

PEACE PROGRAM TOOLKIT

Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence

Prevention, Education, Advocacy, Counselling and Empowerment

PEACE



BC Society of
Transition Houses

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BC SOCIETY OF TRANSITION HOUSE RESOURCES

In addition to the many individuals who contributed to this resource, content was drawn from existing BCSTH documents and training materials, including:

Barbeau, E. (2009). [CWWA Best Practices Manual](#). Vancouver: BC Society of Transition Houses.

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PEACE PROGRAM TOOLKIT Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence



1. INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF THE TOOLKIT

The **Prevention, Education, Advocacy, Counselling, and Empowerment (PEACE) Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence** Toolkit is for PEACE Program counsellors formerly known as Children Who Witness Abuse (CWWA) counsellors, to support and guide their work with children and youth and their families who have experienced violence. It is an updated resource to the existing “Best Practices for Children Who Witness Abuse Program” created by the BC Society of Transition Houses (BCSTH) in 2009. This resource outlines PEACE Program services from beginning to end. It also takes into consideration the deliverables in Program contracts with funders, and provincial and federal laws.

This Toolkit is a continuation in the development of best practices for PEACE Programs and includes updated and practical information, sample forms, and resources. The Toolkit is not a supplement to PEACE training, but provides complementary information and resources for you to use in your daily practice.

We hope that the information and resources in the Toolkit will assist counsellors, both new and those who have been doing the work for many years, to:

- Support the emotional and psychological needs of the children and youth who access your Program.
- Create individual and group service plans.
- Develop parental awareness of the impacts and effects of experiencing violence, both for children and for themselves.
- Nurture the child/youth and non-offending parent relationship.
- Raise community awareness through violence prevention education.
- Ensure that Programs are governed and administered ethically and responsibly.

OVERVIEW OF THE TOOLKIT

The information and resources in this Toolkit are informed by the knowledge and wisdom of PEACE Program counsellors.

This Toolkit has information related to your **practice**, including:

- Rationale and approach to working with children and youth with experiences of violence.
- Resource suggestions.

- Background information and sample activities based on developmental age of the children and youth.
- Supporting the non-offending parent(s) or guardian(s).
- Sample forms to assist counsellors with the daily requirements of their work.
- Sample forms that are strength-based, women- and child-centred, and reflect confidentiality and privacy laws.

This Toolkit has information related to **Program administration**, including:

- Resources and sample forms regarding Program policies and practices that incorporate privacy best practices.

In addition, BCSTH is in the process of drafting a program policy template guide for PEACE Programs and that resource will be distributed as a supplement to this Toolkit when completed.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

PEACE PROGRAM PRACTICE

Counsellors are encouraged to respond to the varied needs and contexts of the children, youth, and parents they support, by adapting the Toolkit materials and adding activities to those included in the Toolkit.

The sample activities provided for each age group, are intended to be a starting place. These activities fall under six key topics or themes that should be covered by PEACE Program counsellors when working with children and youth, to meet the minimum requirement for adherence to the PEACE Program mandate and your Program's contract. Additional resource suggestions outside of the six core themes of the PEACE Program are provided for counsellors to explore and draw from as they develop and expand their practice tools.

The resources and sample activities are organized based on the ages of children and youth. If a child's developmental stage does not reflect their chronological age, the counsellor will need to adapt the Program materials, service plans, and approaches to meet the needs of the child or youth.

PEACE PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

This Toolkit provides PEACE Program counsellors with best practice operational templates—such as intake, consent, and confidentiality forms that take into consideration current privacy legislation. Counsellors are encouraged to review these forms, compare them with their existing forms, and adapt the forms to meet the needs of their Program.



A NOTE ON LANGUAGE

Children Who Witness Abuse Program Name Change

The Children Who Witness Abuse Program started more than 25 years ago. While change can be difficult, and the CWWA name has served the Program and its participants well, the CWWA Program must adapt to evolving social and political environments and discourses. As such, CWWA counsellors, BCSTH, and the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General (MPSSG) collaborated to explore the suitability of “Children Who Witness Abuse” as the Program name. For many years, renaming the CWWA Program to better reflect its work has been discussed in conference calls, trainings, and at CWWA in-person meetings. In March 2016, BCSTH canvassed CWWA service agencies via an online survey to better understand and hear concerns regarding the name. Of the 76 responses received, 75.8% of CWWA Programs wanted to see the name changed.

In May 2017, BCSTH invited CWWA Programs to complete an online survey asking CWWA counsellors for name change suggestions. BCSTH shortlisted several name suggestions and provided the 86 CWWA Programs with an opportunity to vote on a new name, with one vote per agency. The new name is the **PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence – Prevention, Education, Advocacy, Counselling, and Empowerment**. This Toolkit reflects this name change both in name, and in the broadened understanding of how children and youth experience violence against their mothers. (See *Children and Youth Who Experience Violence* next and the *Response Based Practice* section.)

Children and Youth Who Experience Violence

Children and youth living in families where violence in the home occurs, may:

- Hear the violence.
- Be used as a physical weapon.
- Be forced to watch or participate in assaults.
- Be forced to spy on a parent.
- Be informed that they are to blame for the violence because of their behaviour.
- Be used as a hostage.
- Defend a parent against the violence.
- Intervene to stop the violence, during the violence.
- Telephone for emergency assistance after the violence.
- See a parent’s injuries after the violence, and assist in “patching up” a parent.
- Have their own injuries and/or trauma to cope with.

- Deal with a parent who alternates between violence and a caring role.
- See the parents being arrested.
- Have to leave home with a parent, and/or experience dislocation from family, friends, and school.

The above list, although not exhaustive, illustrates that children and youth do much more than “witness” violence. PEACE Program counsellors expand their understanding of children and youth’s experiences to include “experiencing violence,” “resisting violence,” “responding to violence,” “being exposed to violence,” “living with violence,” and “being affected by violence”.

Throughout the Toolkit we are using the language of “experiencing” violence rather than “witnessing” to highlight that even when children are not the primary target of the violence, they still experience, are affected by, resist and respond to it—they are not passive in their witnessing and experiencing of the violence. (See **Response Based Practice** section).

Gender-based Violence

Throughout the Toolkit we refer to **violence against women, woman abuse, and gender-based violence**. These terms are interchangeable and reflect the historical and persistent unequal power relations between men and women. Gender based violence in any form is a violation of human rights and can “result in physical, psychological, sexual, and economic harm or suffering”¹. The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women² defines gender-based violence as encompassing, but not limited to:

- Physical, sexual, and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence, and violence related to exploitation.
- Physical, sexual, and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women, and forced prostitution.
- Physical, sexual, and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs.

This violence can be perpetrated by men and women and in same-sex relationships; however, it is disproportionately perpetrated by men against women and girls, and has long-term, far-reaching impacts on their health and well-being.

This understanding of gender-based violence extends to systemic violence, and acknowledges that it is not only women and girls’ individual experiences of violence, but also structural violence (e.g. poverty, food and housing insecurity), which further disadvantages and harms women. Structural violence—and political, economic, and social systems that privilege some and disadvantage others—contribute to the social and gender inequality that creates conditions whereby gender-based violence is perpetuated and condoned.



Child and Youth

Throughout this manual, *child* or *children and youth* refers to **program participants** unless otherwise indicated. These terms will be used interchangeably. *Child* or *children* will refer to program participants between the ages of 3–9. *Youth* will refer to program participants between the ages of 10–18.

Mother/Non-offending Parent

Most children and youth referred to the PEACE Program will have seen, heard, and/or be aware of violence perpetrated against their mother. Therefore, throughout the Toolkit we use the language **mother** and **non-offending parent** interchangeably, to refer to the non-offending mother or caregiver (e.g. grandparent, foster parent) unless we specify otherwise (e.g. offending parent, or father).

OVERVIEW OF THE PEACE PROGRAM

Children and youth with experiences of violence in the home need a dedicated Program to address these violent experiences. Their feelings need to be validated and recognized as important, and the impact that violence against women has on children and youth, must be assessed.

The PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence (originally called the Children Who Witness Abuse Program) started in 1992, when the (at that time) BC/Yukon Society of Transition Houses (BCSTH) responded to a need for supportive psycho-educational counselling for children and youth with experiences of violence in the home. Core funding was provided by the Ministry of Social Services, and 41 Programs were established. At time of writing this Toolkit, there are 86 community-based Programs offered throughout British Columbia for children and youth with experiences of violence in the home.

The primary goals of the PEACE Program are:

- To support children and youth to feel safe, respected, valued, and heard.
- To support mothers/caregivers to feel respected, empowered, confident, and effective.
- To support children, youth, and parents to develop healthy and respectful ways of connecting with one another.
- To reduce isolation, and let children and youth know that they are not alone.
- To identify and develop safety skills and strategies.
- To educate non-violent ways of resolving conflict.
- To support emotional health and self-esteem.
- To view emotions and responses not as pathological, but rather as a natural response to traumatic events.

- To provide psycho-education and support to help children and youth identify and manage their emotions.
- To provide strategies to help children and youth cope with and minimize responses, including healthy ways of expressing anger.
- To foster hope by reminding children and youth of their abilities, and how they have used strategies and resistance in the past to successfully cope with adversity.
- To offer reassurance that the child's and youth's reactions are natural under the circumstances.
- To provide outreach in schools, focused on violence prevention.
- To develop understanding of violence against women and girls.

BCSTH works closely with each of the PEACE Programs, and provides support through networking, communication, consultation, advocacy, and training. Programs are currently funded by the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General (MPSSG).

DESCRIPTION OF THE PEACE PROGRAM FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH EXPERIENCING VIOLENCE

The PEACE Program is a grassroots psycho-educational program that grew out of a need identified by transition house workers in British Columbia: To support program participants with experiences of violence in the home. The provincial PEACE Program is the only provincial and territorial program in Canada aimed at supporting children and youth living with the effects of experiences of violence against their mother. It includes:

- Free community-based support programs for children and youth between the ages of 3–18.
- Information-sharing and support to non-offending parents and caregivers.
- School prevention activities.

The PEACE Program provides group and individual counselling services for children and youth who have witnessed abuse, threats, or violence in the home, and who:

- Are between the ages of 3–18.
- Reside in (Program location) and the surrounding area (service area), or at the discretion of the Contractor, reside outside of this area.



OVERVIEW OF SERVICES

Aside from providing age-appropriate individual and group counselling services to children and youth, PEACE Program counsellors also:

- Conduct an assessment to determine:
 - Impact of the abuse on the child or youth.
 - Readiness of the child or youth to participate in group sessions.
 - Support for the needs of the non-offending parent.
- Provide individual counselling for children and youth who are not ready for group counselling, and for program participants who need service when no group for their developmental age is available.
- Communicate with, and support, non-offending parents by providing information about the services; and where resources permit, by providing the parents with support groups and individual counselling sessions.
- Deliver prevention activities in schools, where resources permit and are approved by parties involved.

In the context of the PEACE Program, assessment is not clinical or diagnostic, so the Program does not require diagnostic assessment tools. The Program makes a psychosocial assessment to determine eligibility, i.e. whether the referral is appropriate, or if a child needs to be referred to another agency—and if there are any immediate safety concerns. (See the **Working with Children** section.)

Hours of service vary, based on contracts. However, it is advised that PEACE Program counsellors should, in addition to the intake and closing sessions, spend 8–12 sessions per child or youth, and 8–12 sessions per group, per week. It is recommended that within a 7.5–8 hour workday, counsellors should have a maximum of four, in-person sessions per day, unless there are immediate concerns with additional children or youth that need to be attended to. This allows counsellors enough time to connect with new Program participants; prepare for, and clean up after, sessions; record any case notes; communicate with their clinical counsellor and supervisor; and complete other necessary paperwork.

SERVICE PRINCIPLES

Per the current MPSSG Contract:

Primary principles when providing services:

- The safety and support of children and youth who have witnessed abuse, and of the non-offending parent.
- The individual situation, perspective, and needs of children and youth.

Knowledge that needs to be applied:

- The power imbalances in our society that lead to children and youth witnessing abuse, threats, or violence against women.
- The impact and dynamics of abuse, threats, or violence.
- That perpetrators are responsible for their actions.

SERVICE GUIDELINES

PEACE Program counsellor Service Guidelines

Per the current MPSSG Contract:

- Provide age-appropriate group and individual counselling services for children who have witnessed abuse, threats, or violence in the home, between the ages of 3–18, within your service area.
- Communicate with and support parents who are survivors of abuse, or the non-offending caregiver, by providing information about the services.
- Provide services with the objective of stopping the inter-generational cycle of abuse, by teaching children non-violent ways of resolving conflict; and by promoting the process of healing.
- Support children whose emotional health and self-esteem have been affected by witnessing abuse.
- Provide services in an age-appropriate manner designed to:
 - Support children in labeling and expressing all feelings they have experienced in their reaction to the abuse they have witnessed.
 - Assist children in understanding healthy ways of dealing with anger and expressing anger.
 - Support children in understanding they are not at fault for the abusive actions of others.
 - Teach children safety skills and strategies, and non-violent conflict resolution skills.
 - Encourage open communication.
 - Acknowledge loss and separation issues.
 - Facilitate understanding of abuse, and myths about violence against women.
 - Explore other violence issues such as systems responses to violence, messaging in the media, patriarchy, gender, privilege, power, and control.
 - Encourage self-confidence.
 - Provide consultation to women with dependent children whose children are unable to attend or receive services as typically provided.
 - Promote and build positive relationships between parent/caregiver and child.



