Research Trends and Implications for Practice: The State of Alberta’s Children

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11 May 2007
FAMILY VIOLENCE

SAY SOMETHING
For your sake. For their sake.

www.acws.ca  1-866-331-3933
It’s Your Business:

The true measure of a nation’s standing is how well it attends to its children.

ACWS serves as the collective voice for 41 sheltering organizations through:

- *Networking and information sharing*;
- *Acquiring adequate resources*;
- Undertaking *policy and systems research* in order to influence social change that reduces and prevents domestic violence;
- Increasing *public awareness* of issues related to family violence;
- Providing *professional development* for Alberta’s sheltering movement.
It’s Your Business: Where we work

• Alberta leads the provinces in domestic assault, homicide-suicide, stalking and is second in domestic homicide.
• From 2000 – 2006, over 170 homicides are conservatively estimated as domestic violence related. This represents about one third of all homicides in the province.
It’s Your Business: Canada’s women

- 1 in 4 are victims of domestic violence
- 51% have experienced either physical or sexual assault since the age of 16
- 7x more likely to be killed by an intimate partner than by a stranger
- 21% of abused women were assaulted during pregnancy

All data from Statistics Canada, *Family Violence Reports.*
It’s Your Business: Canada’s Aboriginal women

• 3x more likely to be victims of family violence
• 9x higher spousal homicide rates than for non-Aboriginal women in Canada
• Rates of violent crime on reserves substantially higher than the rest of Canada: 8x higher assaults; 7x higher sexual assaults; 6x higher homicides.

It’s Your Business: Canada’s children

- Children and youth are more at risk of physical and sexual assault than adults.
- Every 15 minutes, a child in Canada is assaulted by a family member.
- 1 million children will witness violence against their mother each year.
- 3-5 children in every classroom witness violence in their homes.
- 63% of adolescent sex offenders witnessed family violence during childhood (highest rates of sexual offending in males 13-17).
• Aboriginal children living in homes with violence in remote and often under-serviced reserves could well be the most pressing and needful group at risk of crime and victimization.

• Family violence victims report 57% of Aboriginal children are exposed to family violence.
It’s Your Business: 
Child Abuse in Canada

A Girl in Canada
• 0-9 physical assault
• 9 – 13 sexual assault by parent
• 12 – 15 emotional abuse
• 14 – 15 sexual assault by extended family
• 16 and on, sexual assault by spouse

A Boy in Canada
• 0-3 physical assault
• 4-8 sexual assault by parent and family
• 8-11 emotional abuse
• 9 – 14 physical assault by family members
• 15 and on, assault by family and others
## Risk factors contributing to delinquency

It’s Your Business:

### Prenatal
- Substance abuse by mother
- Poverty and teen pregnancy

### Childhood / adolescence
- Poor readiness to learn
- Poor social skills, impulsivity, hyperactivity
- Alcohol and drug abuse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Society</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prenatal</strong></td>
<td><strong>Partner violence</strong></td>
<td>Low community support for high risk mothers</td>
<td>Policies supportive of economic inequality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childhood / adolescence</td>
<td>Low family income</td>
<td><strong>Parental violence</strong></td>
<td>Low community resources for children and families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor parenting</td>
<td><strong>Child abuse</strong></td>
<td>Quality/safety of neighborhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low school attachment</td>
<td><strong>Delinquent peers</strong></td>
<td>High mobility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Delinquent peers</td>
<td></td>
<td>Low social cohesion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It’s Your Business: Canada’s children: gangs

- Typical age range for gang members is 11-15 years; 17 is the average.
- Firearms usage increasing
  - Toronto doubled its number of gun-related homicides in one year
  - 2400 high school students carried a gun at least once in 2004
- Early identification of youth-at-risk is critical as a preventative factor;
- Inter-generational transfer of violence is a risk factor;
- Number of gang-related homicides in Alberta in 2004 doubled from the previous year.

RCMP Environmental Scan, Youth and Gangs, (2006).
It’s Your Business:
Family violence costs

- The costs of violence against women are at least $4.2 billion. This includes costs associated with medical and criminal justice services, lost productivity, shelters and other services (Greaves et al. 1995). About $200 million is spent on operating shelters for abused women annually (Statistics Canada 2003a).

- The economic cost of child abuse to victims and adult survivors is estimated to be $15 billion with $11 billion associated with lost earnings alone (Bowlus et al. 2003).
Caught in the Middle
It’s Your Business: Children Exposed to Family Violence

- Risk Factors
- Behavioral outcomes
- Physical outcomes
It’s Your Business: Protective Factors

• Secure attachment of the child to adult family member;
• High levels of paternal care during childhood;
• Lack of associating with delinquent or substance-abusing peers;
• A warm and supportive relationship with a non-offending parent; and
• A lack of abuse-related stress.

