

PROTOCOL CHART: ELGIN COORDINATED COMMUNITY RESPONSE TO ABUSED WOMEN AND THEIR CHILDREN

TYPICAL FLOW OF ABUSED WOMEN AND THEIR CHILDREN

- The entry point for most women (75 to 85%) coming into the Elgin Coordinated Response is **Violence Against Women, Services Elgin County (VAWSEC)**. VAWSEC is the central information and referral source for women to criminal justice (Police, Crown, Victim Witness Assistance Program VWAP, Probation and Parole) and other community services (Second Stage Housing, Family and Children's Services, and Changing Ways).
- Research indicates approximately 15 to 25% of abused women came into contact with community services through **Police Services** first. The police then function as a central information and referral source to

- violence specific service, namely **VAWSEC** (Emergency Shelter, 24 Hour Abused Women's Help Line, Counselling). When there are reasonable grounds to believe a criminal offence occurred, charges are laid by police. Then the police function as the central information and referral source to **VAWSEC** and the **VWAP** (court support and information). Both of these organizations refer women to the other services in the Elgin response to abused women and their children as needed.
- All services are accessible for any woman experiencing abuse and are accountable to the women who use their service.

- The links between agencies necessary to ensure a Coordinated Community Response to abused women and their children are fostered by the provision of consistent information about the immediate services by use of the **DART Information Card**. Each agency in this protocol provides and reviews this card with their clients who are abused women.
- The flow described is based on information provided by general research and the **Community Snapshot 2000: Elgin County's Response to Abused Women and their Children** which identified what kinds of supports are most utilized and needed first by abused women.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, SERVICES ELGIN COUNTY (VAWSEC)

PHONE: 633-0155 or 1-800-265-4305

EMERGENCY SHELTER

Access 24 hours, 365 days a year

- Safe, secure, staffed shelter for women (16 or older), with or without children, who are or have been victimized in an intimate or dependent relationship
- An environment free of abuse for her to access information, assess options, get referrals, and obtain support
- Emergency transportation to shelter is available
- Linked to provincial shelter network – providing extended safety if required
- When other services or people contact the shelter, no information is released unless the woman has signed a release of information to receive messages or share specific information
- If **Police** contact the shelter, workers will ask for their name and badge number and call them back to determine the purpose of their call

ABUSED WOMEN'S HELP LINE – Crisis Line

Access 24 hours, 365 days a year, countywide

- For women, children, and the population at large who have been directly or indirectly traumatized by violence against women
 - Anonymous opportunity to access information and support
- #### COUNSELLING SERVICES
- Access during regular business hours, Monday through Friday. Service offered in East, West, and Central Elgin. Night appointments available.
- For **women** (16 and older) who have been **abused** in an intimate or dependent relationship and have left or remain in the abusive relationship
 - For **women** (16 and older) who have been **sexual assaulted** as an adult and/or as a child
 - For **children**, and their mothers, who have **witnessed violence/abuse**

VIOLENCE PREVENTION SERVICES

Access during regular business hours, Monday through Friday

- School based violence prevention programming for students in cooperation with both school boards including training and professional development in schools across the county
- Education, information, and consultation for the public and professional personnel working with abused women and their children
- DART Information Card** is provided and reviewed with women who receive direct service
- At all service sites the **DART Resource Directory** is visible and accessible to clients

POLICE PHONE: Emergency 911

Aylmer Police Services Inquiries: 773-3144
Elgin Ontario Provincial Police Inquiries: 631-2920
St. Thomas Police Services Inquiries: 631-1364

- Access 24 hours, 365 days a year
- Investigation of domestic violence (DV) occurrences** (those that involve **past or present intimate relationships**) according to Provincial Adequacy Standards for police services
- To gather information to determine if charges should be laid, officers interview parties to find out the history of abuse and/or stalking; history of personal threats; safety concerns of victim or other family members; presence of or access to firearms; previous use of weapons; history of drug/alcohol use; and history of mental health issues
- Videotaped statements are taken, if able, if not they are written
- Evidence is gathered (including pictures of the immediate scene, photographs of injuries etc.)
- Charges are laid by police when there are reasonable grounds to believe an offence has been committed
- With consent of victim, police call **Victim Services Elgin** (Victim Crisis Assistance and Referral Source) to send trained volunteers to provide immediate on-site short-term assistance to victims and make referrals to community agencies

IF CHARGES ARE LAID:

- Aylmer, Elgin OPP, and St. Thomas Police complete a risk indicator tool with the victim (Domestic Violence Supplementary Report Form DVSRF)
- Case synopsis and victim contact information is provided to **VWAP** so victim can be offered court support and information
- If there are allegations of counter assault, every effort is made to determine the dominant aggressor
- Safety planning information is offered to the victim
- DART Information Card** is provided and reviewed with victim (St. Thomas Police provide this information in a Victim's Rights Pamphlet)
- Victims are advised of the **VAWSEC Emergency Shelter** and transportation is arranged if she wishes to go
- Accused is arrested and held until bail. However, the officer in charge has the discretion to release the accused if concerns for the victim's or the public's safety can be satisfied with release on conditions. If released the victim is notified by police.

IF NO CHARGES ARE LAID:

- The **DART Information Card** is provided and reviewed with the victim (St. Thomas Police provide this information in a Victim's Rights Pamphlet)
- Safety planning information is offered to the victim
- Elgin OPP complete a risk indicator tool with the victim (DVSRF) and store it in their records management system
- A summary of the occurrence is written up and filed

POST CHARGES:

- Bail Brief prepared and forwarded to the **Crown**, flagged as DV, with a recommendation to oppose or not oppose bail for the accused and all pertinent information required including the DVSRF
- Victim notified of the outcome of the bail hearing and all other subsequent court dates/outcomes per protocol between **Police**, **Crown**, and **VWAP**.
- Investigation if the accused is released on bail and breaches condition of bail
- If accused is charged with a breach, the accused is arrested and the victim notified by police

CROWN ATTORNEY'S OFFICE PHONE: 631-1506

- Access during regular business hours, Monday through Friday
- Represents the community in criminal court and controls the prosecution of domestic violence (DV) offences**
- Co-lead the **Domestic Violence Court** process (see protocol binder for details)
- Domestic Violence Crown** manages all DV cases from beginning to conclusion
- Charges are not withdrawn in cases of DV unless exceptional circumstances exist

BAIL:

- At the bail hearing information is presented as to the potential risk if the accused is released including these items from the Bail Brief from **Police**: risk information gathered; conditions recommended to keep the victim safe; the background of the accused; and all relevant facts relating to the offence
- Victim is notified of the outcome of the bail hearing and all other subsequent court dates/outcomes with the help of **VWAP** and **Police** per established protocol

RESOLUTION/GUILTY PLEA

- Obtain input from and advise victims before making any decisions that may mean resolution of charges

PRELIMINARY HEARING & TRIAL:

- Scheduling priority is given to all DV cases, wherever possible
- Work with **VWAP** to ensure court support is offered to victims
- Meet with victims/witnesses before the trial or prelim to provide them information, including the **DART Information Card**, and seek their input.
- Speak to the victim to hear input before taking a firm position on sentencing
- Ensure that the victim has been advised of their right to make a Victim Impact Statement
- Seek sentences that support the safety of victims and the public, act as a deterrent, and promote the rehabilitation of the offender
- If a probation order is part of the sentence, consider referral in the order to attend **Changing Ways** as a condition of probation

PROBATION & PAROLE SERVICES PHONE: 631-3430

- Access during regular business hours, Monday through Friday
- Rehabilitation, enforcement, and supervision of partner abuse offenders** to hold them accountable for their actions
- Assess risk of the offender to the public and the victim specifically. For all partner abuse offenders a medium risk level is the minimum level assigned
- Pre-sentence reports are prepared for the court, as required, to highlight considerations for sentencing
- Participation of the offender in **Changing Ways** is supported
- If conditions of court order are violated, serious sanctions are imposed if there is a risk to the victim or she feels at risk from any violation
- Police** are contacted for investigation when a breach of conditions also constitutes a criminal offence
- Work with victims to ensure their safety and link them with other services in the community response
- DART Information Card** is given and reviewed with victims of partner abuse

ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS

- A Committee of women, who had experience with the effects of abuse, reviewed and provided feedback on the **Elgin Coordinated Community Response Protocol**
- Each agency signed off on the Protocol in 2002 and initial in-service training to launch the Protocol was completed with staff in participating agencies
- The Protocol was updated in 2005 to incorporate the Domestic Violence Court process and training was offered to staff in all participating agencies
- At least every other year, staff in each organization review the Protocol Purpose, Approach, and this Protocol Chart
- Issues internal to agencies and those between agencies are addressed directly as they arise between the parties involved. The Protocol provides a framework for expectations and accountability.
- Case audits are completed twice a year (dependent on available staff resource), with representatives from participating agencies, to measure Protocol application and serve as an ongoing tool for system issue identification and redress
- Formal Protocol revision occurs every other year as required
- The Protocol works in conjunction with each member agency's internal standards for practice and accountability and existing protocols