- Ensure that every person involved with the provision of services under this agreement, are competent to perform the services, adequately trained, fully instructed, and supervised.
- Ensure that case consultants and counselling supervisors possess the following qualifications:
 - Knowledgeable and skilled in feminist counselling and counselling supervision practices.
 - Experience in counselling children who have witnessed abuse, threats, or violence in the home, and their parents who have been abused.
- Upon request from the Province, from time to time provide evidence satisfactory to the Province that the Contractor, its employees, and all personnel engaged by the Program, hold or have been issued all required licenses, certificates, and memberships; and that they are valid and in good standing.
- At all times maintain a standard of care, skill, and diligence in performance of the services exercised and observed by persons engaged in the provision of services similar to the services.
- Ensure that Program participants and the non-offending parents are entitled to independence from the religious, political, social beliefs, or affiliations of the Contractor, its employees, and volunteers.
- Establish and maintain intake and operational policies that are intended to:
 - Provide for the safety of children and youth, the non-offending parents, and the Programs employees and volunteers.
 - Protect the Program participants, the non-offending parents, the Program's employees and volunteers, from sexual and racial harassment during the provision of services.
 - Sign a confidentiality agreement in a form content satisfactory to the Province, with each board member, employee, sub-contractor, service provider, volunteers, student, trainee, or work placement. The Contractor will provide a copy of this confidentiality agreement to the Province upon request.

Activities that fall outside of the contracted responsibilities of PEACE Program counsellors.

PEACE Program counsellors are sometimes asked by community agencies to go above and beyond their Program mandate and expertise, to:

- Provide therapy.
- Conduct medical assessments, including mental health assessments.
- Supervise visitation.
- “Monitor” women and children accessing their services.
- Exceed the recommended 8–12 sessions.
- Be expert witnesses in pending court matters.

These responsibilities are outside the scope and contract MPSSG requirements of a PEACE Program counsellor. If such a request should arise, counsellors can feel confident in stating that the request is outside their scope of practice. Counsellors can consult with a supervisor if additional support is needed.

ANTICIPATED PEACE PROGRAM OUTCOMES

- Program participants will be able to label and express their feelings, in relation to their exposure to violence in the home.
- Program participants will be able to distinguish between healthy and unhealthy ways of expressing anger, and will develop healthy ways.
- Program participants will understand they are not responsible for the violence perpetrated against their mothers.
- Program participants will understand they are not alone in their exposure to violence. This is often exemplified during group support.
- Program participants will be able to identify who they can talk with to be safe, and develop a safety plan if needed.
- Program participants will be able to recognize the positive aspects of their current support system. Their support system will also be broadened based on their needs.
- Program participants' self-awareness and confidence will be enhanced. They will be able to identify their strengths, and the challenges they face. They will learn how other people see them and how they see themselves, especially with respect to their family relationships. They will feel some control over themselves, their relationships, and their environment.



PSYCHO-EDUCATIONAL MANDATE

The PEACE Program uses psycho-educational methods. Psycho-education is an important part of working with children and youth with experiences of violence. Living in the context of violence can result in impacts which contribute to how a child or youth perceives and understands their experience.

The Program assists children, youth and their mothers to learn skills to cope with their experiences of violence. The Program's goals are to provide participants with a safe, welcoming, and supportive setting to discuss their experiences, the impacts, and to learn to manage their responses. A psycho-educational program is a broad theoretical framework of support that empowers the program participant, and that promotes resilience and attitudinal and behavioural change.

PEACE Program counsellors can employ psycho-educational methods to help increase a participant's ability to understand their experiences of violence, and adapt to them. This helps program participants reduce the impacts, and alleviate the potential for social or behavioural challenges arising from experiencing violence. Research also shows that psycho-education can benefit an individual's mental state and functioning; enhance their skills for keeping themselves safe; reduce feelings of shame; improve self-esteem; and improve family relationships.^{3,4,5}

In a psycho-educational program, the locus of change is within the program participant; the counsellor's job is to empower the program participant through information and strategies. This can be accomplished in both group and individual settings.

The PEACE Program counsellor can empower children and youth through psycho-education, by:

- Providing accurate information that helps the program participant better understand their experiences and the impacts of experiencing violence.
- Providing reassurance.
- Helping program participants explore their feelings (e.g. grief, loss).
- Providing emotional support.
- Setting, and teaching, boundaries.
- Fostering and acknowledging resilience.
- Assisting with goal setting.
- Teaching skills, such as grounding skills and safety planning.
- Challenging thinking patterns.
- Sharing family stories.

- Exploring, acknowledging, and validating their responses to violence.
- Providing opportunities for social interaction with safe adults and peers.

PEACE Program counsellors explore these topics and engage program participants using developmentally appropriate methods (e.g. art, play, story-telling, use of multi-media).

(See the ***Working with Children and Youth: Sample Activities and Forms*** section for a more detailed exploration of age-appropriate tools and methods.)

GROUP SUPPORT

The PEACE Program provides both group and individual counselling support to children and youth experiencing violence. After PEACE Program counsellors have met with program participants individually to complete the initial assessment, Program overview, and safety plan, they are encouraged to provide the opportunity for group participation to Program participants that are group ready.

Most program participants find group sessions enjoyable and comfortable, and groups have many benefits for both counsellors and participants:

- Efficient, consistent, cost-effective delivery of the PEACE Program material.
- Counsellors can support multiple program participants at one time, when long waitlists are an issue.
- Children and youth have the opportunity to hear from, and learn about, other program participant's experiences. This can help to reduce their feelings of isolation and shame.
- Children and youth can build their social and support network with program participants who understand their experiences.
- Children and youth learn safety and coping strategies via group content shared by the counsellors, and also by other program participants.
- Children and youth are empowered in their sharing, through validation of their experiences and the strategies they employ.
- Children and youth reduce the silence surrounding violence in the home, through sharing their stories.

Psycho-education in a group setting is generally delivered to groups of program participants of around the same age, ideally 8–10 participants per group, in a series of semi-structured group sessions. The group provides a supportive environment to discuss program participants' experiences of violence, thus breaking the silence about secrets they may be keeping.

The sessions can challenge myths the program participants may hold about violence against women; discuss



safety skills; teach non-violent values; and provide opportunities to practice respectful ways of relating to others. Additional topics may address issues related to increasing self-esteem, identifying what family and community resources may be available, and providing older participants with information about sexual abuse or dating violence.

Discussing sexual violence is not recommended in a group setting, as it can be upsetting for some program participants. For younger participants, socializing play activities and snack times are part of the process. Depending on the number of sessions available, activities to decrease emotional or behavioural challenges may be included.

Counsellors should ensure that the content of the group sessions reflects the developmental age of the participants, to maximise learning and healing benefits. (See the ***Working with Children and Youth: Sample Activities and Forms*** section for sample age-appropriate activities.)

INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT

PEACE Program counsellors may need to provide individual counselling to program participants who are not group ready, or who may have immediate crisis and safety needs. Some program participants may participate in both, needing individual counselling first before moving into a group. There are benefits to both.

In individual sessions:

- Program participants may open up more about their experiences, particularly if they do not feel comfortable speaking up in group settings.
- Counsellors can explore particular issues in more detail, then tailor their support to that program participant's needs.
- Counsellors can build a relationship with a program participant that fosters connection, trust, and safety.

Counsellors will use activities and strategies such as games and storytelling to help program participants understand their experiences, and to develop tools and coping skills. Counselling with a child or youth can take the form of a simple conversation about everyday events in their life (e.g. asking, "Tell me about your family," or "What do you like to do best?"). These topics lend themselves to conversations that help identify and reinforce the program participant's achievements. With younger children, an approach might be to ask the child to draw a picture around the same topics (e.g. "Draw me a picture about your family," or "Draw a picture about your favourite thing to do.").

Counsellors should ensure the content of the individual sessions reflects the developmental age of the program participant, to maximise learning and benefits. (See the ***Working with Children and Youth: Sample Activities and Forms*** section for age-appropriate sample activities.)

ETHICS OF KEEPING TO THE PEACE MANDATE OF PSYCHO-EDUCATIONAL METHODS

PEACE Programs are mandated and designed to provide psycho-education to children and youth with experiences of violence. A child or youth's responses to their experiences of violence can be very complex; psycho-educational methods provide a supportive approach, to engage and empower the program participant. Psycho-educational interventions are intended for mild to moderately distressed children. PEACE Programs are **not** mandated to provide clinical counselling, and most PEACE Program counsellors are not trained therapists. Even if a PEACE Program counsellor is a certified clinical counsellor, the PEACE Program should employ psycho-educational methods.

Gaining clarity regarding the limits of the PEACE Program counsellor's role does not imply a lack of confidence in the counsellor's abilities. While some PEACE Program counsellors are trained therapists, this is not a therapy program. PEACE Program participants have consented to a psycho-educational program, not to clinical therapy.

In individual or group situations, PEACE Program counsellors must use careful judgement in allowing participants to share, while gently helping them stay present and engaged with the whole group. Counsellors should be aware of the signs that a conversation needs to be steered in new ways. For example, a personal story shared by a child that helps group members normalize their experiences, learn new ways to cope, or break their own silences, is generally within the focus of a group discussion; however, if a program participant shows signs of anxiety or agitation, appears detached or dissociated, or seems to be having more feelings than she can handle, the counsellor should shift the direction of the discussion and attend to the program participant's state (e.g. engage the child in a grounding activity).

If it becomes clear that a program participant wants or needs therapy that focuses on deeper healing, the PEACE Program counsellor should seek supervisory guidance and consider an appropriate referral. It is in fact best practice to refer a program participant for appropriate services.

Some PEACE Program counsellors have the professional capacity, skill, and comfort level to go beyond the PEACE mandate and offer support to individuals that is outside the scope of mandated PEACE work. However, PEACE Program counsellors are contracted to provide a particular service with a particular mandate, usually as

In both group and individual sessions, a counsellor must be aware of the often-blurry line between psycho-education and clinical counselling—to ensure that the methods used fall within the mandate of the Program, and that appropriate referrals are made for other Programs or supports.



an employee of a non-profit organization. To safeguard organizational and individual liability, and in the interest of professionalism, counsellors should not expand the PEACE mandate on an ad hoc basis, or practice outside of their training and expertise as PEACE Program counsellors in the context of the PEACE Program.

Generally, agencies have liability insurance that will cover the PEACE Program counsellor within the context of the Program. However, PEACE Program counsellors who are also trained clinical counsellors, and who practice independently outside of the bounds of psycho-education and the Program organization require additional professional liability insurance.

Best practice in these situations would be to clarify the different roles the counsellor is engaged in, and ensure program participants and non-offending parents understand, and consent individually to, the different services being provided by the same person. Some British Columbia communities are fortunate to have the services of a PEACE Program counsellor who can provide multiple services, but there must be clarity about the role and services provided by the same person and the purpose and mandate of each.

A PEACE Program counsellor with concerns about whether a program participant requires outside referrals, should seek guidance from an experienced peer or supervisor. A referral should be considered when the needs of the program participant are outside the psycho-educational mandate of the PEACE Program, or when the needs are beyond the training and experience of the counsellor. Even a registered clinical counsellor must not engage in therapy that is beyond what the PEACE Program is designed to provide, and what the program participant and mother have consented to.

Signs a program participant has needs that require referral to other services:

- Disorientation.
- Hallucinations.
- Inability to function.
- Dissociation.
- Psychiatric concerns.
- Concerns about self-harming or suicidal ideation.
- Severe depression.
- Ritualistic retelling.
- Drug or alcohol issues that require intervention.
- Disclosure of sexual or other abuse.
- Indication that a program participant wants or needs therapy that is not related to experiencing abuse, or that is aimed at deeper healing.

Even if a CWWA counsellor is a trained clinician and has the capacity and skill to provide support regarding any of the above concerns, it is best practice to keep services separate. However, given the ongoing waitlists and the financial pressure to do more with less, CWWA counsellors face a difficult decision about services that are beyond their competencies and the mandate of the program.

Sometimes PEACE Program counsellors feel pressure to continue working with a program participant because they know there is no other service available or that alternate services also have long waiting lists, and the child or youth will be without service until a space opens up. If a referral to another provider is not possible or appropriate, the counsellor may provide limited supportive counselling intended to avert a crisis, or reduce the possibility of further harm—with the consent of the program participant’s mother and the counsellor’s supervisor. In these instances, the counsellor must ensure they are covered by appropriate insurance and that they have obtained a signed consent form from the program participant’s mother or non-offending caregiver, agreeing to the specific service.

Feminist counselling practices provide some guidance:

- The counsellor must conduct an honest inventory of her own knowledge, skills, and abilities. If a program participant presents with an issue that is outside the parameters of the counsellor’s experience, she must explain the situation to the child and/or to the mother, as appropriate.
- If referral to another provider is not possible or appropriate, the counsellor may, with the consent of the mother, provide limited supportive counselling intended to avert a crisis or reduce the possibility of further harm.
- Questions about competencies to provide services should always be discussed with a supervisor or peer.⁶

REFERENCES

¹ Council of Europe. (2011). Article 3a, Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. Council of Europe Treaty Series, No. 210. Istanbul.

² United Nations. (1993). Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women. Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/48/a48r104.htm>

³ Pharoah, F., Mari, J., Rathbone, J., & Wong, W. (2010). Family intervention for schizophrenia: 2010 update. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews, 2006(4).

⁴ Reyes, C. (2010). What is psycho-education? Psycho-educational teacher for students with behavioral issues. Retrieved from <http://thepsychoeducationalteacher.blogspot.ca/2010/10/what-is-psycho-education.html>

⁵ Sudermann, M., Marshall, L., & Loosely, S. (2000). Evaluation of the London (Ontario) Community Group Treatment Programme for Children Who Have Witnessed Woman Abuse. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma* 3:1, 127–146.

⁶ McEvoy, M., & Ziegler, M. (2006). Best practices manual for Stopping the Violence counselling Programs in British Columbia. Vancouver: BC Association of Specialized Victim Assistance and Counselling Programs.



2. WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH: RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

“A child who lives with violence is forever changed, but not forever “damaged.” There’s a lot we can do to make tomorrow better.”¹

In this section, we explore four key developmental stages—and important considerations when working alongside program participants and their mother, within these stages.

