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# An Environmental Scan of Select Family Violence Related Topics

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Prepared for: Edmonton  
Collaborative Coordinated  
Community Response  
(ECCCR)

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January 18, 2010

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## A. Background

In 2009, the Edmonton Collaborative Coordinated Community Response (ECCCR) Steering Committee engaged Emerging Directions Consulting Ltd. to undertake an environmental scan related to family violence. Given the broad scope of the topic of family violence, ECCCR Steering Committee members identified the following specific areas of interest:

- Current Canadian or Alberta focused family violence related data;
- Collaborative, coordinated community responses to family violence;
- Child custody/access disputes and family violence; and
- Emerging topic areas in academic research of relevance to ECCCR.

Information sources were obtained in several ways:

- ECCCR Steering Committee members sent relevant studies and reports directly to Emerging Directions Consulting Ltd.
- A literature search was undertaken of academic research as well as other web-based sources.

The key search terms used for this environmental scan were: ‘domestic violence’, ‘family violence’, ‘intimate partner violence’, ‘collaborative/ coordinated community response’, ‘coordinated community response’, ‘child custody and family violence’, and ‘child access and family violence.’

In the course of undertaking the literature search, two American published academic journals were found that focus directly on family violence topics: “Journal of Family Violence” and “Journal of Interpersonal Violence”. A manual search was undertaken of the tables of contents of both publications for the period 1999 to 2009 looking for relevant articles. This entailed reviewing approximately 2,400 titles for both publications.

As a result of this literature search, the following key topic areas were identified:

- Coordinated Community Responses and Building Community Capacity
- Intimate Partner Violence and its Impact on Work and the Workplace
- Differences in Rural and Urban Family Violence and Responses
- Culture and Family Violence

In an attempt to find current Canada or Alberta family violence statistics, a review was undertaken of recent, relevant Statistics Canada documents and Statistics Canada’s quarterly journal “Juristat” for the period 1999-2009. Approximately 240 “Juristat” titles were manually reviewed. No new, relevant data was identified from either of these sources to include in this environmental scan.

## **B. Key Family Violence Related Service Gaps in the Local Environment**

At the October 15, 2008 Community Initiatives Against Family Violence (CIAFV) Annual Membership Meeting, approximately 44 individuals generated a listing of service/issue gaps for Edmonton families experiencing family violence.

Common gaps/issues identified across three table groups included:

- Programs for men both as victim and offender. Services for men who are victims. There is a lack knowledge of services available for such men.
- Information not shared between Criminal Court and Family Court.

Common gaps/issues identified across two table groups included:

- Education and support for same sex/GBLT partner violence.
- Need for tighter connection between family violence and bullying.
- Need to educate schools about family violence. Teachers/schools lack awareness about family violence or awareness of protocols, reporting policies, and safety issues.

Source: Community Initiatives Against Family Violence (CIAFV) (2008). "Annual Membership Meeting Report". December 3, 2008, p. 26-27.

At "Building the Puzzle: A Forum to Work toward a System-Linking Family Violence Protocol" organized by CIAFV, 30 front-line and management staff from agencies/organizations/systems providing family violence services to families with children met over a day and a half in late May and early June 2008. Among the work accomplished, participants identified what needed to be strengthened in resources/services for families with children affected by family violence.

Three groups identified the following areas requiring strengthening in resources/services:

- More services for men
- Safe, supervised visitation
- Lack of sharing of information between Queen's Bench and Family Court/Criminal Court leads to orders that are in conflict with each other
- Not enough space in shelters
- Resources for interpreter services
- Not enough space in shelters.

