

Brief: Study on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada

SUBMITTED TO: Standing Committee on the Status of Women

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Acronyms

IPV = Intimate Partner Violence | DV = Domestic Violence

Causes of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)

(Including toxic masculinity, specifically in teen relationships)

Increased supports, resources, and education for boys. Based on our experience, we believe that there is a significant need to allow and encourage male expression of emotion. Teens should be able to openly address their experiences in a confidential forum that is free of judgment or shame. We believe it would be beneficial to help teens become open-minded about topics like sexism, misogyny, and gender-based-violence and to empathize with girls and other marginalized populations.

Improved public awareness. After a woman has finished her journey with Alice House or we finish a presentation, we (too often) hear "I wish I knew this before" or "if I knew then what I know now, I would never have gotten into that relationship". Information is power, especially when it comes to an issue that thrives on silence. We recommend initiatives and public awareness campaigns to challenge normalized violence, toxic masculinity, what healthy relationship behaviour looks like, and structural patriarchy.

Adapting school curriculums. Education and prevention work is a large part of our work, and we adapt our workshops and presentations to be audience and age appropriate. Our discussions are well received from the primary-level to post-secondary education.

Ways to Improve Supports and Protection

(For women and girls who are living in unsafe environments)

Education. Teaching women and girls about boundaries and introducing safety planning.

Increased supports and resources for men and boys. Treatment/support spaces and mandates for abusive men to rehabilitate, be accountable, and maintain distance from their victim(s). Example: [Safe at Home in Lethbridge](#), Alberta. Funded by WAGE. Other resources for abusers to access if they struggle with anger and control, it's critical that abusers know they, too, can reach out for help and access support to improve their behaviour. First, they need to be able to identify the problematic behaviour.

IPV training for workplaces and professionals. More resources kept in offices and locations of doctors, dentists, and pharmacists. These professions should have training on IPV/DV and know when to ask if someone (all genders) is safe at home then be prepared to offer resources. Questions like "any stress or arguing with your partner or kids? Are you ever regretful of what you said or did when arguing?" Medical office washrooms should have support information available.

Improvements to Justice and Child Protection systems. In Nova Scotia (and any province going without), a child advocate would be helpful (as seen in other provinces) to elevate the voice of the child and family. More cohesion between the criminal and family court. Overall, greater trauma-informed practices. Like other provinces, family group conferencing to improve collaborative practices within child protection as it reduces rates of apprehension and can help to keep the child at home or with another family member. Considerations around 'parent alienation' which is often used against victims when they are trying to protect the safety of their children.

Ways to Eliminate Barriers

(For women and girls seeking to leave unsafe environments, such as the financial, social, and other factors preventing them from leaving)

Improvements to Justice and Child Protection systems. In addition to points made above, we have seen that many women decide to not leave or seek support due to fear and lack of trust in the structures that are meant to support them.

Funding opportunities. Many women do not leave abusive situations due to financial reasons/financial abuse and often, leaving means homelessness. Our communities need increased funding opportunities to support affordable and safe housing options.

More second stage housing. Increased second stage housing would support the work of local emergency shelters and the capacity issues we are seeing to provide safe housing. Second stage housing is a longer-term solution that gives those who need it a safe place to lay their head at night while they do all the work necessary to move onto independent, healthy, and self-determined lives.

Strategies to Prevent IPV

(And to educate survivors and perpetrators of violence)

Prioritize early intervention, education, and prevention. Topics like respectful relationships, consent, boundaries, and respectful communication should be discussed in schools and therapeutic group settings. In classroom environments (K-12), it is possible to have age-appropriate discussions and activities within learning. For children part of marginalized groups (based on level of risk, culture, etc.) these conversations are best had in smaller groups. We have had success with presentations like this within school systems and have partnered with community organizations like the YMCA Immigrant Centre to teach parents and professionals about these topics. These practices and interventions could be mandatory within health curriculum in public schooling. For post-secondary education, these same lessons could be mandatory. We believe there could be great success introducing a course/certification the year before or first year of post-secondary to show they understand sexualized violence, dating violence, controlling and abusive behaviours, and what to do if you see violence.

Experiences Regarding the Criminalization of Coercive and Manipulative Behaviours

(Between intimate partners as well as consider the use of other public policy tools to eliminate these behaviours.)

Treatment spaces and mandates for perpetrators. The creation of treatment spaces and mandates for perpetrators to rehabilitate, be accountable, and maintain distance from their victim(s).

Prevention education for immigrants. As seen with groups like the YMCA, we believe there needs to be more prevention education for immigrants, specifically men and boys (for statistical purposes) to inform them of legislation in Canada around domestic/intimate partner violence.

About Alice House

Alice House provides opportunities for women and their children to create a life free from intimate partner violence by offering safe second stage housing, counselling, and support services. We envision a society in which every person can live a life without fear or threat of physical, sexual, emotional, financial, social, or spiritual abuse.

To learn more about our work, please visit www.alicehouse.ca