



Family Violence Project of Waterloo Region, Ontario, Canada

It is internationally recognized that domestic violence is the number one preventable crime that we respond to in law enforcement today.

Domestic violence is very much like a cancer. If left unchecked the cycle of violence and the impacts of power and control will continue to metastasize, evolving from psychological and emotional abuse into escalating physical violence and reaping devastating results. Domestic violence is non-discriminatory. It manifests in many forms and is not exclusive to any one charter trait, gender, age, socio-economic status, culture or ethnicity. Domestic violence is however, a learned behaviour. There is no inherency; no genetic predisposition to this social ill.

For many years the Region of Waterloo has been blessed with a wealth of professionals and a host of agencies dedicated to the prevention of family violence. Beginning in 2002, an intervention and prevention strategy aimed at de-fragmenting our social services network and removing the stigma that domestic violence placed on our victims and children began to emerge. The vision that ultimately developed was a collaborative response; a Region Wide team comprised of all Community Service Partners, police included. This model would provide comprehensive and seamless delivery of services, resources and supports to our victims, offenders and their families in both the immediate and long term.

On January 1, 2006 Family Violence Project of Waterloo Region opened its doors, providing a consistent, comprehensive and holistic response to victims of family violence. Domiciled at the Catholic Family Counselling Centre, the Project collaborative currently boasts well over 130 professionals representing eleven agencies/services dedicated to domestic violence intervention and prevention. Modelled after the "San Diego Family Justice Center," this holistic response to domestic violence intervention and prevention represents a Canadian first.

Fundamental to the success of the Project is the fact that each Partner agency continues to be independently operated and managed. The primary aspects of their

business have not changed. However, through co-location, services to clients are enhanced and expedited. Front-line staff work, train and problem solve together. The common language and open communication results in clients receiving a consistent, coordinated, comprehensive and seamless response. Clients are empowered to choose support and services from all of the Partners or only a few. The Project espouses the right for clients to self-direct how they are supported.

The Family Violence Project is passionately committed to assisting families to end violence in their home and in their lives. The work does not end with the Project; rather it begins with the Project. As the momentum of the Project grows, so too does the list of co-located Partners and off-site Partners. The Family Violence Project of Waterloo Region is realizing successes, both qualitative and quantifiable, that are directly attributable to collaboration and partnerships.

Prevention is the ultimate goal. Through this model response prevention is not only achievable, it is also sustainable.

