



SMALL CENTRE TOOLKIT

ACCESS TO SERVICES

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SUPPORTS

MARCH 2019



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As we collectively strive to understand the historic and ongoing relationship between settlement and the land on which we are located, AAISA respectfully acknowledges that the province of Alberta is comprised of Treaty 6, Treaty 7, and Treaty 8 territories, and is the traditional lands of First Nations and Métis peoples.

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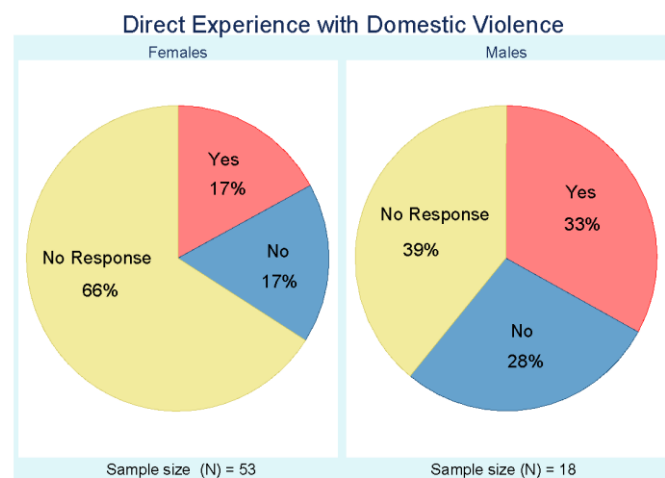
Note: Throughout this document, clicking on underlined text will direct to various websites and resources.

FAMILY SUPPORT: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

This resource focuses on **domestic violence and/or intimate partner violence (D/IPV)** in newcomer communities. The objective of this section of the toolkit is to improve the understanding of domestic violence in newcomer communities through literature review. This literature review will address the many barriers and challenges newcomer women face when they experience domestic violence. It will address the issues that service providers come across when assisting newcomer women with support for domestic violence. Additionally, it will address recommendations provided by academic researchers on how to adequately provide support to newcomer communities facing domestic violence.

There are various terms used to denote domestic violence, including violence against women, spousal abuse, or family violence. Although there is no universally accepted definition of D/IPV it is often defined as: “when a person who is currently or previously in an intimate personal relationship uses abusive, threatening, harassing or violent behaviour as a means to psychologically, physically, sexually or financially coerce, dominate and control the other member of the relationship.”ⁱ They include a range of abusive behaviours including physical, sexual, emotional and/or psychological, and patrimonial, property, and/or economic violence.ⁱⁱ

D/IPV is a serious problem in Canada with many of the incidents unreported to the police.ⁱⁱⁱ In a study by the [Central Alberta Women’s Association \(CAIWA\)](#), with a sample of 71 immigrant men and women, 66% of women and 39% of men gave no response when asked about their experience with domestic violence, and knowledge of services.^{iv} This can be attributed to cultural and religious beliefs as many newcomer families who experience D/IPV do not acknowledge nor disclose or report abuse to public service providers.