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS: CHILDREN AGES 3–5

CHILD DEVELOPMENT AGES 3–5

According to the Child Development Institute, a children’s mental health agency in Toronto, “children go through distinct periods of development as they move from infants to young adults. During each of these stages multiple changes in the development of the brain are taking place. What occurs and approximately when these developments take place are genetically determined. However, environmental circumstances and exchanges with key individuals within that environment have significant influence on how each child benefits from each developmental event. Ages and Stages is a term used to broadly outline key periods in the human development timeline. During each stage growth and development occur in the primary developmental domains including physical, intellectual, language and social-emotional.”²

Contributing further to the **Child Development Theory** section, the following will provide information specific to the development and impacts of violence on children between the ages of 3–5.

Overview of this Developmental Stage

When a child takes the first step on her own, a new phase in development begins. At this stage children actively explore their environment. This stage is referred to as the “play age.” The child’s developmental goal at this age is to become independent.

According to the Child Development Institute, the healthily developing child learns: (1) to imagine, to broaden her skills through active play of all sorts, including fantasy; (2) to cooperate with others; (3) to lead as well as to follow. Language development takes major leaps, which leads to learning the names of objects of interest; the ability to ask for things; and as they discover their independent nature, yes, the ability to say “NO!”. They are also very curious and will begin to ask questions like, “Why?”

During this developmental stage, a major challenge is developing what psychologists call “emotional regulation.” Preschoolers are easily upset by changes to daily routines, and separation from cherished items such as blankets or pets. They are comforted by the establishment of routines, such as those at mealtime and bedtime. “Meltdowns” are common during this period; but caregivers can use the bond developed during infancy to help the child learn to modulate their emotional expression, and begin to grasp the difficult concept of delaying gratification. While they instinctively seem to be able to say “NO,” toddlers also need help in learning how to accept “NO” from others.

This is also a stage of rapid physical and intellectual development that prepares these children for starting school, including interacting cooperatively with peers while at the same time being able to compete physically and intellectually. A child’s parent is in the position to be a coach, providing just the right combination of encouragement, support, and guidance. Parents also need to serve as the primary teacher for the mastery of basic learning skills, and for encouraging active discussion and experimentation of new concepts and skills.

HOW EXPERIENCING VIOLENCE AT HOME MIGHT INFLUENCE CHILD DEVELOPMENT	
KEY ASPECTS OF DEVELOPMENT	POTENTIAL IMPACT OF EXPERIENCING VIOLENCE
Learn how to express angry feelings and other emotions in appropriate ways	Learn unhealthy ways to express anger and aggression
Experiences and observations most salient in forming meaning in their world	Confused by conflicting messages (e.g. “What I see” vs. “What I am told”)
Outcome is more salient than the process	May be distressed by perceived unfairness, father’s arrest, and/or trip to shelter
Think in egocentric ways	May attribute violence to something they did
Form ideas about gender roles based on social messages	Learn gender roles associated with violence and victimization
Increased physical independence (e.g. dressing self)	Instability may inhibit independence; may see regressive behaviours

FIGURE 1: HOW EXPERIENCING VIOLENCE AT HOME MIGHT INFLUENCE DEVELOPMENT

(Source: Cunningham, A., & Baker, L. (2007). *Little Eyes, Little Ears: How violence against a mother shapes children as they grow*. London: The Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System.)



THE IMPACTS OF EXPERIENCING VIOLENCE AT AGES 3–5

Preschoolers, from about age 3–6 years, are severely distressed by witnessing the abuse of their mother. They may be very clingy, or difficult to manage and negative in their mood. Children at this age appear more likely to experience physical complaints and to regress to earlier stages of functioning.

In this age group, what they experience is more real than anything you tell them. Because of their egocentric nature, they might blame themselves for bad events, such as when their parents “fight.” The child may worry about being hurt, and may have nightmares about being hurt. She may believe that the violence is her fault and may try to stop the abuse (e.g. by yelling). She may tune out the violence and focus instead on something like toys or television. She may hope that a television character or superhero will come and save her. She may be confused if her father is gone, and worry that her mother may leave too.

Potential impacts of experiencing abuse at this age:

- Poor sleeping habits.
- Eating problems.
- Higher risk of physical injury.
- Trauma may impact development of neural pathways, which are needed for brain and nervous system to communicate.
- Poor attachments to appropriate caregivers.
- Heightened startle response.
- Separation/stranger anxiety.
- Regressive behaviors.
- Fearfulness.
- Repetitive/ritualistic play.³

Features of experiencing abuse of their mother that might be most stressful for this age group:

- Seeing their mother upset, crying, and maybe bleeding or with a bruise.
- Seeing (and hearing) their father angry and yelling.
- Sounds and sights of first responders when they secure the scene and assist on a call to the home.
- Chaotic change and unpredictability.
- Fear that they might be injured.
- Disruption in their routines if they leave a familiar home (e.g. to go into shelter) or if a father is no longer in the home.⁴

HOW TO HELP

What a child experiences and needs when experiencing abuse, depends on the developmental stage of the child. The following chart provides a starting place for identifying ways PEACE Program counsellors can support children and their non-offending parent.

WHAT YOU MAY OBSERVE	HOW YOU CAN HELP (AND SUPPORT PARENTS TO HELP)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sleep disturbances • Disturbances in feeding • Feelings of helplessness and passivity • Generalized fearfulness • Specific new fears • Loss of recently acquired developmental skills (e.g. walking, talking) • Clinginess and separation anxiety • Inhibited play and exploration • Thinking and talking about the traumatic event • Being upset at reminders and doing their best to avoid reminders • Irritability • Aggressiveness • Scanning for danger/expecting danger • Easily startled 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster parent-child relationship • Create welcoming, calm, stable and predictable environments • Help the child anticipate what will happen • Give choices • Let the child know that they are not to blame for the abuse • Provide reassurance when the child needs it • Name and validate the child's feelings • Build emotional health; help the child to manage their emotions • Do not pressure her to talk • Be a good listener; show interest, empathy, and availability • Establish an emotional, non-judgmental connection to help build trust • Reduce stress and build coping skills • Identify and build on their strengths, coping strategies, and talents • Model emotional expression, and healthy behaviours and relationships • Identify and nurture a child's support network • Support peer relationships • Be a mentor; offer a positive, nurturing relationship with an adult to enhance resiliency • Be patient; expect to do these over and over again, as it is natural for children to need repeated reassurance

FIGURE 2: SUPPORTING CHILDREN AGED 3-5

(Source: Van Horn, P. (2008). Children Exposed to Domestic Violence: A Curriculum for Domestic Violence Advocates. Chicago: The Domestic Violence and Mental Health Policy Initiative as cited in National Centre on Domestic Violence. (2012). Tips for Supporting Children and Youth Exposed to Domestic Violence. Retrieved from http://www.nationalcenterdvtraumamh.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Tipsheet_Children-Exposed_NCDVTMH_May2012.pdf)



RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS: CHILDREN AGES 6–8

CHILD DEVELOPMENT AGES 6–8

According to the Child Development Institute, “children go through distinct periods of development as they move from infants to young adults. During each of these stages multiple changes in the development of the brain are taking place. What occurs and approximately when these developments take place are genetically determined. However, environmental circumstances and exchanges with key individuals within that environment have significant influence on how each child benefits from each developmental event. Ages and Stages is a term used to broadly outline key periods in the human development timeline. During each stage growth and development occur in the primary developmental domains including physical, intellectual, language and social-emotional.”⁵

Contributing further to the ***Child Development Theory section***, the following will provide information specific to the development and impacts of violence on children between the ages of 6–8.

Overview of this Developmental Stage

Children at this age begin to form outside friendships and attachments. However, the family is the central influence. Their identity is strongly tied to belonging to their family, and they look to their parents as significant role models. At this stage, parents are in a position to impart a moral code that the child gradually internalizes. Children look to parents to provide praise and encouragement for achievement.

No longer requiring constant supervision, school age children become gradually ready for more independence. They are learning to form complex thoughts, and enjoy complex play using lots of imagination. Children at this age continue to develop their sense of humour, become protective of others, and are better able to control their conduct and behavior, including how they express their anger—which they begin to demonstrate verbally (e.g. saying “I hate you.”).

HOW EXPERIENCING VIOLENCE AT HOME MIGHT INFLUENCE CHILD DEVELOPMENT	
KEY ASPECTS OF DEVELOPMENT	POTENTIAL IMPACT OF EXPERIENCING VIOLENCE
Increased emotional awareness for self and others	More aware of own reactions to violence; more aware of impact on others (e.g. mother’s safety, father being charged); feeling overly responsive toward mom and siblings; appear hyper-vigilant and over-involved in adult activity
Increased complexity in thinking about right and wrong; emphasis on fairness and intent	Possibly more susceptible to rationalizations heard to justify violence (e.g. alcohol as cause, victim deserves it) or may challenge rationalizations not viewed as fair or right; may assess “was the fight fair?”; sees discrepancies between actions and words, and considers intent; justifications involving children may lead to self-blame or guilt
Academic and social success at school has primary impact on self-concept	Learning may be compromised (e.g. child may be distracted); may miss positive statements; may selectively attend to negatives or evoke negative feedback
Increased influence from outside family (e.g. peers, school); competition assumes new importance within peer group	Possibly more influenced by messages that confirm attitudes and behaviours associated with partner abuse; may use hostile aggression to compete; increased risk for bullying and/or being bullied
Increased same-sex identification	May learn gender roles associated with partner abuse (e.g. males as perpetrators, females as victims, perception of mother as weak)

FIGURE 3: HOW EXPERIENCING VIOLENCE AT HOME MIGHT INFLUENCE DEVELOPMENT

(Source: Cunningham, A., & Baker, L. (2007). Little Eyes, Little Ears: How violence against a mother shapes children as they grow. London: The Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System.)



THE IMPACTS OF EXPERIENCING VIOLENCE AT AGES 6–8

School-aged children can show their distress through aggressive and/or withdrawn behaviours at school, and difficulty in concentrating. These children are often labelled with attention deficit disorders (without having been asked about violence at home); may have difficulties in peer relationships; and have low self-esteem. Boys may begin to be defiant with female teachers, mimicking the disrespect for women they see at home.

Children begin to identify with their same-sex parent: “They learn what it means to be male and female in our society, but this learning is distorted when they live with violence against their mother.”⁶ Looking to their parents as significant role models, boys and girls quickly learn that violence is an appropriate way of resolving conflict in human relationships. They may also suffer significant emotional consequences, and experience embarrassment and shame related to the “family secret.” They may feel guilt at their own inability to prevent the violence, and be confused by their divided sense of loyalty in wanting to protect their mother, while also fearing their father’s control over the family. These children may spend long hours at school, distracted and inattentive. Developmental regressions may lead to ostracism by classmates. Hyper-vigilance combined with impaired concentration may make it very difficult for these children to learn well at school.

Potential impacts of experiencing abuse at this age:

- Somatic complaints i.e. physical symptoms (e.g. stomach aches, headaches) resulting from anger or anxiety.
- Regressive behaviours (e.g. thumb-sucking, bed-wetting).
- Feelings of loss and sadness.
- Loss of security and stability.
- Depression.
- Nightmares.
- Difficulties in school.
- Low self-esteem.
- Loneliness.
- Impulsive behaviour.
- Hyperactivity.
- Anxiety.
- Distorted thinking.⁷

Features of experiencing abuse of their mother that might be most stressful for this age group:

- Realization that their mother can't control her partner—either to protect herself, or perhaps keep the children safe.
- Understanding that their mother is sad and upset between incidents.
- Concern that their mother may be hurt.
- Feeling guilty about not protecting their mother.
- Scared that no one will take care of them if their mother is seriously hurt or dies.
- Living in fear of betraying the “family secret.”
- Feeling anger, fear, and confusion towards their father.
- If they love their father, concern that he might experience negative consequences such as arrest, or that the parents will separate.
- Fear that they might be injured now, or in the next fight.
- When noise keeps them awake at night, there is an adverse effect on school performance.
- Anticipatory fear and anxiety about the next incident.
- Unpredictability of father's “moods.”
- Worry that neighbours and friends will hear the noise, or find out.
- Being upset by negative comments others make about their father, because of a need to preserve a sense of their father as a good person. Being upset at changing schools and losing touch with friends (e.g. if the family must move or go into shelter).⁸

HOW TO HELP

What a child experiences and needs when experiencing violence depends on the developmental stage of the child. The following chart provides a starting place for identifying ways PEACE Program counsellors can support children and their non-offending parent.