WHO, Preventing Child Maltreatment, p. 16
Say Something:
Alberta’s shelters respond

- Over 13,000 women and children were resident in shelter;
- Over 25,000 women and children were turned away;
- Crisis calls to shelters have more than doubled over the past two years.
- 53% of women admitted into Alberta emergency shelters self-identify as Aboriginal (2005)
Say Something:
Alberta’s shelters respond

• 75% of women resident in shelter are at high or serious risk of assault or homicide

• By exit survey, over 95% are more able to keep themselves and their children safe, as a result of their stay in shelter;

• The number of women forced to return to abusive situations, due to lack of affordable housing in Alberta, has increased by over 50%.
Say Something:
Alberta’s on-reserve shelters respond

- 5 on-reserve Alberta shelters; 44 First Nation reserves
- On-reserve shelters served on average 10% of Alberta women and children resident in shelter
- 50% less funding from the federal government (INAC) than provincially contracted shelters
In 2006, children were:
- 47% of residents in emergency shelters
- 65% of residents in on-reserve shelters
- 62% of residents in second stage shelters

• Over 11,000 children were unable to be accommodated in shelters
What the data indicates

• Women and children resident in shelter have fled from serious incidents of family violence;

• Aboriginal children represent over half of the children in all Alberta shelters and are an important demographic in need of specialist intervention that currently does not exist;

• Shelters are providing effective interventions and women are learning and willing to learn how to keep themselves and their dependants safe
Say Something: What the data indicates

• Far too many women and children do not receive access to resident programs in Alberta’s shelters, because there is simply not enough space.

• While 57% of Aboriginal women access emergency shelters, only 34% enter second stage housing and are able to benefit from those longer and more preventative based programs.
# Say Something: Breaking the silence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women talk with:</th>
<th>Tell women about shelters:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>73% with someone close to them</td>
<td>32% friend or family member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30% with a doctor or nurse</td>
<td>4% doctor or nurse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22% with lawyers</td>
<td>18% police, RCMP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12% with the clergy</td>
<td>19% counselor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# Say Something:
## Woman resident abused as a child

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Abuse</th>
<th>% of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotionally abused</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexually abused</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Witnessed violence between parents</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physically abused</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neglected as a child</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tears
Shelters know that for the child to be safe, their mom must be safe. Additionally, children need specialized help:

- CEFV interventions must be age and gender appropriate
- Culturally appropriate
- Must address the needs of older children
Say Something: Shelter observations

- Children do not leave the affects of family violence in the home. It travels with them into the classroom or shelter.
- Children across the full spectrum of ages are resident for 24 hours/day for up to 21 consecutive days
- Children resident in shelter may well be foreign language speakers, have special needs and health issues that intersect with their other needs
### Say Something:
What women want help with

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Help with children</th>
<th>Wanted at entry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How abuse affects children</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child-care / day care and /or relief</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counseling / groups for children</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning about healthy child development</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with a difficult child</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with my child’s schooling / school</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety plans for my children</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Support / Advocacy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support / Advocacy</th>
<th>Wanted at entry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff talking to community agencies with you</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff going to appointments with you</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Say Something: On exit: women get the help they need

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Help with children</th>
<th>Very helpful</th>
<th>Somewhat helpful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child care/day care and/or relief</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How abuse affects children</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with my child’s schooling/school</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counseling/groups for children</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with a difficult child</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning about healthy child development</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety plans for my children</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Say Something: It’s hard to say you are abused

Although 9 out of 10 children considered themselves to have come from a warm and loving family background, detailed questions revealed that 16% had experienced serious maltreatment. Many [youth] deny abuse even though the harm they suffered may have been severe.

Say Something:
What is working in Alberta

Children in treatment groups significantly decreased their anxiety, improved their attitudes and response to anger, and decreased their sense of responsibility for both their parents and the violence.

