I remember the first beating I received. I remember the last beating I received. I remember the first words ever spoken to me by a shelter worker. I remember the power those words gave me. I will always be grateful to that worker a long time ago. The women whose enduring patience and kindness help women leave the chaos and terror of abuse will always be my heroes.

-- Cindy Toker, Peace River, in Standing Together

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are extremely grateful to Joie Dery, former ACWS President (and long time Executive Director of Dr. Margaret Savage Crisis Centre), who started us on our journey to update this manual. Her sage wisdom and guidance, along with that of Gerry Carter, former ACWS Board member and Executive Director of Phoenix Safe House, helped to shape this manual. Along the way we also had help and support from Patti McClocklin, former Communications and Partnerships Advisor with ACWS and Linda Goyette, the phenomenal editor of our Standing Together book.

We also thank the following Executive Directors, who as members of the ACWS Shelter Education and Programs Committee, reviewed and provided valuable feedback on drafts of this manual:

Karen Pease (Chair)        Marj Luger
Jean Dunbar                Pat Garrett
Jennifer Gullage           Kathleen Nakagawa
Joy Johnson Green          Cassandra Putman

Special acknowledgment goes to the Manitoba Association of Women’s Shelters, whose Lighting the Road to Success helped us to augment and enhance the information in this manual. We thank them, and the Manitoba CAPC Coalition for their willingness to have their information adapted for the educational purposes of our membership.

And finally, but importantly, this manual would not have happened without the financial support of Alberta Children and Youth Services. We would like to thank them for their commitment to supporting Alberta’s women’s shelters.

The Alberta Shelter Director’s Guide
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Alberta Council of Women’s Shelters
320, 10310 Jasper Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 2W4
January 2011
The information in this guide is accurate and complete to the best of our knowledge. The guide is intended to be used as an information resource for ACWS members. In no way is it intended to replace, countermand or conflict with the advice given to your organization by legal counsel. Please ensure that you receive appropriate professional advice on each specific situation. All recommendations are made without guarantee by ACWS. The reader is encouraged to adapt the information in the handbook for the educational purposes of her/his organization. Photocopying of these materials in whole or in part is permitted as long as the photocopies are used for information only. Reproduction for sale or inclusion in any publication for sale may not be done without the prior written permission from ACWS.

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Introduction

A few opening words

First of all, we welcome new shelter directors! Congratulations to you for accepting this important position. We are grateful for your willingness to work beside us, and we look forward to getting to know you better as our friend and colleague.

You are joining an inspiring team of supportive, caring and determined Albertans.

Directors of shelters for battered women and their children are exceptional individuals who work in a challenging occupation – and rise to the challenge every day. Together, you are a beacon of safety and healing for the vulnerable children, women and men who turn to you for support. You provide critical services at a time of crisis, and you work hard to improve those services with creative thinking and compassion.

Quietly, often behind the scenes, you accomplish amazing things. You are in charge of the daily operation of the shelter. You mentor and guide staff in their demanding work, keeping up their spirits on the tough days and always encouraging them to do their best. You work closely with your board of directors to ensure the shelter's legal obligations are met. You consider vital security issues, and manage risk. You stretch each dollar within a stringent budget. In consultation with government; you strive for excellence in program design and evaluation.

You are a determined advocate, too. Collaborating with other fine people in your community, you speak out against violence and abuse in all forms.

Most important, you ensure a safe, welcoming and supportive environment for abused women and their children.

In short, you have accepted a position of great responsibility. The challenges are significant – but so are the rewards.

The Alberta Council of Women’s Shelters created the Alberta Shelter Director’s Guide to support your crucial work. Keep a copy at your fingertips for handy use. We hope it will be especially helpful for new shelter directors, but it is also designed as a quick reference to some of the documents and information all shelter directors require from time to time. The guide is also intended to be used with the Voting Designates Reference Guide. Both documents are available on the ACWS members’ only web-site at www.acws.ca.

If you are a new shelter director, you might feel overwhelmed by this heavy barrage of information. Don’t worry, you are not alone. No one begins this job with all the answers. All new shelter directors have lots of questions. Consider this guide an ally in learning the “ins and outs” of the job.
At times, you will search for information that you can't find in this guide, in your office, from your board or from your staff. Do call on colleagues or the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters for the support you need to get the job done. Many new shelter directors also visit other shelters to ask questions and meet their colleagues. You will find them friendly and helpful. Remember, you don’t work in isolation. We are here to support one another.

When we work together, we have the strength to support the children and women who knock on our doors.

Strength for the journey!

Jan Reimer  
Provincial Coordinator  
Alberta Council of Women’s Shelters
Remember… we are here to help

Before we begin to offer practical information, here is the most important personal advice we can offer: Take care of yourself. Do your best to find a comfortable balance between shelter work and your personal life. Establish boundaries at work to avoid burnout.

We asked wise and experienced shelter directors what they wished they had known when they were new and green.

This is what they said:
- Know your contract inside and out
- Be familiar with the Alberta Labour Code
- When faced with a difficult situation to resolve, don’t be afraid to step back and take some time to think before making a decision

We are here to help you. The Alberta Council of Women’s Shelters provides this guide as a service to its members, but that’s not all we do. The council will also provide you with regular updates on shelter activities, initiatives, position statements and emerging good practices for responding to family violence. Be sure to tap into our Members Only Page for the most current information.

This guide is meant to be used in conjunction with the Voting Designate Reference Guide. Other valuable information includes the ACWS Shelter Practice Orientation Manual (available on the ACWS members only website at http://www.acws.ca/shelter_manual.php) and the Mission-focused Management and Empowerment Practice Handbook for Executive Directors of Domestic Violence Programs


If you have questions or do not understand the history or background of an issue, do not hesitate to contact the ACWS Office or another shelter director at any time. You can also post questions to other shelters on the Messages and Bulletins section of the Members Only Page or use the Shelter Director’s listserv. A listing of shelter directors can be found in your Voting Designates Reference Guide as well as on our Members Only site.

Alberta Council of Women’s Shelters
www.acws.ca
Phone: (780) 456-7000
Fax: (780) 456-7001
General mail: voice@acws.ca
ACWS will provide you with a username and password to log-in to the members only site. It is up to each individual shelter to manage access to the web page. Also, it is up to each individual shelter to request a new shelter username and password due to board or staff changes.

**Updating this Guide**

This second edition of the *Alberta Shelter Director’s Guide* includes significant changes from the original and the guide will continue to evolve.

The ACWS Shelter Programs and Education Committee is responsible for ensuring that this guide is updated as required. From time to time, shelters may receive information that updates the guide or provides new information.

Keeping the guide current and useful requires a commitment from all team members. We welcome your suggestions.

**Acronyms**

Unfamiliar terms, acronyms, and definitions will no doubt emerge from the guide, especially if you are a first time reader. Some of the most important are captured below. When communicating with the public, board members and the media, it is important to be clear with your message and try to use the full name of programs, organizations, etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alberta Works</td>
<td>The program under which a person receives social assistance, formerly known as SFI (see below). <a href="http://employment.alberta.ca/FCH/3171.html">http://employment.alberta.ca/FCH/3171.html</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACYS</td>
<td>Alberta Children and Youth Services. The department which has the responsibility for funding women’s shelters and other family violence prevention initiatives. Formerly known as Alberta Children’s Services and Alberta Child and Family Services. <a href="http://www.child.alberta.ca/home">www.child.alberta.ca/home</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AASAC</td>
<td>Alberta Association of Sexual Assault Centres. They have changed their name to the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services.</td>
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<tr>
<td>AASAS</td>
<td>Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services <a href="http://www.aasas.ca">www.aasas.ca</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AASCF</td>
<td>Alberta Association of Services for Children and Families <a href="http://www.aascf.com">www.aascf.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACSW</td>
<td>Alberta College of Social Workers <a href="http://www.acsw.ab.ca">www.acsw.ab.ca</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACWS</td>
<td>Alberta Council of Women's Shelters <a href="http://www.acws.ca">www.acws.ca</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AGM</strong></td>
<td>Annual General Meeting. Every organization incorporated under the Alberta Societies Act is required to conduct an AGM for the purpose of approving annual financial statements, changing the Society’s by-laws and electing/appointing new officers to the society. See your articles of incorporation, bylaws and the relevant legislation for more information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CEFV</strong></td>
<td>Children Exposed to Family Violence. Other terms include children exposed to batterers; children who witness violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CFSA</strong></td>
<td>Children and Family Services Authority. Regional authorities set up in the Alberta government whose members are appointed by the Minister of Children and Youth Services. <a href="http://www.child.alberta.ca/home/local_offices.cfm">http://www.child.alberta.ca/home/local_offices.cfm</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CORI</strong></td>
<td>Canadian Outcomes Research Institute. Your shelter may have had an agreement with CORI in the past regarding data collection. CORI ceased operations 2011. <a href="http://www.hmrp.net/CanadianOutcomesInstitute/Resources.htm">http://www.hmrp.net/CanadianOutcomesInstitute/Resources.htm</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CRA</strong></td>
<td>Canada Revenue Agency. Registers qualifying organizations as charities, gives technical advice on operating a charity and handles audit and compliance activities. <a href="http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/chrts-gvng/menu-eng.html">http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/chrts-gvng/menu-eng.html</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DFNA</strong></td>
<td>Delegated First Nations Agency. The agencies have been given delegated authority to deliver services as per the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EII</strong></td>
<td>Employment, Immigration and Industry formerly known as Human Resources and Employment. This department delivers Alberta Works, which provides Employment and Training Services, Income Support, Health Benefits and Child Support Services. They also have safe, healthy workplaces and labour force development within their mandate. <a href="http://employment.alberta.ca">http://employment.alberta.ca</a> and <a href="http://employment.alberta.ca/421.html">http://employment.alberta.ca/421.html</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EPO</strong></td>
<td>Emergency Protection Orders <a href="http://www.law-faqs.org/ab/pafva.htm">www.law-faqs.org/ab/pafva.htm</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HPA</strong></td>
<td>Health Professions Act. Your organizational and human resource policies and procedures need to comply with this act if you employ one of the professions regulated under this act (e.g., social workers, psychologists). <a href="http://www.qp.alberta.ca/574.cfm?page=h07.cfm&amp;leg_type=Acts&amp;isbncln=9780779738083">www.qp.alberta.ca/574.cfm?page=h07.cfm&amp;leg_type=Acts&amp;isbncln=9780779738083</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HOMES</strong></td>
<td>Hull Outcome Monitoring and Evaluation System. This is the database that was used to collect shelter statistics throughout the province through the Canadian Outcomes Research Institute (CORI). Most shelters in Alberta now use Outcome Tracker software provided by VistaShare.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>INAC</td>
<td>Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. This is the federal department that funds on reserve shelters now known as Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. <a href="http://www.aincl-inac.gc.ca/index-eng.asp">http://www.aincl-inac.gc.ca/index-eng.asp</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LWA</td>
<td>Local Working Agreement. An agreement entered into by individual shelters and the police detachments in their geographical area. These agreements are enabled by a Memorandum of Understanding that was first signed by ACWS, the RCMP and Alberta Children and Youth Services in 2002.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOU</td>
<td>Memorandum Of Understanding. Most common for shelters is the MOU signed between the RCMP, ACWS, Alberta Children’s Services and the Solicitor General. This agreement sets out roles and responsibilities of the parties involved and the framework for the LWA (Local Working Agreement).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PFVBD</td>
<td>Prevention of Family Violence and Bullying Division. A branch of Alberta Children and Youth Services which contracts with women’s emergency and second stage shelters and advises on policy. This office also administers the Community Incentive Fund as well as several other initiatives that address family violence and/or bullying across Alberta (formerly OPFVB). Currently the division’s name is Prevention of Family Violence, Bullying and Youth Strategies. <a href="http://www.child.gov.ab.ca/home/593.cfm">www.child.gov.ab.ca/home/593.cfm</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RA</td>
<td>Regional Authority. In the late 1990’s the province embarked on a regionalization initiative which saw hospitals and social services delivered on a regional basis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>For the delivery of services by Children and Family Services, Alberta is divided into several geographical regions. These boundaries coincided with the various health regions across the province; however, in 2008 the health regions were amalgamated. <a href="http://www.child.gov.ab.ca/home/822.cfm">www.child.gov.ab.ca/home/822.cfm</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RO</td>
<td>Restraining Order <a href="http://www.rosenet-ca.org">www.rosenet-ca.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSW</td>
<td>Registered Social Worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SFI</td>
<td>Supports For Independence. A term often used to describe the funding program that supports Albertans who have no income or income insufficient to support themselves and their children. Now known as Alberta Works.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SROI</strong></td>
<td>Social Return On Investment. An approach that assigns monetary value to traditionally non-valued things such as the environment and social value. It is required by Alberta Justice for some of its community funding programs. <a href="http://www.calgary.ca/sroi">www.calgary.ca/sroi</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VDRG</strong></td>
<td>Voting Designate Reference Guide – ACWS Manual provided to each voting delegate of ACWS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WSIS</strong></td>
<td>Women’s Shelter Information System: An Alberta Children and Youth Services information system for Women’s Shelters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WHMIS</strong></td>
<td>Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System. WHMIS was developed to ensure that workers receive adequate hazard information about chemicals that are used at their work sites.</td>
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Section 1

About ACWS
About ACWS

The ACWS logo symbolizes a dove for peace; clasped hands portray our unified voice; and a heart represents the courage and caring of shelter workers and the women and children they serve.

ACWS

The Alberta Council of Women’s Shelters (ACWS) is a provincial organization of individual sheltering agencies. While membership in the council is not mandatory, all organizations in Alberta that currently operate shelters for abused seniors, women and their children, have chosen to be ACWS members. While its functions are many, the Council provides a unified voice for its 43 members provincially, federally and even internationally. It is one of the few provincial bodies that can claim 100% membership.

As a shelter manager, you are one of two representatives from your shelter able to vote at the ACWS Annual General Meeting.

For complete information regarding ACWS, please refer to “Voting Designates Reference Guide” located on the Members Only section of our web site (www.acws.ca). There should also be a Voting Designates Reference guide alongside this guide in your office. If you need an additional copy, please call the ACWS office.

The office of ACWS is located in Edmonton. To contact the office:

By mail: Alberta Council of Women's Shelters 320, 10310 Jasper Avenue Edmonton AB T5J2W4

By phone: (780) 456 – 7000
By fax: (780) 456 – 7001
By email: voice@acws.ca Staff names and e-mails can be found under the Contact Us section of the ACWS web page.
ACWS Board of Directors

Please refer to the ACWS By-laws (in the VOTING DESIGNATE REFERENCE GUIDE) to learn more about the ACWS Board structure and rules of operation. The Board consists of 12 members from different geographical areas in Alberta and the President who is elected at large.

Each geographic area has two board members. There is:
- One ACWS Board member, who is also a shelter director, and
- One ACWS board member who is a current or former member of a shelter board

The two year terms are staggered to assist with board continuity. These geographic areas are designed to ensure representation from across the province so that the ACWS board is not over-represented from any one part of the province. However, ACWS board members are elected by the membership and have the duty to represent the entire membership, rather than their geographic area, or their shelter.

A call for nominations goes out three months in advance of the Annual General Meeting. A copy of the nomination form, board member responsibilities and code of conduct are circulated at the time, as well as being available on the members’ only website and in your Voting Designates Reference Guide.

You will find a complete listing of the current Board of Directors under the About Us tab on the ACWS webpage.

ACWS Meetings

Shelter Directors Meetings

Shelter managers of full member shelters are invited to meet three to four times per year. Not all shelter managers are executive directors given the variety of organizations that are members of ACWS. Shelter Managers are also referred to as Shelter Directors. These meetings are specifically intended for managers only, giving you a venue in which to discuss issues pertinent to shelter operations, to learn of new initiatives being considered, to network with each other, and to better understand good practices in shelters. Educational components are often added to these meetings, or other guest speakers are engaged to discuss topics as they affect shelter operations. ACWS covers the cost for meeting rooms, refreshments and lunch. We are also able to negotiate favorable rates with a hotel. Your shelter is responsible for your travel costs (hotel and transportation) to attend these meetings.

The chair serves a two year term and is elected by all paid managers. ACWS staff takes meeting notes and disseminates them. It is very important that members attend these meetings if at all possible. The chair may invite other individuals or groups wishing to
attend these meetings (see the Board policy in the VOTING DESIGNATE REFERENCE GUIDE, Paid Manager Meetings, OPS-10). If you would like an item placed on the Agenda or invite a speaker to the meeting, please contact the Chair.

**ACWS Board Meetings**

The ACWS Board generally meets quarterly to carry out the business of ACWS. Prior to each Board Meeting, ACWS board members will contact each voting designate to determine whether there are any issues member shelters want brought to the Board table, to provide specific information to members, or to answer any questions individuals may have. This is known as the Board Phone A Round. If you have not been contacted, please call or e-mail the ACWS president. You can help the office greatly by ensuring that all contact information for your shelter is kept up to date. The Board also conducts teleconference meetings several times a year.

**Committee Meetings**

You will note in the Voting Designate Reference Guide that there have been several Board appointed standing committees of ACWS. Each committee has specific terms of reference to address the needs of the membership. Standing Committees are permanent in nature, and deal with ongoing issues. The by-laws provide for the establishment of ad-hoc committees or task forces as required to address emerging issues, and are expected to be of a time restricted nature.

Committees meet as required, with most meetings conducted as teleconferences to keep meeting expenses and traveling times at a minimum. However, each committee tries to have at least one face to face meeting each year.

As the work of the Council is extensive, these committees assist in addressing key issues that affect member shelters and the needs of the women, children and families they serve. Committees can be struck or dissolved as required and are made up of shelter staff members, representation from the ACWS Board, representation from ACWS staff, and may also include persons with expertise in the specific subjects being addressed.

Committee membership is established annually. The current committees of ACWS are listed in the Voting Designate Reference Guide located on the ACWS Members Only web site (www.acws.ca). Your costs for participating on ACWS Committees are covered by ACWS in accordance with our expense claim policy (the form and the policy can also be found on the Members Only Web site).
Annual General Meeting

As a registered charity and society, ACWS is required to hold an AGM within six months of the fiscal year end (March 31st for ACWS). This meeting is normally held in June. Both the Paid Manager and Board Designate are encouraged to attend. ACWS covers the costs of your Board Designate. Your expenses as the Paid Manager are covered through your shelter budget.

ACWS Staff

There are several staff positions at ACWS. Working as a shelter manager, you will soon become very familiar with the important roles they play. The people filling these positions are incredibly dedicated to assisting the ACWS membership in their efforts to address violence against women and to make the needs of shelters heard. Other positions are sometimes created through funding received for specific projects. Current funded positions at ACWS include:

- Communications & Partnerships (provides support with internal and external communication, fund development and event management.)
- Finance & Information (provides oversight for all ACWS financial and information systems and reporting requirement.)
- Member Programs and Services (provides direct support to shelters, through programs and projects; acts as the provincial coordinator in her absence.)
- Office Administrator (provides clerical, reception and office support, as well as primary contact for the office with respect to booking hotel rooms, training events, etc.)
- Provincial Coordinator (responsible for implementing ACWS strategic plan in order to build a strong, forward looking organization that supports the Board, staff and members.)
- Researcher (supports shelters through the implementation of the ACWS research plan that includes evaluation, outcome measures, research on shelter usage, and the dynamics of abuse.)

A current listing of staff can be found under the Contact Us tab on the ACWS webpage.
Compendium of Services

The Compendium of Services, available on the ACWS web site as well as in hard copy, includes information on all member shelters regarding their capacity, contact information, languages spoken by current staff, as well as the services and programs they offer. This is an excellent reference tool for your use. Please check the information on your specific shelter regularly and advise ACWS of any changes that need to be made. This can be done online through the Members Only page. Hard copies are provided to each shelter on an annual basis to distribute to key community partners, such as the RCMP and Children’s Services. The paper copy of the Compendium also includes the contact information for shelter directors, and languages spoken by shelter staff, which is not included on the webpage.

Expense Claims

An ACWS Expense Claim form must be completed and submitted to ACWS in order to be reimbursed for expenses. Rates for reimbursement of ACWS related expenses are reviewed and adjusted annually. Please follow the instructions on the Expense Form regarding receipts, etc. Carpooling and/or accommodation sharing are encouraged. A copy of the policy is in the Voting Designate Reference Guide and on the Members’ only webpage, along with an expense claim form (http://www.acws.ca/documents/ExpenseForm-MeetingsSept10rev.pdf). If you are in doubt as to who pays for what, please contact the ACWS office. Generally, the shelter pays your expenses to attend ACWS meetings, unless you are attending an ACWS committee meeting or are a member of the ACWS Board. Shelter participants in ACWS projects will sometimes have their expenses and training covered.

Flow of Information

ACWS will forward you lots of information, most frequently by electronic mail. Members will be advised of any issues needing attention, current news articles that affect shelter operations, information on good practices, and general information affecting shelters in Alberta. Input will often be requested that will assist ACWS in determining membership need, protocols, etc. ACWS will also disperse specific questions or information from individual shelters that require input from other members. It is important to check your email regularly and respond to these requests for information in a timely fashion. Often these responses will determine the work to be done by ACWS.

ACWS will also advise members of upcoming meetings, events, times, places, etc. Often ACWS will require replies to this information in order to facilitate the events we host.

Watch for the Friday Files, which gives regular updates to the membership. Encourage your Board Designate at ACWS to circulate the Friday Files to her/his colleagues on your board.
Funding

ACWS receives funding from a variety of sources. Membership dues account for only a small portion of the ACWS budget. Direct fundraising is a challenge, as we recognize that individual shelters are also raising dollars in their local communities. Care is taken not to ‘cross’ fundraising lines but rather to support one another. Grants are sought and received for specific initiatives from various funders, such as the Government of Alberta, Status of Women Canada, and IODE. However, operational expenses are dependent on special fundraising events, casinos, etc. ACWS operational funding is an ongoing issue and the Council is always looking for ways to supplement this income. Project funding is a major source of income for ACWS, which also enables us to provide enhanced services to members.

Initiatives

In support of member shelters, ACWS works to

Develop a coordinated, collaborative response to family violence that is comprehensive and responsive through such activities as:

- Encouraging and assisting community groups that wish to form a shelter
- Working with other family-violence focused entities to develop a continuum of services that comprehensively meets the needs of abused women, their children, and abused seniors

Coordinate funding and improve services in order to better meet the needs of abused women, their children and abused seniors through such activities as:

- Acting as a liaison between women’s and seniors’ shelters and government
- Managing, where appropriate, global grants from any funding body made for the purpose of operating women’s shelters in the province of Alberta
- Working to establish standards (and protocols) with shelters for the provision of consistent services

Educate the public and professionals about prevention of, and responses to, spousal and senior abuse through such activities as:

- Offering courses, seminars, conferences, and meetings and by disseminating information on family violence
- Initiating, conducting, and/or participating in public awareness programs relating to abused women, their children, and abused seniors

Initiate, conduct and/or participate in research relating to the causes, impacts, prevention of family violence, and elimination of violence against women, children and seniors.
ACWS endeavors to address issues that affect member shelters and the women and children they serve. The ACWS Board of Directors, through strategic planning and with input from member shelters, determines key issues to be addressed and initiatives to be undertaken over the following year. This strategic plan is posted on the Members Only website. The work is then done by the ACWS office staff, and/or the committees. Once an initiative has been supported by the ACWS Board, it is forwarded to the appropriate body for action.

Past initiatives ACWS has been involved in include:

- The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Shelters, RCMP, Children's Services and the Solicitor General. It was the first ever MOU between the RCMP and a nongovernmental organization.
- The Alberta Council of Women’s Shelters Compensation Review and Evaluation conducted by Banister Research and Consulting, resulted in major increase in wages for shelter staff for those shelters with provincial contracts.
- Towards Parity. This project and subsequent work with the On Reserve shelters resulted in increased funding for all on reserve shelters across Canada.
- The Premier’s Roundtable on Family Violence (we were one of the recipients of the Premier's Award of Excellence for this work).
- Discovering the Common Core: Practical Frameworks for Change was the first ever world conference of women’s shelters, planned and implemented by the Alberta Council of Women’s Shelters. The website, www.womenshelter.ca contains valuable educational information.
- Second Stage Shelters: Closing the Gap, to assist communities in the development of transitional housing for abused women and their children (also posted on the website).

Materials and Resources

Information Sharing:
ACWS collects, analyzes and releases aggregate data relating to the needs of shelters and the women and children they serve. Data is presented to shelter directors prior to release. Each shelter has signed an information sharing agreement with ACWS. See Appendix A for the sample agreement. ACWS will only release non identifiable aggregate province wide data and will NOT release individual shelter data unless there is prior agreement from the shelter or shelters involved. Sometime there is value in releasing regional or municipal data in response to various issues, i.e., turnaways in a certain part of the province, women’s experiences with police response, etc.
Family Violence Awareness:
ACWS conducts a number of family violence awareness activities, which include:

- **PowerPoint presentations** pertaining to Family Violence: Aboriginal, Faith, Girls and Women, Men and Boys, Children, Education, Seniors, Same Sex, and Medical. See our website for some of these PowerPoints.