Two groups identified the following areas requiring strengthening in resources/services:

- Safe exchange sites
- Assessments done by family violence specialists only
- Support for victims/families in family Court
- Education of judges about family violence to ensure consistency in decisions
- Access to legal assistance for family violence issues
- Domestic Violence Court
- Counselling for immigrant victims

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- Not enough affordable housing
- Increased legal advocacy for victims
- More services for persons with disabilities
- Child care so parents can take advantage of services
- Dedicated multilingual intake workers
- Front-line workers keep within their own area of expertise and know when and where to refer clients
- Have a protocol with the Court system so could work as a supportive team
- Lawyers for children.

(Source: Wendy M. Doughty, PhD. (2008). “Building the Puzzle: A Forum to Work toward a System-Linking Family Violence Protocol”. Prepared for CIAFV Steering Committee. July 15, 2008, p. 29 – 32.

### **C. Family Violence Research Literature**

The following section of this report describes the results of a review of academic research published on the following topics:

- Coordinated Community Responses and Building Community Capacity
- Intimate Partner Violence and its Impact on Work and the Workplace
- Differences in Rural and Urban Family Violence and Responses
- The Influence of Culture on Family Violence
- Child Access/Custody and Family Violence

#### **Coordinated Community Response**

##### **Background and Context**

According to Shepard, Falk, and Elliot (2002), “Although community models vary, coordination typically involves police, prosecutors, probation officers, battered women’s advocates, counsellors and judges in developing and implementing policies and procedures that improve interagency coordination and lead to more uniform responses to domestic violence cases.” (p. 551). Salazar, Emshoff, Baker, and Crowley (2002) state that “Coordinated community responses (CCRs) to domestic violence entail a strategy that is deemed ecological in that a network or infrastructure is created that brings together community activists, individual and institutional advocacy for women, law enforcement, judiciary, and social agencies to address the problem holistically.” (p. 631)

Shepard, Falk, and Elliot (2002) note that identified components of a coordinated community response often include the following:

- Pro-arrest or mandatory arrest policies
- Follow-up support and advocacy for victims

- Aggressive and prompt prosecution
- Active monitoring of offender compliance with probation conditions
- Court-mandated participation in batterer intervention programs
- Strengthening of civil remedies
- Monitoring of the system-wide response to domestic violence cases (p. 552).

Salazar, Emshoff, Baker, and Crowley (2002), indicate that CCRs emerge in a variety of ways. They can originate from an informal community-based organization or agency, from a formalized Family Violence Task Force, from local law enforcement agency, or even from a public organization (p. 631). They note that, “There is not a standardized intervention protocol for CCRs to follow when implementing the specific activities undertaken by each CCR because each CCR is unique and meeting its objectives may require an approach that is tailored for the community.” Yet, Salazar, Emshoff, Baker, and Crowley (2002) state, “CCR’s have similar objectives. Key goals are to provide victim protection, offender accountability, coordinate and evaluate existing services, develop new services, and to change the social climate of tolerance for domestic violence.” (p. 631- 632) They go on to say, “Specific activities adopted as part of the overall strategy may differ from CCR to CC, however, the goals are corresponding: Seek to enact systems-level changes while evoking societal level change to norms that promote domestic violence.” (p. 632)

Duluth, Minnesota is commonly cited as one of the first communities to develop a coordinated community response through the work of the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project (DAIP) initiated in 1980. DAIP’s well-known accomplishments have been its work with the Duluth Police Department to develop a mandatory arrest policy in the early 1980s and the development of an educational curriculum for batterers that focuses on power and control (Shepard, Falk, and Elliot (2002), p. 552). Shepard, Falk, and Elliot (2002) state that, “DAIP has always been focused on institutional change to effectively coordinate community responses to domestic violence. The philosophy has been that communities, rather than individuals, must be responsible for holding abusers accountable for their violence and ensuring the safety of victims.” (p. 552)

The Greenbook demonstration project is another well known community collaboration initiative where several U.S. federal agencies provided funding beginning in 1999 for six sites to develop multisystem collaborative approaches to working with families experiencing child maltreatment and domestic violence.

