collaborative efforts of individuals, the community, government, and law enforcement agencies. It has been developed in response to the voices of Islanders. The Premier's Action Committee on Family Violence Prevention extends sincere appreciation to Islanders and organizations who continue to dedicate work and effort to prevent and address family violence.

This strategy sets out a framework of collective action to address family violence with a number of goals and strategies identified under the following key areas:

- Awareness, education, and engagement
- Coordination and training
- Interventions and service delivery
- Policy, protocols, and legislation
- Research and evaluation

It recommends a sustainable process to implement the strategies and an evaluation process to measure the level of success. The strategic plan does not outline resource implications, but it should be noted that action may be speeded or slowed by availability of resources.

This is an ongoing piece of work. In many areas, notable success should be achieved over the next five years. However, in some areas, the work over the next five years will lay the foundation for continuing activities. In all cases, implementation will require dedication and a sustained commitment by government, the community, and individuals to work towards ending family violence. The Premier's Action Committee on Family Violence Prevention believes that the pieces are now in place to take this strategy to the next level and invites all Islanders to be part of the journey.

December 2015

Premier's Action Committee
on Family Violence Prevention

Comité d'action du premier ministre
sur la prévention de la violence familiale

Premier's Action Committee on Family Violence Prevention

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