- **ACWS Fact Sheets** on: Children Exposed to Family Violence, Elder Abuse, Potential Impact of Violence on Children, Community Involvement.


- **Educational Resources** such as: Elementary, Junior and High School Activities, “Hands are Not for Hitting; Words are Not for Hurting” material and activities, and a Teacher’s Guide are available on our web site in further detail. *Alberta Children and Youth Services* now distributes these resources across the province.

- **Aboriginal Resources** such as: Blankets Bibles and Beads. In addition, ACWS has worked with the on reserve shelters and Portage College to deliver specialized training for First Nations Shelter Workers.

- **Marketing Resources**: ACWS has posters and a template for restaurant placemats that can be used for public awareness on domestic violence issues.

- **Media Releases**: Please use these releases, adapting them for your local community, and then forwarding to your media outlets.

These can all be viewed in more detail on our web site.

**Membership**

Full membership to ACWS is open to any registered corporation with the primary purpose of assisting women and families in abusive situations subject to Board approval. Once approved as a member, membership renewals are processed annually. (See the Board policy guide for the application process, OPS-2, posted on our website).

**Benefits of membership include:**

- Reimbursement of travel expenses for one Board Representative to attend all General, Special and Annual Meetings of ACWS
- Voice, the ACWS Newsletter and the Friday Files
- Invitation to attend all ACWS education programs
- Notice of all ACWS public activities
- One copy of the Director's Guide
- Two copies of the *Compendium of Services* and one copy of “*Blankets, Bibles and Beads*, an aboriginal resource manual”
• Members are also eligible to participate in ACWS’s group benefit plan
• The Women’s Shelter Leadership Bursary Fund
• The Shelter Emergency Fund
• Other educational resources as they become available
• Participation in action based research

Members’ responsibilities include:
• Notifying ACWS of the society’s board representative with up-to-date contact information
• Notifying ACWS of new paid managers and contact information
• Sending a Board designate and paid manager to ACWS General, Special and Annual Meetings
• Using the ACWS logo on your website and print material, where appropriate, such as newsletters and letterhead

As noted in the by-laws of ACWS, members pay an annual fee. This fee varies as to the type of membership, and the total operating budget of the individual shelter member. An annual renewal reminder will be forwarded to members to assist them in determining the fee to be submitted. A late penalty is imposed if fees are not submitted on time. A sample is provided below:

**ACWS Membership Fee Schedule (1990 – 2011)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TAL BUDGET</th>
<th>FEE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$0 - $249,999</td>
<td>$300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$250,000 - $499,999</td>
<td>$400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$500,000 - $749,999</td>
<td>$500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$750,000 - $999,999</td>
<td>$750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1,000,000 +</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Your membership renewal notice is circulated to you in February and is effective for the fiscal year. The value of support received by ACWS exceeds your cost of membership, significantly. For instance, each member is eligible for $3,000 from the Shelter Emergency Fund and $5,000 from the Bursary Fund, alone.
Newsletter

VOICE, the ACWS newsletter is published semi-annually. News articles from individuals, individual shelters, and others are most welcome. ACWS retains the final decision as to the content of the newsletter. An e-copy of the newsletter is forwarded to each ACWS voting designate when they are published and hard copies provided for each shelter director and each Board member. Please ensure that Voice is circulated to all Board members and staff!

Friday Files, an e-newsletter, provides you with weekly updates on ACWS activities, training opportunities, current information and issues that are relevant to shelter and board operations.

Position Papers

Periodically, ACWS and/or Committees of ACWS will develop Position Papers which are approved by the ACWS Board. These papers spell out the stance ACWS is taking in regard to specific topics as they affect shelters and the women and children they serve. These statements are in the Voting Designate Reference Guide and are also available on the ACWS web site under the “About Us” tab, “ACWS Profile” link. From time-to-time, the media will call you and ask for information on certain issues such as gun control, second stage shelters, etc. You will want to have quick access to these position papers.

Shelter Emergency Fund

Thanks to an anonymous donor, ACWS is able to offer member shelters up to $3,000 to assist with unforeseen emergency expenses. An information package and application form can be found in the Voting Designate Reference Guide as well as on the members' only website.

Shelters are asked to briefly describe the expense and why it constitutes an emergency. An emergency expense eligible under the fund must be an unexpected expense that is essential for daily shelter operations and could be either a capital replacement item (e.g., failure of a hot water tank, security monitor, fridge, stove; etc.) or emergency repair work (e.g., burst water mains). The expense cannot be part of the shelter’s regular maintenance and repair budget.

Shelters are asked to confirm that the expense was not budgeted for, was not foreseeable, and the shelter cannot carry on the day to day operations without replacement or repairs being undertaken.

Two signatures are required to verify that the item was not budgeted or foreseeable: one from staff and one from a board signing authority.
It must be a reasonable expense: the shelter must show that it has complied with their shelter purchasing policy. The shelter may either prepay the expense or if approved, forward the invoice to ACWS for payment.

**Shelters may only apply once per year up to a maximum of $3,000.** If the emergency expense is greater than $3,000, the shelter will have to find the additional dollars from other sources.

ACWS must be notified within 7 working days of the emergency and shelter intent to apply. If emergency funding is received in one year, the same item would not be covered in the next year. An ACWS Shelter Emergency Fund application is available on line at [http://www.acws.ca/acws_forms.php](http://www.acws.ca/acws_forms.php)

**Shelter Representation to ACWS**

As a member of ACWS, your shelter board appoints two voting designates to represent your agency to the council: one the paid manager voting designate, the other a member of your board. If you do not appoint a member of your board, then the president will be considered your voting designate to the Council.

Members of ACWS are independent registered societies in their own right, governed by individual boards of directors. Some shelters are a program of larger organizations such as the YWCA. The governance and operation of each member falls under the jurisdiction of their board. ACWS does not have any governing authority over individual member shelters. The ACWS role is to support its membership. By speaking with a common voice, shelters are able to accomplish more than they may be able to achieve individually.

*It is important that shelters notify ACWS of any changes regarding contact information so lists may be kept current. Please e-mail the ACWS office with any changes.*

**Voting Designate Reference Guide**

This Guide provides you with information about ACWS, its programs, and resources. A copy is provided to both you, as the shelter manager and to your board representative who has been appointed as the ACWS voting designate.
Section 2

Your Role as a Shelter Director
Your Role as a Shelter Director

As a Shelter Director you are the person who is primarily responsible to carry out the strategic plans and policies of your shelter, as established by the Board of Directors. As such, the position involves a number of major functions and responsibilities.

The list below outlines some of the most typical of these functions.

Overall Functions
- To implement the strategic goals and objectives for your shelter organization
- To work with the Chair, enabling the board to fulfill its governance function
- To give direction and leadership toward the achievement of the organization’s philosophy, mission, strategy and its goals and objectives

Major Functions/Accountabilities Leader
- Advise the board
- Advocate / promote the organization ensuring positive public relations
- Support and motivate shelter staff

Visionary/Information Bearer
- Ensure that your staff and board have sufficient and up-to-date information
- Look to the future for change opportunities
- Act as the liaison between board and employees
- Liaise with other organizations and community members
- Develop strong relationships with funders

Decision Maker
- Formulate policy and planning recommendations for the board
- Decide or guide operations by staff

Manager
- Oversee development, delivery and quality of programs
- Manage human resources, according to personnel policies and procedures
- Manage financial resources, including annual budget recommendations and shelter finances within the agreed-upon budget guidelines
- Manage risk and emergency preparedness
- Manage the facility and physical resources
Re: The Perfect Executive Director

We would like to share with you the results of our current research regarding how to hire the Perfect Executive Director. We hope this information may help you to find someone who meets your standards.

Our recent studies have given us an accurate picture of what board members, staff, funders and clients see as desirable attributes in a senior manager of a not-for-profit. Here is the profile we have assembled from our data.

- S/he meets all expectations of funders without an excessive focus on rules, procedures or reporting requirements!
- S/he delegates everything to trusted employees while maintaining close control over all details of agency operations!
- S/he runs a model agency administratively while spends lots of time with program staff and clients!
- S/he arrives at 7:00 am to make coffee and leaves at midnight after completing his/her janitorial duties!
- S/he finds her minimum wage salary to be quite satisfactory, wears attractive business attire, drives a good car and donates half his/her income to worthy causes!
- S/he is 34 years old with 37 years of progressively responsible management experience!
- S/he is not married, has three children, none of whom make any demands on his/her time allowing him/her to be totally focused on the work required!
- S/he has a quick wit, loves public speaking and is happiest in large groups of people listening to endless debate about what type of photocopier should be purchased!
- S/he spends much time on community development and is always in the office when needed!
- S/he is the life of the party, drinks only ginger ale, tells great jokes and always remembers everyone’s names!
- S/he votes Liberal, attends all Conservative political functions and is a card-carrying member of the New Democrats!

Board Developer
- Make recommendations and support the board during orientation and self-evaluation
- Support operations and administration of the board by advising and informing board members

Fundraiser
- Oversee fundraising planning and implementation
- Research funding sources, establish strategies to approach funders, submit proposals and keep fundraising records and documentation

See the Year at a Glance Form, Appendix B that will help you track some of your reporting job responsibilities.
Definitions

On top of all the acronyms you will hear, there are a number of key terms to familiarize yourself with:

**Not-for-Profit Organization**

**A not-for-profit organization** (or nonprofit) is a company or group organized for the purpose of social, religious, charitable, educational, athletic, literary, political or other such activities. Although there are many different kinds of not-for-profit organizations, they all have one thing in common: the people involved in the not-for-profit organization cannot use it to make personal financial gain. Nonprofits have four fundamental factors: they are composed of members, governed by a volunteer Board of Directors, cannot receive any financial gain and their power is limited to their mandate. Some maintain that this term should be discontinued (see information box on the right).

**Non-Registered Charitable Organization**

**A non-registered charitable organization**, also known as a non-profit organization normally operates without a charitable number. The absence of charitable status limits its ability to obtain grants from registered charities like foundations and the local United Way. It is unable to issue charitable receipts for income tax purposes. In Alberta, a not for profit organization must be registered under the Charitable Fund-raising Act if:

- It uses a fund-raising business
- It intends to raise more than $25,000 in gross contributions in its financial year from solicitations (requests for contributions) to individuals in Alberta
- During or after the campaign, it finds it has raised more than $25,000 (if so, the charity must register within 45 days after the contributions reach $25,000)

The Act applies to any incorporated or unincorporated organization that is formed for a charitable purpose. It applies even if the organization is incorporated under the Societies Act or registered with Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (CRA).

**Social Profit**

There is a current line of thinking that the term “Nonprofit” should be nonexistent — the term, not the type of organization. They hold that the time is right to insist on a term that focuses on the investment, risk taking, and entrepreneurial imagination that have always been so essential to organizations that serve the social good. "Social-profit organizations" is a term that can better capture the contribution made by entities that have too long been known as charities or nonprofit groups.

The Act also applies to any person asking for contributions to be used for a charitable purpose or charitable organization, even if that person is not connected to any charitable organization.

A charitable purpose includes any philanthropic, benevolent, educational, health, humane, recreational, religious, cultural or artistic purpose.

**Charitable Organization**

A charitable organization is one which is registered as a charity with the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA), the government department responsible for granting charitable tax status. One of the major advantages of having charitable status is the ability to issue receipts for income tax purposes to donors. This can be a major advantage when soliciting for donations. It also increases the organization’s eligibility for funding from other charitable organizations. Additionally, charities receive certain tax exemptions.

Not to be overlooked, however, is the fact that registered charities are also subject to a number of regulations and restrictions. One such restriction is the limitation on a charity’s ability to advocate for a specific cause. Currently, groups with charitable tax status can only use 10% of their budget for advocacy (see box on left). Charities are also required to file annual Registered Charity Information Return. The filed information becomes part of the public record and is available to anyone requesting access to it, along with other official documents about the organization.

Charitable organizations are legally required to submit a Registered Charity Information Return on an annual basis, within six months of the fiscal year end. A portion of the submitted information is available to donors and the general public on the CRA website. For more on the legislated requirements, see page 87.

Note: 90% of a registered charity’s activities must fit with their charitable objects. CRA guidelines are that 10 % of a charity’s activities may include:

- Call to political action (i.e., encouraging the public to contact an elected representative or public official and urging them to retain, oppose, or change a government law, policy, or decision.

- Explicitly communicating to the public that the law, policy, or decision of any level of government in Canada or a foreign country should be retained (if the retention of the law, policy or decision is being reconsidered by a government), opposed, or changed.

- Explicitly indicating in its materials (whether internal or external) that the intention of the activity is to incite, or organize to put pressure on, an elected representative or public official to retain, oppose, or change the law, policy, or decision of any level of government in Canada or a foreign country.
If your organization is a registered charity, it is important that you stay up to date on changes within the department. The CRA website is [http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/chrts-gvng/menu-eng.html](http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/chrts-gvng/menu-eng.html). It is advisable to also subscribe to the "Charities — What's New" email newsletter at [http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/esrvc-srvce/mllst/sbscrbchrts-eng.html](http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/esrvc-srvce/mllst/sbscrbchrts-eng.html).

If your organization is not yet a charitable organization, you may want to discuss the possibility of applying for charitable status with your Board of Directors. The approval can take anywhere from six to eighteen months and requires applicants to provide an extensive amount of information. The application form can be found at [http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/chrts-gvng/chrts/pplyng/menu-eng.html](http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/chrts-gvng/chrts/pplyng/menu-eng.html)

### Sponsoring Organization

A sponsoring organization means that an agency receives funding and holds legal responsibility for a funded project. For instance, your shelter may be asked to be a fiscal agent for a project that collaborates with a number of other organizations. In the typical agency relationship, the agent is required to account to the funding agency on how money is spent, to keep records, and generally to be the eyes and ears of the project. If your agency should be a fiscal agent, you will want to ensure that there is a formal agreement with all partners on roles and responsibilities. You, and your partners, will also want to check with your insurance companies to ensure you have appropriate coverage. If you are exploring the possibility of becoming a fiscal agent, you may want to review "Working in Partnership - Recipes for Success" that is available to assist organizations to partner effectively ([http://culture.alberta.ca/voluntarysector/partnershipkit/default.aspx](http://culture.alberta.ca/voluntarysector/partnershipkit/default.aspx)).
Working with Your Funders

Your relationship with your agency's funders is one of the most important aspects of your job. It is a relationship that needs to be fostered. It is important to fully understand what your funder requires of you and to comply with those conditions.

Funding Contracts

Funding contracts are legally binding documents that outline the obligations of both the recipient organization and the funder. As such, you need to thoroughly understand the agreement's conditions and requirements. To assist in this understanding, it is important to read the agreement, ask questions of the funder, discuss it with your Board of Directors, obtain legal advice if necessary and only then should it be signed. Funding agreements cannot be changed, so it is important that both you and your Board of Directors remember that you are accepting the funds based on the terms of the agreement.

Reporting to Funders

Your relationship with your funder does not end with the approval of the funding or the signing of the contract. You are responsible for spending those funds as approved. In order to demonstrate that you are using the funds as agreed upon, you will generally be required to provide regular reports. Each funder will communicate the types of reports they require. The most commonly used reports are narrative, financial, and project work plans. Each funder may ask for a slightly different work plan, based on their funding requirements. See brief descriptions of narrative reports, financial reports and work plans below. Some funders may also conduct site visits as part of their accountability requirements.

Narrative Report

The narrative report is also known as a progress, mid-term or final report. It describes the progress made towards completing your proposal's goals and objectives, as well as the final results. It also highlights the challenges you faced, whether and how you overcame them, and the grant's results. The narrative report details the program's activities and the achievement of objectives that were detailed in your project work plan. Topics often include:

- Identifying the goal and objectives of the program/project
- Listing the activities undertaken
- Reporting on program outputs, such as number of participants
- Reporting on participant satisfaction
- Evaluating program outcomes, such as how the activities made a difference to the target population
Exposing the program service delivery challenges faced
Providing solutions for overcoming those challenges
Recording and disseminating the project's promising practices and lessons learned
Relating your activities to the funder's priorities

**Financial Report**

The financial report is a statement of how the funds were used. The reported expenses need to both be eligible expenses for the individual funder and correspond to the approved activities. Again, the format will be defined by the funder. Most often the categories include:

- Personnel (types of positions, number of positions, salary paid per position, benefits)
- Travel
- Program Expenses
- Overhead (including rent, utilities, etc.)
- Equipment
- Contributions from other sources

It’s important to note that the financial report needs to correspond to the approved budget. Many funders have specific processes and guidelines in the event that you need to move funds from one budget category or line to another. When in doubt, double-check with your funder!

**Work Plan**

A work plan specifies the main objectives, activities, resource requirements, and outputs expected over a specific period of time. It also contains performance monitoring indicators for inputs and outputs, including timelines for their delivery and the quality level at which they are to be produced, as well as impact.

See [http://www.charityvillage.com/cv/research/rom2.html](http://www.charityvillage.com/cv/research/rom2.html) as one possible resource on developing your work plan. Various funders may also have required templates for your project work plan.

**Site Visits**

Most funders will meet with their funded agencies at least once a year. These visits provide you with an opportunity to show the funder how their funds have made a difference in the organization and to the beneficiaries. It is a chance for you to convey both the achievements and challenges that your program has experienced.
For the funder, site visits serve as one primary source of their on-going monitoring and ensuring accountability for the funding. During the visit, they will be looking for documentation that the organization is complying with the funding agreement. Many funders will also be conducting some form of a risk management assessment, to ensure that the organization is administratively and financially sound.

Prior to the first site visit, review documentation of previous meetings to determine appropriate follow-up and gain a better understanding of their key areas of interest. Most funders have a questionnaire or checklist that they use during the site visit. Reviewing that document will help you to prepare for the questions that you will be asked. Ensure that your policies and your financial reports are up to date and easy to access. Some Shelter Directors find it helpful to keep a guide for each funder, including all the information that the funders will wish to see. The information and forms in this guide are intended to ensure that you are prepared for your meetings.

Both you and the funder will have topics you will want to cover during the site visit. Use this opportunity to do more than simply provide accountability. If possible, have the funders walk around your project site and talk with different people. This will give them a feel for the activities that their support is putting into practice.

You may choose to have one or two participants share their stories with the funder, if this is appropriate. You can also ask your funder for feedback, technical assistance or connections to similar projects. They can often connect you with other valuable resources.

Sometimes the funder will request that one or more board members join the site visit. Because Board composition changes, this is an opportunity for them to explain the funding arrangement and the Board's legal responsibilities with the current Board of Directors. The board may also take advantage of this opportunity by addressing strategic issues and the organization’s vision.

For more on board member involvement see Section 10, Working with Boards and the Mission-focused Management and Empowerment Practice Handbook

A special thank you to the Manitoba Association of Women’s Shelters for their permission to use and adapt material from Lighting the Road to Success: A Handbook For Non-Profit Executive Directors for Section 2 of this guide.
Section 3

Government Support Services
Government Support Programmes

Government programmes change regularly. The following programmes are the ones you are most likely to encounter. ACWS will update programme changes as we learn of them.

Alberta Works

Alberta Works is the province’s income assistance program for low income Albertans. A description of their program can be found at: http://employment.alberta.ca/FCH/689.html

Income Support provides financial benefits to individuals and families who do not have the resources to meet their basic needs, like food, clothing and shelter.

The department identifies people in three general situations who may qualify for Income Support:

1. *Not Expected to Work:* People who have difficulty working because of a chronic mental or physical health problem or because of multiple barriers to employment.
2. *Expected to Work:* People who are looking for work, working or unable to work in the short-term.
3. *Learners:* People who need academic upgrading or training.

In addition, they also receive:

- Health benefits for themselves and their dependents
- Information and training to find a job
- Assistance in obtaining child support payments

The entire policy guide for Alberta Works can be found at http://employment.alberta.ca/awonline/. Bookmark this site as you will find it valuable in advocating for women in need of financial assistance. “Fact Sheets” (an overview of current benefit rates) are also available, see Appendix C for the most current rates. If you wish to print legal sized paper for great legibility please visit this link http://www.acws.ca/assets/documents/0614040654Alberta%20Works%20Income%20Support%20Information.pdf

Call the toll free number, **1-866-644-5135** (if calling within Edmonton dial 780-644-5135), for support on a 24 hour, seven days a week basis. Financial supports are available providing the program’s eligibility criteria are met. Shelter Directors have found this to be a useful number to call.

Through *Alberta Works*, people eligible for Income Support receive a Health Benefits Card that provides coverage for themselves and their dependents, unless they receive coverage through the Government of Canada.
Currently, women in abusive relationships are considered to be in the *Expected to Work* category when it comes to receiving benefits. ACWS has made numerous submissions about the inadequacy of current benefit levels in Alberta.


Information on the Homeless and Eviction Prevention Fund may also be useful and can be found at: [http://www.housing.alberta.ca/direct_to_tenant_rent_supplement_program.cfm](http://www.housing.alberta.ca/direct_to_tenant_rent_supplement_program.cfm).

ACWS has worked with the on reserve shelters to develop Guidelines for First Nation Families Fleeing Abuse which can be found in Appendix D.

**Child Support Services**

*Alberta Works* helps single parents and parents of blended families get the legal agreements or court orders they need to obtain child support. **Note: Should there be risks to a woman’s or child(ren)’s safety then Child Support Services will not pursue action with respect to obtaining support from the non-custodial parent or through the Maintenance Enforcement Program.** You may need to ensure that the woman identifies this if applying to Maintenance Enforcement.

If necessary, the worker assists with establishing paternity and in locating the other parent. The worker then attempts to negotiate an agreement with the other parent to provide child support or proceeds to court to obtain an order.

Agreements and applications for orders are prepared in accordance with established government child support guidelines. Workers also register applicable agreements and orders with the **Maintenance Enforcement Program**, which enforces, collects and disburses support payments (see below). Child Support Services can continue to help a parent obtain child support after financial/health benefits stop.

**Maintenance Enforcement Program (MEP)**

The Alberta Maintenance Enforcement Act was enacted to ensure that individuals meet their obligations to pay spousal and child support.

Once an order or agreement has been registered with MEP, maintenance payments that the debtor (payer) would normally remit directly to the creditor (recipient) are sent to MEP. MEP then forwards the payment to the creditor once the funds have cleared through a trust account.
When there is non-payment, MEP has the enforcement capability that includes registration at Land Titles and the Personal Property Registry, wage, non-wage and federal support deduction notices, federal license (passport) denials, and motor vehicle restrictions and driver's license cancellations. MEP has access to a variety of databases to assist in locating a debtor or a debtor's assets or income. Information can be provided over the phone through Client Services.

Clients can access the MEP Info Line by calling:
Toll-free access anywhere in Alberta 310-1000
In Edmonton (780) 422-5555
Information on the web can be found at www.justice.gov.ab.ca/mep

Financial Support for Training

Through Employment, Immigration and Industry, the following four programs are offered that relate to women’s training needs:

1. **Career Information** provides information and resources to help make well-informed career, education, employment and business decisions.

2. **Work Foundations** provides full-time or part-time basic skills training.

3. **Training for Work** provides full-time or part-time occupationally-focused training opportunities to help you get a job, get a better job, or increase your skills to keep your job.

4. **Workforce Partnerships** helps ensure working Albertans continue to enhance their skills or respond to skills shortages through industry and community partnerships.

For more information visit: [http://employment.alberta.ca/CES/3172.html](http://employment.alberta.ca/CES/3172.html)

On and Off Reserve Jurisdictional Issues

ACWS worked with the Provincial Government, INAC, Band Social Services and the on-reserve shelters to develop guidelines outlining how benefits should be provided to women normally resident on and off reserve. See Appendix D for a copy of this guideline, which is also posted on the ACWS members’ only website. You will need to approach the nearby band social assistance administrators as well as the province’s regional administrator to review the document and discuss implementation perspectives at the local level. However, the documents provide general guidelines to follow to ensure women receive support. A position statement on the Administrative Reform Agreement between Canada and Alberta outlines some of the jurisdictional issues that are tied to funding.
Section 4

Contracting With Government
Contracting with Government

Definition

A contract is a legal document defining responsibilities for all parties concerned. Contract law is based on the Latin phrase *pacta sunt servanda* (literally, promises must be kept). Breach of a contract is recognized by the law and remedies can be provided. It is important to know your contract requirements. In signing a contract, you and your board are committing to achieving what is outlined in the contract with the dollars that are being provided.

The “Contract”

Each shelter receiving government operational funding will have a contract. That contract is probably the first thing you need to be familiar with as a new director. Long time directors often have it memorized!

Most shelters in Alberta receive contract dollars from Alberta Children and Youth Services (ACYS), which is sometimes referred to as core funding. However, there is no reference to the term core funding in the provincial contracts. Contract funding is given to shelters to “provide services for women and children, including any of the following: outreach services, women’s shelter basic emergency services, women’s second stage housing services, and/or family violence prevention services, as detailed in Schedule A”. Your budget and funding provided by the province is outlined in Schedule “B” of the contract.