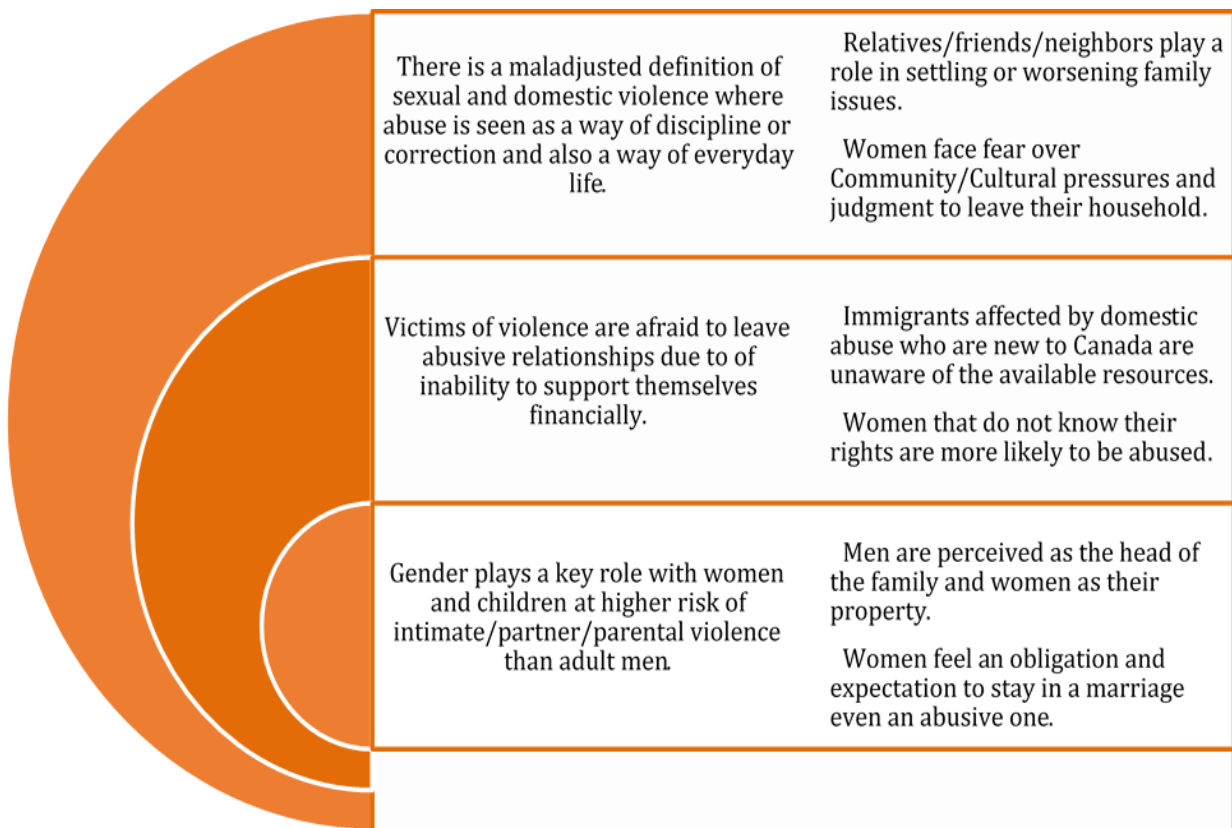


Source: [Central Alberta Women’s Association \(CAIWA\)](#)

It is common to assume that domestic violence-based events affect only women, however, it is apparent that domestic violence occurs in a family and such violent events can have adverse effects on all family members. It is important to understand that family violence is not only defined by violence between partners, rather it can occur between parents and their children, or between other members within a family. Additionally, although men and women can be perpetrators of D/IPV, women are more likely to be victims.^v

With the population of newcomer family expected to rise over the next 30 years, newcomer women's vulnerability to D/IPV is of concern as evidence has shown that newcomer women's experiences of D/IPV can begin in the post-migration context, remain the same, or change from their pre-migration experiences.^{vi} Regardless of this data, there is no empirical evidence that newcomer women are more likely to experience D/IPV than Canadian women.^{vii} In general, women experiencing domestic violence can face many barriers although newcomer women who experience domestic violence face additional barriers and challenges to reporting the violence and accessing support from service providers.

The barriers and challenges to disclosing and reporting abuse along with other various factors that play a role in perpetuating abuse and difficulty in accessing services stems from the many intersecting identities of newcomer women which will be discussed in the following section.



Source: [Central Alberta Women's Association](#)

AN INTERSECTIONAL APPROACH TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE/INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

An **intersectional framework** takes into consideration the intersecting identities of newcomer women, how it influences their lives, and how the system's in place respond to them.^{viii} Intersectionality is the phenomenon of how marginalized women experience life, discrimination, and benefits because of several intra-group differences.^{ix} The many intersecting identities can include sex, gender, education, race/ethnicity, sexuality, ability, or religion. The intersectional identity of newcomer women can create a space of oppression and exclusion from society.^x Service providers who address the intersecting identities of newcomer women and plan services that take into consideration all these factors can provide adequate services rather than a one-size-fits-all or universal approach as a one-size-fits-all or universal approach has been inadequate in addressing the diverse needs of survivors of D/IPV.^{xi}

Reflecting on intersectionality theory and its impact can address the needs of D/IPV survivors. The theory provides a framework that describes how various identities create social locations for people which impact their vulnerability to discrimination and oppression. In D/IPV, intersecting identities greatly impacts newcomer women's experiences and the overall response from organizations and systems in place.^{xii} The many factors that can play a role include:

- Pre-migration experience (including any traumatic experience)
- Gender
- Ethnicity or culture
- Loss of social status as part of migration
- Loss of income resulting from either not being able to work outside the house because of responsibilities for children, or because of a lack of recognition of professional credentials in Canada
- Poverty
- Precariousness of work
- Language barriers
- Educational background
- Socioeconomic status
- Immigration status

The various factors that play a role in newcomer women's identities compounded together gives rise to vulnerability.^{xiii}

TABLE 1: BARRIERS TO ACCESSING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE/INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

This section of the toolkit outlines the various barriers that stand in the way of D/IPV survivors from accessing services and barriers that prevent service providers from delivering domestic violence services that meet the needs of newcomer women. The list of barriers and challenges have been compiled from various academic sources. All sources used for this table will be cited at the end of this document on page 19.

BARRIERS	D/IPV SURVIVORS	SERVICE PROVIDERS
DIFFERENT UNDERSTANDING OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE BETWEEN SERVICE PROVIDERS AND IMMIGRANT WOMEN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to cultural traditions and religious views, immigrant women have a different understanding of what constitutes as D/IPV than Canadian-born service providers and D/IPV survivors. This understanding can either be a source of empowerment and resiliency or it may increase vulnerability to abuse. • Immigrant women understand domestic violence as a private concern between husband and wife. There is a belief that D/IPV should only be discussed with close family members. • Many women are pressured to stay in abusive relationships by close family members to avoid any kind of retribution and isolation from family, and cultural and religious social networks. • Newcomer women are expected to make sacrifices and endure hardships for the sake of their families and children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canadian-born service providers and D/IPV survivors understand domestic violence as male power and control, including structural gender inequalities. • There is an emphasis on individual identity in D/IPV services which contrasts with the collectivist values that newcomer families hold. For example, D/IPV services focus on the division of family members with more focus on isolating newcomer women from their families and social networks. It can become problematic when safety planning to exit the home and involving the police requires isolation. • Sometimes, there is unfamiliarity with the culturally diverse backgrounds of the newcomer population. Such as intra-group differences in a culture or religion.

	<p>This emphasis on protecting their children and self-sacrifice plays an important role in their reluctance to disclose information on their D/IPV experience to service providers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a reluctance to leave abusive relationships because of the stigma it holds within religious and cultural communities. Many women do not want their families to be exposed to the stigma of domestic violence or to be critiqued by the Canadian majority. • Many newcomer families hold family and social networks as very important. There is an emphasis on putting personal well-being on hold to put effort into keeping their families together which translates into the importance of holding collectivist values. • Many do not acknowledge abuse in their relationships in public or in private because of religious and cultural beliefs. • Many obey male authority without question. 	
COMPLEX IMMIGRATION SYSTEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newcomer women in abusive relationships who have been sponsored by a partner can become very dependent on the sponsor. • Many newcomer women experiencing D/IPV can have a lack of knowledge in Canadian immigration policy because of a lack of English or French, resources that can provide them with more information on such policies in their language, or 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited knowledge about immigration laws, rights, and domestic violence services. • Many service providers do not know what to do in cases where newcomer women do not have documentation such as citizenship status. For example, there is a concern for aiding immigrants without status because of a fear of breaking the law.

	<p>interpretation services that can provide this service.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The partner can provide false information on things like immigration status or on immigration policy by using threats to withdraw sponsorship. This tactic is often used to force newcomer women to stay in abusive relationships because of a fear of deportation and loss of immigration status. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-status woman have a legal right to apply to remain in the country on humanitarian and compassionate grounds. However, there are also barriers in accessing legal services (expensive, time-consuming, not guaranteed) or a lack of knowledge in this right.
LACK OF TRUST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many immigrant women do not trust that their needs will be adequately addressed by service providers. • There is a lack of trust in service providers and police which may stems from traumatic experiences and mistrust in police authority prior to their migration to Canada • There is reluctance in contacting police because of the stigma associated with domestic violence within their ethnocultural community members. There are fears of members within the same ethnocultural community finding out about the violence, fears of their children being taken away, fear of husband/intimate partner of being criminally charged, fear of losing status, and fear of deportation. • There is reluctance in contacting police unless there is a serious risk of physical injury or threat of death to themselves or other family members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of trust can stem from immigrant women if service providers have distinct differences in their understanding of domestic violence and if there are no culturally competent domestic violence services. • Feelings of mistrust can arise if public service providers are not understanding of the choices and reasons newcomer women make in a domestic violence situation.
DIFFERENCES IN CULTURAL VALUES AMONG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women from different cultural backgrounds have different values. Not all newcomer women think 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a lack of understanding of the vast range of cultural and religious practices and values of newcomer immigrant women.

