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Municipality of Durham  
Office of the CAO

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Elaine Baxter-Trahair

# Memorandum

**Date:** November 19, 2024

**To:** Regional Council

**From:** Elaine Baxter-Trahair

**Subject:** Information Memo to Council - Intimate Partner  
Violence (IPV)

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## 1. Purpose

1.1 At the October 9, 2024, meeting of Committee of the Whole, a motion regarding Enhancing Shelter Supports for Women and Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence was brought forward by Councillor Shahid and seconded by Councillor Roy. Following this, staff were directed to provide a memo to Council, summarizing the current Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) work underway at the Region of Durham.

## 2. Intimate Partner Violence Programs and Initiatives

2.1 At the Region, the CAO's Office, Health and Social Services Departments are working to address IPV, including Gender Based Violence (GBV) and Human Trafficking, across multiple areas of focus, including:

- Providing Supports and Services
- Community Awareness and Partnerships
- Strategy Development

## 2.2 Providing Supports and Services

### Partner Assault Response Program (PAR)

- PAR is a group/counselling program for individuals who have perpetrated IPV (intervention and prevention based). This program is funded by the Ministry of the Attorney General and provides a 12-session group education/counselling program for individuals (male and female) who have been mandated by the court to attend a PAR program or counselling as directed by a Probation and Parole officer.

- Family Services Division (FSD) served 421 people in the PAR program fiscal year 2022/2023 (346 male; 75 female) and 482 people in 2023-2024 (395 male; 87 female). Interpretation services are provided for group and individual program delivery and DEI principles are incorporated into the curriculum.
- FSD provided 655 partner contacts in 2022/2023 fiscal year; and 568 to date in 2023/2024 providing safety planning, support, referrals to community resources, and information about the offender's progress throughout the duration of the program.

### **GBV Counselling Services**

- These services are available to individuals and families. They can include safety planning, trauma counselling, crisis counselling, family/couple counselling, and sexual violence counselling.
- FSD received 510 counselling requests specific to Gender Based Violence in 2023 (these requests are prioritized for service).
- Note: This number is provided by the client information system, but it does not provide an accurate representation of the number of total GBV/IPV counselling requests, as disclosure can come later (i.e., in counselling, family counselling, anger management etc.)

### **GBV Male Survivors of Sexual Abuse (MSAC) Counselling Services**

- These services are funded by the Ministry of the Attorney General for clients identifying as male. It follows a self-referral process for up to 8 sessions of counselling for impacts related to current or historical sexual abuse/assault.
- In 2023 14 clients were referred to FSD for MSAC services.

### **Older Adult Safety Advisor (OASA)**

- In collaboration with DRPS, the OASA provides support and services to ensure the safety and well-being of older adults. In this work, supporting adults experiencing abuse is a priority.
- From January 2024 to the end of September 2024, there have been 2,786 interactions related to abuse perpetrated against an older adult. This is more than double the number of total interactions in 2023 (1,106).

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### **Positive Alternatives Diversion Program (PADP)**

- This program is a partnership with FSD and Durham Region Police Service (DRPS). DRPS provides parenting support and education to eligible offenders who have used excessive or inappropriate discipline with the goal of maintaining the family unit. This program uses community-based approaches for prevention, intervention and easing emotional distress.

### **Human Trafficking Response Team**

- Two Income Employment and Homelessness Supports Division (IEHSD) community-based case coordinators are dedicated to supporting human trafficking survivors. These case coordinators complete Ontario Works Applications, manage Ontario Works files, provide intensive case coordination support by providing survivors with advocacy, accompaniment and connection to medical, legal, mental health, and housing supports.

### **Additional Support Services**

- Support services often focus on developing safety planning, supporting referrals and supports to assist the individual in accessing counselling and other supports to address trauma and other GBV, IPV and human trafficking impacts. Additional supportive work taking place includes:
  - **Debrief groups** to support Social Services staff providing service at-risk populations including Human Trafficking clients.
  - **Adult Protective Services Program** receives referrals for individuals with developmental disabilities who are experiencing abuse.
  - **Violence Against Women (VAW) Shelter Liaison** partners with VAW shelters to support women and children in shelter who are receiving Ontario Works Assistance. This is done by managing their file and supporting clients moving from shelter into a home by issuing available benefits and supports. The Shelter Liaison also provides supports to clients residing in a VAW shelter who are not in receipt of Ontario Works Assistance.