The general timelines and reporting requirements regarding ACYS contracts can be found on Appendix E. Rarely, if ever, do the contracts cover the full costs of services. Refer to the ACWS Position Statement on Core Funding in your Voting Designate Reference Guide or on the ACWS website. ACWS has also obtained a number of legal opinions regarding contracting that are available to you.

Current practice is that *Alberta Children and Youth Services* through the Prevention of Family Violence and Bullying Division (PFVBD, identify an amount of funding for each shelter that is covered by the contract. This is known as block funding. Dollars for shelter expenditures are then allocated from this sum. This is the amount that you can expect to receive on an annual basis. ACWS has advocated consistently for an annual review of contracted costs. The province has committed to an annual review of salary dollars. It should be kept in mind that contracts should be mutually agreed to through a fair negotiating process.

Occasionally, when substantial cost increases occur that cause great budget stress to all shelters, the province may consider increasing the funding to that specific item. This actually happened a number of times over the last several years to bring salaries to a more acceptable level and to help shelters meet soaring utility and insurance costs. At that time, shelters were faced with as high as a 200% increase in insurance premiums,
which was already a very pricey item. ACWS analyzed insurance costs and was able to effectively present this to government.

From time-to-time funding changes; new positions are added, or some other change to the contract occurs during the term of the contract. In this case the government may want to negotiate an amendment to your contract. If mutually agreed upon, the amendment will replace the part of the contract in which changes have occurred. That amendment should be attached to the main contract.

Make sure you are fully aware of the monitoring provisions in your contract. This may include the right of the funder to inspect financial transactions and relevant records (in accordance with privacy and confidentiality provisions). ¹

Many shelters go much further in providing services than the government requires. However, keep in mind that the government only funds up to the level or standard they require in your contract. You need to familiarize yourself with the province’s standards documents and their policies with respect to women’s shelters. You are not obligated to report to ACYS on items they do not fund.

Other needed services provided by your shelter are normally not part of your contract with Alberta Children’s Services. Funding provided by your regional authority, for instance, is not part of the Women’s Shelter Program. Funders at the regional level usually fund a specific program or initiative.

ACWS is currently working with shelters and government to improve the contracting process. The Government is moving to an outcomes based funding model.

**Core Services on Reserve**

Based on consultation with 12 Aboriginal shelters across Canada and Olsen Harper’s 2006 report for the National Aboriginal Circle Against Family Violence (NACAFV), *Ending Violence in Aboriginal Communities: Best Practices in Aboriginal Shelters and Communities*, eight “fundamental purposes of shelters” in Aboriginal communities were identified². While identified, these services (listed below, in no priority order) are not fully funded by the Federal Government through Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.

1. **Provide for the physical and psychological safety** of women and children who are fleeing domestic violence by providing the basic necessities (food, shelter and clothing) in a way that preserves dignity, without condescension.

2. **Provide security** by offering an environment that is physically safe (within as well as from outside the shelter).

¹ See Section 8, Page 93 on Privacy legislation for more information on this topic.
3. **Minimize clients’ isolation and desolation** through contact with others (staff and other clients in the shelter) and strive for a pleasant nurturing atmosphere.

4. **Support clients’ efforts to reconnect with support systems**, such as family, friends, work contacts, etc., where appropriate and desired.

5. **Assist clients to reduce victimization** by helping them re-establish control over their own lives.

6. **Help clients to formulate** realistic plans and set attainable goals.

7. **Help clients establish a healthy lifestyle** for themselves and their children by providing services such as information on the dynamics of domestic violence, referring to other agencies where necessary and offering advocacy in all required areas, such as for legal, housing, parenting, relationship, social services, etc. issues.

8. **Support clients’ children** in recovering from the violence, within a holistic method of healing.

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### Core Shelter Services

- A warm and respectful residential environment, with appropriate space for children
- Physical protection and security (both inside and outside the shelter)
- Individual case planning, referral and advocacy with regard to access to other supports/systems/resources (social, legal, medical, etc.)
- Culturally appropriate or culturally based education and crisis counselling (group and individual) in the areas of:
  - Family violence
  - Parenting skills
  - Life skills
  - Traditional Healing
  - Addictions
  - Mental health
- Nutritious meals and safe food preparation
- Transportation
- Crisis intervention (including a 24 hour crisis telephone line)
- Child care and children’s programming/counselling
- Follow-up and other post-residence supports
- Education and counselling for men (perpetrators and victims)
- Data collection/tracking for administrative and evaluative purposes
- Protection of privacy and confidentiality
- Community education and awareness raising (service providers and general public awareness)
- Development of networks, collaborations and protocols with other agencies/organizations (shelters, police, healing and health promotion, medical agencies, child and family services, legal aid, social assistance agencies, social housing, etc.)

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4 Addictions and mental health services would normally be provided through the health system, but shelter workers should be prepared to provide crisis counselling in these areas.
Audits

Most agencies receiving more than $100,000 annually require a financial audit. Audit requirements are also stipulated in your agency’s bylaws. Other funders may have different audit requirements. You will need to refer both to your bylaws, agreements with funders, and your contract to understand your full audit obligations and responsibilities. An appropriate auditor must be contracted by your agency to complete this audit. Most bylaws require that the auditor be appointed at your annual general meeting. Information will be forwarded to you by your funders. Make sure you give that information to your auditor prior to the preparation of your audit. When your auditor completes the audit, it must be accepted by your Society, (usually at your AGM). It is then the shelter's responsibility to have a signed copy of that audit forwarded to the appropriate individuals in line with your audit requirements. Audit statements are due ninety days after the end of your fiscal year. Most shelters, but not all, have adopted a fiscal year ending March 31, which is the same as the contract year of the Provincial Government. See Section 6 for more details on Audits.

Staffing

In current contracts, the province funds positions based on the number of beds they fund in accordance with their staffing model. See Appendix F for the most current provincial staffing model.

The province funds positions based on a salary allocated for each funded position. Unless there is a negotiated change, the approved salary level stays the same from year-to-year. Ensure that through your budgeting process all eligible contract expenses are identified and claimed.

ACWS has developed a recommended staffing model for both emergency and second stage shelters. These models can also be found in Appendix F. You can use this recommended staffing model as part of your rationale when negotiating with the province or developing funding requests with other funders.

The Federal Government conducted a review for on reserve shelters which recommended a staffing model for on reserve shelters. This is also contained in Appendix F.

Sample Salary Grid

Information on the sample salary grid can be found in your Voting Designates Reference Guide. The salary "mean" was taken from Table 10 of the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters Compensation Review and Evaluation Report prepared by the Bannister Research and Consulting, Inc. A copy of this report was given to each ACWS Board designate and Executive Director in September 2002 and is available on the ACWS website at www.acws.ca. The grid can also be downloaded from the members’ only site, and includes adjusting formulas for your use. The grid is updated when the province increases shelter salary funding.
Each shelter has the ability to decide these levels for themselves depending upon your regional cost of living and the degree of education you are able to attract in your area. Sample education levels are also provided for each position to provide you with a guide.

The Shelter Programs and Education Committee has suggested a five-step grid, with 3% increments. Shelters wanting to use a grid with more steps could simply add vertical columns, or not assume that each horizontal step equals one year. A shelter could choose to add an entry-level column and develop a policy saying the employee would enter step 1 after a probationary period. The sample grid can thus be adjusted to meet local conditions.

This grid is a guideline. Shelters maintain flexibility, yet the mean number would be standard across the province given that the mean identified by ACWS was used as the maximum salary for PFVBD. Having education levels established for each position at the shelter may encourage staff to take some responsibility to reach the next level and thus receive a move on the grid. The ACWS Training Seminar on Children Who Witness Violence and the Crisis Intervention Workers Certificate developed in collaboration with Portage College could also be incorporated into the education levels.

The mean salary has been adjusted by government several times over the last few years. Please ensure that the mean in the table reflects the most current amount stipulated in your contract.

**Government-funded Positions**

Provincially funded positions are based on full time equivalents (FTE’s). To calculate the total number of hours funded for each position, multiply 2,080 (52 weeks x 40 hours) by the number of FTE’s for each position. If a shelter chooses to increase hours or wages for any position, they must fundraise for that increase.

In addition, if a shelter chooses to hire a position that is not included in their funding model, e.g., a volunteer coordinator, or a group facilitator, additional child support, crisis counselors, etc., then contracted dollars cannot be used for that position.

While the government funds benefits for shelter workers at a rate of 12%, the majority of shelters provide extra benefits for their staff in a variety of ways like medical/dental/life insurance, shift differential/ RRSP’s, etc. Some provincial contracts with other funded agencies may provide for benefits at a higher level. The full cost of benefits is generally found to be 18%. ACWS has negotiated a group benefit plan that shelters can choose to participate in.

When salary increases are negotiated as part of your contract you will also need to address compensation levels for those positions not covered by your contract as well as associated benefit costs. This is left completely to the discretion of individual shelter. It generally has meant that shelters need to fund raise to address any wage and benefit disparities within their shelter.
Given concerns for working alone, increases in crisis calls and the need for collaboration with other service providers, ACWS developed a recommended staffing model. You can use this model as back-up when negotiating with the province or if you wish to apply to other sources for funds. A copy of all Staffing models can be found in Appendix F of this Guide.
Section 5

Facility
Caring For Your Building

Unlike many other service providers, Shelter Directors not only have the challenges of developing, maintaining and evaluating their programmes, but also of delivering them in a residential, 24/7 environment. The wear and tear of continuous use, the need to accommodate shift workers, meeting the needs of traumatized women and children mean that particular attention needs to be given to the physical environment (inside and out). Safety of playgrounds and playrooms, and accessibility also need to be taken into consideration. There are a number of potential grant sources that can assist you in meeting the need of providing and improving a communal living environment.

Grant Sources for Building Maintenance

1. **Community Facility Enhancement Program** (CFEP)  

2. **Community Initiatives Program**  
   [http://culture.alberta.ca/cip/default.aspx](http://culture.alberta.ca/cip/default.aspx)

3. **Shelter Enhancement Program** (SEP)  

The Shelter Enhancement Program assists in repairing, rehabilitating and improving existing shelters for women and their children, youth and men who are victims of family violence; and in acquiring or building new shelters and second-stage housing where needed.

Eligible organizations are:

- Non-profit corporations
- Charities that, as a principal objective, house women and children, youth or men who are victims of family violence
- As funding is limited to capital assistance, sponsor groups must obtain the assurance of operating assistance for emergency shelters. For second stage housing, occupants are expected to make modest contributions to offset the project's operating costs

Eligible repairs/work are those required to:

- Bring existing emergency shelters and second stage housing up to health and safety standards
- Permit accessibility for disabled occupants
- Provide adequate and safe program and play areas for children
- Ensure appropriate security for occupants
The assistance is in the form of a fully forgivable loan provided by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), which does not have to be re-paid provided the agency adheres to the conditions of the program.

**New Development:** For newly developed projects, CMHC may contribute up to 100% of a project’s capital cost.

**Renovation:** The maximum loan for renovation varies with the number of existing units/bed-units within the project and its location.

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**For more information:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Edmonton</th>
<th>Calgary</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(780) 423-8700</td>
<td>(403) 515-3000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMHC Edmonton Office</td>
<td>CMHC Calgary Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>210, 10405 Jasper Avenue</td>
<td>1000 - 7th Avenue SW, Suite 200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edmonton, AB</td>
<td>Calgary, Alberta</td>
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<td>T5J 3N4</td>
<td>T2P 5L5</td>
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4. **Children’s Ability Fund** (accessible playgrounds and vehicles in Northern Alberta)  

5. **Municipal Grants** contact your local municipality to see what might be available

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**Food Safety**

It is a requirement that at least one staff member be responsible for the labeling and rotation of food that comes in to the shelter. Someone on your shelter staff should take the **Food Safety Course** available in most jurisdictions. Contact Alberta Health Services for information on certification.

You may also require a food handling permit from Alberta Health Services if your shelter prepares food for more than ten people. For more information, go to [http://www.calgaryhealthregion.ca/publichealth/envhealth/program_areas/permits/permits.htm#do%20i%20need%20a%20food%20permit](http://www.calgaryhealthregion.ca/publichealth/envhealth/program_areas/permits/permits.htm#do%20i%20need%20a%20food%20permit).

The Food Safety Information Society, a team of professionals with expertise in home food safety issues, can answer your questions about food safety, storage and preparation. Call 310-0000 or (780) 427-2711(dial 310-0000 first then the number for toll-free calling). You can also visit the Healthy U web site at: [http://www.healthyalberta.com/HealthyEating/582.htm](http://www.healthyalberta.com/HealthyEating/582.htm) to learn more about beef, canned foods, canning, chicken, e-coli, dairy, food storage, handling ham, making jam, marinating meat, organic food, handling pork, recipes, shopping tips, thawing meat, turkey safety, water safety etc.
Licensing

The Social Care Facilities Licensing Act governs the licensing of adult and children's facilities, specifically day cares, out-of-school care centres and nurseries, to ensure facilities are safe and meeting the needs of clients. In the past, shelters had a rated licensed capacity on the Social Care Facilities Licensing Act. However, the Act no longer applies to women’s shelters. Shelters need to ensure that they comply with all health, building code and municipal bylaw requirements.

Given the change to provincial legislation, which removed shelters from Social Care Facilities Licensing, you may wish to refer to your municipality’s land use bylaw to ensure that women’s emergency shelters are still a permitted use under existing zoning provisions.

Occupational Health & Safety (OHS)

Go to [http://employment.alberta.ca/documents/WHS/WHS-PUB_li009.pdf](http://employment.alberta.ca/documents/WHS/WHS-PUB_li009.pdf) for the Occupational Health and Safety Guide. Some of the requirements under the Act include:

Emergency Preparedness and Response

*OHS* requires employers to establish an emergency response plan for responding to an emergency that may require rescue or evacuation. The plan establishes what the employer must do until emergency services personnel arrive.

In some situations an employer may use a “911” service as an acceptable means of providing emergency services at a work site. Providing first aid and calling “911” may be the complete emergency response plan for this employer. For the most part; however, an employer must still identify potential emergencies, the procedures for dealing with the identified emergencies (which will include calling “911” for particular types of emergencies), fire protection requirements, workers who will supervise evacuation procedures in an emergency, etc.

Regardless of whether or not a “911” service is used, employers must meet the first aid equipment and service requirements of Part 11 of the *OHS Code*. Using the “911” service does not replace the employer’s obligation to provide the required first aid equipment and services.
Working Alone

The purpose of the Working Alone requirements is to ensure that workers working alone can do so safely. As a result, employers have responsibilities to minimize and eliminate risks associated with their workers who work alone.

A worker is considered to be working alone if the worker works by him or herself at a work site in circumstances where assistance is not readily available. Employers can eliminate the risk of workers working alone, as well as the need to comply with the working alone requirements, if they can organize the work schedules and put procedures in place, such as on-call support, to eliminate the need for workers to work by themselves.

The working alone requirements of the OHS Code apply when both of the following conditions are met:

1. The worker is working by himself or herself
2. Assistance, in the event of an injury, illness or emergency, is not readily available to the worker

If an employer has workers who work by themselves, the OHS Code requires the employer to:

- Conduct a hazard assessment to identify existing or potential safety hazards in the workplace associated with working alone.
- Implement safety measures to reduce the risk to workers from the identified hazard assessment.
- Ensure that workers have an effective way of communicating with their employer, immediate supervisor or another designated person in case of an emergency situation.
- Ensure that workers are trained and educated so they can perform their job safely.
- Regularly contact the worker at intervals appropriate to the nature of the hazard associated with the worker’s work.

An effective means of communication or contact must always be provided by the employer in working alone conditions. An employer cannot, upon performing the hazard assessment, decide that a means of communication or contact is unnecessary.

If you find an explanation is unclear, or additional information would be helpful, please contact Alberta Human Resources and Employment. Call the Province-Wide Contact Centre:

- Edmonton (780) 415-8690
- Other locations 1-866-415-8690

For more information visit: http://employment.alberta.ca/SFW/12608.html. A sample working alone policy can also be found on the ACWS members’ only site.
Workplace Violence

For the purposes of the **OHS Code**, violence means the threatened, attempted or actual conduct of a person that causes or is likely to cause physical injury.

Employers must develop policy and procedures respecting potential workplace violence. **OHS** requires that the procedures be in writing and available to workers. Types of violence include:

- Stranger violence (such as a robbery)
- Client/customer violence
- Co-worker violence
- Violence related to domestic issues

**OHS requires employers to:**

- Instruct workers how to recognize workplace violence
- Communicate the organization’s policy and procedures related to workplace violence
- Develop appropriate responses to workplace violence
- Develop procedures for reporting, investigating and documenting incidents of workplace violence
- Investigate incidents of workplace violence
- Prepare a report of the incident that includes corrective actions to prevent a recurrence
- Have a written report readily available for inspection by an occupational health and safety officer; and to retain it for two years from the date of the incident

Prevention is preferable to intervention. Hazard assessment is a logical and organized method of identifying real and potential hazards, allowing the employer to better manage these hazards. The hazard assessment required by the **OHS Code** must include the possibility of injury to workers from physical violence as a potential hazard.

Unfortunately, there is no single perfect prevention strategy. To manage the issue of workplace violence, each employer must determine the nature and extent of the problem. Employers need to consider such factors as the workers they hire, the sources of violence, work processes and the physical environment, and the level of organizational commitment towards the prevention of workplace violence. Considering each of these factors allows an employer to identify:

- Aspects of the workplace that may enhance opportunities for violence
- Those individuals at highest risk, and the need for controls

ACWS has a model policy for domestic violence in the workplace. See Appendix G. For more information visit: [www.gov.ab.ca/hre](http://www.gov.ab.ca/hre).
Workplace Hazardous Materials Information (WHIMIS)

The letters W-H-M-I-S stand for “Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System.” WHIMIS was developed to ensure that workers receive adequate hazard information about chemicals that are used at their work sites.

Alberta’s Occupational Health and Safety Act requires employers to take all reasonable measures to protect the health and safety of workers at their companies. WHIMIS is an important tool for employers to use in achieving this goal.

Employers play an important role in implementing WHMIS. The employer is responsible for ensuring that:

- All controlled products at their work sites are labeled with appropriate WHMIS labels.
- WHMIS Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) are up-to-date — that means no more than three years old. (Material Safety Data Sheets are commonly known as MSDS. MSDS contain information that is more detailed and more technical than the information on WHMIS labels. MSDS must be readily available to workers who might want to see them).
- WHMIS MSDS are provided for all controlled products at the work site. These MSDS must be located in a place that is easily accessible to every employee.
- Employees receive the appropriate WHMIS employee education to protect their health and safety on the job.

A work-site-specific program is considered effective when workers can apply information that they were taught to protect their own health and safety on the job. To decide if this standard has been met, an employer might offer practical or written tests or assess workers through job observation. The law does not specify how to conduct the training, how frequently it must be conducted or how to test for achievement of the standard. All work-site personnel who work with or close to controlled products, or who do work involved in the manufacture of a controlled product, must be provided with WHMIS worker education.

Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) requires employers to assess a work site and identify existing or potential hazardous materials before work begins. Employers must prepare a report that provides the results of the assessment and specifies the methods that will be used to control or eliminate the hazards. OHS requires employers, if reasonably feasible, to involve employees in assessing, controlling, and eliminating potential hazards.

OHS requires employers to eliminate hazards whenever it is feasible to do so. If elimination is not reasonably practicable, hazards must be controlled:

1. First by using engineering controls
2. Then administrative controls, and
3. Finally, as a last option, by using personal protective equipment
Section 6

Financial Information
Financial Information

Finances govern every aspect of running a shelter, from staff payroll through to decisions on brand name products vs. ‘no name’ brands! It is vitally important that you have a good handle on the financial assets, grants, and all financial policies and procedures of your shelter. It is makes very good sense to have an awesome administrative assistant in place to assist you with this task. Someone with more than basic bookkeeping skills would be extremely beneficial to your shelter. It is challenging to be both manager and financial controller. Unfortunately, most funders do not provide sufficient funds for this type of support.

While the board of directors of any agency is ultimately responsible for its finances, boards depend heavily on the paid manager to oversee the operation. Your shelter needs well understood policies and procedures to guide all financial operations, thus providing some protection for the shelter manager, board members, and any other staff that may have access to financial operations.

Definitions

**Accounts Payable:** The outstanding bills, money owed to suppliers, and staff wages earned but not paid until the end of the fiscal year. They are part of the current liabilities on the balance sheet.

**Accounts Receivable:** Accounts receivable refers to money owed to the agency. They are part of the current assets on the balance sheet.

**Accrual versus Cash Accounting:** Accrual accounting indicates that the agency recognizes revenue in the period in which it is earned and deducts expenses in the period the expenses are incurred. *Example: The agency received a cheque in the amount of $1,000 to buy a computer with no stipulation on when to spend the money. The $1,000 is deferred until the computer is purchased; at that time, it is recorded as revenue.*

Cash accounting is based on cash flow, much like a bank statement. Expenses and revenues are recorded in the timeframe during which the cash is exchanged.

*Example: You are sending your staff to a conference in the next quarter. You register early, to get the lower rate. With cash accounting, you will record the cost as an expense at the time you wrote the cheque. With accrual accounting, you will record the cost as a pre-paid expense, until the time of the conference. At that point, the cost of the conference will be recognized as an expense.*
Deferred Revenue: Represents money received or promised through an agreement but not spent or not related to the period it was received.

General Ledger: Sometimes known as the nominal ledger, is the main accounting record, which usually include accounts for such items as current assets, fixed assets, liabilities, revenue and expense items, gains and losses. Each General Ledger is divided into two sections. The left hand side lists debit transactions and the right hand side lists credit transactions.

Income Statement: Sometimes known as a profit and loss statement, an income statement records all revenues during a given period, as well as the operating expense. The important thing to remember about an income statement is that it represents a period of time. This contrasts with the balance sheet, which represents a single moment in time.

Budgets

A budget is your annual financial plan. Every shelter will determine how much money they will require to annually carry out the business of the shelter. This process can be quite involved, especially for new shelters and/or new shelter managers. The goal is to provide all the services that meet established standards, aspire to surpass those by providing promising practice standards and to meet staffing/ benefit and facility costs. Incomes for shelters vary greatly from shelter to shelter, as do funding sources. Currently most, but not all, provincial shelters receive annual funding from the Alberta Government. Shelters located on reserves in Alberta currently receive their funding through the Federal Government. “Core Funding” is a term that refers to the basic costs to run a shelter as its use is directly for shelter operations (e.g., staffing and benefits as based on the current staffing model), facility costs, direct client costs, and administration.

Most shelters, however, operate many more programs beyond basic emergency accommodation. Shelters develop partnerships for the delivery of a variety of programs such as educating the public about domestic violence, group support to address the many needs of your clientele, community crisis lines, etc. Programming at each shelter will vary greatly to meet the needs of each individual community. Over the years, shelters have found some extremely unique and varied ways to fund their initiatives, which often include staffing requirements beyond the current government funded model.
Budget Development

Planning for your budget is as important as developing your budget. The following steps can help guide the development of your budget.

Step 1: Prepare a Budget Planning Document
Working with your staff and board, identify your projected revenues and expenses, as well as your funders’ expectations. It also helps to lay out your assumptions, such as anticipated salary, utility, and supply cost increases, changes to revenue, etc. Provincially funded shelters have found it helpful to follow their Schedule B as their worksheet. Some items to consider are outlined below.

Assumptions:

Changes to Revenue:
Grants
Contract dollars
Fundraising/Donations
Sale of goods and services

Changes in Expenditures:
Staffing Costs
Salaries
Benefits
Relief
Training
Insurance (errors and omissions, etc)
Direct client costs
Recreation
Food
Clothing
Spending money
Gifts
Material and supplies
Travel
Personal incidentals
Drugs and medical supplies
Facility costs
Rent/Mortgage
Utilities
Maintenance
Taxes
Facility supplies & equipment
Facility insurance
Rental

Administrative costs
Office Supplies and Postage
Telephone and Communications
Maintenance/Repairs of Office
Equipment
Lease/Rental of Office Equipment
Staff Training
Staff Travel
Professional Fees (Legal, accounting, audit)
Board Development
Association Dues
Bank Charges
Technology support and supplies
Liability Insurance (board & staff)
Evaluation

Vehicle costs
Insurance
Operating expenses
Maintenance and repair
Step 2: Analyze Your Plan
After completing your budget, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Are your revenues higher than your expenses? If so, you have a surplus.
2. Is your surplus generated from funding revenue? If so, go back to your agreement as you might have missed approved expenses.
3. Is your surplus related to self-generated funds? If so, you will need to develop recommendations for your board on how to allocate or spend those dollars.

Step 3: Compare Totals
Compare your budgeted totals to the previous year’s actuals. Identify and analyze the variance.

Step 4: Ensure all expenses are covered
Are all of your expenses covered through grants and self-generated funds? If so, it is time to finalize your budget. If not, re-visit every line and identify what can be reduced (unless it is a mandated amount in a funding agreement).

Step 5: Budget Approval
Present the budget to your board for their approval.