NEWCOMER WOMEN	<p>alike or have the same values, religion or cultural norms.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some newcomer women may not understand Canadian relationship ideals of autonomy and interdependency in the same way that non-immigrant Canadian's do. Immigrant women want to hold on to some cultural values during integration into Canada. 	<p>Differences among each newcomer women exist between each ethnocultural and religious communities and within the same communities.</p>
COLLABORATION BETWEEN DIFFERENT TYPES OF SERVICES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many newcomer women do not want to be reliving their D/IPV situation over again by having to re-tell their stories to multiple service providers. There is a belief that their needs may not be met by some service providers because of a lack of resources available such as language services or a cultural competency framework. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There may be a lack of collaboration between immigrant settlement services and domestic violence services. Although there may be a desire to work and collaborate with other service providers, there may be a lack of resources available to service organizations to collaborate with one another. Because of the lack of services available, service providers may feel over-worked, and there can be high turnover rates which makes it difficult to have coordination and collaboration with other service providers. Collaboration with other service providers can avoid the re-traumatization of newcomer victims from having to repeat their stories of D/IPV. It will also provide access to many public services.
FINANCIAL STABILITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is a major concern of newcomer families as many are more likely to lack access to the primary labour market which requires higher skills that result in higher wages. This compounds as a stressor if transition in the post-migration phase is difficult. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a lack of affordable housing, employment, transportation and childcare which puts newcomer women in an even more vulnerable situation and can often result in relying on the abusive partner. Public service organizations may be under-funded.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For immigrant women, accessing the primary labour market is much more difficult regardless of the credentials. Many are more likely to obtain positions in the secondary labour market with lower wages and sometimes precarious work conditions. There is also a higher chance for many to earn less when compared to immigrant men as well as Canadian-born women of equal education levels. • This can lead to more vulnerable situations for newcomer women with more reliance on the abusive partner. There are cases of abuse through financial means such as the partner withdrawing funds, lack of transparency of the partners salary, while at the same time the partner insists on detailed information about her financial situation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under-funding can result in the lack of services available to meet the required needs of newcomer experiencing D/IPV. This includes a lack of cultural competency training for domestic violence service providers or opportunities to collaborate among domestic service providers and with immigration settlement services.
LANGUAGE BARRIERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many newcomer women do not have English or French skills to communicate and access public services or disclose information of abuse. • Children are sometimes asked to be translators which can be a problem as it confuses and traumatizes them. It also creates problematic situations where children are privy to information meant to be for adults. Children are also at a greater risk of being burdened with the responsibility of assessing the level of risk within the family and determining the level of danger. The perpetrator can also see the children as taking sides and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are a lack of professional interpreters or people speaking the same language as D/IPV survivors in public services offering domestic violence support. • Difficulty in explaining what constitutes as domestic violence. An example of this can be emotional abuse as it may be difficult to explain that this constitutes as violence to newcomer women due to personal experiences of violence.

	<p>may not approve of the children providing assisting to the victim.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are misunderstandings of what D/IPV is and what it constitutes. Many have a different definition of what this may be due to cultural and/or religious beliefs. • Barriers to communication can make it difficult to explain the range of behaviours that encompass abuse as well as the extent of D/IPV. • The difficulty in accessing language services because of various responsibilities (children, employment, etc.). 	
STRUCTURAL RACISM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some newcomer women may be reluctant in accessing services because of negative experiences with public service providers. This can include public service misunderstanding/lack of understanding of certain situations with D/IPV or insensitivity towards personal decisions made regarding D/IPV. • Anti-immigrant sentiment from the public increasing fear of the justice system and anyone associated. Additionally, anti-immigrant sentiment from the public can influence newcomer women to keep violence private to transmit an untarnished and positive image of the newcomer community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There may be racial discrimination, a lack of respect for cultural issues and prejudicial attitudes towards refugee and immigrants because of anti-immigrant rhetoric and sentiment.
ISOLATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many factors can result in newcomer women to feel isolated (geographic, social, and cultural isolation). • With a lack of access to language services; family supports; the distance to public services and 	N/A