### **Research Findings**

Shepard, Falk, and Elliot (2002) indicate that most studies of domestic violence interventions have focused on individual components of coordinated intervention (e.g. arrest, batterer intervention, use of restraining orders) rather than on a combination of interventions that are part of a coordinated effort (p. 552). Early research studies conducted in the 1980s focusing on interagency coordination and the implementation of consistent policies and procedures showed

increases in arrest rates for domestic violence, successful prosecutions and court-ordered referrals to batterer intervention programs (Shepard, Falk, and Elliot (2002), p. 552).

Salazar, Emshoff, Baker, and Crowley (2007) report that “typically, evaluations of CCRs have involved an examination of individual behaviour only without an examination of how CCRs affect the behaviour of the service systems or the attitudes of the community in which the CCR was implemented. Thus, it is unclear from the published literature whether the coordinated efforts of a CCR have an impact beyond those individuals affected directly. For example, recidivism has been the main outcome variable of interest in many evaluation studies of CCRs.” (p. 632). The authors go on to argue that, “focusing only on recidivism rates does not get at how the CCR affected the collective behaviour of personnel constituting the criminal justice system or how the CCR influenced the norms of the community.” (p. 632).

According to Shepard, Falk, and Elliot (2002), “A study of the Duluth Minnesota’s DAIP Men’s Nonviolence Program found that there was evidence of reduced recidivism rates with the enhanced community responses. In this case, these project enhancements included expanded danger assessment and information sharing among criminal justice practitioners and advocates.” (p. 551). The authors say the findings are strengthened by steady declines in the number of recidivists over the three years of the project, beginning in the pilot year and increasing significantly during the intervention years (p. 568).

Banks, Dutch and Wang (2008) looked at how the Greenbook demonstration site projects developed collaboration in accordance with the Greenbook foundation principles and associated recommendations. They found that participation in the collaborations by survivors and former clients decreased as involving victims proved to be a struggle in each community (p. 886). They note that while the Greenbook project sought multiple levels of representation within the partner systems, courts and domestic violence service providers had fewer manager level representatives than other partners (p. 887). Banks, Dutch and Wang (2008) note that project stakeholders indicated that the collaborations underestimated the importance of building and maintaining collaborative relationships, given that stakeholders reported that many challenges – including issues of power, trust, and leadership- had to be continually assessed throughout the initiative (p.893-894). Stakeholders also reported that they would have benefited early in the demonstration project from a better understanding of how the participating systems worked. Banks, Dutch and Wang (2008) noted that stakeholders involved in the collaborative often noted that power was often concentrated in the court system, which was frustrating to many because this system seemed to be the focus of fewer system change activities compared to other partner systems. An imbalance of power often led to trust issues at the sites, which were also addressed through cross-system dialogue, neutral facilitation, and leadership to create a safe environment for discussing important issues. Finally, Banks, Dutch and Wang (2008) note that communicating the Greenbook message beyond the collaborative members was important to ensure community buy-in and support for the initiative (p.894).

Shepard, Falk, and Elliot (2002) stated that, “Overall, the study findings [which evaluated the effectiveness of a project designed to enhance coordinated community responses by examining

recidivism rates] suggest that improved coordination through the sharing of risk assessment information among criminal justice professionals can reduce recidivism among men who abuse their partners.” (p. 552) They do go on to say, “Whether coordination efforts can be successful over the long term in reducing domestic violence is more difficult to determine.” (p. 552)

Salazar, Emshoff, Baker, and Crowley (2007) conducted an evaluation of a community-based demonstration project in two Georgia Counties. They cited the long-term goal of the intervention was to move the intervention communities toward a zero-tolerance for battering by accomplishing several intermediate objectives within system, community, and individual levels: increase legal sanctions, raise community awareness of legal sanctions for battering, introduce and maintain a male batterer intervention program in the two counties, and access the possible effects on women (p. 632).