Reporting Your Shelter Budget
Funders generally require a copy of your final approved budget. The format will differ from funder to funder. Some will want to see the entire agency’s budget, while others will only want to see the budget for the programs they fund. You need to check your funding agreement to determine how each particular funder wants you to report.

Project Budgets
When your project was approved, your funder also approved the project budget. For the most part, you will continue using this budget throughout the duration of the project. Some funders will require you to submit your project budget for approval on an annual basis; others require it at the beginning of each funding contract.

If you need to make adjustments to the budget, you will need to receive permission from your funder, as per their procedures.

Project Forecast Cash Flows
Some funders will require you to submit a forecast cash flow at the beginning of the project and then prior to each fiscal year. The forecast cash flow is the official statement of predicted project expenses, as per the agreed upon project activities. The cash flow form requires you to indicate the quarterly amounts for each of the funding categories (Personnel, Travel, Materials, Equipment, Rent/Utilities, Evaluation, and Other). It further requires a monthly breakdown.
Developing your forecast cash flow is best done in conjunction with activity planning. If the expenses for one month or quarter will be particularly high (for example, if you are hosting a conference), then you will want to ensure that you are asking for the appropriate amount during that month.

Financial Monitoring

Budget monitoring provides a wealth of tools and information for anticipating, tracking, analyzing and acting on any potential surplus that could affect a funding agreement or any deficit that might put the agency in a financial difficulty. It provides information that informs decision making.

Budget monitoring ensures that funds are used for their intended purposes and are properly accounted for. It also provides the rationale and authority to review and adjust budget targets during the year. Identifying and explaining variances or differences between actuals and the budget can highlight changes in staff and resource requirements. It is a means of identifying and managing possible over- and under-spending. The Year at a Glance Form in Appendix B can help you identify key dates and reporting requirements.

It is extremely important to analyze your projected year-end revenues and expenses and your variance on a quarterly basis.

No matter how competent your financial personnel are, it is important that you regularly check to ensure that the bookkeeping and accounting are conducted correctly and in a timely fashion. For many new Executive Directors, this task can seem quite intimidating. It doesn't need to be. A "Quarterly Interim Audit" can simplify the process and give you a sense of confidence that matters are as they should be. It will also increase your confidence when you forward your information to the auditor.

Prior to beginning this process, it is helpful to review the deadlines for each funder. In this way you can ensure that they are all incorporated into your quarterly interim audit.

Process:

Note: This example uses an April — March fiscal year. If your fiscal year uses other dates, you will need to adjust the dates accordingly.

**By May 10:** Complete your quarterly internal audit. Table 1 on Page 62 can serve as a guide.

**By July 10:** Complete quarterly internal sign off

**By September 30:** GST Return competed. Charity Return filed

**By October 10:** Complete quarterly sign off

**By January 10:** Complete quarterly sign off
By February 28:  T4 Forms distributed

By March 31:  GST Return completed. Tie staff pay rates to personnel file and pay scale. Update furniture and equipment inventory. Complete quarterly sign off audit.

Some shelters have the bank reconciliations signed off monthly by the Shelter Director and the Board Treasurer.

Table 1: Quarterly Internal Audit
(While the other tables are completed on a quarterly basis, it is important to complete this form after the first month of your fiscal year. In so doing, you can ensure that you are starting the fiscal year with your accounts reconciled)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sign off - April</th>
<th>Initials</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bank Account</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ensure reconciliation completed</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tie bank balance per reconciliation to bank statement and general Ledger</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review outstanding items and inquire about any old items</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review bank statement for any large items (&gt;31,000) and ensure proper authorization obtained. (Payroll and rent can be excluded)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trace any withdrawals</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Payroll</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Review payroll records for the month for any unusual additions or pay rates</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tie payroll withdrawal per payroll records to the bank account</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Financial Statements</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ensure opening retained earnings equal prior year’s closing retained earnings</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review items in balance sheet accounts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review comparison of actual to budget and investigate any significant differences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tie revenue total, expense total and net income to general Ledger</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 2: Quarterly Sign-off

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates:</th>
<th>Initials</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Randomly select one month out of each quarter, obtain the bank statement, cancelled cheques and reconciliation and perform the following:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trace cheques to bank statement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigate any withdrawals without a cancelled cheque</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure all cheques have two authorized signatures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trace outstanding items to subsequent month to ensure they have cleared</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3: Significant Sign-Offs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significant Dates</th>
<th>Sign Offs at Other Points in the Year</th>
<th>Initials</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ensure GST Return is completed and amount matches general ledger</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trace deposit per general ledger to deposit book</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure insurance renewal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure Charity Return (T3010) completed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure T4 slips and summary are completed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure a reconciliation between deductions remitted and deductions required has been completed and any outstanding amounts have been paid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tie pay rate per payroll book for each employee to employees personnel file and to payscale</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure a list of all purchased furniture and equipment are recorded over $1,000 as an asset and under $1,000 as an expense</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If required, return all surplus funds/unspent dollars to funder</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A Note on GST

Registered charities are eligible to receive 50% of their GST back. In order to do so, you need to complete an "Application for GST/HST Public Service Bodies Rebate and GST Self-Government Refund". This form is available online at http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/E/pbg/qf/gst66/. Because you will be receiving a rebate on 50% of your paid GST, this rebate amount should not be recorded as an expense. Rather, it is recorded as an Account Receivable.

If you choose to record as an expense the portion of GST that will be rebated, then when you receive the rebate, you are required to inform the funder and follow their processes.

Monitoring Project Finances

While the requirements vary, most government funders require that you report on your project funding on a quarterly basis.

Note: Many funders will not allow you to carry a surplus. Consequently, it is important that you spend your entire funded amount. At the beginning of the last quarter of the fiscal year, ensure that you will be able to be able to fulfill your projects activities and allotted expenses. If you will be spending less than your contracted amount (an "under expenditure"), you need to report that to your funder prior to year end. Unless the funder has approved a rare exception, agencies cannot carry their project dollars over to the next fiscal year. Any unspent dollars will need to be returned to the funder.

Cash flow

Funders requiring a cash flow reporting format will require a quarterly "Record of Expenditures" cash flow. Using the forecast cash flow as the guide, the Record of Expenditures will identify the actual amounts spent during the noted period. After calculating the difference between the planned amounts and the actuals, you will update the forecast amounts for the remainder of the year.

Note: If during the fiscal year your funder approves additional funding for your project, you will need to submit an updated Project Budget and updated Project Cash Flow.
Reading Financial Statements

Financial Terms

Financial Statements are the end product of the accounting process, summarizing all of the financial transactions of your agency for a given period. The reports most frequently presented to the Board of Directors are the Balance Sheet and the Statement of Revenues, Expenses and Surplus. The date for the Audited Financial Statement is usually March 31 (unless your agency has a different year-end).

The Balance Sheet reports amounts of the agency's assets, liabilities, and surplus/deficit at a specified date.

The Statement of Revenues, Expenses and Surplus: reports revenues, expenses, net income/net loss, and the resulting change to the surplus/deficit for the year.

Terms on the Balance Sheet

Assets are properties and resources the agency owns and can use to achieve its goals.

Current assets include items such as cash accounts, short-term investments, receivables (money owed to the agency) and any other assets that can be converted into cash within one year.

Non-current assets, such as building, furniture, and fixtures, will unlikely be converted into cash within the year.

Liabilities are debts of your agency and amounts that are owed.

Current liabilities include items such as deferred revenue (cash that has been received for specific expenses but has not yet been spent) and payables (amounts owing to other parties). They are liabilities that need to be discharged in a year or less.

Non-current liabilities, such as mortgages, will unlikely be paid within the year.

Surplus/Deficit represents the net of assets over liabilities. If your assets are more than your liabilities then there is a surplus. If the liabilities are greater than the assets then there is a deficit.

Note: Many boards are more interested in reading the Statement of Revenues, Expenses and Surplus than the Balance Sheet. However, it is important that your board understand and study the Balance Sheet, as that statement speaks to their primary responsibility. The Balance Sheet communicates the overall financial health of the agency, identifying the liabilities and cash on hand. It tells the board if the agency can meet its financial obligations.
Interim Financial Statements

At each board meeting, the treasurer will present an interim financial statement, including the Balance Sheet and the Statement of Revenues, Expenses and Surplus. It is important that you are able to read the statements and that you understand the information in them. You need to be prepared to answer any questions that will help the board understand the statements, so that they can assess the financial health of the agency and make informed decisions.

Financial Indicators from Financial Statements

As the Executive Director, you need to ensure that the financial statements are prepared and presented to the board on a regular basis. Once financial statements are presented, the following are a few simple financial indicators that you can learn to watch for.

Current Ratio is the formula used to determine if there is enough cash to pay bills in the immediate future. The current ratio is found by taking the current assets and dividing them by current liabilities. If the number is high, there may be too much cash and some could be earning more if invested. If the number is low, your agency may be in danger of a cash flow crisis. For example, if your shelter has $100,000 in current assets and $20,000 in current liabilities, you would have a Current Ratio of 5. You can easily invest $50,000 in short-term investments. Or the shelter may have $20,000 in current assets and $80,000 in current liabilities, giving a Current Ratio of .25. This shows that you have a serious cash flow problem.

Reserve: Some agencies have a policy to maintain or reserve the equivalent of a month or two worth of expenses that they can access readily (for example, in short-term investments). This is a risk management policy, in the event the agency is required to wind down and cease operations. It is important to note that you can only use unallocated funds for the reserve. Any funds with an allocated purpose, whether from funders or donors, cannot be used to establish a reserve fund.

Comparison of Actual Results to Budget: Normally, the budget is drafted and passed by the board at the beginning of the fiscal year. A comparison of budgeted revenues to actual revenue and budgeted expenses to actual expenses is conducted on a monthly or a quarterly basis. You need to be able to explain significant variations from budget. This is an important process, as it can reveal a problem that needs to be acted upon. For example, unforeseen expenses may have been incurred, which could mean that an unwanted loss for the year may result, unless additional revenues are generated or previously budgeted expenses are reduced.

Unusual and Significant Items: You need to be able to explain any unusual and significant items.
**Auditor's Financial Statement**

The Auditors’ Financial Statement is the end product of the accounting process. It summarizes all of the financial transactions for the last fiscal year. The auditors' financial statement is presented to the Board of Directors and passed by the members at the Annual General Meeting.

The Auditors' Financial Statement consists of
- Auditor's Report
- Balance Sheet
- Statement of Revenues, Expenses and Surplus
- Notes to the Financial Statements

**Auditor’s Report:** The Auditor's Report is addressed to the Board of Directors, normally indicating that the audit was conducted in accordance with Canadian Generally Accepted Auditing Standards. The report concludes with the opinion of the auditor.

**Statement of Revenues, Expenses and Surplus:** reports revenues from all sources (for example, funders, self-generated funds such as fundraising, donations, and interest), expenses, net income/net loss and the resulting change to the surplus/deficit for the fiscal year.

**Notes to the Financial Statement:** The Notes to the Financial Statement speak to i) the purpose of your agency ii) accounting policies; iii) receivables; iv) payables; v) deferred revenue and contributions; vi) capital assets and depreciation; and vii) long term debts and/or long term responsibility such as rent, benefits and its liability, such as pension. These notes need to be reviewed by your auditor and Board of Directors.

**Management Letter:** The management letter is normally addressed to the Board of Directors with recommendations and/or identification of issues with financial procedures. It is important to read it carefully, talk to your auditor and board about the recommendations and, if necessary, discuss ways of making changes.

The Management Letter also needs to be submitted to your funders. If the auditor identifies either major or minor financial issues, you should accompany its submission with a plan to make the recommended changes.
Preparing for an Annual Audit

Any new Executive Director feels anxious as they think about their first audit. If you have been conducting your quarterly internal audit, you shouldn't have to worry about your annual audit. The following checklist of items will help you prepare for the auditor. The list includes both pre-audit activities and the items for the audit itself. Some of the items may be in electronic rather than paper form.

Audit Checklist

Pre-audit (February, March)
- Confirm dates of the audit with the auditor
- Send the confirmation letter to the bank
- Send the list of funders along with the contact person and address to your auditor
- Trial Balance

Audit (as many as applicable)
- Bank Statements and cancelled cheques
- Bank Reconciliation
- Deposit Books
- Cheque Stubs
- Charitable Receipts Book and/or regular receipts book
- Invoices paid during the fiscal year
- List of Accounts Receivable
- List of Grants Receivable
- List of Prepaid Expense
- List of Accounts Payable
- List of Vacation Payable
- List of Deferred Revenue
- Copy of Agreements with Funders, including budgets
- Reconciliation of Interest Revenue
- Analysis of Miscellaneous Revenue
- Analysis of Salaries and Benefits (reconcile it to T-4)
- Board Minutes (signed and dated)
- General Ledger
- Credit Card Statements including receipts
- Credit Cards Merchant Copies
- Capital Assets — Any purchase of capital during the year and according to policy
- Analysis of Donations
- Analysis of Revenue from Fundraising
- Copies of long-term agreements or debts (e.g., rent, vehicle lease)
- Analysis of Professional Fees
- Copy of the Financial Policy
- Copy of motions by the board that have financial implications
- Contract agreements with staff that identify their hourly/yearly salary
- Salary Scale
- Union Agreement (if applicable)
- Documentation relating to any current lawsuits (if applicable)
Large Purchases — expense or asset?

There may be a difference when you purchase higher-cost goods (such as computers or photocopiers) between how they are recognized in financial reports to the funder and in audited reports. For the funder, the purchase would be recorded as an expense. For the auditor, it may be recorded as a capital asset. If this happens, then the asset is depreciated annually rather than recorded on the expense sheet.

Because of this difference, it is recommended that not-for-profit agencies develop a policy on when a purchase is defined as an asset and when it is expensed. A policy may state, for example, "Capital assets such as furniture, fixtures, and computer hardware are recorded as an asset when the purchase cost is $2,000 or more per item."

Based on the policy and the purchase price, assets can then be expensed as "Furniture and Equipment," or recorded as a "Capital Asset" and depreciated. The depreciation amount becomes the expense for the noted year. There are generally accepted depreciation rates\(^5\), which are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Asset Type</th>
<th>Depreciation Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Building</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furniture and Fixtures</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Hardware</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reporting to Funders

Most funders do not recognize depreciation as an expense. Therefore, the financial report to the funders will include the full purchase amount of assets as an expense. This procedure will create a variance or difference between the financial report to the funders and the auditor's statement.

It is the agency’s responsibility to explain the difference between the auditor's statement and the financial report to funders. The following form will assist you in reporting the difference.

\(^5\) These depreciation rates are determined by the Canadian institute of Chartered Accountants and located in the CICA Handbook. Because this handbook is only available to CICA members, you can speak to your agency’s auditor for more information.

A special thank you to the Manitoba Association of Women’s Shelters for their permission to use and adapt material from Lighting the Road to Success: A Handbook For Non-Profit Executive Directors for this chapter of our guide.
Balancing Auditor’s Statement to Funder’s Financial Report

Name of the Agency __________________________
Fiscal Year Ending __________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Closing Balance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital Assets</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mortgage Payment (Principal Only)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depreciation Expense</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Reconciled Balance</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Charitable Reporting Requirements

Most shelters in Alberta have been granted status as a registered charity by the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA). As a new director, it is important to familiarize yourself with your agency’s charitable objects and Canada Revenue Agency requirements. Any agency given this status is permitted to issue receipts for charitable financial donations to the agency.

The Income Tax Act states that registered charities can issue official donation receipts for property gifted by a donor to a registered charity. Note that “services” are not property, so they are not eligible for receipts. Charity Central offers learning modules on charitable receipting. You may wish to refer to this, particularly when it comes to “in kind” contributions (see http://www.charitycentral.ca/). Good information on the requirements for charities can also be found on the CRA website http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/charities/ and the Centre for Voluntary Sector Research & Development (http://www.cvsrd.org/eng/home.html) also provides some useful links.

Occasionally, a court judge will order a perpetrator of some offense to make a payment of a specified amount of money to a charitable agency. If you receive such a payment, you cannot issue a charitable receipt as the donation was not ‘charitable’ as the court ordered it. It would be the same as asking for a charitable receipt when paying a traffic ticket.
When agencies first apply to Revenue Canada for charitable status, they are required to state the goals and objects of the agency. If charitable status is granted, it is granted on the information received with the application. Over the years of an agency’s operation, it is quite possible that the original goals or objectives will change. It is important to advise Revenue Canada of these changes.

**Donations**

Shelters receive donations in many forms, i.e., cash and volunteer manpower as well as materials like books, toys, clothing and food. It is very important to create procedures to follow when giving charitable receipts to donors. There are several rules about what is considered a charitable donation. The best way to determine your procedures is to refer to the web pages cited above and have ongoing dialog with your accountant. You will also need to ensure that applicable health and safety requirements are followed.

It is also useful to track the financial benefit of these donations so that you are able to report on the true cost of shelter operations to your funders and to the public. For instance, if you receive donations of food, it minimizes your shelter’s expenditures in this area. You will need to track the value of donated food plus the cost of purchased food to have a total picture of your food budget. This is tremendously important; particularly should a donor cease to operate in your community or choose not to provide you with the same type of support on an ongoing basis.

Shelters receive literally tons of clothing, toys, food, and personal hygiene products. Actually there may come a point when you will wonder what to do with all this ‘stuff’. Shelters have created several ways to handle these items. One shelter has created a second-hand store where most everything donated is sold at low prices to the public, which has proven to be a very lucrative means of fund raising. Others have chosen to not accept any second hand donations. Whatever your shelter decides to do, there will need to be guidelines established around donations. For example, used child car seats should not be reused.

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**Donation of Services**

A charity may not issue a donation receipt for a contribution of services. This follows from the rule that donation receipts may only be issued for a transfer of “property”: Services are not property. To issue a receipt for a donation of services the transaction must be divided into two parts: one being a sale and the second a cash donation.

- Firstly, the “donor” of the services would invoice the charity for the value of the services provided. The charity should then pay for the services in cash.
- Secondly, the service provider would donate the cash (i.e. the “property”) to the charity. The charity may then issue a donation receipt to the donor.

unless they have been examined by an approved agency, (e.g. Health Unit, Safety City) as they may have cracks invisible to the naked eye that render them unsafe for use. Contact your local health unit to access information on what foods that you may accept for shelter use. Use of already opened products, homemade products, etc. should not be accepted. Given concerns about lead and plastics in toys, you may want to be cautious about some of the toys that might be given to your shelter.

For those of you who run thrift stores it may be wise to watch for changes to the Canada Consumer Product Safety Act as record keeping requirements and prohibitions on recycled items can greatly affect your operations.

Usually shelters provide their residential clients with free access to any donations that are accepted, and it is often handy to have some extra pajamas, rubber boots, swim suits, mitts, etc. for shelter use.

Often women's organizations are anxious to provide gifts for shelters, so have a 'wish list' on hand for things you might like to have. People particularly like to provide things for children and mothers staying at the shelter, so this is a great way to get soaps, deodorants, toothbrushes, combs, shampoo, toys, etc. You should rarely have to purchase these items. It is a good idea to have a variety of birthday presents for both mothers and children on hand. People will often choose to purchase and donate tickets to the zoo, movies, and other attractions that would be nice for your clients to access.

It is important to thank donors. Companies thrive on public acknowledgment of donations. Often a simple thank you card will do. Larger donations need to be acknowledged via letter, or public announcement depending upon the wishes of the donor.
Fundraising

All shelters operating in Alberta have to raise money over and above present government funding in order to effectively carry out the business of their shelter. Other funding sources for shelters can be accessed through grants for specific initiatives, corporate and/or private donations, corporate sponsorship, community partnerships, for profit businesses run buy the shelter, etc.

Fund raising options such as casinos, bingos and raffles have been very lucrative for shelters. There are some very stringent regulations surrounding this type of fund raising. Alberta Gaming sponsors workshops around the province on a fairly regular basis that thoroughly explain these regulations. It is worthwhile to attend one of these free sessions before any fundraising of this nature is undertaken. See www.aglc.ca.

It is advantageous for your agency to adopt a set of values that will guide your fund raising efforts. In fact, some of the larger foundations make having these values mandatory to receive any money from them. You may want to review the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy’s document Ethical Fundraising and Financial Accountability Code for further information http://alumni2.brandonu.ca/giving/ethicalcode.pdf.

Don't hesitate to ask community members, service clubs, banks, or other financial institutions for help to run a program, sponsor a renovation you might need, or purchase some equipment you might like to have.

Often people wanting to financially contribute to your shelter operation will agree to just “use the money where it is most needed”, and you may want to have a shelter “wish list” available.

Fundraising/Gaming Regulations

Alberta Gaming requires that you report all income that is gained from lotteries. You will need to submit to Alberta Gaming a statement of all income, costs, and disbursement of funds under the allotted time restraints. By not adhering to regulations and the timely reporting of funding, the risk exists that you will lose any further access to grants, or you may have to forfeit any money raised. Alberta Gaming publishes a book on these regulations and their clear interpretations. You might find helpful to have a current copy on hand. They are free from Alberta Gaming. For information contact: www.aglc.gov.ab.ca
Gaming Information for Charitable Groups (GAIN)

In November 2003, GAIN was launched to help volunteers gain a better understanding of the responsibilities and requirements of a gaming license and be more accountable to their members and the community at large. To date, over 10,000 volunteers have participated in the program. Today, there are two types of sessions GAIN (overview) and Use of Proceeds.

The province’s charities and volunteers identified a need for a new type of session focusing specifically on the use of gaming proceeds. The new session concentrates solely on the policies around spending gaming revenue earned from casinos, bingo, raffles and pull tickets.

GAIN and the new Use of Proceeds sessions are free to all volunteers and charitable groups, and are available year-round throughout the province. Sessions are posted quarterly. Please check for frequent updates.

For more information about GAIN or Use of Proceeds call 1-866-307-7499 or 780-447-7499. All other inquiries should be forwarded to the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission (AGLC) switchboard at 1-800-272-8876.

Special Events License

A special event liquor license is a legal document that allows the license holder to host a function with liquor service. Special event license holders can be individuals, not-for-profit agencies or companies.

Special event liquor licenses can be obtained from retail liquor stores, general merchandise liquor stores, general off sales rooms or the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission (AGLC). For more info visit: www.aglc.gov.ab.ca
Section 7

Insurance and Liability
Insurance and Liability

One of the most important, but also overlooked aspects of insurance is risk management. A shelter’s mandate is to protect women and their children, yet they also need to manage numerous other risks (driving women, care of children, food safety, potential property and building hazards, staff safety, employee dismissals, etc).

There are many types of losses that could occur while operating a shelter. While it is impossible to be fully prepared for all risks, a shelter needs to be aware of the potential for loss and to determine the best methods to deal with them.

Smaller losses will most likely be covered directly through funds the shelter has budgeted or set aside. For larger losses, transferring the risk is the most common alternative. Purchasing insurance normally does this.

Insurance Toolkit for the Volunteer Sector

This publication is designed to provide general information about insurance. Limited printed copies of this toolkit are available and an electronic version in PDF format is available free of charge on Volunteer Alberta’s website at www.volunteeralberta.ab.ca.

The following are some of the types of insurance that are available through commercial insurance companies:

**Auto**

If your agency owns vehicles, you must have automobile coverage. If you are the personal owner of the vehicle and use it for work-related activities, you may require additional coverage.

Non-owned Automobile Coverage protects the shelter from any liability that may arise from an accident involving another person who had used their vehicle to do work on your behalf. This includes other employees, volunteers and courier services.

Insurance coverage for volunteer drivers also becomes an issue. The CEO Bulletin may be of some use when dealing with this issue, see Appendix H.

**Business Interruption**

This provides compensation if your shelter experiences an unexpected and a temporary cease of operations. An example could be due to a fire that requires several weeks of repair, during which time, the shelter is uninhabitable.
Commercial/Comprehensive General Liability (CGL)
This type of insurance provides coverage on claims made by third parties who allege they have suffered property damage or bodily injury. Their loss is a result of the shelter’s actions while they were acting within the scope of their mandate. They may also provide coverage for your employees, but not the volunteers. At the time of purchase, ask your insurance broker about the exclusions. You may be able to obtain additional coverage through endorsements or under separate cover.

CGL policies are very explicit on what they do and do not cover. For example, most General Liability policies do not cover claims arising from any abuse or sexual misconduct claims.

Crime
This type of policy will cover the shelter for the financial loss that arises from a dishonest employee, volunteer or client.

Fire/Property
This provides coverage for the structural building and the contents inside the premises. If you are leasing the property, there may be a clause in the lease agreement that states your shelter is responsible for any damages on the premises.

Personal Injury/Advertising Injury
This can be added to the CGL policy and provides coverage for claims involving libel, slander, violation of privacy and infringement of copyright. While shelters generally do not advertise or distribute promotional material, most often the costs of this endorsement are minimal and may be worthwhile to purchase.

Professional Liability
Also known as Errors and Omissions or Malpractice insurance, this coverage is for claims arising from third parties who have suffered economic loss due to the professional negligence of your shelter. If you have professionals on staff, such as doctors, social workers or nurses, ensure they have their own professional liability coverage.