Observation from an Alberta shelter, YWCA national study (2005)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Needed programs:</th>
<th>Needed facilities and staffing:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• CEFV intervention groups</td>
<td>• Outdoor play space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Child support</td>
<td>• Play resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Court support and child witness programs</td>
<td>• CEFV intervention resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Parenting support</td>
<td>• Educational resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Education provision</td>
<td>• Age specific beds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Supervised playtime</td>
<td>• Quiet space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Play therapy</td>
<td>• Specialist staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Babysitting</td>
<td>• Tutors or education specialists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Counseling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Group work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Outreach/follow-up</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Special needs interventions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Say Something: Shelters identify priority service gaps

Most needed services for children in shelter:

• Recreational opportunities and programming.
• Counseling, support groups and access to psychologist.
• In-house psychologist to help children.
• Daycare provision
• Parenting programs
• Safe visitation programs
Say Something: Shelters identify priority service gaps

Priorities for children resident

- Shelter staff: Affordable housing, Help for adolescents, Safe visitation
- Shelter directors: Safe visitation, Counseling service, Daycare
- Shelter Board: Affordable housing, 2nd stage housing, Help for adolescents
Say Something:
Community service gaps for children

- Housing
- Safe visits
- Daycare
- Legal aid
- Services for adolescents
Say Something:
A case in point: children’s health

Children resident in shelter:
• Scored significantly lower in physical health status than other children in the same age range, region and social strata
• Had more diagnosable health problems than provincial norms
• Were more absent from school than the national average

Say Something:
A case in point: education provision

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education service provision</th>
<th># of shelters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children attend their own school</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local school with usual classroom/teacher</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-house teacher</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialized school/location used as school outside the shelter</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local school with sequestered classroom/teacher</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Funded by INAC, on reserve shelters face unique issues. In remote, small communities, security and confidentiality are pressing matters. If using the school bus, everyone knows when a stop is made at the shelter. Walking long distances to the school isn’t just about the time it takes; providing security for the child along the way is another issue. These shelters simply do not have the funding or staffing to drive the children to school.
Say Something: Key issues in providing education

- Engaging the child: they need to stay connected to their education
- Engaging the moms: supporting moms and schools to connect
- Transportation: funding for buses or taxis is needed
- Safety: collaboration between the shelter and school
- Documents: transferring children between local schools or across provincial borders
Say Something:
A case in point: shelter location

- Women’s shelters need to be placed in child-friendly areas, with proximity to parks, schools and daycares;
- Well supplied shelters with bright environments needed for positive impact;
- Too many shelters located in low cost land away from needed services.

Say Something: ACWS response: networking

Shelters share best practice

- Outreach follow-up for children
- Elder care for Aboriginal children
- Children’s lawyer
- Safe visitation
- Education
Say Something:
ACWS response: resources

- Parity reports
- Salary reviews
- Aspirational standards
- Shelter Emergency fund
- Federal Early Learning and Childcare Initiative
- Fund raising support
Policy and research capacity
ACWS engages all levels of government, corporate sector and community stakeholders, foregrounding family violence.

- Memorandums of Understanding
- Parity reports
- Violence in the workplace
- Homicide tracking
ACWS member shelters collect data on

- Police response: on assault charges laid; arrests; no response; follow-up, etc.
- My abusive partner lied to authorities, as ranked: police; child welfare; judge; my employer; medical
- Danger Assessment: risk of assault or homicide; perpetrator threatens with weapon; perpetrator owns a gun; believe perpetrator is capable of killing them
- Exit surveys: changes as a result of shelter stay
Say Something:
ACWS response: research

NCPC submission to develop specialist interventions for Aboriginal children exposed to family violence:

- Identifying and facilitating traditional Aboriginal parenting strategies;
- Creating culturally relevant services for Aboriginal CEFV;
- Fostering traditional healing and cultural activities among women who want to live without violence in their relationships;
- Assisting children with safety planning and recovery from witnessing violence;
- Increasing partnerships and collaboration between child and family serving agencies involved through shelters.
Say Something: ACWS response: public awareness

- Media campaigns
  - Specialist campaigns on Children Exposed to Family Violence
  - Silent Witness

- Public awareness
  - November Family Violence Prevention Month
  - Breakfast with the Guys
  - Standing Together
Say Something: ACWS response: professional development

Training for shelters and community partners

• CEFV
• Danger Assessment
  – Potential for research project on Danger Assessment implementation in Alberta Shelters (CIF funded)
• Crisis Intervention Worker Certificate Program: Online training with Portage College
• Bursary program for shelter managers
• IODE training fund
Say Something:
Keys to healthy child development

Canada identifies:
• Adequate income for families with children;
• Effective parenting within strong and cohesive families;
• Supportive and inclusive communities.

A Canada Fit for Children, p. 8

ACWS and/or member shelters:
• Seek improvements in social assistance
• Provide parenting support
• Leaders in implementing community collaboration and building safer communities
The role of women’s emergency and second stage shelters in protecting children from family violence cannot be overstated. Because of their interventions, many children have found safe haven.

So much more needs to be done!
ACWS will host the first ever World Conference on Women’s Shelters in autumn 2008

• This developed from attendance at the Inter-American conference in Mexico City (2006)

• A key theme in the World Conference will be CEFV, with a focus on child trafficking

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