The evaluation was able to detect some successes in changing system behaviours. Salazar, Emshoff, Baker, and Crowley (2007) concluded that overall, the findings provide some cautious optimism for the advocates of CCR. As they noted, “Not surprisingly, systems change and its measurement proved to be difficult, but both efforts resulted in some success. Some analyses of social issues and of domestic violence in particular suggest that nothing short of systems and community change has any chance of making a significant long-term difference.” (p. 640).

Pennington-Zoetliner (2009) argues that while community coordinated responses to intimate partner violence have succeeded in increasing the arrest and prosecution of batterers and increasing some women’s safety, they have failed in one major way: they not identified and included formal and informal resources and strengths to family violence survivors. She says that by not including informal resources like extended family, neighbours, friends, and social groups, and formal organizations like churches and employers, the quality and quantity of support and resources available is drastically reduced (p. 541-542).

Pennington-Zoetliner (2009) argues that community coordination is necessary to end intimate partner violence, but community coordinated responses will not effectively reduce intimate partner violence until the entire community is involved, particularly employers (p. 545).

Banks, Dutch, and Wang (2008) cite the following key lessons learned from the Greenbook collaborative projects focused on working with families with co-occurring domestic violence and child maltreatment or child exposure to family violence:

- Recognize and address institutional differences among partners.
- Be aware that collaborative relationships require constant attention
- Utilize effective and neutral leadership to facilitate discussion of ‘hot button’ issues
- Undertake activities such as needs assessments and analyses are critical to support planning
- Utilize frontline and multidisciplinary approaches as they appear to be most effective (p. 899-901).

## **Intimate Partner Violence and Its Impact on the Workplace**

### **Background and Context**

- 70% of individuals suffering from domestic violence are victimized at work (Ontario Safety Association for Community and Healthcare. (2008), p. 5).
- 20% of physical and sexual assaults in Canada occur in the workplace (Statistics Canada, 2006).

O'Leary-Kelly, Lean, Reeves, and Randel (2008) found that 19% of surveyed American employees indicated that some form of intimate partner violence had taken place at work. Fifty percent of these victimized employees indicated the most common form of intimate partner violence was stalking. Nearly 9% of victimized employees reported that their partners had threatened them at work. Finally, 2% reported they had experienced physical aggression, and 2% reported they had been hurt while at work (p. 60).

Swanberg, Macke, and Logan (2007) cite research that identifies perpetrators' interference with women's jobs take three primary forms: work disruption, on the job harassment, and performance problems (p. 292). They indicate that the short-term consequences of these can be increased absenteeism, reduced concentration, or reduced productivity (p. 292). Interestingly, Reeves and O'Leary-Kelly (2007) identified that those who had experienced intimate partner violence in the past were more likely to be absent than non-victims (p.338). However, their study found that employees currently experiencing intimate partner violence were no more likely to be absent from work than were non-victims (p. 338). Reeves and O'Leary-Kelly (2007) did find that current victims of intimate partner violence reported significantly higher levels of distraction compared to non-victims (p. 339). However, Reeves and O'Leary-Kelly (2007) noted that there were no differences identified in the levels of work distraction for lifetime victims versus non-victimized employees (p. 339). They also found that intimate partner violence negatively affects the productivity of female and male employees (p. 340).

Long-term consequences of intimate partner violence on female victims can include inconsistent work histories, underemployment, unemployment or reduced actual and potential earnings (293). Reeves and O'Leary-Kelly (2007) found significant effect of victimization on salary, with current victims reporting lower salaries than nonvictims (p. 340).