Worker’s Compensation
Determine whether WCB is applicable in the event one of your employees is injured while working. Generally, WCB will compensate the employee who in exchange must forfeit their right to make a claim against the shelter. However, an employee may choose not to accept a settlement from WCB. For these situations, the shelter should purchase Employer’s Liability Coverage, which is added as an extension to the CGL policy.

These are just some of the types of insurance that are available today. For a more detailed description of each type of coverage, please refer to the Insurance Toolkit for the Voluntary Sector (www.volunteeralberta.ab.ca/insurance).
Risk Management

Risk management is a way to address the possibility that some future event may cause harm. It provides strategies, techniques, and an approach to recognizing and confronting any threat faced by an agency in fulfilling its mission.

In nonprofits, the focus is on avoiding harm to the persons that we serve. When things go wrong, the impact goes beyond finances. The situation may impact on the agency’s chances of survival, in terms of potential clients, staff, volunteers and/or finances.

Risk management provides a clear and structured approach to identifying risks. Having a clear understanding of all the potential risks allows an agency to measure and prioritize them and take the appropriate actions to reduce losses. Risk management is important in saving resources, protecting the agency’s reputation, preventing both harm and legal liability, and enhancing the ability to prepare for various circumstances.

Having good risk management policies in place is the best way to keep your insurance premiums as low as possible, as well as to ensure that staff and those using shelter services are well protected. The ACWS Hazard Guide, Appendix I, can be used to assess some of your risks and possible steps you might want to take. You can also discuss these steps with your broker to ensure that s/he understands the steps you are taking to manage risk.

Developing a Risk Management Plan

Many shelter directors and their agencies are *minimizing* risk without even knowing that they are *managing* risk. A risk management plan simply involves formally identifying potential risks and minimizing their possibility such as:

- Screening volunteers to protect clients from harm
- Checking motor vehicle records for all employees and volunteers driving on the shelter’s behalf
- Developing board orientation and training materials
- Coordinating the development and consistent use of employment practices
- Negotiating the availability of bank credit and purchasing property and liability insurance to address the agency’s principal exposures
- Ensuring appropriate accounting practices
- Addressing hazards associated with the agency’s fundraising events
- Recommending policies and procedures that protect the agency from liability when it enters into relationships with partner or affiliate agencies
There are a number of excellent resources to assist you in developing a Risk Management Plan. These include:

**Checklist:**

The ACWS Hazard Checklist (See Appendix I)

**Books:**
*Responsibility and Accountability: What Community-Based Programs Need to Know* produced by FRP Canada. This booklet has some excellent resources on explaining risk management and developing a plan. It includes a number of checklists including: Board of Directors, Board Orientation, Financial Management, Human Resource and Volunteer Management, Risk Management, and Insurance Policy.

**Websites:**
[www.volunteeralberta.ab.ca/insurance/](http://www.volunteeralberta.ab.ca/insurance/)
The Insurance Toolkit for the Voluntary Sector

[http://www.allianceonline.org/content/index.php?pid=164](http://www.allianceonline.org/content/index.php?pid=164). This website, sponsored by the Alliance for Non-Profit Management, has an outline on how to establish a risk management plan.


Emergency Preparedness

Emergency preparedness planning involves establishing a process for managing emergency situations and thereby minimizing the impact on the agency. It includes all plans, procedures, contacts and exercises undertaken in anticipation of a potential emergency. The federal, provincial and municipal governments, as well as agencies and individuals, all have a role to play in preparing for emergencies.

There are four primary steps in developing your emergency preparedness plan:

1. **Assess** the potential risks
2. **Protect** critical functions
3. **Identify** the chain of command
4. **Develop** an emergency response plan

Developing an Emergency Preparedness Plan Questionnaire

The City of Ottawa has developed a questionnaire to help you work through the four steps. It can be found at:
http://ottawa.ca/residents/health/environments/workplace/emergency_checklist_en.html

Be Ready

- Ensure that your agency is part of your local government’s emergency plan
- Purchase a Weather Radio (with extra batteries)
- Post evacuation maps
- Maintain a complete First Aid Kit
- Purchase flashlights with spare batteries
- Maintain a paper register of staff and, if appropriate residents
- Maintain a 72 hour supply of food, water, hygiene products and, if appropriate, medicine
- Establish a meeting place
- Obtain a minimum of two emergency contacts for staff and participants
- Ensure that the facility has emergency lighting
- Establish a Pandemic Plan for the agency. See H1N1
- Learn more about Emergency Preparedness Planning. The following websites may be useful:
Shelter Case Study

The Pincher Creek Women’s Emergency Shelter took a proactive approach to H1N1, putting a committee in place to do everything possible to educate and prepare both staff, clients and board. The Community Health nurse came in days prior to the first roll out of the shots. Her message: shelter clients are considered very high risk (young aboriginal women, many pregnant and young children). It was even more critical that staff get vaccinated to ensure they would not pass the virus on to vulnerable clients.

Information was provided on clinic locations and nearly all staff was vaccinated in the first roll out as well as all clients who were in shelter at the time. There were no issues with abusers being in the line ups given the fact we had choices between small towns in the area.

We are sanitizing during every shift and have generally stepped up on all the precautions. Signs everywhere, masks available, a quarantine room if needed and we do a “mini” workshop with women during intake on the virus.
Section 8

Legislation
Legislation that Affects You

Alberta Human Rights Act

The Alberta Human Rights Act prohibits discrimination based on the protected grounds of race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, religious beliefs, gender, age, physical disability, mental disability, marital status, family status, source of income and sexual orientation.

You can read more about protected areas and grounds at: www.albertahumanrights.ab.ca/ProtAreasGrounds.pdf

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom is one part of the Canadian Constitution which sets out those rights and freedoms that Canadians believe are necessary in a free and democratic society. Some of the rights and freedoms contained in the Charter are freedom of expression, mobility rights, equality rights, and freedom from unreasonable discrimination http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/charter/.

Charitable Fundraising Act (CFRA)

The Charitable Fundraising Act (CFRA) and regulation lay out the rules that must be followed when charities ask Albertans for donations. Fund-raisers need to know about their legislated responsibilities.

Three key responsibilities are:

- Disclosing information to donors
- Preparing financial statements
- Keeping proper records

Charities and fund-raising businesses can be fined if they are convicted of offences under the act.

The following information must be provided to each donor before accepting a donation:

- Name of the charitable agency for which the donation is being requested
- Charitable purpose for which contributions will be used
- Cost of fund-raising and how much the charity expects to raise
- Address of the charity and, if incorporated, the place of incorporation
- Name and phone number of a contact person employed by the charity that the donor can call for further information
If a fund-raising business is used to solicit donations, a potential donor must also be told:

- Operating name and full legal name of the fund-raising business
- Remuneration of the fund-raising business is determined

All new applicants will be required to submit a copy of the solicitation materials or canvassing scripts that will be used to solicit funds. It is a serious offence to make a false statement of fact or to misrepresent any fact or circumstance in a solicitation for a charitable donation.

Every charitable agency that makes solicitations must maintain complete and accurate financial records of its operations in Alberta for at least three years after the solicitations are made. This includes:

- Original copies of financial statements
- Records regarding solicitations
- Records of the deposit bank account used by the fund-raising business and any payments from that account

Requirements for charitable agencies who solicit donations for a charitable purpose include:

- Names of the signing officers for the bank account
- Samples of the kinds of information given to potential donors, including any solicitation material and phone scripts
- Copies of the fund-raising agreements and any amendments
- Copies of receipts for all monetary contributions

A charitable agency must prepare and may be required to produce copies of its most recent audited financial statements if it has raised $250,000 or more through solicitations or a copy of its financial information return if it has raised less than $250,000.

Copies of all solicitation materials, canvassing scripts and other solicitation documents may also be examined and reviewed. The financial statements must identify all expenses incurred for the purpose of solicitation and include:

- Information on the gross contributions received
- Summary of dispositions of contributions (with a separate description of each disposition equal to or greater than 10% of the gross contributions received)
- Total amount paid as remuneration to employees of the charitable agency primarily responsible for fund-raising
- Amount of remuneration paid to the fund-raising business used, if applicable
The Alberta Government Services Web site www.gov.ab.ca/gs (then click on Charities) has forms and instructions for registering a charitable agency, links to the act and regulation, and the tip sheet "Information for Charities and Donors". The tip sheet "Information for Charities and Donors" contains information about registration, Standards of Practice, and general rules about solicitations.

All other inquiries can be directed to:
Alberta Government Services
Consumer Services Branch
Phone: Edmonton (780) 427-4088
Toll-free in Alberta: 1-877-427-4088
For more information visit: http://www.servicealberta.gov.ab.ca/

Canadian Charity Law

Charities in Canada must be registered with the Charities Directorate6 of the Canada Revenue Agency. According to the Canada Revenue Agency7:

A registered charity is an organization established and operated for charitable purposes, and must devote its resources to charitable activities. The charity must be resident in Canada, and cannot use its income to benefit its members. A charity also has to meet a public benefit test. To qualify under this test, an organization must show that:

- Its activities and purposes provide a tangible benefit to the public.
- Those people who are eligible for benefits are either the public as a whole, or a significant section of it, in that they are not a restricted group or one where members share a private connection, such as social clubs or professional associations with specific membership.
- The charity's activities must be legal and must not be contrary to public policy.
- To register as a charity, the organization has to be either incorporated or governed by a legal document called a trust or a constitution. This document has to explain the organization's purposes and structure.

For more information on charitable requirements see Page 70.

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6 http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/chrts-gvng/menu-eng.html

Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act

The Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act supports the development and well-being of Alberta’s children, youth and families while keeping them safe and protected. The act came into force on November 1, 2004.

Family violence has been highlighted in the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, and the definition of emotional injury has been expanded to include exposure to family violence. As well, police may now be required to report every family violence incident where children are present in the home.

The act was designed with the expressed intent of providing more services to families before they reach crisis, more quickly establishes permanent homes for children in government care, allows increased access to adoption information, and strengthens collaboration and sensitivity to aboriginal and Métis needs.

The Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act emphasizes that for families who experience domestic violence, intervention services should be provided in a manner that supports the abused family members and prevents the need to remove the child from the custody of an abused family member, while keeping in mind that the safety of children is of paramount concern.

Online training is available regarding the act. See www.child.gov.ab.ca

Employment Standards Code and Regulations

Employment standards are minimum standards of employment for employers and employees in the workplace. In Alberta, our employment standards are contained in the Employment Standards Code and the Employment Standards regulation. Through these laws, minimum standards of employment have been established for:

- Payment of Earnings
- Minimum Wage
- Hours of Work, Rest Periods and Days of Rest
- Overtime and Overtime Pay
- Vacations and Vacation pay
- General Holidays and General Holiday pay
- Maternity and Parental Leave
- Termination of Employment
- Employment of Individuals Under 18 Years of Age
- Adolescent Employment in the Restaurant and Food service Industry
- Working Alone
- Violence in the Workplace
Where legislated standards do not fit the unique circumstances of a workplace, it may be necessary to obtain a permit for a variation or relief from a standard.

For more information visit: www.hre.gov.ab.ca. Nearly all employers and employees in Alberta are subject to the standards in the Employment Standards Code and the Employment Standards Regulation.

If you have any doubt about the application of any standard, contact the Employment Standards Telephone Counseling Service. Call the province-wide information line at 1-877-427-3731 (Edmonton and area dial 780-427-3731).

Counselors are able to address a broad range of employment standards questions and issues. They are available during regular business hours (8:15a.m. to 4:30 p.m.). Recorded messages on core employment standards are available 24 hours a day.

Employment Standards staff provide comprehensive hands-on training designed to provide participants with a better understanding of the rights and obligations of employers and employees under the Employment Standards Code.

Education programs are delivered in three ways:

1. "Wages at Work" Workshop
   This is a full-day workshop designed for business owners, managers, supervisors, payroll and accounting personnel.

2. Presentations and Seminars
   These presentations can range from one hour to four hours, depending on the information requested. Information is customized to suit the needs of your business or group.

3. Train the Trainer
   The Train the Trainer program is a partnership initiative aimed at educational institutions, non-profit/social agencies and associations. We provide half-day instructor training sessions that allow instructors to present a basic overview of the Code provisions to clients in their agency.

For more information visit www.hre.gov.ab.ca or contact:

**Edmonton and area**
Main Floor, Sterling Place  
9940 - 106 Street  
Edmonton AB T5K 2N2  
Phone: (780) 644-3940 or (780) 427-4200  
Fax: (780) 427-5698

**Calgary and area**
Main Floor, Elveden Centre  
717 - 7 Avenue SW  
Calgary AB T2P 0Z3  
Phone: (403) 297-5792  
Fax: (403) 297-4140
**Family Law Act**

*The Family Law Act* replaced the Domestic Relations Act, the Maintenance Order Act, the Parentage and Maintenance Act and parts of the Provincial Court Act and the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act.

**The Family Law Act:**
- Gives guidelines to family members, lawyers and judges about the rights and responsibilities of family members
- Encourages settlement of family law disputes and focuses on the best interests of children

**The Act also sets out:**
- Responsibilities and powers of parents, guardians and others, how to share responsibilities, powers and time with children when parents do not live together
- How to decide on amounts of support
- How to apply to the court when people cannot agree

**The Family Law Act does not deal with:**
- Divorce
- Matters involving family property
- Child protection matters

For more info for legal issues, see the ACWS Shelter Practice Orientation Manual and associated PowerPoint presentation on the Members Only webpage.

*The Family Law Act can be viewed and printed from the Alberta Queen’s Printer web site at:* [http://www.qp.alberta.ca/](http://www.qp.alberta.ca/)

For more information visit or call: [www.albertacourts.ab.ca](http://www.albertacourts.ab.ca)

**Edmonton**
Main Floor, Law Courts Building
1A Sir Winston Churchill Square
Edmonton, AB T5J 0R2
Tel: (780) 427-2743
Fax: (780) 427-5797

**Calgary**
Calgary Courts Centre
601 5 Street S.W.
Calgary, AB T2P 5P7
Tel: (403) 297-3471
Fax: (403) 297-3461
Freedom of Information and Privacy Act (FOIP)

Privacy Legislation and Women's Shelters
-by George Alvarez, Information and Privacy Office

As an agency:
Within the public sector, there exist two provincial privacy acts: the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP) and the Health Information Act (HIA).

As well, there is private sector privacy legislation: the Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA).

Women's Shelters fall within the private sector, but as agencies incorporated under the Societies Act they excluded from following PIPA requirements. In essence, they do not have any privacy legislation that directly applies. Similarly, in considering the federal privacy legislation, there is no direct application, either under the public (Privacy Act, Access to Information Act) or the private (Personal Information Protection of Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA)) sectors. In order for a not-for-profit agency to be subject to either PIPA or PIPEDA, it would have to be involved in some form of commercial activity that includes the management of personal information, for instance through your fundraising activities.

As an Agent of the Province through provincial contracts:
When an agency provides services on behalf of another agency, they may be indirectly subject to privacy legislation. For example, the contracts between Women's Shelters and Alberta Children and Youth Services mean that certain information that is exchanged between the Shelters and the ministry becomes subject to the FOIP Act. In addition, there are requirements placed on the shelters as to how they should be managing the information that they have within their custody. This is required of a public body (ministry or department) under the FOIP Act. Contracts should be relatively specific about some of those expectations, and about which records come under the control of the ministry, and which ones should be submitted to, or open to review by, the ministry staff. It is fundamental that Alberta Children and Youth Services, your local police service, etc. should never have access to individual case files. Alberta Children Services under the terms of the contract only has access to your aggregate shelter data.

The current contracts do not set out any control by the ministry over the personal information of the families that the shelters work with, other than it be properly managed. Any decisions about sharing personal information by shelter staff would therefore depend on circumstances being reviewed, in the best interests of those involved, and perhaps by other legislation.
By way of example, if shelter staff determines that there is a potential for a child to be at risk, they are obligated to report that information to the ministry. However if the staff determine that a woman is placing herself at considerable risk to her health and safety, it would be at their discretion as to whether or not they would need to report their concerns. In the first example, the obligation to report is a requirement under the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act*. However, in the second example, there is no privacy or other legislation that applies, and the staff needs to determine what are the appropriate steps based on whatever criteria are deemed relevant. If the woman was not prepared to consent to the disclosure, the staff would likely need to weigh the degree of risk, the existence of other supports, and weigh that against any concerns that the woman might not return to the safety of the shelter should she feel that she has not had her views respected.

It should be noted that the factors noted above could also be considerations in situations where the agency considering them is subject to privacy legislation. The rationale for making a decision to disclose is due to the potential need to address health and safety issues.

In general, all information that is required to be reported to ACYS deals with aggregate information and "only anonymous individual information is given to the Prevention of Family Violence and Bullying by the women's shelters. Anonymous individual information is information that by itself does not readily identify the particular individual. The Prevention of Family Violence and Bullying will not use the reported information to make service decisions about individual women". This aggregate information is stored in the Women’s Shelter Information System (WSIS). Authorized CFSA staff has access to this information to support their service delivery responsibilities under the *Child and Family Services Authorities Act*.

There may be occasion when ACYS, for auditing purposes, may need to review some information that may include personal information held by shelters to support the aggregate information reported to Alberta Children's Services, but generally should not include client files. “Audit purposes do not include operational or administrative purposes such as verification of a claimant’s eligibility for a program, benefit or service, where an actual decision would be made about an individual”.

The Women’s Shelter Program Standards Document states that the Service Provider shall, under no circumstances, confirm admission or divulge the whereabouts of clients admitted for service to the shelter to any other person without the consent of the client unless required to do so by legislation, judicial order or medical crisis”. This would, I believe, include other personal information about the client as well.

In terms of disclosing without consent a client’s personal information the FOIP section of the contract I reviewed, stated that the agency “shall not use or disclose any personal information about an individual for any purpose other than what is needed to carry out this Agreement, unless the Agency has received the consent of the Minister of Children’s Services or of the individual’s guardian”. To receive the consent of the Minister in this case would mean I believe going through the Prevention of Family Violence and Bullying to obtain such.
Joint Consult Form
You can access a template consent form by going to the Alberta Children and Youth Initiative web site found at:

Once there you would click on Information Sharing and then on Sample Terms of Reference - Integrated Service and Consent to Disclosure Form.

Given that shelters collaborate with public bodies (e.g., schools, police, CFSA’s, etc.) it is important to understand how the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act works.

What Does FOIP Do?

- Allows any person a right of access to the records in the custody or under the control of a public body subject to limited and specific exceptions as set out in this Act.
- Controls the manner in which a public body may collect personal information from individuals, to control the use that a public body may make of that information and to control the disclosure by a public body of that information.
- Allows individuals, subject to limited and specific exceptions as set out in this Act, a right of access to personal information about themselves that is held by a public body.
- Allows individuals a right to request corrections to personal information about themselves that is held by a public body.
- Provides for independent reviews of decisions made by public bodies under this Act and the resolution of complaints under this Act.

Our thanks to George Alvarez, Information and Privacy Office, who prepared the information on the above section: FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AND PRIVACY ACT (FOIP).
Gaming and Liquor Act

Under the Gaming and Liquor Act, the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission is given the responsibility for regulating Alberta’s charitable gaming activities and conducting and managing provincial gaming activities. It also controls the manufacture, importation, sale, purchase, possession, storage, transportation, use and consumption of liquor in Alberta. See Section 6 for more on fundraising and gaming regulations.

The Health Profession Act (HPA)

The Health Professions Act requires mandatory registration without exemption for all social workers practicing in Alberta regardless of job title. This legislation recognizes the scope of practice of social work and establishes "social worker" as a protected title that can only be used by registered social workers.

As an employer of social workers, shelter directors must submit a complaint to the College of Social Workers if you have terminated or suspended a social worker or accepted a social worker’s resignation in place of suspension or termination due to unprofessional conduct. (See s.57 of the Health Professions Act). All registered social workers have an obligation to notify the College when they believe or have reason to believe that a colleague is guilty of malpractice or professional misconduct. If the person filing the complaint is not the person who was directly affected by the violation, clients should be named only if they have given their consent.

The Labour Relations Code

The Labour Relations Code sets out basic certification, collective bargaining and dispute resolution mechanisms applicable to the various collective agreements negotiated between employers and unions within Alberta. For A Guide to Alberta's Labour Laws, go to www.alrb.gov.ab.ca/guideopening.html

Mental Health Act

The Mental Health Act of Alberta permits involuntary detention and admission to a hospital for examination and treatment against an individual’s will.

However, the Act provides various rights and safeguards. If you have concerns that rights are not being respected, you should contact a lawyer or the provincial Mental Health Patient Advocate. In addition, Calgary Legal Aid may provide a lawyer if there is an upcoming review panel hearing.
Contact the Mental Health Patient Advocate’s office at:

The Mental Health Patient Advocate
12th Floor, Centre West Building
10035 – 108 Street
Edmonton, AB T5J 3E1

By telephone, call (780) 422-1812. Outside of Edmonton use the Riteline at 310-0000.

*The Mental Health Act of Alberta: A Guide for Consumers and Caregivers* was written to help one understand ones rights within the Act. It is intended as self-advocacy information only. Although the information in this publication is about legal issues, it should not be seen as providing legal advice. It is available on-line at: [http://download.cmha.ab.ca/alberta/mha.pdf](http://download.cmha.ab.ca/alberta/mha.pdf)

**Occupational Health & Safety (OHSA)**
(See “Facility” Section as well)

Enacted in 2003, the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Code establishes minimum standards for safe and healthy practices in Alberta workplaces. As part of the Alberta government's continued commitment to workplace health and safety, Human Resources and Employment (HRE) conducts a review of suggestions for changes to the Code every two years so watch for changes.

For information about a particular topic or issue you should call the Workplace Health and Safety Contact Centre at 1-866-415-8690 or (780) 415-8690 in Edmonton.
Deaf or hard of hearing:
Edmonton (780) 427-9999
Other locations 1-800-232-7215

Readers can also contact the Contact Centre through the Workplace Health and Safety Web site at: [www.whs.gov.ab.ca](http://www.whs.gov.ab.ca) or [www.worksafely.org](http://www.worksafely.org)

**Protection Against Family Violence Act (PAFVA)**

On June 1, 1999, the *Protection Against Family Violence Act* was proclaimed in Alberta. One of the provisions of this legislation allows police or social workers to obtain an Emergency Protection Order (EPO) by contacting a Justice of the Peace, on a 24-hour basis.

The EPO is a temporary order that can order the respondent to stay away from family members and the residence, and allow the claimant (victim of violence) to remain in the home if it is safe. The legislation also allows a person to apply directly for a Queen's Bench Protection Order (a longer-term order) and allows police to obtain a Warrant of Entry to assist victims of family violence. For more on protection orders see the ACWS Orientation Manual.
Protection for Persons in Care Act

The *Protection for Persons in Care Act* promotes the safety and wellbeing of adult Albertans who receive services from publicly funded agencies. These agencies must protect Albertans from abuse and maintain a reasonable level of safety.

The emphasis is on prevention. Every complaint is investigated. After an investigation, recommendations that focus on preventing abuse in the future are made to agencies. An investigator may also dismiss a complaint if it is unfounded or there is not sufficient evidence.

The Protection for Persons in Care program is part of Alberta Seniors and Community Supports. To report abuse call the Protection for Persons in Care reporting line at 1-888-357-9339, Monday to Friday from 8:15 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

The reporting line is not a crisis line. Call the police if a person’s life or wellbeing is in immediate danger, or if the matter is criminal in nature.

A complaint can be submitted in writing to:

Protection for Persons in Care  
Station M, Box 476  
Edmonton, AB T5J 2K1  
For more information about Protection for Persons in Care visit: [www.seniors.gov.ab.ca](http://www.seniors.gov.ab.ca)

Social Care Facilities Act

The *Social Care Facilities Licensing Act* governs the licensing of adult and children’s facilities, specifically day cares, out-of-school care centres and nurseries, to ensure facilities are safe and meeting the needs of clients. In the past, shelters had a rated licensed capacity on the Social Care Facilities Licensing Act. However, the Act no longer applies to women’s shelters. Shelters need to ensure that they comply with all health, building code and municipal bylaw requirements.

From time to time members of the Social Care Facilities Review Committee (see text box below) will visit provincially funded shelters. They will ask to speak with staff and residence each year they prepare a report that is released by the Minister. Their reports frequently identify the concerns expressed by women on the difficulty they experienced accessing community services as well as the lack of affordable housing available once they left the shelters.
The Social Care Facility Review Committee (SCFRC)

This committee does not operate under the Social Care Facilities Licensing Act; it only shares a similar name. The SCFRC is currently looking at reviewing the mandate again which would include a name change to prevent future confusion between the SCFRC and the Social Care Facilities Review Licensing Act.

The Committee’s purpose is to review facilities that are funded wholly or in part by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, such as women’s shelters, as well as day care and out-of-school care facilities. The SCFRC exists to provide the Minister of CYS with information regarding care, treatment and accommodations within facilities as heard from service recipients and providers.