	<p>family members; role within the family and responsibilities to taking care of children; dedication to their husbands needs; cultural understanding of that role; social situation in Canada; pressures from ethnocultural community or religious community; and the lack of affordable childcare facilitating their becoming employed or accessing language services all have their own role in contributing to newcomer women’s isolation in Canadian society.</p>	
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*All sources used for this table are cited at the end of this document on page 19.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS

The following recommendations have been compiled together from various academic sources and have been cited accordingly.

- **Coordination and collaboration of services among providers^{xiv}**

Greater coordination and collaboration with various public service organizations including domestic violence agencies and immigrant settlement agencies can increase understanding of women from different cultural and religious backgrounds. Additionally, it can tackle the issue of the lack of resources available, increase awareness of each service organizations mandate, provide trauma-informed assistance without duplication, and allows for more immigrant women to access public services available.

- **Women-centric focus on activities for immigrant women^{xv}**

Many newcomer women can feel uncomfortable in social situations that involve men. Providing activities and services for women only can increase attendance of newcomer women if they are “focused on the needs of the women, driven by women, and attended by women.”

- **Professional and confidential interpretation services^{xvi}**

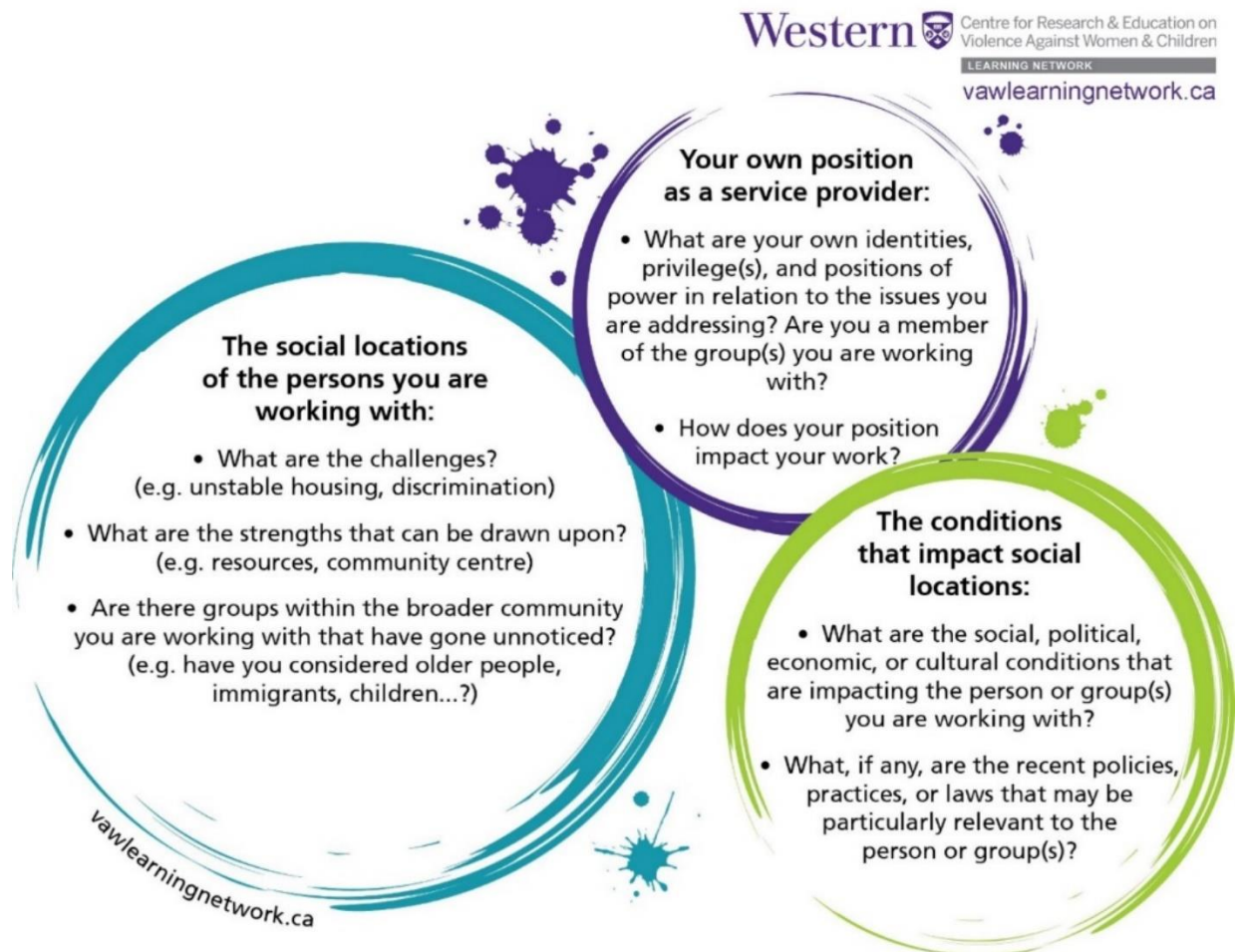
Due to language barriers of refugee and immigrant women, many are not able to communicate or access services when experiencing D/IPV. Having professional and confidential interpretation services for complex, sensitive, and potentially volatile situations can alleviate this barrier. It is also important to recognize that although this may alleviate any present language barriers, some newcomer women may not feel comfortable enough to disclose information to someone who speaks their language and is from the same ethnocultural community.