WHAT YOU MAY OBSERVE	HOW YOU CAN HELP (AND SUPPORT PARENTS TO HELP)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posttraumatic play* • Thinking and talking about the trauma outside play • Being upset at reminders of the trauma and doing their best to avoid reminders • Specific fears, often triggered by traumatic reminders • Feeling guilty about the trauma and responsible for what happened • Fantasies of revenge • Fear of being overwhelmed by their feelings • Impaired concentration and difficulty learning • Sleep disturbances • Headaches, stomach aches, or other physical symptoms • Concerns about their own safety and the safety of others • Aggressive behavior • Anxiety • Withdrawn behaviour <p>*Posttraumatic play is a kind of play engaged in by some children who have been with experiences of trauma. Posttraumatic play is a repetitive reenactment of a traumatic experience or event.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster the parent–child relationship • Create welcoming, calm, stable, and predictable environments • Listen to the child’s concerns • Answer questions truthfully and simply • Give choices • Let the child know that they are not to blame for the abuse • Support the mother in letting the child stay close to her • Offer reassurance that you and the mother are working together to keep the family safe • Name and validate the child’s feelings, and encourage the child to find ways to express them through language, play, or drawing • Help the child anticipate what will happen next • Build emotional health and help the child to manage their emotions • Do not pressure the child to talk • Be a good listener; show interest, empathy, and availability • Establish an emotional, non-judgmental connection to help build trust • Reduce stress and build coping skills • Identify and build on the child’s strengths, coping strategies, and talents • Model emotional expression, and healthy behaviours and relationships • Identify and nurture a child’s support network • Support peer relationships • Be a mentor providing a positive, nurturing relationship with an adult to enhance resiliency • Be patient; expect to do these things again and again

FIGURE 4: SUPPORTING CHILDREN AGED 6-8

(Source: Van Horn, P. (2008). Children Exposed to Domestic Violence: A Curriculum for Domestic Violence Advocates. Chicago: The Domestic Violence and Mental Health Policy Initiative as cited in National Centre on Domestic Violence. (2012). Tips for Supporting Children and Youth Exposed to Domestic Violence. Retrieved from http://www.nationalcenterdvtraumamh.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Tipsheet_Children-Exposed_NCDVTMH_May2012.pdf)

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS: CHILDREN AND YOUTH AGES 9–12

CHILD AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AGES 9-12

According to the Child Development Institute, “children go through distinct periods of development as they move from infants to young adults. During each of these stages multiple changes in the development of the brain are taking place. What occurs and approximately when these developments take place are genetically determined. However, environmental circumstances and exchanges with key individuals within that environment have significant influence on how each child benefits from each developmental event. Ages and Stages is a term used to broadly outline key periods in the human development timeline. During each stage growth and development occur in the primary developmental domains including physical, intellectual, language, and social-emotional.”⁹

Contributing further to the *Child Development Theory* section, the following will provide information specific to the development and impacts on children between the ages of 9–12.

Overview of this Developmental Stage

Significant social and emotional growth gives an increasing sense of independence to children and youth at this stage. They place greater importance on the world, activities, and relationships outside the family. They are forming an internal code of moral values, and parents would ideally guide and support them during this development. Children look to parents for encouragement and support, and this support also involves setting clear guidelines so the children know what is expected of them.

No longer requiring constant supervision, school-age children become gradually ready for more independence. They enjoy complex play using lots of imagination. Children at this age continue to develop their sense of humour, become protective of others, and are better able to control their conduct and behavior, including how they express their anger—which they begin to demonstrate verbally.

During this stage, a child learns to master more formal life skills:

- Relating with peers, according to rules.
- Progressing from free play, to play that may be elaborately structured by rules and may demand formal teamwork (e.g. baseball).
- Mastering social studies, reading, arithmetic.
- Increase in self-discipline.¹⁰



HOW EXPERIENCING VIOLENCE AT HOME MIGHT INFLUENCE CHILD DEVELOPMENT	
KEY ASPECTS OF DEVELOPMENT	POTENTIAL IMPACT OF EXPERIENCING VIOLENCE
Increased emotional awareness for self and others	More aware of own reactions to violence; more aware of impact on others (e.g. mother’s safety, father being charged); feeling overly responsive toward mom and siblings; appearing hyper-vigilant and over-involved in adult activity
Increased complexity in thinking about right and wrong; emphasis on fairness and intent	Possibly more susceptible to rationalizations heard to justify violence (e.g. alcohol as cause, victim deserves it); may challenge rationalizations not viewed as fair or right; may assess “Was the fight fair?”; can see discrepancies between actions and words, and consider intent; justifications involving children may lead to self-blame or guilt
Academic and social success at school has primary impact on self-concept	Learning may be compromised (e.g. child may be distracted); may miss positive statements; may selectively attend to negatives or evoke negative feedback
Increased influence from outside family (e.g. peers, school); competition assumes new importance within peer group	Possibly more influenced by messages that confirm attitudes and behaviours associated with violence against women; may use hostile aggression to compete; increased risk for bullying and/or being bullied
Increased same-sex identification	May learn gender roles associated with violence against women (e.g. males as perpetrators, females as victims, perception of mother as weak)

FIGURE 5: HOW EXPERIENCING VIOLENCE AT HOME MIGHT INFLUENCE DEVELOPMENT

(Source: Cunningham, A., & Baker, L. (2007). Little Eyes, Little Ears: How violence against a mother shapes children as they grow. London: The Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System.)

THE IMPACTS OF EXPERIENCING VIOLENCE AT AGES 9–12

School-aged children may show their distress through aggressive and/or withdrawn behaviours at school, and difficulty in concentrating. These children and youth may be labelled with a variety of diagnoses without having been asked about violence at home. They may have difficulties in peer relationships, and may have low self-esteem. Boys may begin to be disrespectful, sometimes mimicking the violence against their mother that they see at home.

Children and youth begin to identify with their same-sex parent. They learn what it means to be male and female in our society, but this learning can be distorted when they live with violence against their mother. Looking to their parents as significant role models, boys and girls quickly learn that violence is an appropriate way of resolving conflict in human relationships. They may also suffer significant emotional consequences, and experience embarrassment and shame related to the “family secret.” They may feel guilt at their own inability to prevent the violence, and be confused by their divided sense of loyalty in wanting to protect their mother, while also fearing their father’s control over the family. These children may spend long hours at school, distracted and inattentive. Developmental regressions may lead to ostracism by classmates. Hyper-vigilance combined with impaired concentration may make it very difficult for these children to learn well at school.

Potential impacts of experiencing abuse at this age:

- Somatic complaints i.e. physical symptoms, with no discernable cause.
- Regressive behaviors (e.g. thumb-sucking, bed-wetting).
- Depression.
- Nightmares.
- Difficulties in school.
- Low self-esteem.
- Denying feelings (e.g. discussing upsetting events in a detached way).
- Loneliness.
- Impulsive behavior.
- Hyperactivity.
- Anxiety.
- Distorted thinking.
- Little understanding or awareness that violence is an inappropriate response.
- Difficulty in taking responsibility for inappropriate or disruptive behaviour.¹¹



As children grow through the elementary school years, their understanding of violence towards their mothers becomes more sophisticated. They see that actions have effects, and they may believe that stress, family finances, alcohol, or whatever else their parents argue over, is the cause of the fighting. Believing these explanations is emotionally easier than seeing a beloved parent as someone who is purposely violent.

Features of experiencing abuse of their mother, that might be most stressful for this age group:

- Realization that their mother can't control her partner, either to protect herself or perhaps keep the children safe.
- Understanding that their mother is sad and upset between incidents.
- Concern that their mother may be hurt.
- Feeling guilty about not protecting their mother.
- Scared that no one will take care of them if their mother is seriously hurt or dies.
- Living in fear of betraying the "family secret."
- Feeling anger, fear, and confusion towards their father.
- If they love their father, concern that he might experience negative consequences such as arrest, or that the parents will separate.
- Fear that they might be injured (now, or in the next fight).
- When noise keeps them awake at night, there is an adverse effect on school performance.
- Anticipatory fear and anxiety about the next incident.
- Unpredictability of father's "moods."
- Worry that neighbours and friends will hear the noise or find out.
- Being upset by negative comments that others make about their father, because of a need to preserve a sense of their father as a good person.
- Being upset at changing schools, and losing touch with friends if the family must move (e.g. to go into a transition house).¹²

HOW TO HELP

What a child and youth experiences and needs when experiencing violence depends on the developmental stage of the child. The following chart provides a starting place for identifying ways PEACE Program counsellors can support children, youth, and their mothers.

WHAT YOU MAY OBSERVE	HOW YOU CAN HELP (AND SUPPORT MOTHER TO HELP)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posttraumatic play* • Thinking and talking about the trauma outside play • Being upset at reminders of the trauma, and doing their best to avoid reminders • Specific fears, often triggered by traumatic reminders • Feeling guilty about the trauma, and responsible for what happened • Fantasies of revenge • Fear of being overwhelmed by their feelings • Impaired concentration and difficulty learning • Sleep disturbances • Headaches, stomach aches, or other physical symptoms • Concerns about their own safety and the safety of others • Aggressive behavior • Anxiety • Withdrawn behavior <p>*Posttraumatic play is a kind of play engaged in by some children who have been with experiences of trauma. Posttraumatic play is a repetitive reenactment of a traumatic experience or event.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster the mother-child relationship • Create welcoming, calm, stable, and predictable environments • Listen to the child’s or youth’s concerns • Answer questions truthfully and simply • Give choices • Let the child or youth know that they are not to blame for the violence • Support the mother in letting the child or youth stay close to her • Offer reassurance that you and the mother are working together to keep the family safe • Name and validate the child’s or youth’s feelings, and encourage the child or youth to find ways to express them through language, play, or drawing • Help the child or youth anticipate what will happen next • Build emotional health and help the child or youth to manage their emotions • Do not pressure her to talk • Be a good listener; show interest, empathy, and availability • Establish an emotional, non-judgmental connection to help build trust • Reduce stress and build coping skills • Identify and build on their strengths, coping strategies, and talents • Model emotional expression, and healthy behaviours and relationships • Identify and nurture a child’s or youth’s support network • Support peer relationships • Be a mentor; offer a positive, nurturing relationship with an adult to enhance resiliency • Be patient; expect to have to do these things again and again.

FIGURE 6: SUPPORTING CHILDREN AGED 9-12

(Source: Van Horn, P. (2008). Children Exposed to Domestic Violence: A Curriculum for Domestic Violence Advocates. Chicago: The Domestic Violence and Mental Health Policy Initiative as cited in National Centre on Domestic Violence. (2012). Tips for Supporting Children and Youth Exposed to Domestic Violence. Retrieved from http://www.nationalcenterdytraumamh.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Tipsheet_Children-Exposed_NCDVTMH_May2012.pdf)



RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS: YOUTH 13–18

CHILD AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT FOR AGES 13–18

“Children go through distinct periods of development as they move from infants to young adults. During each of these stages multiple changes in the development of the brain are taking place. What occurs and approximately when these developments take place are genetically determined. However, environmental circumstances and exchanges with key individuals within that environment have significant influence on how each child benefits from each developmental event. Ages and Stages is a term used to broadly outline key periods in the human development timeline. During each stage growth and development occur in the primary developmental domains including physical, intellectual, language and social-emotional.”¹³

Contributing further to the ***Child Development Theory*** section, the following will provide information specific to the development and impacts of experiencing violence on children and youth between the ages of 13–18.

Overview of this Developmental Stage

Adolescence can be a challenging stage for both parents and youth, with its dramatic physical and emotional changes. Young people are drawn closer to their peer group, and how they are perceived by others is immensely important. While gaining more autonomy, they still need guidance and supervision. During this stage, the adolescent continues to uncover who they are. They develop an increased sense of self, and establish autonomy from their family. They might experience some role identity division, meaning, they will experiment with rebellion and self-doubts. However, during successful adolescence the individual acquires self-certainty, anticipates achievement, and experiments with different roles.

The adolescent has increased capacity for abstract reasoning and thought. She seeks leadership and gradually develops a set of ideals. At this time, the adolescent also develops a clear and healthy sexual identity. They continue to experience physical changes brought on by puberty. The establishment of closer relationships outside of the family may include intimate relationships in which they practice the sex roles and communication styles learned from their parents.

HOW EXPERIENCING VIOLENCE AT HOME MIGHT INFLUENCE CHILD DEVELOPMENT	
KEY ASPECTS OF DEVELOPMENT	POTENTIAL IMPACT OF EXPERIENCING VIOLENCE
Increased sense of self and autonomy from family	Accelerated responsibility and autonomy, positioning youth in caretaking roles and/or premature independence; family skills, for respectful communication and negotiation, may be poorly developed; transition to adolescence may be more difficult, and result in challenges such as parent-child conflict, early home-leaving, and school drop-out
Physical changes brought on by puberty	May intervene and try to stop violence; may use increased size to impose will, with physical intimidation or aggression
Increased peer group influence and desire for acceptance	Possibly more embarrassed by family, resulting in shame, secrecy, insecurity; might use high-risk behaviours to impress peers (e.g. theft, drugs); may increase time away from the home; may engage in maladaptive defensive (e.g. drugs) and offensive (e.g. aggression towards abuser) strategies to avoid or cope with violence and its stigma
Self-worth more strongly linked to view of physical attractiveness	View of self may be distorted by abuser's degradation of mother and/or child maltreatment; may experience eating disorder and use image management activities (e.g. body piercing, tattoos)
Dating raises issues of sexuality, intimacy, relationship skills	May have difficulty establishing healthy relationships; may fear being abused or being abusive in intimate relationships, especially when conflict arises; may avoid intimacy, or prematurely seek intimacy and childbearing to escape and create own support system



<p>Increased capacity for abstract reasoning and broader world view</p>	<p>“All or nothing” interpretations of experiences may be learned, and compete with greater capacity to see “shades of grey” (e.g. “everyone is a victim” or “everyone is a perpetrator”)—this style of processing information may be intensified by experiences of child maltreatment; may be predisposed towards attitudes and values associated with violence and/or victimization</p>
<p>Increased influence by media</p>	<p>Possibly more influenced by negative media messages about violent behaviour, gender role stereotypes</p>

FIGURE 7: HOW EXPERIENCING VIOLENCE AT HOME MIGHT INFLUENCE DEVELOPMENT

(Source: Cunningham, A., & Baker, L. (2007). Little Eyes, Little Ears: How violence against a mother shapes children as they grow. London: The Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System.)

THE IMPACTS OF EXPERIENCING VIOLENCE AT AGES 13–18

Adolescents may demonstrate their distress at violence against their mother through school truancy, dropping out, and/or running away from home. It is common for adolescents to have trouble focusing on the future; involvement in juvenile delinquency, or depression and suicide, is more common among adolescents who have been with experiences of the abuse of their mothers. This may also be a time when teens begin to experience violence within their own relationships. For girls, this may be a turning point in which they make decisions about how to respond to threats or violence from boys. Some boys handle their frustration with the violent behaviour they see at home, by assaulting their mother or siblings. You may work with teenagers who are victims of child abuse, witnesses to violence in their home, perpetrators of violence in the home, or who are in abusive dating relationships. Some are all four.