From time to time members of the Social Care Facilities Review Committee will visit provincially funded shelters. They will ask to speak with staff and residence each year they prepare a report that is released by the Minister.

Societies Act

The Societies Act provides legal authority for a society to incorporate for a non-profit purpose and file by-laws for governance of the society. Copies of the Acts can be ordered from the Queen’s Printer at: www.qp.gov.ab.ca
Section 9

Policies and Procedures
Policies and Procedures

**Policies are expectations**, definitions and courses of action agreed on by an organization’s Board of Directors. Policies can be general or can relate to a specific program. For legal and accountability reasons, it is important for non-profit agencies to have policies which protect the agency, its staff, clients/participants and volunteers.

**Procedures**, on the other hand, refer to directions, instructions, and/or step-by-step courses of action. Procedures may be part of policy or just practical knowledge. Basically, procedures outline how you will implement a policy.

Policies are developed and approved at the board level, while procedures are internal matters, generally developed by the Executive Director.

If you have not written policies before, you can look at other policies within your agency or at other agencies. ACWS has a section on our website that provides you with sample policies and procedures.

The ACWS Board Manual can be found on the ACWS website. In addition shelters have shared many of their internal policies and procedures on the members only website.

**Contents of a Policy Manual**

Your Policy Manual contains all the policies of your agency.

- Your **Service Delivery Policies** need to be consistent with the objectives and standards set by the funder and by the mandate of the agency. It also needs to be consistent with the various relevant Acts/Laws.
- Your **Financial Policies** must meet both your funding agreements and Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP).
Policy Checklists

The following checklists are guides to help you as you develop your policy manual.

Personnel Policies

Recommended Sections:
- Who approves the policy\(^8\)
- The Composition and role of a Personnel Committee
- Employment Practices – Identify that they are according to current legal standards \(^9\)
- Authority to employ
- Recruitment
- Probation period
- Evaluation
- Termination
- Orientation
- Discipline
- Grievance procedure
- Conflict of interest
- Professional conduct
- Remuneration & Benefits (e.g., pension plan, and group insurance)
- Hours of Work
- Overtime and Compensation
- Holidays (ensure it includes what is identified by law as a minimum)
- Vacation
- Compassionate Leave
- Parenting/Adoption Leave
- Sick Leave
- Working Alone
- Violence in the Workplace
- Other — as required by the law and your agency

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\(^8\) Sample wording: This policy is approved as the general statement of terms of employment of staff of (agency name) and adopted by the Executive Director.

\(^9\) Sample wording: The agency adheres to the laws and regulations of Canada, the province of ________, and the city of __________, governing fair employment practices and in accordance with the highest ethical standards.
Note: The Human Resource Toolkit at www.hrcouncil.ca/hr-toolkit/access-point-manager.cfm offers a wealth of information for developing policies as well as excellent tools and resources, including an HR Check Up. Make sure to bookmark this site.

Service Delivery Policy
Note: Shelters share many of their policies on the ACWS members only website.

Recommended Sections:
- Agency’s mandate
- Identification of clientele
- Programs delivered
- Clients’ Rights and Responsibilities
- Release of information
- Clients’ access to their information
- Clients’ complaints
- Conflict of interest
- Communication Policy (verbal and written)
- Internet and Email policy
- Retention of clients’ records (how long)
- Destruction of clients’ records (method, who is responsible, when)
- Other - as required by the law and your agency
- Ethical/Moral Framework

Financial Policy

Recommended Sections:
- Financial Accountability (who prepares the budget, who adopts the budget, when the budget is adopted)
- Signing Authority
- Limitation of financial transactions (for example, the Executive Director has the authority to spend up to $ without board/finance committee approval)
- Payroll
- Insurance
- Purchasing power
- Audit
- Internal Audit
- Cash on Hand (amount, who handles it, safeguards)
• Reporting
• Employees Benefits El
• Reimbursement of expenses
• Travel (mileage)
• Financial Forms
• Retention and Destruction of Financial Records
• Other - as required by the law and your agency

Critical Incident Forms

It is important that whenever a critical incident occurs in your organization (for example, injury, a fall, threatening behavior, a fight, suicide attempt), a staff member completes a Critical Incident Form as soon as possible. The form needs to describe the incident, indicate the staff/agency response and state the follow-up activity required. It is your responsibility to ensure that the follow up actually happens.

The completed form will be important documentation should the issue ever need to be pursued by the legal system, the media or fenders.

(From Lighting the Road to Success)

**Critical Incident Form**

Date: ____________________

Name of Person Filling Form: ____________________________________________

Name(s) of Person(s) Involved: ____________________________________________

Description of Incident: __________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

Action Carried Out: ______________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

Follow Up/Action Required: ______________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

Signature of Person Filling out Form: ________________________________________

Signature of Shelter Director: ______________________________________________
Section 10

Shelter Staffing
Shelter Staffing

In providing needed social services, our greatest asset is our staff. They are the ones who establish relationships with your clientele and are critical to meeting the organization’s goals and objectives. This section will provide you with introductory information on various aspects of the Human Resources (HR) function. For more detailed information, there are excellent resources and training available. One resource developed by the CAPC/CPNP National Projects Fund is People & Planning: A Human Resources Management Toolkit for CAPC/CPNP Projects. The manual can be downloaded at: http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/hp-ps/dca-dea/proq-ini/pphr-torh/index-eng.php

The HR Toolkit is a comprehensive online resource designed to help managers, employees and board members better understand, address and manage issues relating to HR in nonprofit organizations. Whether you're looking for guidance on the hiring process, information about employment legislation or sample HR policies to download, the HR Toolkit's intuitive navigation, plain language and integrated tools and templates make it easy to find what you're looking for. ACWS is currently augmenting this template to add specific shelter issues to assist shelter directors and their boards. It can be found at www.hrvs-rhsbc.ca/hr-toolkit/home.cfm.

You may also find the “The Myths and Realities of the Workforce Crunch in Non-Profits” as useful background information. See Appendix J.

Hiring

The first step in developing a strong staff team is hiring the right people. While there are no guarantees when hiring, there are a few strategies to help you ensure the right fit between the organization and the new staff person.

Writing an Effective Job Ad

Establishing Selection Criteria

Before writing an ad, think about the position and the type of applicant you are looking for. Review the position’s duties and required qualifications. This is the time to review and make changes from the last time you filled the position. Imagine your ideal candidate. What kind of job would they be looking for? What do they value? For example, would they be motivated by location? Salary? Sharing the values of their employer? Training?
Make sure that your job description is clear and up to date. A good job description helps potential applicants understand their duties and responsibilities; the relative importance of their duties and how their position contributes to the mission, goals and objectives of the organization. They also help you to clearly identify the most appropriate employee for new duties and realignment of workloads. A good job description is fundamental to human resource management.

The HR Toolkit can walk you through some important steps, including:

- Performing a thorough job analysis
- Designing interesting and challenging jobs
- How is a job description developed
- Who approves a job description
- Job profiles and sample job descriptions

Go to http://www.hrcouncil.ca/hr-toolkit/right-people-job-descriptions.cfm

Charity Village (www.charityvillage.com) has developed a series of worksheets that are useful in determining what you are looking for in an employee. The worksheets, examine:

- Results that must be produced by the person doing the job
- Skills, knowledge and experience required to achieve the organization’s key values
- Behaviors that would demonstrate that the applicant has the required values
- Major components of the organization’s working climate
- Criteria (such as education, personal traits and experience) that demonstrate compatibility

The HR Toolkit also has useful sections on recruitment, interviewing and reference checks.

**Determining the Advertising Medium**

The next step is determining where you will post your advertisement. While nonprofits have traditionally advertised through the local newspapers, there are other mediums available. The Internet has numerous job-seeking sites. Some of these sites are free, some are geared towards target groups and others provide unlimited words and ads for one fee. The federal government has a job bank at www.jobbank.gc.ca. It is free and other job search sites link to it.

Some employers find their best recruitment to be through word of mouth, postings at likeminded organizations, professional association newsletters and postings at educational/training institutions. Many organizations that prioritize community capacity building start by looking at their volunteers and participants to see if there are any potential employees.
Again, think about your ideal candidate. Where would they go if looking for a job? Where would they come across the information, even if they weren’t actively seeking? If you aren’t sure about the answers to these questions, you can get feedback from your current staff.

Writing the Ad
Your aim is to attract the right applicant. In order to attract highly-qualified applicants, especially if the job market has more positions than qualified employees, you will need to sell the position. Research has shown that potential applicants look first at salary, location and benefits. Strong applicants will also look for an element of personal challenge. Your ad should be simple, concise, and open.

When using online job-seeking sites, you have more room to play with format and wording. For example, you can use bullets and write in a more personal manner. It will be important to ensure that you have included any keywords that your ideal candidate will be using in her/his Internet search.

Checklist for Writing a Job Ad

Include:
- Position title
- Agency name and location
- Short description of agency
- Description of position
- Required education, experience and skills
- Salary and benefits
- Contact information
- Closing date

Tone
- Write in a positive tone, to make the role in your shelter sound worthwhile
- Present the information in order of interest to the applicant
- Present information in a logical order
- Check your spelling and grammar
- Get feedback from current employees (e.g., would this attract them?)

Listing a Position’s Salary

There are mixed views on whether or not to include the position’s salary in the ad. Some organizations choose not to publish the salary, either because there’s a range dependent on qualifications, or because they don’t want to limit their potential pool. Others will post it – either to screen out or attract potential applicants, depending on the pay scale.
Optional (particularly for Internet Marketing)

- Illustrate the work environment: busy, casual, professional, personal office space
- Describe the company: nonprofit, community-based, shelter
- Use subheadings to break up large sections
- List items with bullet points to make the details easy to scan
- Include keywords related to the role, such as alternative job titles
- Detail the requirements of the role:
  - Key skills and responsibility areas
  - Software or technical knowledge
  - Professional memberships, certification
  - Special skills, such as languages

Interviewing

Interviewing is the most important part of the hiring process. Your questions will likely focus on a number of areas, including:

- Experience
- Knowledge
- Skills
- Interests
- Values
- Working Climate

Interviewing Tips

- Remember that the applicant is also interviewing you. The tone of the interview will give them a sense of the tone of the organization, helping them to determine whether the position and agency feel like a good fit.
- Avoid close-ended (i.e., yes and no) questions.
- Wherever possible, ask for examples from their previous experience. For example, rather than asking them how they handle conflict in the workplace, ask them to tell you about a time that they experienced conflict with a co-worker and how they responded.
- Be specific in your questions. Rather than asking whether they are proficient with Microsoft® Excel, ask them if they are able to use a spreadsheet to add, subtract, multiply figures, determine percentages and create pie charts.
- Ensure that you have at least two people present at the interview. If possible, the same people should sit in on all of the interviews.
• It is important to give the candidate time to think through your question and to answer fully. Some applicants will be quite nervous and giving them time will help you gain the most complete information from them.

• After the interview, identify and assess your feelings and impressions. It’s important to determine if something felt good or if it felt not quite right. Once you identify your gut reaction, you can then examine it further to see whether there is something of value behind it and if you need more information before you can make a decision.

• Do not ask questions prohibited by Provincial human rights Legislation. Visit the following link for a chart outlining what can and can’t be asked in Alberta. http://www.albertahumanrights.ab.ca/RecommGuidePreEmpl.pdf. For information on legislation in other provinces, please contact your provincial Human Rights Commission or see: http://www.albertahumanrights.ab.ca/publications/bulletins_sheets_booklets/sheet_s/hr_and_employment/pre_employment_inquiries_guide.asp.

• Provide an opportunity for the applicant to ask questions.

There are a number of resources with comprehensive lists of interview questions. See sample interview questions from The HR Toolkit, www.hrcouncil.ca/hr-toolkit and from www.hrsv-rhsbc.ca/docs/staffing_sample_interview_questions.pdf.

Other resources are:

Another is on the Charity Village website, www.charityvillage.com/cv/ires/RecruitQs3.html
Reference Checks

Reference checks are generally conducted after all other assessments, either on the highest ranked candidate or several highly-qualified candidates. Under Alberta’s Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA) employers may collect, use or disclose "employee personal information" without the consent of the employee or prospective employee if reasonable for the purposes of establishing, managing or terminating an employment relationship.

Accordingly, when conducting a reference check, the prospective employer does not need the applicant’s consent. However, the prospective employer must:

- Give the applicant notice in advance that it intends to contact previous employers or conduct background checks.
- Explain to the applicant in advance the purpose or reason for collecting, using or disclosing the information (i.e., to make a hiring decision).
- Ensure that the collection and use of the information is "reasonably required" for the establishment of the employment relationship (i.e., to determine the job applicant's suitability for the position).

Although consent from the applicant is not required for reference checks, a prospective employer may still wish to obtain written consent, especially if the prospective employer intends to contact previous employers who are not listed as referees.

If an applicant lists a former employer as a referee, then he or she has implicitly consented to that former employer disclosing his or her employee personal information to the prospective employer. However, if a former employer is not listed as a referee, then that former employer may be in breach of PIPA if it discloses the applicant’s employee personal information without consent.

For this reason, it may be prudent to get an applicant’s consent up front to contact persons other than those listed by the applicant as references. This consent could be requested on the job application form. A sample consent form is found below.

When contacting a reference, explain the reason for the call and summarize the position. Ask open-ended questions, asking the reference to support their opinions with facts, behaviors, critical incidents and recent knowledge of the candidate. It is appropriate to ask about:

- Personal work habits, including absenteeism, sick leave usage, respect for others, honesty, and integrity.
- Reason for leaving previous place of employment. It is important to ask previous employers if they would rehire them.
- If the candidate was disciplined for misconduct, released for incompetence, rejected on probation, dismissed for disciplinary reasons or if they abandoned their position.
- The candidate’s ability to carry out certain tasks or responsibilities. If possible, have them provide you with examples.
Consent for Collection of Reference Information

I, ________________________, authorize [agency] to collect information about me from appropriate references regarding employment dates, job responsibilities, performance, attendance, salary history, and other job-related information.

I understand that this information is required for the purposes of completing the process of an application for employment (or volunteer position) and will be kept confidential. I accordingly authorize anyone contacted as a reference to disclose such information to [agency] for that purpose.

____________________________________________________________
Printed Name     Signature

Dated this ____________ day of __________________, 20___

Should you have any questions about this consent to handle personal information, please contact ___________________________ at [agency and phone number]

Remember

After an applicant has accepted the position, contact all the other applicants to inform them that they did not receive the position. One way of responding to questions as to why they didn’t get the position is to describe how the successful candidate had the required qualifications. You may want to keep your responses brief so as to avoid any potential problems with liabilities.

Re-Posting

It is seldom wise to “make do” when you cannot find an acceptable applicant. Rather, take your time to find someone who is able to do the job. If you need, you can repost the position, including looking at other avenues of advertising. Remember, it is always easier and less time consuming to repost than to terminate an employee later. If you still cannot find an appropriate employee, take another look at the job description - perhaps the requirements are too rigid or the skill requirements too diverse for one position.
Employment Contract

The first order of business with a new staff person is to sign an employment contract, sometimes referred to as a Hiring Agreement, Job Contract or Employment Agreement. Refer to the HR Toolkit, www.hrcouncil.ca/hr-toolkit/right-people-selection.cfm#_secA6 for an agreement template.

Orientation

All new employees, as well as returning employees who have been on an extended leave, need to receive an orientation to both the organization and their position.

Recommendations:

- Meet with your new employee pre- and post-orientation to welcome her or him.
- Sign a contract or agreement to their letter of offer, oath of confidentiality and overtime agreement.
- Determine what frequency and type of supervision they need.
- Determine what type of training they require.
- Document your notes and place them in the employee's personnel files.
- Have them sign the Personnel Policy Declaration form (below).
- Develop an orientation kit, including information about the organization, relevant policies, and any forms that need completion. For more on steps to orient a new employee see http://www.hrcouncil.ca/hr-toolkit/right-people-orientation.cfm.

Personnel Policy Declaration Form

[AGENCY]
Personnel Policy Declaration Form

I, _________________________________, acknowledge that I have received a copy of the Personnel Policy, and understand adherence of this policy to be a condition of my employment with [agency].

__________________________________________  _________________
Signature of Respondent                                                      Date
Employee Performance Management

1. Ongoing, non-disciplinary communication:
   An important part of performance management is the relationship between you and your employees. This relationship is developed through ongoing communication in both individual and group contexts. Staff meetings, annual interviews, and office conversations are all a part of this communication. Some directors choose to have an 'Open Door Policy,' allowing staff to approach them whenever it’s needed. Others find that this impedes on their productivity and they ask staff to make an appointment unless it’s an emergency.

2. Annual Interview:
   At least once a year, you should meet with each staff member to discuss how they are doing in their position. It is an opportunity to find out how they feel about their job and the organization. Areas you will want to look into include:
   - What they find rewarding
   - What they find frustrating
   - Changes they’ve experienced over the past year
   - Ideas they have for improvement in their position and the agency
   - What motivates them
   - What form of supervision would be helpful to them at this point in their career
   - Any accomplishments of which they feel particularly proud

3. Goal Setting:
   Goal setting and monitoring are important aspects of staff supervision. Goals provide direction to both the employee and to you as the supervisor, setting a direction for the employee’s performance and giving a frame of reference for communication. They can also provide a strong sense of fulfillment as they are an indicator of success. Goal setting should be a collaborative process with both you and the employee setting clear performance goals together. Like the objectives in your program planning, employee goals should follow the S.M.A.R.T. guidelines (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time bound).

4. Supporting Employee Motivation:
   Supervisors are the people who can best set the environment for employees to motivate themselves. Each person’s motivations will be different – don’t assume that what motivates you is what will motivate others. Some motivators are affirmation, money, promotions, flexibility, variety, and perks. It is important to take the time to determine what motivates each person.
5. Providing Feedback on Behaviors:
It is important to provide your staff with ongoing feedback.

Guidelines for Feedback
1. Emphasize the positive
2. Be specific
3. Focus on the behaviour and not the person
4. Focus on behaviour that can be changed
5. Be descriptive rather than evaluative
6. OWN your feedback (i.e., “I statements”)
7. Be careful about giving advice
8. Be clear about your expectations

6. Providing Professional Development Opportunities:
Professional development helps staff reach professional and personal excellence. Prioritizing professional development should be based on the needs of the organization, services delivered in the community, and the training required to provide the best possible programs. ACWS offers a number of training opportunities. Friday Files provide you with upcoming training events.

Determining and planning for professional development is a two-pronged process based on both budgeting and need.

Staff Needs
An important component of either the annual interview and/or performance review is to identify the staff member’s needs. Once the priorities are established, it is fine to delegate the task of determining the appropriate training to that staff member. Once they have found something suitable, have your staff submit a written request like the following sample Training Request Form, which prompts staff to identify the benefits of the training to them and to the organization.

Exercise
What motivates your staff?
1. Make list of 3 to 5 things that motivate each employee.
2. Meet with each employee individually to discuss and see if you are accurate.
3. Determine specific actions you will take, showing how you will motivate each staff person.
The annual performance review is a means of providing feedback to employees on how they are doing. It is the formalization of an ongoing, year-round communication and supervisory process.

The performance review is a tool to:

- Provide feedback on performance
- Provide recognition for good work
- Identify training needs
- Provide a forum for discussing career goals
- Generate ideas on how the supervisor can better support the employee

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**Training Request Form**

Name: ________________

Date: ________________

Professional training requested: ________________

Date Delivered: ________________

Cost: ________________

Benefit to the agency:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Benefit for service delivery

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Approved by ________________________________

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10 This section draws from *People & Planning: A Human Resources Management Toolkit for CAPC/CPNP Projects (The Pas Family Resource Centre, 2002).*
There are four basic steps to a performance appraisal:

1. **Plan the performance appraisal**
   - Review and, if necessary, revise the job description.
   - Prepare the appraisal form based on the performance standards, as listed in the job description.
   - Review the appraisal process.
   - Set a schedule and inform the employee.
   - Have the employee complete the self-assessment.
   - Complete the form and/or have their direct supervisor complete it.
   - If you are getting input from others, have them complete the form also.

2. **Hold the performance appraisal meeting**
   The performance appraisal meeting is an opportunity for you and the employee to share your perspectives. There are six main topics to cover in the meeting:
   a) The employee’s strengths and achievements. Some employers keep a list of positive accomplishments that the employee has made over the year. Others recommend that the employee do so and bring the list to the meeting.
   b) Review of the responsibilities of the job.
   c) Look at areas that need improvement (remember to focus on the behavior not the person).
   d) Consider possible supports and strategies to address areas needing improvement (or new emerging job responsibilities).
   e) Develop an action plan.
   f) Evaluate the effectiveness of the appraisal process.

### Tips for Performance Appraisals

- Accentuate the positive
- Focus on behaviour
- Avoid judgment
- Be clear and specific
- Be timely
- Make formal feedback private
- Be careful about offering advice
- Encourage two-way communication
3. Document the performance appraisal
After the meeting, document the appraisal, incorporating the input from all involved. Ensure that both you and the employee sign the final form. One copy is given to the employee and another is placed in her/his file.

4. Act on the performance appraisal
This may be the most critical aspect of the entire process. It is important that both you and the employee follow through on the action plans determined. This is where the employee’s continued growth and development can occur.

5. Celebrate accomplishments
A key motivator for many is a sense of doing well and knowing that they are contributing to their workplace. Make your organization one that celebrates successes and accomplishments!

A key motivator for many is a sense of doing well and knowing that they are contributing to their workplace. Make your organization one that celebrates successes and accomplishments!

Responding to Staff Performance Problems

The following is a recommended process when there is a staff performance problem.

1. First Incident:
   - Speak to the employee immediately.
   - Inform them of the discrepancy between their behaviour and the agency’s expectations. Confirm what is expected of them.
   - Ask if they need any resources in order to do their job properly and then, if appropriate, see that they get the resources.
   - If the resources they require are personal (for example, if they require therapy), be empathetic. At the same time, remember that the personal concerns are their responsibility and keep your focus on their work behavior.
   - Write a note recording the conversation for the personnel file.

2. Second incident:
   - Write a memo, which you will present to them at a one-to-one meeting.
   - Include in the memo: what you saw, the behaviour that needs improving, the date of the previous conversation and what the consequences will be.
   - Ask again if they need help.
3. **Third incident:**
   - Write a warning memo and present it at a meeting with the employee.
   - In the warning memo refer back to previous conversations and documentation.
   - Also state what the consequences will be.
   - Inform either your personnel committee or the board chairperson.
   - If you have legal concerns, consult a lawyer.

4. **Fourth Incident:**
   Terminate the employee (see notes below).

**Termination**

Below is a list of steps to take when terminating a staff member.

1. Ensure that the following conditions have been met:
   - You have told them what is expected.
   - You have documentation and/or absolute proof of misconduct.
   - You have personnel policies which specify the termination process.
   - The employee has initialed the personnel policy.
   - You have followed the disciplinary process and have documented all of your steps.
   - You observe that the inappropriate behaviour is still occurring.

2. Think about it for a day. During this time, you may want to consult a lawyer, your personnel committee or the chair of the board. Also, make sure that you are complying with legislation.

3. Decide on a settlement. They may be entitled to final payments, or you may choose to offer a settlement as a way to avoid legal action.

4. Write a letter of termination. Be clear about the process that has been followed. Most experts recommend including as little background information as possible.

5. Collect keys, change employee passwords, access to voicemail, etc.

6. Meet with the employee and give her/him the letter of termination. Explain to them what will happen next. Ensure that they return any work keys and give them 30 minutes to get their personal belongings. You may want to monitor them as they do this. If you deem it necessary, change the building locks. Excellent resources include the “Termination of Employment” booklet, found on the Cultural Human Resources Canada website at: [http://www.culturalhrc.ca/hrtools/pdfs/E_Termination.pdf](http://www.culturalhrc.ca/hrtools/pdfs/E_Termination.pdf) and the HR Toolkit, [http://hrlicence.ca/hr-toolkit/keeping-people-termination.cfm](http://hrlicence.ca/hr-toolkit/keeping-people-termination.cfm).
Exit Interview

Exit interviews with departing employees are an excellent opportunity to learn more about the organization, its strengths and challenges, and the staff. They should be conducted with all outgoing employees. It varies as to whose responsibility they are. For some it is the Executive Director and for others, the personnel committee of the board.