Swanberg, Macke, and Logan (2007) say that while studies suggest that intimate partner violence may not prevent women from obtaining work, they do suggest that it has significant costs for individual victims and for organizations (p. 293). They quote research estimates that, in total, victims in the United States lose \$18 million in annual earnings and nearly \$1 billion in life time earnings due to missed work, job loss, and inability to maintain consistent employment (p. 293). O'Leary-Kelly (2007) cite health care related costs associated with intimate partner violence to be almost six times greater than absenteeism costs - \$4.1 billion (US) vs. \$728 million

(US) (p. 341). O’Leary-Kelly, Lean, Reeves, and Randel (2008) discussed research that found victims require an average expenditure of \$439 to \$1,775 more per year on medical care than nonvictims (p. 63). Because many employers provide medical insurance, a large percentage of these medical costs are paid by employers (p. 63). When leaving an abuse relationship, Swanberg, Macke, and Logan (2007) report that women encounter further economic hardships when having to leave a well paying job for safety reasons or having difficulties securing meaningful work (p. 293).

Swanberg, Macke, and Logan (2007) report limited research on how women cope with partner violence when it does interfere with their job in some way (p. 293). They indicate that limited available research suggests that victims’ decisions to disclose details of their interpersonal victimization may depend on the possible prevailing personal and/or organizational attitudes about intimate partner violence, the extent to which it affects their work performance, and the subsequent availability of workplace support (p. 300).

Swanberg, Macke, and Logan (2007) studied 757 women who obtained a domestic violence order against an intimate partner in one of four court jurisdictions between February 2001 and November 2003. They found that participants who were unemployed at the time of the study had faced a significantly greater number of before-work interference tactics in their last job compared to those who were employed at the time of the study. These tactics included threatening them from going to work, physically preventing them from looking for a job, or undermining efforts to go to work (p. 302).

Those employed at the time of the Swanberg, Macke, and Logan (2007) study were significantly more likely than unemployed women to have received the following workplace support while on the job: schedule flexibility, assistance with developing an at-work security plan, screening phone calls from the violence partner, a co-worker lending a listening ear, and a co-worker spending break time with victims (p. 303-304). The authors suggest that workplace supports may actually help women to remain employed. They also note that a victim’s disclosure of intimate partner violence is associated with current employment and infer that increasing disclosure rates within a company may result in lower turnover rates and subsequent economic benefit for the employer and the victimized employee (p. 306).

Based on the results of their study, Swanberg, Macke, and Logan (2007) offer the following suggestions:

- Encourage workplaces to educate employees about partner violence, reduce the stigma surrounding partner violence, offer workplace support, and create work environment that is responsive to victims who opt to tell someone at work about their situation.
  - Safety planning should extend beyond the home to include the workplace and the commute to and from work.
  - Social work professionals should explore with victims the advantages and disadvantages of workplace disclosure, as well as determining the optimal way to inform an employer about the partner violence circumstances and the supports needed to stay focused on the job (p. 307).

## **Best Practices for Management**

The Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence (CAEPV) developed best practices organized into the following key steps for management to respond to intimate partner violence:

- Organize a multidisciplinary team to oversee the development and planning for an intimate partner program in the workplace.
- Develop a corporate policy addressing intimate partner violence.
- Provide training.
- Build awareness through workplace communication.
- Enlist employees to help ensure a violence-free workplace.
- Broaden communications to include the community, important stakeholders in the company's industry, and other organizations.

Swanberg, Macke, and Logan (2007), p. 69-71; Randel and Wells (2003), p. 825 – 828.

CAEPV member organizations that have identified and developed effective programs for intimate partner violence identified the following key best-practice areas that make workplace programs most effective:

- Lead from the top with strong commitment from executives and upper-level management.
- Set and enforce policies.
- Train, train, train.
- Offer real life answers with real processes and tools for employees to use.
- Make safety and security vital issues.
- Wrestle with tough issues such as balancing employee privacy with a desire to assist in cases of domestic violence.
- Communicate creatively utilizing many forms of communication.
- Integrate education by intertwining awareness and educational programs on domestic violence with other programs that are complementary such as employee-wellness fairs, workplace safety programs, etc.
- Create a supportive culture where victim and perpetrator employees believe that they will get help and not be fired or discriminated against for sharing this information with a supervisor or manager.
- Reach out to other businesses about how to handle tough and delicate issues and challenges  
(Randel and Wells (2003), p. 829 – 832).