- **The Safety Network Durham Team IESD case coordinators and FSD counsellors** attend the Safety Network Durham on Mondays and Thursdays to support women and families who are leaving IPV. They provide financial literacy training and administer Ontario Works Assistance as well as provide safety planning, emotional and counselling support, education, information, advocacy, and referrals.
- **The IEHSD IPV Steering Committee** regularly reviews internal policies to ensure Ontario Works is administered in accordance to IEHSD Family Violence Protocol, ensuring client safety is always prioritized.
- **The Health Department delivers the following programs** to support clients who disclose they have been, or are currently victims of, GBV/IPV: Food 4 Thought groups (specific GBV/IPV principles); Stepping Stones, EarlyON and other community programs; Healthy Babies Healthy Children home visiting program; and Cognitive Behaviour Therapy groups (for clients with perinatal mood disorders)
- **Administer Ontario Works Assistance** to human trafficking survivors residing at Safe Hope Home.
- **Nourish and Develop Foundation (North Durham)** – FSD partners with Nourish and Develop Foundation to deliver counselling to victims of GBV living in north Durham.

## **2.3 Community Awareness and Partnerships**

### **Community Engagement: Inaugural Awareness Walk**

- Durham Region collaborated with eight Violence Against Women (VAW) response agencies; including Bethesda House, Herizon House, Luke’s Place, Safety Network Durham, The Denise House, Victim Services Durham Region, Women’s Multicultural Resource and Counselling Centre of Durham, and YWCA Durham; to organize the inaugural Community Awareness Walk to End IPV.
- This event took place at Durham Region Headquarters in Whitby on Saturday, September 21, 2024, engaging over 150 participants.

## **The Guide to Community Resources for Seniors and Older Adults**

- Developed and distributed The Guide to Community Resources for Seniors and Older Adults across Durham Region in partnership with The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Division, Durham Region Transit, the Social Services Department, and over 20 community organizations. The guide aims to enhance social connections and community engagement among older adults by raising awareness of resources and supports available in the community.
- The guide includes services and programs categorized under the mental health, housing, legal and safety sections, addressing the unique challenges older adults face concerning elder abuse generally and GBV specifically.
- Printed copies of the Guide were made available at approximately 130 locations throughout Durham Region, including public libraries, community facilities, health centers, seniors' residences, and community partners. To date, over 6,500 older adults have received hard copies of the guide, and an accessible online version is available at [durham.ca/agefriendly](http://durham.ca/agefriendly).

## **Human Trafficking Advocacy and Awareness**

- The Region of Durham is mobilizing a number of Human Trafficking (HT) Advocacy and community awareness initiatives, including:
- Human Trafficking Awareness Training: In March 2024 IEHSD provided this training to 48 individuals from 6 community partner agencies.
- Liaise with municipalities across the province who aim to duplicate the success of Durham Region's Human Trafficking Response.
- Attend International Human Trafficking Conferences, highlighting Durham Region's Human Trafficking response as an International Best Practice.
- IEHSD Community Partner Committee: A frontline sub-committee of the Human Trafficking Coalition that will create awareness and build on best practices among all participating Community Agencies.

- Note: The Durham VAW shelters indicated they are in a 'staffing crisis' at the last Violence Prevention Coordinating Council (VPCC) meeting. It was shared that some VAW shelters in Ontario have no overnight staff, that ED's are taking shifts and that resident numbers are being adjusted due to these shortages.
- Although the VAW sites are funded directly by the province and not part of the homelessness system, this could certainly exacerbate the shortage of beds we are already encountering.

### **Provincial Funding Applications**

- The Region is leading two and partnering on seven GBV funding proposals to support prevention and intervention of GBV. The two Regionally led proposals aim to:
  1. Provide counselling to individuals with developmental disabilities who have experienced GBV as a victim or perpetrator.
  2. Develop, implement, and evaluate a community-based public education and awareness campaign on GBV throughout Durham Region.