FAMILY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES PHONE: 631-1492

- Access 24 hours, 365 days a year
- All agencies in this protocol are governed by the Child and Family Services Act, regarding **duty to report** child protection issues and contact is made by each organization as necessary
- Investigation of allegations regarding children – under the age of 16 - who have suffered physical, sexual, and/or emotional harm or who are at risk of physical, sexual, and/or emotional harm.**
- Guidance, counselling** and other services are provided to families for **protection of children** and for the **prevention** of circumstances requiring the protection of children
- Response to allegations is determined by an Eligibility Spectrum
- Investigations are conducted in accordance with the Ontario Risk Assessment Model and local protocols
- Interviews occur with the parent(s) and the child to determine whether abuse/neglect has occurred and if the child is in need of protection. The worker assesses further possible safety risks to the child and if necessary develops strategies to reduce the risk and the child's need for protection.
- The outcome of the investigation will result in the agency providing ongoing services or closing the case.
- Ongoing services may involve working with the non-abusive parent and children within their home on a voluntary basis or with a Supervision Order from the Court.
- Children will only be removed from the care of the non-abusive parent if they cannot be adequately protected in their own home.
- An abused woman will be encouraged to contact **VAWSEC**
- If direct contact occurs with an abused woman, the **DART Information Card** is given and reviewed

NOTES

- All agencies noted endorse the approach to working with abused women and their children cited in the **Elgin Coordinated Community Response Protocol to Abused Women and Their Children**.
- Self referral applies to all of the agencies noted
- Women are not compelled to go through the criminal justice system by those in community services, rather they are given information about that option
- Information in this document is from the **Elgin Coordinated Community Response Protocol to Abused Women and Their Children**. Agencies noted can refer to the Protocol for more detailed information about the policies and practices of each organization in the response.

VICTIM WITNESS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (VWAP) PHONE: 633-1920 OR 1-866-633-1920

- Access during regular business hours, Monday through Friday
- Establish early contact with victims and witnesses by phone or by letter
- Provide **court information, assistance, and support** for victims of crime
- Provide information about the criminal justice system, orientation to the court room, interpreter services (if required), explanation of legal terminology and court procedures, up to date information about victim/witness specific case and a waiting room for the person attending court
- Offer emotional support throughout the court process including the day of court, address victim/witness concerns, and offer referrals to other community resources
- Provide court accompaniment when required and resources permit
- Obtain victim/witness input and provide it to the **Crown**. Work with the Crown when requested. Schedule victim/witness appointments with the Crown.
- Provide information to the victim about the outcome of each stage of the court process (e.g., bail, resolution, preliminary hearing, trial, sentencing) per established protocol between **VWAP**, **Police**, and the **Crown**
- Co-lead the **Domestic Violence Court** process (see protocol binder for details)
- Referrals to the service via police per established protocol. Self and community referrals also accepted.
- DART Information Card** is given and reviewed with women who receive direct service
- At the service site, the **DART Resource Directory** is visible and accessible to clients

SECOND STAGE HOUSING PHONE: 637-2288

- Access during regular business hours, Monday through Friday
- Affordable housing for women**, with or without children, **who have left an abusive relationship**
- Emotional support and counselling to residents** of the complex, both women and children
- Primarily accepts women moving from the Emergency Shelter where their immediate safety needs have been met
- The length of stay is up to 8 months, with possible extensions if required
- The **DART Information Card** is given and reviewed with residents
- At the service site, the **DART Resource Directory** is visible and accessible to residents

CHANGING WAYS PHONE: 631-7355

- Access during regular business hours, Monday through Friday.
- Treatment group for men who are abusive** in relationships with the primary goal of increasing women's safety
- Partner/victim contact provided throughout the program for **support, referral, and safety for the victim**
- Referral is most often court mandated through the **Early Intervention Program of the Domestic Violence Court** process or at the time of sentencing or made by the **Probation Officer**
- The **DART Information Card** is given and reviewed with Elgin victims of men in the program

**DOMESTIC ASSAULT REVIEW TEAM
OF THE ELGIN ALLIANCE
TO END VIOLENCE**

JANUARY 2005