## **A Comparison of Rural and Urban Intimate Partner Violence**

### **Background and Context**

Eastman and Bunch (2007) and Logan, Walker, Cole, Ratliff and Leukefeld (2003) noted that available research shows rates of domestic violence are similar across rural and urban areas. However a number of factors act as barriers to intervention efforts in rural areas. Eastman and Bunch (2007) cite geographic isolation, limited access to services, the absence of employment opportunities, insufficient housing, the absence of public transportation, and attitudes of tolerance toward domestic violence (p. 465-466). Logan, Walker, Cole, Ratliff and Leukefeld (2003) mention low education and high poverty rates as having a greater impact on the experiences of intimate violence victims in rural areas (p. 83).

### **Research Findings**

Through a pilot study using a protective order sample of 23 women (15 urban and 8 rural), Logan, Walker, Cole, Ratliff and Leukefeld (2003) found that rural women, consistent with the research, reported significantly less social support than did urban women and significantly more feelings of loneliness. Rural women were far less likely to cope with their abuse by talking to a friend or family (p. 86).

Through a survey of 93 domestic violence service providers, Eastman and Bunch (2007) identified significant differences between rural and urban providers regarding service consumer needs and experiences, perception of the general public, area resource availability, agency funding, providing training and worker safety (p. 465).

According to Eastman and Bunch (2007), service providers in rural localities reported members of the general public as being more likely to see the victim as being responsible for remaining in an abusive relationship and therefore more likely to blame for their own victimization (p. 468). Rural service providers reported in far greater numbers than urban service providers that they felt vulnerable at times and more often experienced incidents where their safety was threatened (p. 468). In terms of training, Eastman and Bunch (2007) reported that rural providers said that accessing relevant training was difficult and that it was also more difficult to find rural training that reflected the latest developments in the field of domestic violence (p. 469-470).

Rural and urban service providers differed in terms of available resources, according to Eastman and Bunch (2007). Rural providers indicated that they did not agree that adequate resources were available, while urban providers agreed that resources were adequate and available (p. 470). Rural providers also reported that the demand for services outweighed available resources compared with urban providers (p.470). Eastman and Bunch (2007) further report that rural providers, more so than urban providers, tended to view their agencies as understaffed and unable to meet the needs of their clients (p. 471).

## **The Influence of Culture on Family Violence**

### **Background and Context**

Bent-Goodley (2005) states that a growing scholarship has acknowledged the significance of race, culture, and ethnicity in accessing and intervening when family violence occurs.

This includes:

- An understanding of historical context;
- Stereotypes toward people of color that have been found to result in discriminating treatment and denial of services; and
- Methods of intervening require a cultural foundation (p. 196).

Yoshioka and Choi (2005) point to previous research on the influence of a woman's cultural worldview (individualism or collectivism) in shaping her experience of violence and abuse. Collectivist cultures emphasize obedience to and harmony within the group. When faced with conflict, collectivists tend to use collaborative strategies to maintain relationships and save face with others (p. 514). Individualist cultures emphasize personal pleasure, achievement, and autonomy. In conflict situations, individualists tend to use more confrontation including adversarial strategies with an aim of saving their own sense of face (p.514).

What do these differences in cultural worldviews mean for women affected by family violence?

- A woman's perception of accessible gender and marital roles and her real and perceived options for addressing family violence are deeply influenced by the relative priority she places on her own needs and goals over those of her family/community. A woman socialized with collectivist values does not have the same type of access to divorce, independent living or single parenthood as a woman from an individualist culture. (Yoshioka and Choi (2005), p. 514).
- A woman's relationship with her host society is noteworthy. This status includes her legal standing (i.e. access to support programs), the size of the cultural community in terms of geography and population with which she identifies, her familiarity with social/ political/cultural systems, and real and perceived receptiveness of these systems to the woman (Yoshioka and Choi 2005, p. 514).