Benefits of an Exit Interview:
- Provides useful information about the organization, allowing an opportunity to improve the environment, culture, systems, management, staff supervision, etc.
- Allows the opportunity for an outgoing employee to provide feedback and leave on good terms
- Provides an opportunity for unhappy employees and the organization to ‘make peace’
- Seen by existing employees as a sign that management cares about their staff and wants to improve
- Provides management with an understanding of employees’ experiences, motivation, and suggestions
- Provides an opportunity for management growth and improvement
- Allows for transfer of information from outgoing to ongoing employees
- Provides insight into HR issues such as training, recruitment, orientation, and retention

Process
- Exit interviews are best held face-to-face, which gives more opportunities for understanding and clarification. Questionnaires should be reserved for staff who are uncomfortable with an in-person meeting.
- Exit interviews need to be voluntary.
- Listen rather than talk, giving the employee time to answer your questions.
- Resist the temptation to explain yourself or justify your actions, unless there are factual errors that you need to correct. Overall, the intent is for the employee to feel heard and understood – not to have them understand your perspective.
- Prepare your interview questions and topics. For the most part, it is important to use a standard process with all outgoing employees.
- Take notes.
- At the end, say thanks and wish them well. Whenever possible, you want employees to leave on positive terms.
Sample Exit Interview Questions

- What is your primary reason for leaving? Any other factors?
- How would you have preferred the situation be handled? What suggestions do you have on how the organization could handle these situations better in the future?
- What have been the highlights of your time with us?
- What have been the most frustrating parts of your time with us?
- What could you have done better if you’d had the opportunity? What other responsibilities would you have enjoyed?
- What training was most helpful? What additional training would have been helpful to you?
- What can you say about communication within our organization? Do you have suggestions on how to improve it?
- How would you describe the culture or feel of the organization?
- Were you properly oriented for your position? How could we improve the orientation process?
- Did you find that you received enough supervision? How could this have been improved?
- What feedback do you have regarding the performance review process? How could we improve this?
- What suggestions do you have to improve working conditions?
- What can we do to keep our best staff (and not lose any more like you)?
- If you’re comfortable saying so, what is it about your new employer that appeals to you?
- Could you be persuaded to stay or discuss the possibility of staying? (Ask only if appropriate.)
- How and when would you prefer to pass your knowledge and experience on to your successor?

Team Building

In a strong organization, there is a sense that everyone – staff, volunteers, and board – are working together to enhance the organization. A strong team – one that supports, encourages, positively challenges and upholds one another – does not come without effort and is a significant part of your position. There are a number of ways in which you can do this:

Staff Meetings. Regular staff meetings are significant opportunities for both teambuilding and reducing stress. They are also a form of efficient time management for you, enabling you to give everyone the same information at the same time.
Annual Agency Day. On an annual basis, take one day with your staff to review agency policies, programs, activities, mission, goals, etc.

Annual Team Building Day. Take one day per year to build up the team and the relationships amongst staff. There is a wealth of suggested activities available in books, journals and on the Internet.

Professional Development Opportunities. Hosting professional development opportunities for all staff doubles as an opportunity to build your team.

Special Events (for example, Christmas party). Again, there a number of opportunities for staff to celebrate special events together, be it a Christmas party, summer beach day or thanksgiving meal. The type of event is less important than the opportunities for team building.

Training and Resources Offered by ACWS

ACWS offers a number of training programs and resources for shelter staff.

Children Exposed to Family Violence Training I and II:
Dr. Peter Jaffe and Dr. Linda Baker developed this training, for shelter workers and service providers. We have several trainers around the province to assist in delivering this program on an ongoing basis. Contact the ACWS office for more information.

Specialized training for board members and shelter workers is provided on request:
ACWS tries to ensure that shelter workers and board members have access to specialized training that meets their needs. Watch the Friday files and your list serve for current training opportunities coming up in the community as well as those offered by

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Staff Meetings
Proposed Agenda

*Note:* It is important to have agendas for your meetings and to keep minutes. These should be kept in a place where all staff can refer to them.

1. Review overall conditions of the agency, including successes
2. Inform staff of any upcoming changes
3. Round Robin: Each staff person provides an overview of their current and planned activities
4. Discuss upcoming events that require collaboration of all or most staff
5. Other business
ACWS. And of course, the presentations made during the 1st World Conference of Women’s Shelters are posted on the conference website (www.womenshelter.ca).

Protocol Development:
Working with other agencies, ACWS develops with our members, protocols that provide a framework for local level agreements. Recent examples include the Memorandum of Understanding with the RCMP and the Protocol with Children’s Services. A guide for protocol development is included with this manual. The Guideline Protocol Development comes with a powerpoint presentation that can be used for training purposes.

Shelter Standards:
ACWS has identified a basic level of service that women, children and seniors should have the right to expect when staying at a shelter. These aspirational shelter standards can:

- Serve as a benchmark and standards of practice for shelters
- Be used as a rationale for shelter funding requests
- Help to assure the women and children receive the same services no matter where they live in the province

ACWS Shelter Practice Orientation Manual:
This orientation manual was developed for front line counselors to supplement their knowledge and assist in orientating in new staff. Can be downloaded from the ACWS website and adapted into your shelter materials. Powerpoints are also available.

Resource Materials:
Are provided to our members and offered for sale on a cost recovery basis to the general public. “Blankets, Bibles and Beads”, and the Pathways for Change: Parenting, Child Support and Children’s Programming Manuals are current resources that are available.

Partnership with Portage College:
The Crisis Worker Certificate Program is an on line training program that is valuable for crisis workers as well as for family violence prevention service providers working with women and children. For an application form visit www.portagecollege.ca. An IODE scholarship fund is available to workers from member shelters to reimburse tuition after completion of the course. For more information available contact ACWS.

Danger Assessment Training:
ACWS has partnered with Dr. Jacquelyn Campbell, who designed the Danger Assessment. We have developed a specialized curriculum for training shelter staff in the danger assessment. Shelter workers are able to be certified in the danger assessment upon successful completion of this half day course. The program is delivered on a train the trainer model so that each shelter can have a resident danger assessment trainer.
Section 11

Data Collection
Data Collection

Shelter Data Collection

ACWS members collect data on the services they provide. This information is useful to explain the work shelters do in their community; improve services to women, children and seniors in shelter, facilitate change and report to funders.

Historically, this data was collected on the HOMES database system (owned and maintained by Canadian Outcomes Research Institute, CORI). The use of the HOMES system was included in the contractual agreements between the provincial government and individual shelters. In November, 2009, CORI gave notice that they were ceasing operations. Working with the members, funders and government ACWS developed a transition plan to a new software database (OutcomeTracker from VistaShare).

The advantages to using a common software system are many and they are empowering. In fact, Alberta shelters are uniquely positioned in Canada as a result of their collective efforts in data collection. Systematic gathering of information that is consistent (both in content and method) among the Alberta shelter community results in:

- Information that provides a province wide data capacity to create a complete picture of domestic violence in Alberta from a shelter perspective.
- Information that can be compiled by group (e.g., geographic area, on-reserve shelters, and shelter type) to disclose aggregate information.
- Data that supports research and policy analysis in a timely and comprehensive way.

The ACWS membership has already experienced the positive results of collective data gathering. The Escaping Violence Benefit for women fleeing abuse was achieved by compiling information on why women return to their abuser. Tracking police response rates through HOMES enabled advocacy on procedural changes that were adopted by the RCMP. Collecting data with the on-reserve shelters has furthered the campaign on parity funding with the federal government. Two action based research projects completed to date have resulted in documented improvements to service delivery and better understanding of women and children accessing shelter. Future research and policy initiatives will include studies on services to children, turnaways, trend analysis, danger assessment and police responses. As well, program logic models and outcome measures have become a part of focused attention for database collection. This is becoming even more important as the province moves to outcome based funding.

Each shelter has a Data Sharing Agreement with ACWS (see Appendix B). Under the terms of this agreement ACWS has access to non-identifiable shelter data on individuals accessing shelter services. This helps us to understand trends, as well as identify shelter needs, practices and information that best serve the interests of abused seniors, women and their children. Individual shelter data is only released with the request or consent of the member. ACWS traditionally releases fiscal year and calendar year shelter statistics after discussing emerging trends with shelter directors.
The ACWS Common Database Provider

By purchasing software on behalf of our members, ACWS was able to reduce costs significantly for individual shelters. An Ad Hoc Software Selection Committee was formed to identify user needs and then evaluate and select a software provider. Based on an extensive process, Outcome Tracker software provided by VistaShare was chosen. VistaShare uses an array of policies and procedures to keep the data on Outcome Tracker secure and confidential including:

- Permissions for users who have access to the database
- Encryption of data sent over the Internet
- Physical security of the database server hardware and backups
- VistaShare treats customer data confidentially via privacy policies and procedures

Users and Permissions
A shelter assigned Outcome Tracker Administrator controls what each user is allowed to see and do in your Outcome Tracker database. You grant permissions for the following areas:

- What options a user may run
- Which names the user is allowed to see
- What fields the user may view and/or update

These permission tools allow the Administrator to grant different access levels based on a user’s position and tasks. It also allows the Administrator to remove Outcome Tracker functions that are not needed by a user, thus simplifying the user’s experience.

Encryption
Outcome Tracker is delivered with https using AES-256 bit encryption. This encryption guards against the ability for a third party to read transmissions between the Outcome Tracker server and the user’s browser.

Physical Security
Outcome Tracker servers are housed with Rackspace, a leading web hosting company. Rackspace Hosting has SAS 70 Type II Certification. This certification, achieved through an audit from an independent accounting firm, provides proof that Rackspace has the processes and safeguards in place to protect the data that is housed there.

Data is stored in a secure environment that is separate from the shelter’s hard drive; and is maintained off site. Given the confidential nature of the information and in more remote Alberta locations, the potential vagaries of the power supply, it is important for shelter boards and managers to know that their information is safe and secure. Finally, access to the database is controlled: shelters define who has the password to enter the program and therefore who is able to manage and organize the confidential data.
Other important shelter-based advantages:

- Ongoing access to their own information
- Use of the database for client information, such as case notes, crisis calls, and even archived files are easily managed by front line staff
- Call/contacts
- Intake on client and dependents
- Discharge
- Referrals
- Project logic models
- Outcomes
- Staff lists and contact information is easily stored and accessed by managers
- Tracking volunteer time and contacts
- Staff contacts
- Accurate reports for funders/donors, community, boards, and AGM’s

Shelters currently using the common data base system are managing their information in a professional, current and appropriate way. As a result of this commitment, they are making a direct contribution to the understanding of domestic violence at the local, provincial and national levels. The dissemination of this information is a key part of the social transformation that defines ACWS and member shelter work.

Go to the ACWS members only webpage for Database Documents and Resources for your shelter use as well as the Forum on Database Messages and Bulletins.
Section 12

Working With Boards
A positive relationship between the board and the executive director is necessary to develop the full potential of the organization, the board, and the executive director. As an executive director, you are part of a dynamic and critical partnership that requires you to assume several roles to maintain balance. While you manage the shelter’s staff, you are also an employee of the board. Being the board’s link to the shelter, you implement the board’s decisions and strategic directions for the shelter. At times, you provide leadership and support to effectively engage the board in the shelter’s mission and its governance process. There are also times when you work directly with the board to carry out various initiatives.

To have an effective partnership with your board requires a solid foundation built on mutual support and understanding that is held together by trust, honesty, and respect. Take a few moments to consider the following questions:

**Trust:**
- Do board members and you trust and support each other?
- Is the primary motivation of you and the board to do the best for the women and children in the shelter?
- Do you and the board do what you say that you will do?

**Honesty:**
- Are board members and you able to openly share information, ideas, and opinions with each other?
- Is it safe for you to share bad news and problems with the board?
- Does the board make decisions as a full group at board meetings, or are decisions actually made by small groups outside of the meetings?

**Respect:**
- Do board members and you value each other’s skills, perspectives, and motives?
- Is there an appreciation for board process, lines of communication, and roles and responsibilities?
- Is decision making conducted with a sense of purpose and goodwill?
This article contains ideas and approaches that you can use to strengthen this foundation, and to develop and enhance your partnership with your board. The article is divided into 10 sections to help you decide where you want to begin:

- Passion for the mission
- Board-executive director relationship
- Roles and responsibilities
- Board structure
- Opening doors for the shelter
- Strategic planning
- Policy development
- Decision making
- Board meetings
- Board development

**Passion for the Mission**

A strong connection to the mission:

- Focuses both you and the board on what is important
- Helps ensure that resources are invested in line with the mission
- Strengthens decision making about your shelter’s priorities and programs

To build and support your board’s commitment and passion for the shelter’s mission, you must already possess that strong connection and passion.

Board members become involved with the shelter for a variety of reasons. As a result, board members are not all equally comfortable, conversant, or connected with the shelter’s mission. Your passion and connection can help build board members’ support of the mission, thus increasing their commitment, support, and value to the shelter. Creating and sustaining a sense that everyone is involved in carrying out important work helps solidify the foundation for an effective team.

You can help board members make a personal connection to the mission in a variety of ways. Keeping board members connected can be as simple as sending a note, along with the board minutes, that indicates he or she was missed at the meeting.
Sharing the shelter’s history with board members is a valuable way to build a sense of connection to its past and roots. By sharing stories about the founding of the shelter and its major milestones, you can:

- Recognize the people who helped shape the current shelter
- Show where the shelter has been, and what was learned on the journey
- Indicate how far the shelter has progressed
- Demonstrate the roots of the current strategic directions
- Give a sense of where the shelter can go in the future

Another way to bring passion into the boardroom is to regularly remind board members about the shelter’s current accomplishments. Use storytelling to bring facts and figures to life.

Board members often need to see how the shelter relates to changes and trends in the external environment. By informing board members about changes that will affect the women and children who are using the shelter’s services, you can encourage them to discuss possible changes for the shelter. Seeing connections to changes in the external environment, especially in your community, and formulating ways to address them, helps board members see how their efforts are making a difference.

Be sure to recognize the outstanding work of board members to help solidify a growing sense of passion for, and commitment to, the shelter’s mission.

**Board-Executive Director Relationship**

Most boards that function well have a strong relationship with the executive director. In order to create a strong working relationship, the board and the executive director need to:

- Understand and respect the boundaries of each other’s authority and responsibilities.
- Treat each other respectfully, especially during times of stress and disagreement.
- Communicate honestly and openly.
- Strive to build a relationship of trust and a sense of team.
- Be willing to listen to each other’s perspectives.

While the board needs to articulate and guide the shelter’s vision and long-term direction, you, as the executive director, play an indispensable role in creating a picture of the organization’s future that is relevant, inspiring, and challenging. In reality, effective governance calls for the board and you to agree upon how organizational leadership will be shared.
You have to spend time and energy building a strong partnership with your board. Because of the part-time nature of the board, you often need to set in motion activities that will strengthen the partnership between the executive director and the board chair, between the executive director and the board, and between the executive director and board members.

Effective communication with the board builds trust in you. It also increases the board’s confidence in its own work, because decisions are based on objective and comprehensive information. Communication guidelines for enhancing your relationship with the board include:

- Provide timely and accurate information to the board.
- Communicate the same message to all board members. Clear, consistent messages build trust. Remember that you work for the whole board, rather individual board members.
- Keep confidential information confidential. Ensure that board members understand which information is confidential and not to be shared beyond the board table.
- Adapt your communication and reporting style to the current style and preferences of the board. For example, some boards prefer detailed reports; others prefer charts and graphs that highlight key points.
- Be open and honest about issues by providing the board with the full picture, and ensure that there are no unwelcome surprises.
- Ensure that reports and presentations include a balance of information. For example, boards need to have explicit, focused summary and recommendations, along with adequate contextual and background information.

Other strategies for building your relationship with the board include:

- Make sure that all commitments to the board, including staff commitments, are honoured. If you are unable to fulfill a commitment, you need to inform the board as soon as possible.
- Ensure that staff understands the board’s roles and responsibilities, and how those differ from the roles and responsibilities of the executive director and staff.
- Ensure that staff understand and respect the appropriate lines of communication.
- Ensure that board members understand the appropriate lines of communication.
- Be actively involved in helping to ensure that board members are fulfilled and productive, both as individuals and as a board.
- Respect each board member for what he or she brings to the board.
- Recognize contributions and accomplishments of the board and individual board members.
• Keep the board informed with timely updates, current trends, and relevant information to raise the board’s awareness about issues that could have an impact on the organization, and to assist the board in its decision making.

• Make suggestions to the board about how it could govern the organization more effectively.

Being responsive to the board and its members does not mean acting immediately upon board members’ requests or ideas. To build trust and credibility, you need to acknowledge questions and requests when you receive them, informing the member about what action will occur and when it will be taken. Setting an example of responsiveness with the board chair can demonstrate the importance of the board’s accountability to the shelter.

Keep in mind that requests from a single board member are not the same as directions from the board. Requests from individual board members that differ from previous board directions, or requests requiring significant staff time, are more appropriately placed on the board’s meeting agenda. Having the board decide on the importance of the individual’s request determines whether this is indeed the will of the board, or simply the desire of an individual board member.

Both you and the board chair are seen as leaders in your shelter. Both of you have a level of leadership skills and a passionate commitment to the shelter’s mission. However, you probably did not select the other as the partner in this important leadership team. As a result, it takes time, effort, and patience to build and maintain a complementary working relationship that benefits the shelter.

You can build a positive working relationship with your board chair in a number of ways:

• Discuss your preferred working styles. Agree to a style that meets both of your needs.

• Work with the board chair to create an atmosphere that encourages quality board relations.

• Help the board chair to better understand the sector in which the shelter operates.

• Discuss and agree to dividing the work in shared leadership areas, such as:
  o Representing the organization in the community, and within the organization at special events
  o Providing development opportunities to the board

Developing and maintaining a positive relationship with the board chair is a critical part of developing an effective working relationship with the board. It is your most important relationship, since this interaction is observed and assessed by both board and staff who look for a shared focus. As soon as the board chair takes office, consider suggesting a discussion about expectations. More important than simply reviewing your formal position descriptions, you need to discuss and agree on important issues, such as:

• Honest and regular feedback about your performance.
• If the board chair, the executive committee, the entire board, or other board group will conduct your formal performance evaluation, and when the evaluation will be conducted.
• The amount and type of communication, such as weekly telephone updates.
• Sharing both good and bad news.
• Establishing board goals that are specific to your shelter. An example of a board goal might be increasing board member engagement.

An effective and timely evaluation of your performance is critical to building and sustaining this important relationship. In addition to assessing your performance in relationship to your position description and the organization’s strategic and operational plans, well-thought-out evaluation processes:

• Clarify position roles, responsibilities, and expectations between you, the board, and individual board members.
• Offer you and the board insight into the board’s understanding of your strengths, limitations, and overall performance.
• Provide feedback about your perception of the board’s strengths, limitations, and overall performance.
• Enhance the development of you, the board, and the shelter.

Roles and Responsibilities

Truly effective board-executive director partnerships have a clear definition of the distinctive roles of the board, individual board members, and the executive director, as well as the related boundaries. Unlike some partnerships, this partnership does not function well with indistinct boundaries and joint responsibilities. Without clear agreement about roles, responsibilities, and boundaries, trust and respect are eroded, and the partnership falters.

To assist the board in clarifying its roles and responsibilities, you must first understand the board’s governance role. This includes:

• Being able to explain the board’s governance responsibilities.
• Recognizing and describing activities that the board undertakes to fulfill its governance responsibilities.

Having this understanding gives you a foundation for assisting the board to understand and fulfill its governance responsibilities. A significant step in accomplishing this is for you to diplomatically identify when the board or a board member has become inappropriately involved in management or operations.

Boards that concentrate their attention on management and operational matters do not necessarily do it deliberately, or because they do not trust the executive director. It often
happens because board members do not understand what their governance role is, and the appropriate activities to fulfill this role. Many times, it is because the executive director has not directed the board’s attention to important strategic issues and questions. If you frame issues in a manner that highlights major and strategic issues, then the board is less likely to direct its attention to management and operations.

To focus the board on *the big picture*, you need to keep board members informed about external factors that are having an impact on the shelter by providing:

- Relevant newspaper articles, journals, and internet sites
- Focused presentations
- Comparisons to organizations with similar programs and services

Another way for you to clarify roles and enhance the board’s governance capabilities is to support the board by providing leadership for development. Strategies include:

- Identify possible training areas and resources.
- Propose informational and educational activities.
- Organize board development activities, if requested.
- Work with the board to develop evaluation mechanisms that focus on the board’s governance and strategic role.
- Ensure that planning documents identify appropriate roles for both the board and individual board members.

While you may hesitate to influence the board, research has concluded that executive directors are more effective when they give more guidance and direction to their boards.

**Board Structure**

A well-designed board structure, especially its committee structure, enables a board to do its work thoroughly by allowing it to:

- Delve into its governance issues and concerns
- Allocate board resources to support its governance role

A board focused on strategic issues and directions is most often effective if its committees are established to align with board concerns, rather than operational concerns.

There are several ways in which you can support your board’s current committee structure, while encouraging the evolution of a more effective structure. First, encourage the board chair to allocate time to review the board’s governance structure on a regular basis. This assessment can be part of a board meeting, or in the form of a short questionnaire that can be completed individually by each board member and the executive director. Once compiled, the board, as a whole, discusses the results, and
decides what needs to be done to improve the current structure. Here are samples of questions to initiate a board discussion, or to include on a questionnaire:

- What is working well with our current committee structure?
- Do all committees have clear mandates and levels of authority?
- What could be improved?
- What structural changes are needed to help the board govern more effectively?
- Are there clear and appropriate roles for staff who work with committees?

Boards are often unaware of what a committee actually costs the shelter in time, both staff and volunteer, and resources. To help board members gain a clearer understanding of the resources that committees use to carry out their work, you can:

- Establish a budget area for direct committee expenses that is separate from board and operational expenses.
- Document the amount of staff time used to prepare for, attend, document, and do follow-up tasks for committees.
- Document the amount of board and volunteer time that is devoted to the committee.

After documenting the resources used by each committee, you can present this information to the board as they assess the work completed that year by each committee. By knowing the resources utilized by a committee, the board can make an informed decision as to whether or not the value of the work done by this committee is worth the organizational resources that it consumes.

To effectively support board committees, you must be constantly aware when committees are straying into management and/or operational areas. You need to spend time with the committee to clarify the appropriate roles for the committee and the staff member who is supporting the committee. Agreed-upon roles need to be recorded in the committee’s terms of reference. Make sure that staff does not take a lead role in the committee’s deliberations, particularly in matters on which the committee is making a recommendation to the board. Appropriate roles for staff on board committees include:

- Providing information
- Explaining the impact of recommended policies or directions on operations
- Providing secretarial support

The type of support received from staff also has a significant impact on the effectiveness of the board’s committees. You must ensure that a staff member who provides support to a committee understands his or her role and responsibilities to the committee. When working on a committee, staff needs to respect the lines of communication and authority of the executive director and the board. The executive director is the key person in orienting and supporting staff as to their appropriate roles on committees. To stress the importance of the staff role, you could include staff’s support role to committees as part of their performance evaluation.
Supporting the board in assessing and changing its governance structure to fit the shelter’s current circumstances is an important role for the executive director. By doing this, you contribute to building a stronger board, with both board and staff fulfilling their appropriate roles.

**Opening Doors for the Shelter**

Most board members are untapped resources to other relationships and resources that will increase the value of the shelter and its impact on community issues. However, to maintain trust with and support from board members, the board needs to decide the extent to which the ability to open doors is a criterion for selection and participation on the board. Once decided, expected levels of support and influence must be included in the board member’s position description that is used for recruiting.

However, when they join the board, some board members do not understand the numerous ways in which they can support the shelter. You and the board chair need to work together to help board members understand how they can bring additional value to the shelter. For example, they can:

- Open doors to needed resources
- Influence others to support the shelter’s mission

While it is important that board members financially support the shelter to whatever level is feasible for them, they can also help access additional resources. Examples include:

- Identifying sources of in-kind donations of products and services
- Providing lists of individuals, organizations, and companies that might share a common interest in the shelter’s mission
- Assisting with donor development
- Supporting fundraising activities

When properly supported by the executive director, board members can be powerful voices for the shelter and the women and children that it serves. It is essential that you provide the board with the information that it needs to be a consistent and effective voice in the community. By working together as a board, and individually as citizens in the community, the board and board members can:

- Respond to and advance issues concerning family violence
- Shape public policy by influencing policy makers
- Promote good ideas in the community
- Press for adoption of or change in laws that will have an impact on the shelter’s mission
- Support provincial initiatives
To make this possible, you need to work with the board chair to clarify each board member’s ability and willingness to assist in accessing resources and influencing change in the community. If individuals are willing, but do not have the knowledge or skill to take on these important tasks, you will need to provide training and support.

Keep in mind:

*Passions are the only advocates that always persuade. A simple woman with passion will be more persuasive than the most eloquent without.*

* Rene Descartes

**Strategic Planning**

Effective strategic planning is a cyclical, continuous process that is an integral part of organizational growth and sustainability. Strategic planning establishes the means, processes, resource needs, and policy needs required to move the shelter from the present to where it wants to be at an agreed-upon time in the future. Three fundamental questions are addressed in strategic planning:

- Where does the shelter want to be in the next three to five years?
- What is the shelter’s current situation?
- How is the shelter going to achieve the preferred future?

A well-done, functional strategic plan that is adapted to external and internal environmental changes will result in improved organizational relevancy, sustainability, and effectiveness. A well-thought-out plan promotes stability, and focuses the shelter’s board, staff, and volunteers during times of change. A focused strategic plan can also serve as a catalyst for attracting funders, partners, and volunteers to the shelter.

An effective executive director participates actively, and provides support to the board, staff, volunteers, and clients during all parts of the strategic planning process. To do this, you must be committed to both the planning process and the implementation of the plan.