As they grow physically larger and stronger, teens may choose to intervene in incidents and even risk injury. Adolescents may feel embarrassment and a strong desire to hide the violence from those outside the family. They may feel concern for the well-being of their mother, and responsibility for taking care of younger siblings and perhaps their mother as well. They may feel vengeful towards the abuser and may have anger aimed at either or both parents.

Youth have access to a wider range of coping strategies than younger children. Some of these techniques are effective at solving the immediate problem—such as running away, or using drugs to numb the emotional pain—but this relief comes at a cost if it leads to problems at school or in other contexts. At the same time, teenagers are better able to reach out for help by talking or chatting with others who have similar experiences, or by using a confidential telephone help line like Kids Help Phone.

Potential impacts of experiencing abuse at this age:

- Withdrawal from the family unit.
- Exhibiting antisocial behaviour, or “acting out.”
- Demonstrating violence in peer relationships.
- Linking sex with violence.
- Little understanding or awareness that violence is an inappropriate response.
- Difficulty in taking responsibility for inappropriate or disruptive behaviour.
- Poor skills for resolving conflict, or getting needs met.
- School truancy.
- Delinquency.
- Substance use.



- Early sexual activity.
- Nightmares.
- Anxiety.
- Depression.
- Identifying with aggressor (e.g. dating violence) or with victim (e.g. risk of dating violence).
- Pregnancy.
- Poor self-esteem.
- Poor concentration.
- Chaotic thoughts.
- Lack of empathy or remorse.
- Difficulties in school.
- High-achiever.
- Runaway.
- Injury or arrest for assault by intervening in “fights” between adults.¹⁴

HOW TO HELP

What a child or youth experiences and needs when experiencing violence depends on their developmental stage. The following chart provides a starting place for identifying ways PEACE Program counsellors can support children, youth and their non-offending parent.

WHAT YOU MAY OBSERVE	HOW YOU CAN HELP (AND SUPPORT PARENTS TO HELP)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detachment, shame, and guilt • Self-consciousness about their fears, and intense feelings • “Acting out” and sensation-seeking behaviors that may include life-threatening re-enactments • Abrupt shifts in relationships • Desire for and plans to take revenge • Radical changes in attitude and changes in self-identity • Premature entrance into adulthood or reluctance to leave home • Being upset at reminders of the trauma and doing their best to avoid reminders • Coping behaviors that may include self-endangering behaviors (e.g. alcohol and/or drug use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create welcoming, calm, stable, and predictable environments • Provide an environment in which the youth can talk about concerns • Foster the mother-child relationship • Support mothers in letting their youths stay close to them; even relatively independent youths may need extra support after a traumatic event • Let the youth know that they are not to blame for the violence • Give choices • Help youth anticipate what will happen next • Answer questions honestly • Help youth find ways to express their strong feelings (e.g. journaling, writing stories or poems, art) • Name, and validate, the youth’s feelings • Build emotional health; help the youth manage their emotions • Do not pressure her to talk • Be a good listener; show interest, empathy, and availability • Establish an emotional, non-judgmental connection to help build trust • Reduce stress and build coping skills • Identify and build on their strengths, coping strategies, and talents • Model emotional expression, and healthy behaviours and relationships • Identify and nurture a youth’s support network • Support peer relationships • Be a mentor; offer a positive, nurturing relationship with an adult to enhance resiliency • Be patient; expect to have to do these things again and again

FIGURE 8: SUPPORTING YOUTH AGED 13-18

(Source: Van Horn, P. (2008). Children Exposed to Domestic Violence: A Curriculum for Domestic Violence Advocates. Chicago: The Domestic Violence and Mental Health Policy Initiative as cited in National Centre on Domestic Violence. (2012). Tips for Supporting Children and Youth Exposed to Domestic Violence. Retrieved from http://www.nationalcenterdvtraumamh.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Tipsheet_Children-Exposed_NCDVTMH_May2012.pdf)



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- ⁶ Cunningham, A., & Baker, L. (2007). Little Eyes, Little Ears: How violence against a mother shapes children as they grow. Retrieved from http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ncfv-cnivf/familyviolence/pdfs/fem-2007-LELE_e.pdf.
- ⁷ Hjelm, R. (2014). Facing the Facts: Impact of Exposure to Intimate Partner Violence on Children in the Home. The Family and Children's Trust Fund.
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- ¹¹ Hjelm, R. (2014). Facing the Facts: Impact of Exposure to Intimate Partner Violence on Children in the Home. The Family and Children's Trust Fund.
- ¹² Cunningham, A., & Baker, L. (2007). Little Eyes, Little Ears: How violence against a mother shapes children as they grow. Retrieved from http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ncfv-cnivf/familyviolence/pdfs/fem-2007-LELE_e.pdf.
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3. WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH: STAGES OF SERVICE

GUIDING THOUGHTS

In your role as a PEACE Program counsellor, it can often feel like there is *so much* to know. The tendency can be to think we don't know enough—that we will never have enough tools or exercises for all the psycho-educational elements needed to perform the job well—and sometimes we can even feel like an imposter.

This is normal! Don't worry!

BCSTH recognizes that being a PEACE Program counsellor has many challenges, and would like to remind you that this work is underpinned by some guiding principles:

- **Build relationships:** Connecting with the children, youth and families you serve is one of the most important elements of the job. Take the time to acknowledge when and how you do this. It is important.
- **Create “safe enough” spaces:** Safety is experienced along a continuum and we can never know the experience of another. The role of counsellor can come with varying levels of power attached to it. By offering accountability, honesty, integrity, predictability, and approachability, we step towards another in the spirit of safety. This is invaluable.
- **Uphold the dignity of those you serve:** Violence and abuse are violations of an individual's dignity. We can be part of supporting someone to restore their dignity by some simple dignifying practices—always asking permission; not rushing or pushing another; being mindful of how you speak and debrief about your work.
- **Ask yourself, and acknowledge, the ways you counteract violence and abuse with dignity:** Be mindful of your thoughts and feelings, to be “present.”

Don't underestimate the power of knowing *how* you are. Being able to notice your own emotions, judgments, biases, and responses to another, is ongoing and important work. When we notice how we are, we can then find ways to support ourselves—and ultimately, be of support to the children, youth, and families we serve.

Breathe! You are enough!

STAGES OF SERVICE

This section outlines the stages of service delivery, from beginning to end, for each developmental age group. Sample activities are provided for each of the six core PEACE Program themes that meet the Program mandate and the contract deliverables. PEACE Program counsellors are encouraged to adapt and add activities that work for each age group. Templates of administrative forms—such as intake, confidentiality, and consent forms, which we believe follow current privacy legislation and record-keeping best practice—are also provided.

INITIAL CONTACT

Generally, a child or youth will be referred to the PEACE Program by their non-offending parent or another service provider. Youth may also self-refer; for example, after experiencing a Violence Is Preventable Program presentation at school.

When a counsellor receives a referral:

- Have a conversation with the referring source to get a sense of who is being referred, and what their primary needs and concerns are:
 - Honour and maintain the confidentiality of the individual or family being referred. Referring sources do not need to share a child's, youth's, or woman's entire story to provide the referral.
- Screen for safety.
- Ask the referring source to invite the mother or youth (if age-appropriate, or a mature minor) to call. (See **Sample Form C, Initial Contact/Phone Assessment with Parent/Guardian.**) During this phone call:
 - Provide a brief description of the PEACE Program, your role, and what they can expect.
 - Get agreement from the youth if a mature minor, or from the mother, for the child's or youth's participation in the Program.
 - Assess a child's or youth's willingness to participate in the Program.
 - Determine if it is a crisis situation, and if so, book 1–3 sessions as soon as possible to discuss safety.
- Record basic contact information. (See **Sample Form A, Referral.**)



ELIGIBILITY ASSESSMENT

When a referral is made to the PEACE Program, first discuss with the child’s mother, or the youth if a mature minor, how the Program operates and who it is designed to serve. Every PEACE Program should have clear screening process and eligibility criteria; for example, the Program should clearly state any geographical boundaries, age limits, and other restrictions—such as whether it will accept children or youth who are living with the offending parent; to what degree it supports the mother; and if, and in what capacity, it will support the offending parent.

All eligibility policies should be transparent and consistently applied, so that each person feels fairly treated. The process of screening a program participant, accepting her into the Program, and beginning to gather information from her, is part of the intake process.

At time of initial screening, the Program should gather only enough information to:

- Establish whether the child or youth and their mother is safe.
- Determine eligibility for service.
- Determine the child’s or youth’s readiness for a particular type of service (e.g. individual or group service).
- Determine a safe way to contact the mother or children and youth.

The initial assessment can be done by phone or in person during the orientation session. This is a psychosocial assessment, not a clinical or diagnostic assessment, so PEACE Programs do not require any diagnostic assessment tools (e.g. those that assess for anxiety, PTSD, depression). For the purposes of the PEACE Program, the assessment is to determine eligibility—whether the referral is appropriate, or if a child or youth needs to be referred to another agency—and if there are any immediate safety concerns. Things to cover during the assessment:

- The age of the child or youth:
 - To determine if there is an appropriate upcoming group, and if not, to maintain a referral list for starting a group for a particular age range.
- Gender:
 - To ensure the group is gender-balanced.
- Number of children in the family:
 - To arrange for siblings to attend separate groups, avoiding the potential for one to be inhibited by the presence of brother(s) or sister(s).

- Whether the child or youth is living in a stable environment:
 - To determine if a child or youth is still living where the abuse is continuing. If so, it would not be safe for them to attend the group. Individual counselling can be considered to assess the child's or youth's safety, and the impact of living with the abuse.
- Experiences of violence:
 - To determine the nature and severity of the violence they have been experiencing.
- Safety:
 - To determine if there are immediate safety concerns that need to be attended to.
- Group readiness:
 - To determine the needs and goals of the child or youth, and mother.
 - To determine if there are any other concerns that need to be addressed before the child or youth is ready to join a group.
 - To determine if there has been sexual abuse. If this is disclosed, provide the mother, or mature minor, with a referral to an appropriate agency or Program, explaining the limitations of the PEACE Program mandate.
- Mother's needs:
 - To determine if there are referrals you can make to assist the mother (e.g. housing, health, employment, child care, substance use, mental health support)
 - To determine if the mother is eligible for any groups run through the PEACE Program.
 - To explore strategies with the mother for minimizing barriers to her child's participation (e.g. language difficulties, learning impairments, behavioral challenges).

The assessment helps guide the service plan by establishing priorities for service, and helps create an estimate of the frequency and format of the counselling.

The assessment is also a time to determine if a child or youth who is requesting to be considered a mature minor, can in fact provide informed consent without their parent's knowledge or consent. (See **Sample Form HH, Interview Assessment with Youth**.) For more information on how to assess whether a program participant can be considered a mature minor, see the **Mature Minors** section under *Informed Consent* in the **Administrative and Legal Issues** section.

Determining Readiness

All children and youth with experiences of violence in the home should have access to PEACE Program services. Assess all program participants for suitability for group or individual support. In some situations, a child's or youth's needs may be better served by another agency or Program.



Considerations for determining the child's or youth's readiness for the PEACE Program:

A child's or youth's readiness to discuss the issue of violence, and their capacity for doing so in a group process.

- Whether support systems are in place. Mothers must support the child or youth, and be willing to deal with issues that surface. Children and youth with separation anxiety may find group difficult, as they are apart from their mother.
- Whether there is motivation to attend. Is the child or youth being pressured to attend? They should feel a sense of control over the decision. Motivation is the single most significant factor in the success of any group.
- A child or youth with severe behaviour challenges or aggression could have difficulty in a group setting. Consider working with them individually.
- A child or youth who has experienced repeated acts of severe violence over many years may have significant needs that may be better suited to individual counselling.

The assessment process needs to be ongoing. The counsellor will see changes over a period of time, in working with children and youth. Being attuned to issues, concerns, and needs as they arise, and responding accordingly, is essential in ensuring the program participant's needs are met.

ORIENTATION

Whether the child or youth is coming to the PEACE Program for group or individual sessions, the PEACE Program counsellor should meet with the mother, or youth if a mature minor, for an orientation session within one week of receiving the referral. (See Sample Form B, *Orientation*.) This initial meeting with the mother allows her the space to share her concerns and needs about her child, and to ask any questions she has about the Program. This meeting also enables the mother to be more present with her child when they come for their first meeting with the PEACE Program counsellor together, as she will have already had her questions and concerns responded to.

Be aware, that there may be program participants interested in attending the Program without their mother or guardian knowing or consenting. Mature minors can consent to service, without parental consent. Information about how to assess whether a child or youth can consent to service without a parent's knowledge or consent, can be found in the ***Mature Minors*** section under ***Informed Consent*** in the ***Administrative and Legal Issues*** section.

During orientation:

- Meet in a comfortable and welcoming space.
- Provide an overview of services, clarify the role of the PEACE Program counsellor, and do a tour of the agency.
- Provide any resources and information you have on the Program, such as program participant rights, Program overview, and privacy and confidentiality.
- Discuss the role of the PEACE Program, and differentiate between group and individual sessions:
 - Provide examples of topics explored, and methods of psycho-education.
 - Depending on the assessment, individual sessions may occur before or after the child or youth has participated in a group. Considerations include: when no group is available, age of children or youth, fit for the group/s currently available. The assessment may also result in individual sessions without attending a group.
- Explain the PEACE Program waitlist and the current wait. If relevant, invite the mother to bring their child during school hours to get an appointment sooner.
- Assess for Program eligibility and safety concerns.



FIRST MEETING

After the orientation session, set up a time for a program participant's first meeting with the PEACE Program counsellor. For most children and youth, except in cases of mature minors, it is helpful for mothers to be fully involved in their child's process. Mature minors can consent to service without parental consent. Information about how to assess whether a youth can consent to service without a parent's knowledge or consent, can be found in the **Mature Minors** section under **Informed Consent** in the **Administration and Legal** section.