- **Better understanding of an ethnocultural diversity framework or an intersectional framework to address the needs of newcomer women^{xvii}**

Employing an ethnocultural diversity framework to accompany immigrant women to better understand experiences of newcomer women and the differences in their choices regarding D/IPV can be beneficial. Service providers are strongly recommended to approach any concerns in a therapeutic, culturally competent way while considering the practical, legal, and cultural concerns of the victims and their children. Additionally, there should be time spent in understanding the family dynamics and their migration and acculturation experience to better assess risk and safety. Lastly, addressing the needs of newcomer women through an intersectional lens provides organizations with an idea of the oppression and systemic barriers newcomer families may encounter.

- **Community engagement and education^{xviii}**

There is a need for more focus on educating the community regarding risk factors and barriers newcomer women face. This should be part of the prevention and intervention efforts in which community members are provided with tools to aid anyone experiencing D/IPV.



Source: Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children

The Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children have developed this resource to provide to service providers on how to address intersectionality within their organization.

These questions offer a glimpse of various questions to ponder when assisting members of the community with a focus on various identities and the intersections of these identities. These questions can improve the way services are organized by giving attention to various forms of oppression and violence.

For more information on how to employ intersectionality, please visit [Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children Issue on Intersectionality](#).

RESOURCES

Note: The underlined titles are links to each resource.

Booklet: [Family Law Issues for Immigrant, Refugee and Non-Status Women](#)

This booklet provides the basic understanding of legal issues of family law for immigrant, refugee and non-status women during a relationship breakdown.

Report: [Intimate Partner Violence Against Immigrant and Refugee Women](#)

This report on immigrant and refugee woman covers experiences of intimate partner violence, risk factors and vulnerabilities, highlights barriers and accessing services and supports and shares recommendations for successful violence prevention initiatives for service providers.

Report: [Prevention of Domestic Violence Against Immigrant and Refugee Women: Prevention Through Intervention Training](#)

The Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI) developed a detailed training model for immigrant service providers that do not have knowledge of domestic violence against women.

Report: [Intersectionality](#)

This report provides an overview of intersectionality with tools public service providers can use.

Report: [Family Violence When a Woman is Sponsored by a Spouse or Partner](#)

This document explains the different types of immigration classifications in Canada. It then covers available options for woman in abusive relationships.

Video: [A Resource and Information Website on Family Abuse and How to Effectively Present the Subject to Newcomers](#)

This video is an orientation tool on the subject of family abuse to show to all newcomers to Canada. It provides an overview of abuse, the types of abuse that occurs, the laws surrounding abuse, and the assistance available to both victims and perpetrators. It reinforces the fact that abuse of any kind is not tolerated in Canada and is dealt with in accordance with laws of the country. It deals

with this subject matter sensitively but with a resolve that the country's constitution and laws are there to protect the rights of all Canadians assuring them a safe and secure environment that is free from any and all abuse.

