

**FEDERAL STRATEGY ON GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE  
BRIEFING NOTES FOR STATUS OF WOMEN CANADA AND THE DEPARTMENT  
OF JUSTICE CANADA**

**ISSUE: Treatment for Assaultive Men**

There are challenges that need to be addressed in the funding and delivery of treatment for men who have assaulted their intimate partners, including treatment for non-court-mandated men. Coordination with local community services for women, the lack of culturally specific treatment options, the need for an understanding of the power dynamics of violence against women, and creating evaluations to determine the effectiveness of treatment approaches are all issues that need to be addressed.

**KEY POINTS**

- Treatment for assaultive men is one of the essential elements in an effective, coordinated response to gender-based violence.
- The most pressing issues in terms of the delivery of assaultive men’s treatment are: 1) lack of access to treatment for “voluntary” men (non-court-mandated); 2) infrequent second level (the “treatment” phase) assaultive men’s treatment groups, due to lack of numbers to justify groups; 3) lack of culturally-specific and Indigenous-specific treatment; 4) need for improved communication with victims and current partners of assaultive men, and with the service providers who are assisting them; 5) increasing use of inappropriate services that are not specific to gender-based violence and therefore may not address the power dynamics of these crimes (i.e., anger management); and 6) need to involve assaultive men’s programs in coordinated responses to gender-based violence at the local level.
- In BC, as a result of restructuring, community-based assaultive men’s treatment contracts have been narrowed to include only sentenced offenders – completely excluding voluntary participants – and restrict second level programs to medium and high-risk offenders. Court-mandated low-risk offenders are only admitted to the first level “educational” phase of response. There are a number of advantages to combining court-mandated and voluntary men in the same group. For example, it increases the likelihood that there will be enough participants to run groups in small communities. Highly motivated voluntary men can also have a positive impact on court-mandated men when they are in the same group.
- Outside large urban areas, ongoing challenges are reported in accessing assaultive men’s treatment groups for court-mandated offenders. There is also a lack of funded treatment for assaultive men who voluntarily come forward, resulting in a serious lack of services that could prevent future violence. In the absence of appropriate, funded assaultive men’s treatment options, assaultive men are increasingly relying on other counselling resources that are not designed to address the dynamics of power and

control and the recurring nature of gender-based violence, which may inadvertently reinforce attitudes and behaviours that support the violence.

- There is a need for more culturally and linguistically appropriate assaultive men's treatment groups for immigrant men and Indigenous men.
- There is a critical need for victim services and women-serving agencies to work in conjunction with assaultive men's treatment providers and to help women realistically assess potential impacts of men's participation in treatment/educational groups and develop safety plans.

## **SUGGESTED ACTIONS**

The Federal government should:

- Call for provinces and territories to continue to develop and expand programs for abusive partners that reflect evidence-based practice. There is a need for rigorous research and evaluation to help determine the elements of an effective response.
- Program implementation should address the following considerations:
  - Accountability and monitoring mechanisms to address the impact on offenders, and the problem of high attrition (with meaningful sanctions for non-compliance, such as immediate, predictable and reliable punitive consequences for repeat offences or failure to participate in these programs).
  - Access to sufficient counselling services for abusive men, including men who voluntarily self-disclose perpetuating gender-based violence. Each community should have access to culturally and linguistically appropriate programs reflective of their population, including programs for Indigenous men.
  - The need to address the challenges of the migration process, including underemployment and discrimination, issues of Canadian family law and laws concerning violence, and cultural norms concerning relationships (including marriage and parenting).
  - Facilities, programs, and instructors should be approved by a governing body, and available to mandatory as well as voluntary referrals. The programs should also offer appropriate information sharing and support services for victims/survivors and their children, maintain direct liaison with probation services and community-based victim service programs, and take part in local domestic violence coordinating initiatives.
  - Participation in such community-based programs should be mandated as part of treatment for perpetrators, with immediate, predictable and reliable punitive consequences for repeat offences or failure to participate.
  - On-going evaluation of all support or treatment groups for men who batter to determine the effect on ending gender-based violence. Priority should be given to program models that have been identified as the most effective in the evaluation research.
- Fund all provinces and territories to establish death review committees for domestic violence homicides. The results should be rolled into a federal death review initiative.

- Establish a national domestic violence prevention group with representatives from all provinces and territories to carry out the recommendations of the domestic violence death review committees, and develop best practices.

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