Depending on the age and requests of the child or youth, counsellors can assess whether to meet with the mother and program participant individually, together, or not meet with the mother at all (in the cases of mature minors). Counsellors may find that communicating and setting up meeting times with youth via text messaging, is the most effective. For young children, meet with them together with the mother, until the child is comfortable with the mother not being present for the session; this can help in the process of establishing safety, and increase the comfort level of the child while working with the counsellor.

Intake should be completed when a program participant is moved off the waitlist and will begin service, for two reasons: A child's or youth's situation and feelings can change over time, and Programs should not be collecting personal identifying information until consent to service has been obtained. (See the **Administrative and Legal** section, particularly **Record Keeping** and **Informed Consent** for more information.)

Meeting with the Mother

Generally, the younger the child, the more vital the mother's involvement. Have a conversation with the mother, or meet with the mother individually, prior to meeting with the child or youth. (See Sample Form D, **Parent/Guardian Intake** and Sample Form E, **Interview with Parent/Guardian**.) When working with all program participants, except those that qualify as a mature minor, take the following steps to promote the mother's involvement:

- Inform her of the goals of the PEACE Program and of individual and group sessions.
- Identify the needs of the child or youth, and the expectations of the mother. Make referrals if appropriate.
- Begin building trust and rapport.
- Discuss her concerns for her child, and any special needs:
 - Complete the Emergency Medical Form. (See Sample Form I, **Emergency Medical Form**.)
- Discuss consent (See Sample Form F, **Consent to Provide PEACE Program Support to Minors**), confidentiality (See Sample Form G, **Parent/Guardian Confidentiality Agreement for Minor Child**), and its limitations.
- Discuss any existing legal agreements:
 - Guardianship and parenting time?

- What is the situation with the offending parent?
- What does their communication look like?
- Is the offending parent aware of the PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence?
- Does the child or youth visit with the offending parent?
- Let the mother know that it's generally best for the program participant (but not necessary) if the offending parent knows that the child or youth will be attending the PEACE Program. Offer to speak to the offending parent to explain the Program. However, if for safety or other reasons, it is unreasonable to advise the offending parent of their child's participation in the Program, the Family Law Act allows for the mother to make this decision. Under the Family Law Act, each parent is considered a guardian and can make decisions that are in the best interest of the child. (See Informed Consent under the **Administrative and Legal Issues** section to find out more about consent to allow a minor child to access PEACE services.)
- Screen for safety, for both the mother and program participant:
 - Discern if they have connected with anti-violence women-serving programs.
 - If safety is a concern, prioritize safety planning.
- Assess support needs of mother:
 - If you are running any support groups for mothers, you may use this opportunity to assess her willingness to participate.
- Discuss and support the mother in her parenting. (See **Working with Parents Section**.)
- Encourage questions and expressions of concern:
 - Let the mother know that she can call you should any issues arise that she would like to discuss, and explain that you will do the same.

This meeting will give you an opportunity to find out, from the mother's perspective, how the child or youth has been affected by their exposure to violence in the home. It will also provide you with insight into how supportive the mother might be during the process. In some cases, mothers are not ready to deal with issues arising from the child's or youth's sessions with the counsellor.

The mother must be clear that supports are available to them, and that they will be kept informed of the issues addressed in the group and individual sessions. This enables them to prepare for, and respond to, behavioural changes in the child or youth that might arise from painful or difficult issues being addressed. They need to know that you are available to assist them in developing strategies to cope with the anger and "acting out" behaviours.

During this meeting, stress to the mother that she needs to keep you informed of any changes in the family situation, so that safety plans can be adjusted. The mother should be advised that if certain information is disclosed during your sessions with the program participant, you will contact her for more information.



Throughout the meeting, emphasize the importance of maintaining ongoing and open communication between the mother and the counsellor. This will not only help the counsellor provide support to the program participant, it will ultimately strengthen the relationship between the mother, and the child or youth.

Meeting with the Program Participant

This first meeting with a child or youth is primarily to set the foundation for the counsellor's relationship with the program participant. Create a welcoming and safe environment for the child or youth to settle into:

- Listen carefully to their voices *and* bodies.
- Listen to and respect their boundaries.
- Do not push or rush conversation or activities.
- Ask permission.
- Begin to create structure, predictability, and rituals.
- Respect and honour culture.

Do a short orientation with the program participant. Tell them about the PEACE Program and show them around the building. Tell them about yourself, what your role is, and what you hope to achieve in working together. Start to get to know the program participant, what they like, and how they feel about coming to see you. Ask age-appropriate questions: Do they have any concerns about talking to you? How can you be helpful? Would they feel comfortable telling you that they've had enough, and that they would like to stop? What do they hope to get out of coming to the PEACE Program? Discuss consent and confidentiality. (See **Confidentiality** and **Consent** section, and Sample Form G, **Parent/Guardian Confidentiality Agreement for Minor Child**.)

During the counsellor's first meeting with the program participant, begin to identify the most pressing issues. Use the interview assessment form (see Sample Form H, **Interview Assessment with a Child**) to guide your questioning, or (even better), ask open-ended questions and have a natural conversation. Counsellors can informally invite the program participant to have a conversation by playing games, such as Nerf basketball or cards; or by doing an art activity, such as beading bracelets—depending on the needs, likes, and developmental age of the program participant. Younger program participants can be invited into conversation while playing games such as "The Sponge Game," illustrated at the end of this section.

If you are meeting with a mature minor: (See Sample Form AA, **Mature Minor Intake**.)

- Inform her of the goals of the PEACE Program, and of individual and group sessions.
- Identify her needs and expectations, and make referrals if appropriate.
- Begin building trust and rapport.

By the end of the meeting, you should be able to assess:

- How ready the child or youth is to talk about their family situation.
- How comfortable the child or youth may be in a group setting.
- If the child or youth can trust an adult.
- If the child's or youth's behaviour will fit into, or disrupt, the group process.
- Impacts of violence.

The counsellor's job is to listen. It is not to offer advice, suggestions, interpretive remarks, or empathy.

Questions should be minimal, restricted to comments like: "Can you say more about that?" There is great power in witnessing a child's or youth's experience—listening, while setting our internal reactions aside; without attempting to interrupt, comment, fix, or solve.

THE SPONGE GAME

- Prior to the program participant arriving, the counsellor can set up the room with multi-coloured paper on the floor and wall, with questions on them (e.g. "What do you do when you're angry?", "What's your favorite food?")
- Invite the child or youth to throw a wet/damp sponge at the floor and wall, trying to hit the colourful squares of paper.
- When she lands on one of the pieces of paper, everyone in the room answers the question (including the mother, if present).
- This is a fun, non-intimidating way to get a sense of the program participant, and conduct an informal assessment. With younger children, counsellors can observe how the child behaves and responds with the mother in the room, and can assess group readiness.



SAFETY PLANNING

To respond to the trauma of their experience, children and youth require a sense of physical and emotional safety. A safety plan, a strategy which involves identifying the steps to take to increase safety, is one step towards this goal: It helps prepare for the possibility of further violence, and provides guidelines to follow if one's safety is at risk.

Before working on safety planning with children and youth, first understand what safety means to them. Safety has many dimensions, and physical safety is one important aspect; however, when understanding what safety looks like to a child or youth, it is helpful to discuss other forms of safety—such as emotional or cultural safety. Support workers may also have to help a program participant understand what safety is; as not all children and youth with experiences of violence in the home may understand this.

The PEACE Program counsellor also must be able to understand how children and youth have responded and coped with violence. Women and children and youth who live with someone who uses violence, are safety planning all the time. The counsellor does not come up with safety plans; the counsellor acknowledges information the program participant shares about their situation, and the helpful steps the child or youth already takes to keep herself safe, and builds on that.

It can be a powerful experience for a program participant to have a counsellor affirm and validate how much skill and creativity it takes to navigate violence in their home, and to keep themselves safe. Safety planning is a rich and important part of the PEACE Program counsellor's role. When we ask about safety, and what children, youth, and their mothers are already doing to keep safe, counsellors learn so much about their lives, ability to be creative, and their resistance to violence.

Be familiar with the mother's safety plan, and how it relates to the child or youth. Be sure to discuss with the non-offending parent what kind of safety planning steps are already in place. This could include protection orders, probation orders, peace bonds, and court orders that describe parenting arrangements and who is authorized to pick up the child or youth from childcare or any other activity.

When relevant, and with consent from the mother and child or youth, coordinate safety plans with other service providers working with the family. Collaboration between all service providers can enhance the child's or youth's safety by ensuring everyone is aware of the risk and safety factors, and the safety plan in place. The consent to collaborate should be limited to the time you are working with the program participant and mother.

WHEN SAFETY PLANNING WITH A PROGRAM PARTICIPANT, KEEP IN MIND:

- Safety planning with children and youth takes more than one session or visit.
- All safety plans are individual and require regular revision.
- Safety plans will vary depending on the risk and safety factors present, and the community resources available.
- Ensure the directions you give to a child or youth about making emergency service calls, reflect the reality of their community and region. For example, 9-1-1 is not available in all BC communities; in such cases, provide the local RCMP number.
- Consider whether the child or youth is being used to keep the non-offending parent in the violent relationship.
- Safety planning is complex and often challenging; consulting with a trusted peer or supervisor as needed, can be valuable.
- The safety of children and youth with experiences of violence is always aligned with the safety of their mother. Helping mothers enhance their safety, enhances the safety of their children.
- Caregivers, such as foster parents or other guardians, may have unique responses and issues that need consideration when safety planning with a child or youth. Ensure that caregivers understand any relevant orders, guardianship, or parenting rights and responsibilities, and how these relate to the safety plan—both for themselves, and for the child or youth they are caring for.

Source: Reproduced from Safety Planning with Children and Youth: A Toolkit for Working with Children and Youth Exposed to Domestic Violence. (2011). Ministry of Justice. Retrieved from <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/law-crime-and-justice/criminal-justice/victims-of-crime/vs-info-for-professionals/training/child-youth-safety-Toolkit.pdf>



Suggested Steps to Follow When Developing a Safety Plan²

- Let the program participant know that all children and youth, no matter where they live, have a right to feel safe.
- Begin building rapport—mutual confidence, respect, and acceptance.
- Children and youth who have not self-referred, might be scared or confused about why you want to talk to them. It can be helpful to ask them why they think they are there, assure them that they are not in trouble, and that you are here to support them.
- Introduce the concept of safety planning:
 - Explain what a safety plan is (e.g. use example of a fire drill in school).
 - Reaffirm that the violence is not their fault.
- Listen to the program participant, and determine their experience and knowledge:
 - Find out how they are already keeping themselves safe.
 - How they know violence is about to happen.
- Work on the core safety planning points; there is no “one size fits all” safety plan:
 - Go to a safe place.
 - Don’t get in the middle.
 - Call for help.
- You are not alone.
- You are not to blame.
- Violence against women and children is dangerous and against the law.
- Close the safety planning discussion:
 - Discuss with the program participant, and with their mother, if it is safe for the child or youth to have a copy of their safety plan; if appropriate, give them a copy.
 - End with an activity, so that the program participant leaves your office on a positive note (e.g. draw a picture of their safe place and talk about why it is safe).
- Children and youth have a right to be safe. Reinforce with the program participant that though it is okay to protect themselves if needed, it is ultimately adults who are responsible for their safety.
- See the [Ministry of Justice Safety Planning Toolkit](#) for a detailed explanation of these steps, and sample scripts to use.

Important Considerations when Safety Planning with Different Age Groups

Safety planning differs, based on the developmental age of the program participant.

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS WHEN SAFETY PLANNING WITH AGES 3–5

- At this young age, the conversation around safety and safety planning is most commonly done in collaboration with the mother. (See sample Safety Plans in **Sample Activities** section.)
- At this developmental stage, safety planning is often more of an introduction to safety, rather than a detailed plan.
- Telling the child that everyone wants her to be safe, and that she is not to blame, are important messages for her to hear—and for the non-offending parent to deliver.
- Discuss the importance of staying away from the violence inside the home. Note that the option of leaving the home by themselves during the fighting, is unsafe for this developmental level.
- Use an illustration or a photograph, to help locate a safe place to go to inside the home.
- Use a book, puppet, doll, or art and film resource as appropriate (e.g. the video “Tulip Doesn’t Feel Safe,” Hazeldon /Johnson Institute).
- Role-play using puppets or dolls, teaching the child their name, age, contact numbers, address, or identifying landmarks of where they live. Discuss with mother and child where contact information can be located for easy access, if the child cannot remember the details.
- The use of visual aids, images, and maps can be very useful with this age group. Help the child memorize their address and phone number; and/or practice calling 911, or local RCMP when 911 is not available, on a “pretend” or out-of-use cellphone for fire, ambulance, or police.
- Draw pictures, or use actual photographs of trusted people the child knows, and with whom they could talk about their feelings and safety. Children must be clear about who they can turn to if they are in an unsafe situation, and if they need help.
- Use words based on the child’s level of understanding, and contextualize this in an age appropriate way i.e. “When (x) happens, and you feel (x), what do you do, who do you tell?”
- Keep the discussion simple and use repetition.
- Do not label anyone as bad. Focus on the behaviour of the offender as not being okay. Reaffirm with the child that it is okay to love the person, but not their behaviour.
- Young children sometimes worry about others knowing about the violence, and about who will “get into trouble,” so talk about how making their own safety plan as a good way to keep them safe.
- Ask the mother to give copies of court orders, protection orders, and any other relevant orders to daycare providers and other service providers; or to people who work with the children, such as babysitters, teachers, and coaches.



IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS WHEN SAFETY PLANNING WITH AGES 6–8

- Discuss the importance of staying away from the violence inside the home. Note that the option of leaving the home by themselves during the fighting, is unsafe for this developmental level.
- Counsellors can be specific and concrete with this developmental level.
- Work together with the child to understand what gender-based violence is. Assess what the child knows from school, home, and the Internet about this issue.
- Use a book, puppet, doll, or art and film resources as appropriate (e.g. the video “Tulip Doesn’t Feel Safe,” Hazeldon /Johnson Institute).
- As there is significant variation in the reading and writing abilities of children at this developmental age, it is helpful to use visual techniques. Ask them to draw a picture of their home, to help locate a safe place to go to inside the home.
- The use of visual aids, images, and maps can be very useful with this age group. Help the child memorize their address and phone number; and/or practice calling 911, or specific emergency numbers in communities that do not have 911, on a “pretend” or out-of-use cellphone for fire, ambulance, or police.
- Create a support map with contact numbers, address, or identifying landmarks of where they live. Discuss with mother and child where contact information can be located for easy access, if the child cannot remember the details.
- Draw pictures, or use actual photographs of trusted people the child knows, with whom they could talk about their feelings and safety. Children should be clear about who they can turn to if they are in an unsafe situation, and if they need help.
- Use words based on the child’s level of understanding and contextualize this in an age-appropriate way, e.g. “When (x) happens, and you feel (x), what do you do, who do you tell?”
- Keep the discussion simple and use repetition.
- Do not label anyone as bad. Focus on the behaviour of the offending parent as not being okay. Reaffirm with the child that it is okay to love the person, but not their violent behaviour.
- Young children sometimes worry about others knowing about the violence, and about who will “get into trouble,” so talk about how making their own safety plan as a good way to keep them safe.
- Ask the mother to give copies of court orders, protection orders, and any other relevant orders to daycare providers and other service providers; or to people who work with the children, such as babysitters, teachers, and coaches.

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS WHEN SAFETY PLANNING WITH AGES 9–12

- Discuss the importance of staying away from the violence inside the home. Note that the option of leaving the home by themselves during the fighting, is unsafe for this developmental level.
- Counsellors can be specific and concrete with this developmental level.
- Work together with the program participant to understand what gender-based violence is. Assess what they know from school, home, and the Internet about this issue.
- Use a book, or art and film resources as appropriate.
- The use of visual aids, images and maps can be very useful with this age group.
- Create a support map with contact numbers, address, or identifying landmarks of where they live. Discuss with program participant, and the mother when appropriate, where contact information can be located for easy access if the program participant cannot remember the details.
- Draw pictures, or use actual photographs of trusted people the program participant knows, with whom they could talk about their feelings and safety. Children and youth should be clear about who they can turn to if they are in an unsafe situation, and if they need help.
- Keep the discussion simple.
- Do not label anyone as bad. Focus on the behaviour of the offending parent as not being okay. Reaffirm with the program participant that it is okay to love the person, but not their behaviour.
- Children and youth sometimes worry about others knowing about the violence, and about who will “get into trouble,” so talk about how making their own safety plan is a good way to keep them safe.
- Ask the mother, when appropriate, to give copies of court orders and protection orders to care providers and others who may require it, such as teachers and coaches.



IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS WHEN SAFETY PLANNING WITH AGES 12–14

- At this age and developmental stage, safety plans may be developed in collaboration with the mother and the program participant. (See sample Safety Plans in **Sample Activities section**.) Safety plans may also be completed with a program participant on their own, particularly in the case of a mature minor. Full participation of the mother might not be relevant or desired by the youth.
- Discuss the importance of staying away from the violence inside the home.
- Counsellors can be specific and concrete with this developmental level. Have a focused discussion where many safety scenarios are given, and the youth identifies which feels safe or unsafe for them.
- Work together with the youth to understand what gender-based violence is. Assess what she knows from school, home, and the Internet about this issue.
- Use a book, or art and film resources as appropriate; for example, the “Teen Relationship Workbook,” by Kerry Moles (www.researchpress.com) and the DVD and Study Guide “It IS a Big Deal: Youth responses to being exposed to domestic violence” from BCSTH (www.bcsth.ca).
- Provide the option to create an online safety plan, or a written contract that states what they will do and where they could go if they feel unsafe. It is empowering for them to create a plan that is for them personally.
- Create a support map with contact numbers, address or identifying landmarks of where they live.
- Make a list of trusted people the youth know they could talk to about their feelings and safety. Youth should be clear about who they can turn to if they are in an unsafe situation, and if they need help.
- This developmental level can be open to talking about all aspects of safety—sexual, emotional, and physical—as well as thinking about their own emerging gender role. Discussing dating safety and healthy relationships can be part of this.
- Safety plan around technologies the youth is using. For example, children and youth can be monitored and tracked by the offending parent through social networks, spyware devices, and cellular phones.
- Ask the mother to give copies of court orders and protection orders to care providers and others who may require it, such as teachers and coaches.

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS WHEN SAFETY PLANNING WITH AGES 15–18

- At this age and developmental stage, safety plans may be developed in collaboration with the mother and program participant. (See sample Safety Plans in **Sample Activities section**.) Safety plans may also be completed with a program participant on their own, particularly in the case of a mature minor.
Full participation of the mother might not be relevant or desired by the youth.
- Older youth often have a greater ability to keep themselves safe in comparison to younger children, but they may need help with identifying their own resources and developing a realistic safety plan for themselves.
- At this age, males especially may feel they can protect their mother by intervening in the violence in some way. While respecting their feelings about this, encourage youth to consider their own safety.
- Discuss the importance of staying away from the violence inside the home.
- Counsellors can be specific and concrete with this developmental level. Have a focused discussion where many safety scenarios are given, and the youth identifies which feels safe or unsafe for them.
- Work together with the youth to understand what gender-based violence is. Assess what she knows from school, home, and the Internet about this issue.
- Use a book, or art and film resources as appropriate; for example, the “Teen Relationship Workbook,” by Kerry Moles (www.researchpress.com) and the DVD and Study Guide “It IS a Big Deal: Youth responses to being exposed to domestic violence” from BCSTH (www.bcsth.ca).
- Option to create an online safety plan or a written contract that states what they will do and where they could go if they feel unsafe. It is empowering for them to create a plan that is for them personally.
- Make a list of trusted people the youth know they could talk to about their feelings and safety. Youth should be clear about who they can turn to if they are in an unsafe situation and if they need help. Safety plans for youth often include peers, community resources, and specific agencies and help lines (e.g. MCFD, crisis lines, child and youth mental health services).
- This developmental level can be open to talking about all aspects of safety—sexual, emotional, and physical, as well as thinking about their own emerging gender role. Discussing dating safety and healthy relationships can be part of this. Some youth seek emotional and physical support (from others such as friends and partners), so talking about keeping safe around drugs, alcohol, sex, and bullying can be helpful.
- Safety plan around technologies the youth is using. For example, children and youth can be monitored and tracked by the offending parent through social networks, spyware devices, and cellphones.
- Some older male youth may choose to, or need to stay with, a relative or friend if their mother is in a transition house.
- Older youth may be able to assist in developing a safety plan for their younger siblings.

Adapted from: Important Considerations When Safety Planning, adapted from Safety Planning with Children and Youth: A Toolkit for Working with Children and Youth Exposed to Domestic Violence. (2011). Ministry of Justice.



Safety Planning for Visits with the Offending Parent

When the program participant will be visiting the offending parent in an unsupervised setting, it may be helpful to problem-solve with the child ahead of time regarding potentially dangerous situations. This can help children manage fear or anxiety, and can help them develop safety skills and realistic safety plans to minimize the risk of violence during visitation.

Focus on uncovering how a child or youth knows if the offending parent is going to be violent, and on what they need to do to help themselves stay safe. If the child or youth is unsure of what to do, consider engaging in a role-play to identify safety measures they can take. Ensure the program participant knows how to use a phone and to call 9-1-1 or community-specific emergency contact numbers, and what to say. If the program participant feels comfortable, develop a system for calling their mother or another family member for help if it is needed. The program participant and mother can choose a code word that will let the mother or other identified family member know that the child is feeling unsafe and to go and get them. If two or more children are on the visit, counsellors can talk with them about ways they can help each other.

“Quizzing” children for information about their mother and ongoing family life is a common practice of offending parents. Talk to the program participant about how they can respond comfortably while not jeopardizing their own safety, and sometimes inadvertently, the safety of their mother.

Explore with the mother, the concerns she may have regarding child abduction, and safety plan with her and the child (as appropriate). Assess and reassess safety plans, both before and after visits.

CONFIDENTIALITY

PEACE Programs are voluntary Programs that collect personal information for the purpose of delivering services.

Take the time to clearly explain the confidentiality policy for any information gathered to the mother and program participant, and be clear that all information collected and retained in records management is consistent with laws that govern privacy and personal information. (See Sample Form G, ***Parent/Guardian Confidentiality Agreement for Minor Child***, and Sample Form GG, ***Mature Minor Confidentiality Agreement***.)

DISCUSSING CONFIDENTIALITY WITH PROGRAM PARTICIPANT'S MOTHER

Ensure that the mother understands that any information she provides on behalf of her child, and any information provided by her child, is confidential. The release of any information regarding a mother and child's involvement with the PEACE Program may occur only with written and signed consent (See Sample Form M, ***Parent/Guardian Release of Information for Minor Child***), subject to certain legal exceptions. Mothers can revoke their authorization to release personal information of their child at any time. (See Sample Form N, ***Parent/Guardian Revocation of Release of Information for Minor Child***.)

The legal exceptions where a counsellor can release information without consent:

- If PEACE Program staff have reason to believe that a child needs protection under section 13 of the Child, Family and Community Service Act, they are obligated (as are the general public) to inform the Ministry of Children and Family Development.
- If PEACE Program staff have reason to believe that a parent or child is likely to cause serious physical harm to themselves or another, they are obligated to inform the appropriate authorities.
- If PEACE Program staff are required by a Judge in a Court Order to disclose specific records, or to go to court to testify.

If a PEACE Program and/or counsellor receives a subpoena or a request for their records, there are steps that can be taken in response to the subpoena or request: These steps are found in the [BCSTH Legal Toolkit](#) in the section entitled "Responding to Subpoenas and Record Requests." The steps include acknowledging the receipt of the subpoena or request in writing; consulting with your supervisor, executive director, and a lawyer to determine if there are grounds to move to set aside the request; and if the request is granted, to limit the disclosure of records. Subpoenas and record requests are part of the discovery process in court cases and PEACE Programs have a legal obligation to address the request but they also have legal rights to protect these records and can raise legal objections to the disclosure. **You do not have to release the records until, and only if, a judge orders you to.**



DISCUSSING CONFIDENTIALITY WITH PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

The concept of confidentiality and its limitations can be a hard for individuals of all ages to understand. When working with all ages:

- Explain that confidentiality means that what a child tells a counsellor is private. Ask if they understand what this means:
 - Clarify that what they share is their story and that you won't tell their story to anyone else, i.e. "You can talk about you, but I can't talk about you to anyone else."
 - Explain that there may be cases when you will need to share something with their parent. Assure the child that you will let them know if a situation like this arises.
- When explaining the limitations of confidentiality, it can be helpful to discuss these as the "Three Hurts":
 - If a child or youth wants to hurt themselves.
 - If a child or youth wants to hurt someone else.
 - If a child or youth is being hurt by someone.
- Explain the difference between a secret, and confidentiality.
- Ask program participants to explain it back.
- Keep in mind that there may be things a child or youth either only wants to talk about with their mother in the room, or perhaps when they are not in the room. Always provide the option.
- Be repetitive. Be sure to revisit confidentiality, and what it means, regularly.
- In a group setting, ensure that confidentiality is introduced to program participants when defining group guidelines:
 - Say it out loud every week.
 - Encourage program participants not to share the personal information of the other participants with anyone outside of the group setting. This is a guideline that will help ensure group safety for all program participants.

Discussing Confidentiality with Children Ages 3–8

For children this age, confidentiality can be a hard concept to understand. It can be helpful to use a flipchart, write the word "CONFIDENTIALITY;" and say it out loud a few times with the child.

CONFIDENTIALITY IN THE COMMUNITY

A program participant and their mother's right to confidentiality extends to the public sphere. Have a conversation about what the program participant, and mother when appropriate, would like you to do if you arbitrarily run into them outside of the Program; would they like you to acknowledge them, or would they rather not? This is particularly relevant in small communities.

If the mother's preference is that the counsellor not acknowledge them in the community, ensure that they recognize this can be hard for some children to understand, particularly at a young age, and that the child might wonder why they would need to pretend they don't know the counsellor. Ensure the program participant and mother that you will respect their wishes, and are comfortable with their preference.

ADMINISTRATIVE CONSIDERATIONS

- Be aware of your agency's policy regarding the confidentiality of program participant information.
- Ensure program participant documentation is kept in a secure file cabinet or a locked room.
- If names and case notes are part of an online database, ensure the database is password protected and that files are not accessible to staff and volunteers not working within the PEACE Program. Ensure that the data is encrypted and the database is on a secured network.
- Ensure children and parents are made aware that their information may be shared with a supervisor, to provide them with the best possible service.
- Be aware of, and work in accordance with, the appropriate professional association standards, where applicable.
- Be aware of the sections relating to confidentiality in the funding agreements or contracts that your agency may have with funders.
- Note that program participants and their mothers do not have to provide their legal names to receive PEACE Program services.

(See **Protecting Program Participant Privacy** in the **Administrative and Legal Issues** section for further information about protecting program participant records and confidentiality.)



INFORMED CONSENT

The PEACE Program counsellor must get permission or “consent” from a parent for a child or youth, who is not considered a mature minor, to participate in the voluntary PEACE Program. (See Sample Form F, **Parent/Guardian Consent to Provide Support to Minors.**) Mature minors can provide consent without a parent’s knowledge or consent. (See Sample Form FF, **Consent to Receive PEACE Counselling: Mature Minor.**)

Consent can be:

- **Informed:** Parent is aware of the service being provided and gives consent or permission for their children to participate in the service.
- **Written:** A signed consent form.
- **Time-limited:** The consent for service will be given for the time specified.