During the planning process, your role is to:

- Provide information, expertise, and the operational perspective
- Identify changes in the internal and external environment that must be addressed in the plan
- Promote the plan to staff
- Encourage both the board and staff to be creative, and to accept the changes required to reach the shelter’s desired future
- Work with the board to develop key indicators to monitor the overall success of the shelter
During implementation of the strategic plan, your role is to:

- Develop operational plans that align with, and reflect the priorities of, the strategic plan
- Work with staff and board committees to ensure that the plan is implemented
- Monitor both the strategic and operational plans
- Provide regular updates to the board
- Make recommendations that improve the effectiveness and the impact of the plan

Strategic plans are developed for three to five year periods. However monitoring is done continuously and updating the plan, as needed, is done at least annually. Keeping an eye on the external environment and conducting ongoing environmental scanning are vital things that you can do for the shelter and the board. Your board needs both hard facts and informed opinions that they can use as a regular part of their board discussions. To focus your scan, determine which sectors are most important to the shelter. Work to establish networks and information sources from experts in order to collect and analyze information about current events in the identified sectors. Be sure to format the information for the board in a way that shows how the shelter fits with partners, similar organizations, and other sectors.

**Policy Development**

The board is responsible for developing and maintaining a policy framework that is designed to reflect both the organization's mission and its core values. Policies address the preferred ways in which an organization acts in ongoing or recurring situations, especially those situations in which the board requires consistent decisions and actions. Policy adopted by the board provides parameters for action by staff, volunteers, the board, and individual board members. Thus, policy is the primary tool by which the board exercises its authority, control, guidance, and direction in the shelter.

The executive director has a vital role to play in helping the board ensure that its policies are relevant, effective, and up-to-date. To assist the board in developing and maintaining a solid policy framework, you can:

- Inform the board about the effect of its policies, including alerting the board to unintended consequences.
- Identify areas in which policy development or revision is required, or where changed circumstances have made a policy redundant.
- Assist the board in drafting and updating policies.
- Assist the board in making distinctions between board-level and management-level policies.
- Avoid taking issues to the board that are already addressed in board policies. Inform the board when there are agenda items that have been resolved previously through existing policies.
• Make reference to the relevant policies when reporting to the board.
• Encourage the board to use its own policies to guide its decision making.
• Develop, maintain, and use management-level policies and procedures that align with the board’s policies.
• Orient staff to policies that are relevant to the work, and demonstrate how the staff’s work links with the board’s policies.
• Ensure that the board policy manual is up-to-date, and that each board member has a current copy.

**Decision Making**

The basis of good governance is the board making wise choices among various options that have either an immediate, short-term, or long-term impact on the shelter. Some decisions are easy for the board to make. Others are difficult, complex, come with no guarantees of success, and, many times, will not satisfy all those who will be affected by the decision. To govern well, boards must be able to anticipate issues, and to make informed choices, in order to provide effective leadership. A board’s effectiveness is ultimately revealed through the quality of its decisions.

Because the board has limited time to make decisions, it needs to focus on those decisions that will make the most difference, add value to the shelter, and fall within the board’s governance role. By adopting a strategic focus, the board makes decisions that are necessary to move the shelter toward its preferred future, leaving management and operational decisions to you as the executive director.

Thus, the board needs to regularly refer to its strategic plan and policies when making decisions. Using the strategic plan and the board’s policies helps the board to:

• Maintain consistency in its decisions
• Align the organization’s work
• Avoid redoing previously approved work
• Learn from its successes and mistakes
• Ensure continuity of service when key board members and/or staff change

One of the best ways that you can support the board in making decisions that are in the best interests of the shelter is to provide pertinent, useful information. To do this, you need to work closely with the board chair to determine that:

• The key information required to make a good decision is available.
• Background information and other supporting documents for the decision are presented clearly, concisely, and in a timely manner.
• Options are clearly described, with rationale and assumptions included.
• Consequences, both positive and negative, are stated.
• Recommendations are explained and supported.
To focus the board on governance issues, to improve the quality of discussions, and to increase the value of board decisions, be sure to:

- Research and prepare background materials in order to place all board members on the same page, thus enabling everyone to participate in discussions.
- Prepare materials carefully so that they focus the board on strategy.
- Give succinct information that is targeted explicitly to top priorities.
- Relate information to the strategic plan and mission.
- Explain the relationship between the information and board policy.
- Present information in a brief, consistent, and readable format. Provide detailed, in-depth documents only when absolutely necessary, or when requested by the board.

While it is vital to keep the board informed about what is happening in the shelter, you need to do this without drawing them into operations. To do this:

- Document progress toward the shelter’s goals.
- Highlight what you have learned, and what is being done differently as a result.
- Describe challenges, and what you are doing to address them.
- Share information about program effectiveness.
- Identify policy and/or strategic plan issues affected by the above information.

In addition to information about the shelter, include information about the external environment to enhance the board’s decision-making capabilities. This information includes:

- Changes in government policy
- Challenges in both the sector and the wider community
- New directions in the shelter movement
- Position and plans of partners with whom the shelter is working

Carefully evaluate all information that you distribute to board members to ensure that the majority of it is directly related to immediate decisions. This is critical in order to reduce information overload, and to increase the possibility of the information being read. Before sending information to board members, ask yourself:

- Does it add to board members’ knowledge about the shelter’s mission or the sector?
- Does it deal with an emerging internal issue or opportunity facing the shelter that the board will probably need to address in the future?
- Is it related to external advances or changes that may affect the shelter now or in the future?
- Does it alert the board to potential risks facing the shelter?
Board decisions and policies provide direction to you and the shelter staff. Unless an action is illegal or unethical, you must implement the board’s decisions. If you disagree with a board decision, discuss your concerns with the board chair prior to taking action. You might be able to negotiate the process, and decide on a more agreeable way to reach the desired outcome of the board’s decision.

**Board Meetings**

Properly prepared and well-run board meetings focus the board on priority strategic and governance issues, while ensuring that the board appropriately monitors the organization’s performance. Effective board meetings result in committed board members who believe that their time is well spent, and that the board adds value to the organization.

By working with the board, especially the board chair, you can develop a governance-focused system, rather than a management- and operations-focused system. Building on governance-focused information and decisions, you and the board chair can construct board agendas that focus discussions on issues with significant strategic and policy implications.

When preparing background materials for board meetings, make sure that the information is useful to board members in making appropriate-level decisions and carrying out their governance role. Effective governance-focused background information:

- Explains options and consequences
- Compares actual to intended performance and results
- Is forward-looking, contributing to decisions about policy or strategic direction
- Demonstrates the appropriateness of policies, and how they are administered
- Shows both short-term and long-term impacts
- Allows comparison with similar organizations
- Is presented in an understandable manner that permits the board to interpret the significance of the information
- Increases the board’s capacity to report the organization’s performance to its stakeholders
- Improves the board’s ability to assess the organization’s performance
- Enhances the board’s ability to fulfill its governance roles and responsibilities

While board agendas are often full and time is limited, it is important to consider including on the agenda a substantive discussion item that has no immediate or easy answers. You can encourage board members to apply their experience and perspectives to the issue by framing it with a set of questions. This allows the board to discuss matters that
require a deeper understanding, to consider multiple perspectives on an issue, and to have periods of reflection, before making a decision.

To properly prepare for meetings, board members need to receive meeting packages in enough time for them to review the reports, minutes, and other materials. Keep information concise and organized in a logical fashion. This gives board members time to reflect on the information instead of spending time shuffling through piles of paper. Ways to make meeting information more easily accessible include:

- Develop a standard schedule for sending out board information, so that board members know when to expect it, and can plan their time accordingly.
- Use a consistent format for the board meeting package that allows easy access to the information.
- Make sure that information is relevant, and clearly separated into governance and management issues. Link information to specific agenda items.
- Provide a table of contents or explanatory memo when there are multiple pieces of information.
- State the purpose of the meeting or information, and why it is important.
- State what is expected from the board member at the meeting for each agenda item. Is there a decision to be made? Is this background information for a discussion? Or this simply information to be read?

When introducing agenda items at board meetings, you can provide a structure for the discussion, and help the board to focus on governance issues. Strategies include:

- State concisely why a major item is coming before the board, and how it relates to the organization’s strategic plan and/or board policies.
- Use key questions for board members to consider when you are seeking advice or approval.
- Explain the link between the organization’s strategic plan and the board’s current agenda.

When requesting feedback from the board, you need to be clear whether or not you are asking only for advice or input. Without understanding what is expected, the board may make decisions that are:

- Not well-thought-out
- Are outside of their governance role, and are part of your responsibilities
- Not aligned with previous decisions, plans, or policies

Keep in mind that you can help facilitate the conversation at board meetings. In addition to responding to board members’ questions, you may need to encourage dialogue among board members by asking questions that provide opportunities for further discussion.
Make sure that you leave board meetings with accountabilities for tasks clearly defined. At the meeting, clarify your role in implementing the board’s decisions, and include a summary in the minutes. When in doubt, ask the board to provide you direction through a motion.

To achieve results, meetings depend on timely communication and support from you. Ways to stimulate action and follow up include:

- Distribute meeting minutes in a timely fashion, with action items highlighted.
- Ensure that all action items identify a person or committee to bring the item forward at a specific meeting.
- Remind individual board members of their meeting commitments far ahead of the deadline.
- Offer assistance to board members needing help with task completion.
- Provide new and emerging information related to assigned tasks as soon as it is available.
- Inform the board chair of board members who are unable and/or unwilling to complete assigned tasks that will affect the group’s efforts.

*There is no way to truly influence a process except to dive into its dynamics, those forces that give it life and propel it to its present form.*

*Margaret Wheatley*

**Board Development**

Recruiting, developing, and retaining appropriate individuals to serve in board roles is often a difficult and time-consuming job. Board composition will need to change as the shelter grows and matures, as new strategic directions are established, or as the environment changes. A major investment of time and effort is required to sustain a board that has the ability to govern effectively and to build a strong organization.

Recruiting, orienting, training, and evaluating the board are core responsibilities of the board. However, you can assist the board in a variety of ways:

- Identify to the board chair individuals who might be appropriate board members.
- Help the board to develop an information kit and board member position description to provide to prospective board members.
- Link individuals who are interested in serving on the board with the nominating committee or the board chair.
- Assist with board orientation, especially explaining the organization’s programs and services.
- Provide to the board chair governance-focused information and materials that are useful for board training and development.
- Support, train, and/or coach board members who are willing, but do not have the skills to accomplish a task.
In Conclusion

This article gives you a starting point for building and maintaining a strong partnership with your board and board chair. There are numerous suggestions for you to try, and to adapt to the specific situations of your board and shelter.

Be sure to use other sources when looking for ideas and strategies to move forward with this important relationship. Sources to explore for information and discussions include:

- Executive directors from other shelters
- Executive directors from other not-for-profit organizations
- ACWS
- Governance articles on the Internet
- Books and articles on board governance

No two boards or shelters are exactly the same. As board members and the shelter change, the approaches that you use to build the board-executive director relationship will need to change. When changes occur, review this article to find different approaches to build a solid new relationship.

Remember that the board-executive director relationship, like any other important relationship, requires ongoing effort from both you and your board. The resulting benefit for women and children in your shelter is well worth the time and energy.

Board Orientation

It is important that your Board of Directors receive to provide a yearly orientation to the Board of Directors, usually within the two months following the AGM and board election. The timing of the orientation should be part of the administration policy.

Board training gives new board members the knowledge and understanding they need to be effective members of any governing Board of Directors. Board orientation provides training both on generic issues – such as legal liability – and organization-specific information. Selection of training topics and training methods depends on the nature and needs of the organization. The following guidelines and sample training agenda will give you a starting place as you plan your own training plan.
Board Orientation Checklist

Agency Related
- History of the agency
- Mandate of the agency
- Policies
- Programs delivered
- Funding model and funders
- Financial information
- Staff

Board Related
- Role of the board
- Understanding governance
- Expectations of board members including Board positions and job descriptions
- Bylaws
- Board liability
- Committees (standing and ad-hoc)
- Conflict of interest and declarations
- Organizational chart, identifying decision-making and reporting processes
- Board manual
- Annual board calendar

Board Manual

At the orientation, you will provide each board member with a board manual. The board manual will serve as a tool for new members to understand the mandate of the agency, programs delivered, and policies adopted. In addition, it should help members understand their roles and responsibilities, allowing them to make informed decisions.

Checklist for Board Manual
- Agency membership
- List of Board of Directors
- List of staff
- List of committees and their members
- History of the agency
- Programs
- Role of the board
- Legal responsibility of the board
- Policies
- Bylaws
- Program policies
- Personnel policy
- Conflict of interest policy and guidelines

The board manual will serve as a tool for new members allowing them to make informed decisions
Board Liability Insurance

Director and officer liability insurance provides the protection a board needs. It protects from personal liability and financial loss arising out of wrongful acts committed, or allegedly committed, in their capacity as officers and/or directors.

What to look for in Liability Insurance

- Protection for board members from personal liability
- Protection from any financial loss arising out of wrongful acts committed or allegedly committed in their capacity as board members
- Covering the liability of the nonprofit itself if the liability rises out of a claim involving the purchase or sale of the agency’s securities
- Protection for service by staff, directors or officers
- Wrongful dismissal coverage (normally insurance companies do not provide severance pay to an employee)
- Employee Benefits Plans and Errors and Omissions Insurance
- Administrator’s Errors and Omissions (Directors and Officers)
- Coverage

Decision Making

Each organization needs to decide how it will make decisions. While most meetings are run using a form of Parliamentary Procedure (i.e., using motions and voting), a number of Organizations are choosing to use Consensus Decision Making. Below is a brief introduction to both methods, highlighting their basic principles and processes.

Further information on either Parliamentary Procedure or Consensus Decision Making can be found using a web search. Particularly helpful sites are:
http://www.csufresno.edu/comm/cagle-p3.htm
(Parliamentary Procedure) and
http://encyclopedia.thefreedictionary.com/Consensus+decisionmaking
(Consensus Decision Making)
A third model - the Coalition Decision-Making Model - is also introduced, providing a hybrid of the two models.

**Coalition Decision Making Model:**
- Initial polling (Vote 1=yes, absolutely; Vote 2: OK, I can live with this, Vote 3: OK, but refer to the group for decision. Won’t stand in the way and Vote 4:No).
- If no consensus, further discussion and then second round of polling.
- If no consensus after second round of polling, vote then a successful vote will be 75% of those present and voting.

**Parliamentary Procedure**

Parliamentary Procedure, commonly known as Robert’s Rules of Order, provides common rules and procedures for decision making. The intent is to place the whole membership on the same footing, speaking the same language. Decisions are made based on the vote of the majority, after there is a complete discussion of the issues involved.

**Decision-Making Process**

With parliamentary procedure, decisions are made through the passing of motions. The process is as follows:

1. A member makes a motion.
2. Another member seconds the motion.
3. The chair states the question on the motion.
4. The members debate the motion.
5. The chair puts the question to a vote. Votes may be indicated verbally, through standing, by show of hands, ballot or roll call.
6. The chair announces the result of a vote. Most often, a motion is passed/carried when 50% plus one vote affirmatively. Some bodies choose to require a two-thirds vote.

**Consensus**

Consensus decision making is based on obtaining the agreement of all parties and includes resolving the objections of those with concerns. Users of consensus indicate that it is more cooperative than voting, providing a win/win solution through compromise and problem solving.

It also provides for greater group cohesion and effectiveness, through ensuring that the entire body is working together. Additionally, consensus is seen to increase the commitment of each decision maker to the decision.
Decision-Making Process

1. **Discussion**: The issue at hand is discussed, looking at available information and current opinions. Through the discussion, the group gets a sense of its general position and potential proposals for action are identified.

2. **Formation of a consensus statement**: From the discussion, a formal consensus statement is presented to the group. The wording of this statement may be determined collaboratively.

3. **Call for Consensus**: The facilitator polls the group for consensus on the proposal. Every member states their agreement on the statement. Most often, participants use a number to indicate their position:
   - 1 – unqualified yes
   - 2 – although it is not perfect, it is quite acceptable
   - 3 – okay, I can live with this decision
   - 4 – okay, although I need to register my concerns. I will not, however, block the decision
   - 5 – No, I do not agree with this decision

4. **Identification and Discussion of Concerns**: If consensus is not reached, those positioning themselves as a four or five present their concerns. At this point there is an additional round of discussion.

5. **Modification of the proposal**: Based on the discussion, the proposal is amended, re-phrased or even cancelled, to reflect the most recent discussion and the concerns raised. The process then returns to the call for consensus and the cycle is repeated until a satisfactory decision is made.

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When Things Go Wrong

While the relationship between the board and the Executive Director is intended to strengthen an organization, sometimes that relationship or even a board itself can become unhealthy. If you find yourself in such a situation, there are a number of factors to keep in mind:

- **Remain clear on the boundaries** between your role and that of the board, remembering that you are responsible for management of the organization and they are responsible for governance. It is ill-advised to report on activities of the agency to only one board member or, conversely, to involve the whole board in staff issues. Be careful not to inadvertently encourage the board to micromanage. For example, avoid requesting their approval on items that have already been approved in the budget.

- **Consult the bylaws** and policies and procedures, to see if there are any guidelines that aren’t being followed.

- Throughout this time, **ensure that you are following through on your responsibilities** and providing the board with all the information they need.

- **Document your interactions** with the board and with individual board members. One way of providing a timeline to your paper trail is to seal and mail the information to yourself. The postmark will provide evidence of the timeline (don’t open the envelope).

- **Consult with an outside professional.** You may want to speak with a mediator or a board development consultant. If it seems necessary, do not hesitate to obtain legal advice.

- Whether or not there is conflict, it is important to **network with and receive personal support** from other Executive Directors. These relationships can normalize your feelings, provide you with an alternate perspective and/or offer additional resources.

A special thank you to the Manitoba Association of Women’s Shelters for their permission to use and adapt material from Lighting the Road to Success: A Handbook For Non-Profit Executive Directors this section of the manual.
Section 13

Public Relations
Public Relations and Relating to the Media

The media can be a very powerful ally in advancing the work of your organization and enhancing the wellbeing of your clients. The challenge is to learn to work with the media in such a way that it becomes a positive partnership. You can provide them with news stories which will, in effect, promote your organization.\textsuperscript{12} ACWS can provide you with assistance in this regard.

Communications Planning

As with other aspects of your position, effective media relations begin with planning. There are a number of steps involved:

1. Identify your Communication Goals
   For example:
   - Encourage financial contributions for a capital campaign to purchase a new building.
   - Provide the general public with a more balanced picture of your community.
   - Increase the public’s understanding of your organization’s role in the community.

2. Identify your Audience
   Answer the following questions:
   - Who do you want to influence? \textit{E.g.} policymakers and taxpayers
   - What influences them? \textit{E.g.} low cost with high impact
   - Where do they get their information? \textit{E.g.} news reports
   - What media do they watch or listen to? \textit{E.g.} local newspaper and 6:00 news
   - What do they read? \textit{E.g.} local newspaper
   - Who do they respect? \textit{E.g.} professionals
   - Who do they trust and listen to? \textit{E.g.} research studies, front-line staff

3. Determine your Primary Message
   For example:
   - Investing in families decreases children’s involvement in costly systems
   - Women’s shelters make a difference in your community

\textsuperscript{12} While there are many excellent resources on relating to the media. there is one resource which is particularly informative. Park & Recreational Technical Services, Planning Division, California State Parks. (July, 2007). \textit{Tried and True Public Relations and Promotional Tools}. Retrieved December, 2007 from \url{http://www.parks.ca.gov/pages/795/files/final%20pr%20manual%207%2012%202007.pdf}
Promotional Activities through the Media
(Reporters, Newspapers, etc.)

Press Releases – Press releases alert the press to a major event or accomplishment. They serve as an invitation to the media to attend the event and to provide information to the general public. ACWS will send you media release from time to time which you can adapt & then send to your local media for extended professional coverage.

Media Alerts - One week before your event, send out a media alert. This will inform the media of the upcoming event, allowing them to schedule staff time and to get background information.

Press Conferences/Briefings/Tours - As with the Press Release, the press conference topic must be significant enough to attract the press and newsworthy enough to secure coverage of the event. When determining the location, you need: a) room for a large press contingent with their cameras; b) adequate electrical outlets; and c) speaker system. For maximum exposure it is recommended that your press conference be held mid-morning.

Public Service Announcements (PSAs) – Short, non-commercial promotions provided for free by the media, providing information that benefits the general public. PSAs can be used as a marketing tool providing a no-cost way of providing information to the general public. You can use PSAs to promote events such as fundraisers, groups, workshops or community events.

Articles and Stories that You Write – You can write a news story for a local newspaper or magazine. This is your opportunity to describe what your organization is doing to address the concerns identified or to share success stories from your participants.

Editorials and Letters to the Editor – You and your staff have expertise in both the services you provide and the community receiving this service. You can respond to current news and issues through writing letters to the editor and editorials. This is an excellent way to promote your organization or initiative, or to respond to issues and policies affecting your participants.
Press Kits – A press kit is a folder with press releases and other materials for press conferences. You can use it with both the media and in training employees about working with the media. The kit usually includes:

- Press releases
- Cover letters
- Background information on the agency
- Lists of sponsors and donors
- Contact person
- Photos
- Calendar of programs or special events
- Quotes from satisfied participants
Media Strategies

Be respectful. Treat the media with respect and as partners.

Be proactive. Initiate communication with the media.

Never miss an opportunity. Respond to issues that relate to your organization and/or clients.

Always return reporters’ phone calls. Do this as soon as possible. This builds strong relationships with the media and develops your role as a “go-to” expert.

Write your own stories. In order to ensure your priorities and stories are communicated, take the time to develop stories, letters to the editor, editorials, etc.

Use your webpage to your advantage. It is recommended that you put a press room section on your webpage. Here you can include information on the agency, relevant statistics and media story ideas.

Use email. Email is preferred instead of fax. Find out if they open attachments before sending them and ensure that any attachments have been developed using a common computer program such as Microsoft ®Word.

Follow up. Follow up with a phone call to ensure that they received the email and to answer any initial questions.

Keep an up-to-date media list. Include any special interests, etc.

Ensure that you are available to the media. Be available after sending out a press release.

Train your staff. Keep your staff informed on how to relate to the media.

Find a champion. Find someone within the media who will support and promote your organization.
Press Release Tips

**Be newsworthy.** The press release needs to highlight something that will be of broad, general interest and provide a strong news angle.

**Write in a journalistic, third-person style.** The media is not looking to be your marketing tool; they are looking for a news story. A strong press release is written in such a way that the media can simply draw from it.

**Use catchy headlines.** The headline should catch their attention, provide a snapshot of issue/story and be limited to one line.

**Quotes.** Use quotes to provide personal interest and validation. Attribute potentially controversial statements to a specific quotable individual.

**The writing:**
- Get to the point in the first paragraph, and then back it up with quotes and evidence.
- Address the issues of who, what, when, where, why, and how.
- Ensure that the writing is clear. Read it aloud to ensure your intended meaning comes across.
- Include your contact name, release date, date of writing, website and phone number.
- Use standard information about your organization in the last paragraph.
- Restrict the length to one page.

**Availability.** Make sure that you are available for media who phone after receiving the press release.

**Added attractions:**
- An offer to interview participants
- Photo opportunities
- Refreshments
Other Promotional Activities and Events

**Word of Mouth** – It's often said that word of mouth is the best way to promote your organization. The goodwill generated by positive person-to-person communication can benefit all aspects of your organization.

**Organizational Website** – Websites provide convenient access to information about your organization. Your website should be simple to read and to navigate, providing accurate and up-to-date information about the organization. Some websites include the option to make donations online. Other websites include a page for the media, including news releases, newsletters, media articles, etc. Whatever structure you use for your website, it is important to keep it updated.

**Annual Reports and Newsletters** – Disseminate these to key stakeholders. They hold a wealth of information, particularly if they include an overview of the year’s activities, accomplishments, challenges, and financial status. It cuts down on cost and labour if you develop an email database and distribute the newsletters via email.

**Networking** – Spread the word to peers, professional organizations, and those with whom you interact outside the organization, such as educators, consultants, suppliers, and clients. It is helpful if you and/or your board members join networking organizations such as business clubs or the local Chamber of Commerce.

**Presentations** – You and your staff have developed an expertise. Find ways to give presentations. By sharing your story or the story of your organization, you are developing relationships that can have numerous spin offs. Ways to do so include the United Way Campaign Speakers’ Bureau, churches, business groups, local Rotary Clubs and schools.

**Relationships with Key Stakeholders** – Identify at least one representative from each major stakeholder group and take them to lunch once a year. These brief, informal exchanges can cultivate powerful relationships of interest and concern.

**Special Events** – These activities tend to attract attention and can include, for example, an open house, third-party fundraising, granting a special award, announcing a major program or service or campaign, etc.

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*A special thank you to the Manitoba Association of Women’s Shelters for their permission to use and adapt material from Lighting the Road to Success: A Handbook For Non-Profit Executive Directors in the section above.*
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