The video is available in 17 languages.

Webinar: Immigration Status and Relationship Breakdown: What Women Should Know

This webinar covers types of immigration status for non-citizen women in Canada and how immigration status may be affected by their partner and the breakdown of a relationship. The webinar covers immigration laws, and what it means for women who want to leave an abusive relationship.

Website: Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children

This website has various evidence-informed resources for individuals, service providers, and organizations working to end violence against women and other forms of gender-based violence.

Website: Family Violence Prevention Resources

The Government of Alberta provides a series of resources available for the public to access on family violence prevention.

Website: Immigrant & Refugee Communities Neighbours, Friends & Families (IRC/NFF)

This website has various resources available for immigrant and refugee woman experiencing domestic violence.

NOTES

ⁱ Government of New Brunswick, *Moving from theory to outcomes: New Brunswick's Crime Prevention and Reduction Strategy* (Fredericton, NB: 2012). <https://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/ps-sp/pdf/Publications/MovingFromTheoryToOutcomes.pdf>.

ⁱⁱ United Nations: Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Division for the Advancement of Women, *Handbook for Legislation on Violence against Women* (New York: United Nations, 2010), <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/vaw/handbook/Handbook%20for%20legislation%20on%20violence%20against%20women.pdf>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Vathsala Jayasuriya-Illesinghe, "Immigration Policies and Immigrant Women's Vulnerability to Intimate Partner Violence in Canada," *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 19, no. 2 (2018): 339-348, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-018-0545-5>.

^{iv} Central Alberta Immigrant Women's Association, *Helping Immigrants to Thrive in Central Alberta: A Synthesis of Three Research Projects*, (Red Deer, AB: Central Alberta Immigrant Women's Association, 2019).

^v Catherine Holtmann and Tracey Rickards, "Domestic/Intimate Partner Violence in the Lives of Immigrant Women: A New Brunswick Response," *Canadian Journal of Public Health* 109, no. 3 (2018): 294-302. doi: <https://doi.org/10.17269/s41997-018-0056-3>.

^{vi} Jayasuriya-Illesinghe, "Immigration Policies," doi: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-018-0545-5>.

^{vii} Holtmann and Rickards, "Domestic/Intimate Partner Violence," doi: <https://doi.org/10.17269/s41997-018-0056-3>.

^{viii} Tabibi, J., Ahmad, S., Baker, L., & Lalonde, D., "Intimate Partner Violence Against Immigrant and Refugee Women," *Learning Network Issue 26* (London, ON: Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children, 2018), http://www.vawlearningnetwork.ca/sites/vawlearningnetwork.ca/files/Issue_26-Final.pdf.

^{ix} Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, no. 140 (1989): 139-67. <https://philpapers.org/archive/CREDTI.pdf>.

^x Ibid.

^{xi} Randal David and Peter Jaffe, "Protecting Children Living with Domestic Violence: Risk of Homicide in the Context of Immigration," *In When Parents Kill Children: Understanding Filicide*, by Thea Brown, Danielle Tyson and Paula Fernandez Arias, (London, ON: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 181-199, doi: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-63097-7_10.

^{xii} Tabibi, J., Ahmad, S., Baker, L., & Lalonde, D., "Intimate Partner Violence Against Immigrant," http://www.vawlearningnetwork.ca/sites/vawlearningnetwork.ca/files/Issue_26-Final.pdf.

^{xiii} Jayasuriya-Illesinghe, "Immigration Policies," doi: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-018-0545-5>.

^{xiv} Holtmann and Rickards, "Domestic/Intimate Partner Violence," doi: <https://doi.org/10.17269/s41997-018-0056-3>.

^{xv} Ibid.

^{xvi} Ibid.

^{xvii} Randal David and Peter Jaffe, "Protecting Children Living with Domestic Violence, doi: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-63097-7_10.

^{xviii} Lois Magnussen et al., "Responding to the Needs of Culturally Diverse Women Who Experience Intimate Partner Violence," *Hawai'i Medical Journal* 70, no. 1 (2011): 9-15, <https://libguides.westsoundacademy.org/c.php?g=457482&p=3155496>.

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