### **Community Partnerships**

- The Region of Durham has staff members who are members and/or working in support with the following committees, community partners and initiatives:
  - Safety Network Durham (SND) (Steering Committee member and weekly meetings for all Ontario Works SND team members)
  - Violence Prevention Coordinating Council of Durham (VPCC)
  - Durham Region Human Trafficking Coalition
  - Domestic Violence Sexual Assault Care Centre
  - DRPS
  - Victim Services of Durham Region
  - Durham Region Sexual Health Clinic
  - Children's Aid Society
  - High Risk Action Review Team (HART) for domestic cases that are case intensive and high risk.

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- Partner Assault Response Community of Practice – Family Service Ontario member PAR providers
- Partner Assault Response Alliance – representing PAR organizations throughout the province.
- VAW Shelters Bethesda House, Denise House, and YWCA Y's Wish through the IEHSD Shelter Liaison Case Coordinator
- Durham Region Housing – support to apply for Canada Ontario Housing Benefit and Special Priority Housing and check client's status on waitlist.
- IPV Awareness Training - Facilitate IPV training to Internal Staff and Community Partner agencies. In March 2024 IEHSD provided IPV training to 48 individuals from 6 community partner agencies.
- Ongoing Regional support for community partner agency awareness and fundraising efforts.

## **2.4 Strategy Development**

### **IPV and GBV Community Action Plan**

- The development of an IPV and GBV Community Action Plan was initiated through the formation of a subcommittee, comprised of Regional staff from the CSWB Secretariat, Health and Social Services Departments, and members of the Violence Prevention Coordinating Council (VPCC) of Durham<sup>1</sup>. This group was tasked with developing a Community Action Plan that outlines key actions that could be taken to address IPV and GBV in Durham Region over the next two years as part of the CSWB Plan's Victimization priority risk factor.
- Although the Action Plan is still in development, five priority outcomes have emerged for collaboration among survivors, community organizations, service providers, community members, businesses, and other institutions:
  - Expand IPV and GBV awareness and prevention initiatives.
  - Enhance outreach and engagement with populations disproportionately affected by IPV and GBV.

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- Secure sustainable funding for IPV and GBV prevention and response efforts.
- Improve access to safe and affordable housing for IPV and GBV victims/survivors to help them escape abusive situations.
- Strengthen data collection and monitoring of IPV and GBV prevalence and trends.

### **Community Healing Protocol**

- Efforts are underway to develop a Community Healing Protocol (CHP) as access to restorative, culturally affirming, community-led healing responses can play a crucial role in disrupting cycles of interpersonal violence and other forms of trauma. The CHP will facilitate a community-led response to local traumatic and violent events, including incidents of alleged femicide and contribute to restoring balance and wellness within communities.

### **Development of a Violence Prevention Strategy**

- A Youth Violence Prevention Strategy and Toolkit is being developed as part of the implementation of Public Safety Canada's Building Safer Communities Fund.
- The Strategy will acknowledge the complex challenges facing youth in our communities and will provide a road map for collaborating across multiple sectors and levels of government to promote youth safety and well-being in Durham Region. Areas of focus could include issues related to mental health, anti-racism, human trafficking, consent, IPV, healthy relationships, sextortion, teen dating violence, gun and gang violence and cyber safety.
- A toolkit will be developed as a standalone document for distribution in community. It will serve as a resource guide for youth, their families, and their social support networks who are looking to connect with services in the Region.

## **3. Conclusion**

Ongoing research and collaboration efforts are underway, such as connecting with other municipalities and organizations in the broader IPV/GBV sector (e.g., Building a Bigger Wave, Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children at Western University). These efforts ensure we

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remain informed about IPV/GBV initiatives and best practices at the municipal level.

These actions demonstrate a robust, multi-faceted approach by the Region of Durham to prevent, address and mitigate the impact of IPV and GBV within the community. As work progresses and new information becomes available, we will continue to keep Council informed.