Yoshioka and Choi (2005) point out that the current service response to family violence is geared to assisting a woman to leave an abuse relationship and live independently from the abusive partner. Practitioners, however, are well aware that this response does not fit for abused women with collectivist cultural values (p. 516).

## Recommendations

Yoshioka and Choi (2005) call for continuing to educate clients and their communities about their options to address family violence that include leaving abusive relationships, but also honour their decisions by giving them the type of help they are asking for, which may include helping them stay (p. 516).

Drawing upon lessons gained from HIV prevention intervention strategies, Yoshioka and Choi (2005) call for practitioners to develop a full range of nonjudgmental options to lower a woman's risk for violence, including those who are not likely to leave their relationship. By adopting safety rather than leaving the relationship as the desired outcome, Yoshioka and Choi (2005) argue that society is taking greater responsibility for keeping women safe (p. 518-519). Pennington-Zoetliner (2009) expands upon this idea, stating that changing the focus from leaving to more appropriate outcomes like empowerment, access to resources, and economic security will increase some women's safety more than leaving (p. 542).

Bent-Goodley (2005) suggests four key areas that require development in order to ensure that people of color are better represented in research and more likely to receive much-needed services:

- **Better integration of cultural competence in domestic violence service provision.** It is imperative that the concept of culture be extended beyond race to include other factors, such as ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and class. The needs of people with color should be addressed through agency policy, staffing at all levels and service provision.
- **Evaluation of culturally competent programs for best practices.** Developing a tool for evaluating culturally competent domestic violence programs would make a significant contribution to conceptualizing best practices.
- **Culture reflected in policy making.** Programs receiving public funds should be required to demonstrate public competence. Agencies should be encouraged to develop policies that support cultural competence on the institutional and direct service level.
- **An increased emphasis on people of color in the design, conceptualization, implementation, and evaluation of domestic violence research.** More research is needed to fully understand the impact of stereotypes and discrimination on domestic violence survivors of color seeking help. Culturally constructed perceptions of domestic violence also require inquiry and knowledge development (p. 200).

### **Child Custody/Access Disputes and Family Violence**

In their evaluation of the Community Safe Visitation Program, Tutty, Weaver-Dunlop, Barlow, and Jesso (2006) conducted an extensive literature review that included examining research focused on child custody disputes when domestic violence is an issue. They identified a research study on child custody determinations that found family courts were made aware of a perpetrator's substantiated history of intimate partner violence in less than 25% of custody cases. The study authors identified a lack of coordination between legal systems, and that family courts do not screen adequately for domestic violence (p.12).

Tutty, Weaver-Dunlop, Barlow, and Jesso (2006) reported on another study that found courts were more likely to limit the access of fathers to children, limit their decision-making power, and require some type of treatment as a condition of access. The study authors noted, however, that 83% of fathers with a substantiated history of family violence were still granted access to their children (p. 12). A Canadian study quoted by Tutty, Weaver-Dunlop, Barlow, and Jesso (2006), noted that abusive men, by and large, are awarded unsupervised access to their children. This was further substantiated by another research study that reviewed Canadian court cases between 1997 and 2000 where domestic violence was documented as an issue in the trial proceedings. Most of the men that abused their spouses were granted access to their children, mostly unsupervised. Access was reportedly only denied in seven of the 31 cases in which the court accepted the mother's allegation of spousal violence (p. 13).

Tutty, Weaver-Dunlop, Barlow, and Jesso (2006) cite research that children who have not been directly abused by a parent may suffer psychological distress when having witnessed domestic violence. Another study they reference identifies that the abuser's style of parenting may not be adequate even if he has not abused his children. It reports that abusers' parenting styles are often authoritarian, controlling and rigid. They may be under-involved, neglectful, and avoid situations requiring parental responsibility (p. 14).

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