PARENT

Most program participants, except those deemed mature minors, are not able to provide informed consent, so parents will provide it on their behalf. When parents consent to services, ensure they:

- Specify what Programs they are permitting their child to participate in.
- Know that they can withdraw their child from the PEACE Program at any time.

Be informed of parental status, parental responsibilities and the primary residence of the program participant. In situations where there has been a separation under the BC Family Law Act, each parent is considered a guardian of the child or youth and they can share or divide parental rights and responsibilities and sometimes there are agreements or court orders that determine the terms of this relationship. Counsellors often wonder if in these cases if it is necessary for both parents to provide consent for a minor child to participate in the Program, even if it is only the mother that knows about or is supporting the child to come to the Program. Unless there is a court order or agreement that states otherwise, the short answer to this question is no and the PEACE Program counselor should review the **Parental Consent for a Minor** under **Informed Consent** in the **Administrative and Legal Issues** section for more information and guidance.

PROGRAM PARTICIPANT

Even with parental consent, the program participant should verbally consent to receiving services, and the Program counselor should explain why they are receiving services from the PEACE Program. The act of asking a child or youth if they want to participate, and letting them know that they can say no to any activities suggested by the PEACE Program counsellor, is an important part of creating trust and safety.

Mature minors can consent to service without parental consent. (See Sample Form FF, **Consent to Receive Counselling: Mature Minor**.) See **Informed Consent** in the **Administrative and Legal Issues** section for more information about how to assess whether a child or youth can consent to service without a parent's knowledge or consent. If you are unsure of the program participant's ability to consent, involve another service provider if possible: Do you both agree that the child or youth is mature enough to make the decision on their own?

As when explaining confidentiality, ask the child or youth to outline in their own words what you have just said, after you have explained consent to service.

ADMINISTRATIVE CONSIDERATIONS

- Be aware of your agency policy and privacy legislation with respect to obtaining informed consent.
- Be informed of the agency's policy regarding the minimum age for children accepted into the Program without the consent of a parent. In BC, there is no legal minimum age for determining whether a child or youth can be considered a mature minor. Determination is based on an assessment of certain criteria. When a child wants to access a PEACE Program without a parent or guardian's knowledge or consent, a counsellor needs to assess whether the child would be considered a mature minor and able to provide informed consent on their own.
See the **Informed Consent** section related to mature minors in the **Administrative and Legal Issues** section for more information on the criteria and how to assess.
- Provide some services that do not require consent. Some services that are offered throughout the school day, for example, may not need parental consent if they are part of the curriculum.
- If custody and guardianship of a child or youth has been:
 - **Permanently been transferred** to someone other than the parents, the assigned guardian will provide consent, except in situations where the program participant is deemed a mature minor.
 - **Temporarily transferred** to someone other than the parents by agreement, such as an Extended Family Plan (EFP), the issue of consent will be spelled out in the EFP agreement. Usually consent for routine care decisions would be made by the caregivers, while more exceptional care decisions would be made by the parent (e.g., consenting to new medications or surgeries). Again, if the program participant is deemed a mature minor, they can provide informed consent on their own behalf. (See Informed Consent in the Administrative and Legal Issues section for further information.)
 - **Temporarily transferred by court order** then the caregiver provides consent for all matters except in cases when the program participant is a mature minor.



SERVICE PLANS

A properly documented service plan (See Sample Form J, **Service Plan** or Sample Form JJ, **Service Plan with Mature Minor**) is part of a complete program participant record. Except in the case of mature minors, service plans are normally developed with the participation of the child or youth, and the mother. Service plans outline the goals of service and the methods that will be used to achieve those goals.

After meeting with both a Program participant and their mother (except when the program participant is a mature minor), and assessing their safety and support needs, PEACE Program counsellors will begin to develop service plans. Counsellors can begin to identify what the program participant's and mother's Strengths, Needs, Abilities, and Preferences (SNAP) are in the first couple of sessions, and use these to develop a service plan. The service plan should include information about the services being provided and by whom, service goals, desired outcomes, proposed strategies to address any special needs, and approximate timeframes. These service plans reflect the needs and goals of the Program participant and mother; and whether the child or youth will be receiving group or individual support, or both. To ensure that needs and goals continue to be met, the service plan should be revisited frequently with the Program participant, and mother when relevant, throughout the course of working with a child or youth.

The PEACE Program counsellor should develop a written service plan for each individual or group served. Service plans as well as significant changes to them should be signed by the Program participant, and also by the mother, as appropriate.

Children and youth who have experienced abuse have common needs that are usually addressed in the Program, including:

- Breaking the silence about the abuse.
- Learning about safety planning in case the violence recurs.
- Learning that they were not at fault.
- Processing the traumatic memories in a safe, nurturing environment.
- Assistance with coping strategies around trauma responses, such as irritability, avoidance of situations that remind them of the violence, anger outbursts, withdrawal, fearfulness, tension, and intrusive memories.
- Learning that there are alternatives to violence in relationships, and that violence is not acceptable (e.g. sibling violence, child physical assault, child sexual assault, verbal abuse, dating violence, peer-to-peer violence).
- Learning about equality in relationships and dispelling myths about woman abuse.³

Group and individual services generally range from 8–12 weeks, as stated in the PEACE contract. The PEACE Program is not designed to be a long term, therapeutic Program. However, each counsellor’s practice varies, as do the needs of each Program participant. It is suggested that counsellors adapt their service plans and sessions to meet both the immediate and long term needs of the program participant. If a counsellor believes the child or youth could benefit from additional and ongoing support beyond 12 sessions, they should identify next steps, such as referrals to other agencies.

INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT

Individual counselling can be a positive venue for children and youth to develop self-esteem and enjoy a Program that is tailored specifically to their needs.

At the end of each session, counsellors should complete the Individual Session Summary. (See Sample Form L, *Individual Session Summary*.)

When to Provide Individual Support

When doing an intake assessment, a counsellor may decide that a child or youth is not appropriate for group but would benefit from individual support. Considerations include:

- Children who are very young or very vulnerable and cannot be comfortably separated from their mothers.
- Children or youth who are very aggressive or active and cannot participate effectively in a group.
- Children or youth who have been so severely traumatized multiple times that their experiences would seem extreme in the context of other program participant’s experiences.
- Mothers who have had unpleasant experiences in groups in the past or report that their child has had such experiences, and who would prefer individual sessions.
- Mothers who worry that their child will be traumatized by the stories other children may share.

Some administrative reasons to see children individually:

- Many counsellors work alone, though running a PEACE group with two co-facilitators is preferred.
- There may not be enough children of a given age group or developmental level to run a group.
- Program participant has been referred to another, more appropriate service, but are waiting for that service to begin.
- In some Programs, no appropriate venue is available for running a group.
- In a small town, privacy concerns may make a group inappropriate.



Considerations when developing an individual service plan:

- To prepare for individual support with a Program participant, assess the impact of abuse on the child or youth and their support needs, as well as the needs of their mother.
- The number of sessions per program participant will largely be determined by the demands for your services.
- If you find that a child's or youth's needs are too complex and out of the scope of Program work, such as a child that dissociates, don't hesitate to refer them to a registered and trained therapist.
- Remember that this Program is psycho-educational. Ensure the interventions you provide are consistent with the Program objectives and your Program's PEACE contract.
- In individual sessions, counsellors can use many of the same techniques that are outlined in the various group curriculums. The main difference will be the individual attention the child or youth receives.
- Ultimately, all program participants receiving individual support should participate in a group if possible. Most often children and youth benefit from knowing that they are not alone in their experiences of violence.

GROUP SUPPORT

Group settings provide an opportunity for Program participants to receive violence education in a safe, supportive environment. There are many benefits of group work for children and youth who have experienced violence:

- Assisting program participants in their relationships with others their age, and reducing isolation.
- Enabling program participants to learn from their peers' stories and responses.
- Fun! Many program participants feel less threatened attending a group than they may feel attending individual counselling.
- Empowering program participants to overcome feelings of helplessness.
- Providing safety planning options and problem solve safety issues.
- Helping program participants to share feelings and experiences, and reduce feelings of shame around the abuse.
- Breaking the program participant's silence about the abuse by telling others about their experiences.
- Increasing program participant's ability to identify different types of violence.
- Helping program participants to learn healthy ways to communicate and resolve conflict.
- Learning non-abusive ways to express anger and emotions.

Important considerations when preparing for a group:

- Determine where your group will take place. Ensure your space is cozy and age appropriate.
- Establish a timeframe and parameters for your group:
 - A typical timeframe is 8–10 weeks after orientation, and includes intake, group readiness assessment, and a closure session.
 - Each session runs from 1.5–2 hours, depending on the age of the group. Groups for ages 3–5 might only run for 45 minutes.
 - The best time of day to provide a group will likely be between 4 pm–6 pm or at school, to reduce travel barriers.
 - Allow time for pre- and post-assessment interviews.
- Consider the number of program participants. Groups ideally consist of 3–10 children within an age range of two to three years. Groups of between 6–9 participants are considered most effective for most age groups, but for children ages 3–5, groups of 4–6 children work best. Children should be out of the immediate crisis situation, and should have the support of the mother to attend.
- Consider the potential group participants, including developmental age, the issues they are experiencing, and specific confidentiality needs.
- Consider having a co-facilitator. Ideally, groups should be led by two counsellors, preferably a female with a male co-facilitator. This will enable the co-facilitators to model appropriate female-male interactions.
- Acquire the material you will need (e.g. a flip chart stand and paper, scissors, writing paper, felts, crayons, glue, magazines). You may also need access to audio visual equipment.
- Groups should follow a structured format, but the counsellor should be flexible enough to adapt the structure and format to particular group needs on any given day.

At the end of each group session, counsellors should complete the Group Session Summary. (See Sample Form K, **Group Session Summary**.)

Suggestions for Group Work with Children and Youth

- **The Group Room:** This should be large enough to move around in, but not so large that it loses its comfortable and welcoming feel. For groups of young children, eliminate dangers and distractions as much as possible.
- **Content and Language:** Adapt content and language to fit the program participant's maturity level. With younger children, keep it simple, but remember that they usually can understand much better than they can express themselves; when you think they don't understand, try rephrasing instead of repeating. With younger children, it can also be helpful to have a structured group that incorporates a regulating activity at the beginning and end of group. When working with youth, be careful not to talk down to them.



- **Pacing the Group:** Help the group move through the activities at a pace that seems comfortable to them. If some are ready to move on while others are still finishing an activity, you may need to divide the group up. Some children, especially younger ones, enjoy repetition. Others like new activities each time. Adapt to the group. When you seem to have lost the participants' attention, change approach or activities.
- **Modelling:** Children and youth learn by modelling other's behaviour, so they may imitate your ideas or another participant's ideas. This happens especially with younger children. It is helpful to start with different children each time, so that each child has a chance to be creative. Children and youth will also tend to model your behaviour in the group. The way you respond to them is often the way they will respond to you and to each other.
- **Helping Participants Listen:** In groups of young children, many of the program participants may not have listening skills. Rewards can be given for listening. It is also helpful to ask program participants to repeat what another participant has said: "Who can tell me how Janet said she was feeling today?" Model good listening skills, by listening attentively to participants.
- **Using the Group:** Use the group as much as possible in the presentation of content, to draw participants out. Give them responsibilities; let program participants come up with their own answers, and take turns leading activities. Use the group to help young children behave appropriately. When a participant is "acting out" it is not always necessary to act immediately; let some time pass to see if the group handles it. Let program participants make up some of their own guidelines before the group begins (ground rules), or as they go along. Ask younger children to hold hands during an activity to help each other pay attention. Ask youth to remind each other of the rules.
- **Setting Limits:** Set limits by reinforcing "ground rules." For example: "We all agreed that there would be no name calling; what are some other ways to...." Be firm about these rules. Some rules can be added gradually over the course of the group.
- **Rewards and Positive Verbal Reinforcement:** These should be utilized liberally throughout the group. They build self-esteem and encourage appropriate behaviour. Remember never to take away a reward from a program participant after it has been given.
- **Using Touch:** Respect boundaries of children and youth who may have problems with touch.
- **Using Movement:** Children and youth can tire of sitting for long periods. Follow a sitting activity with an activity involving movement. Invent or let the program participants invent brief exercises, and use these during restless times.
- **Time-Outs:** For groups of younger children, have a time-out pillow or chair. Explain that program participants can take a time-out when they need one, and that you may ask them to take a time-out if you think they need it. Time-outs give children a chance to calm down before coming back to the group. Time-outs should be brief, and forced time-outs should be used only when all else fails. If a time-out is not calming a child down, try something else.

- **Be Creative:** Each group is different. Be attentive to how each program participant functions within the group, and how the group functions as a whole, and you will get ideas for how to work with them. Keep trying out new things; for example, in a younger children's group where they were having trouble forming a circle when asked to by the counsellors, the group decided they needed a "magic phrase" that would mean "form a circle." From then on, saying "Alla Peanut Butter Sandwich" brought them into a circle. For groups of youth, bring in technology and the use of videos.
- **Caregiver Letters:** You may send standard letters home each week to briefly explain the group activities, and to suggest how the mother might reinforce what was learned at home.
- **Final Interview:** Schedule an interview with the program participant, and the mother as appropriate, as soon as possible after each group ends. This is an opportunity to discuss the child's or youth's participation in the Program. Again, questions and concerns are encouraged. You may talk about the strengths you have observed in the child or youth, and discuss any concerns and referrals you may have.

STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGING YOUTH

Create space, so that youth program participants take the lead in choosing what topics and activities are explored. Have food and snacks available, in both in individual and group sessions.

The following strategies and suggestions are a collection of practices that youth have identified as successful engagement tools.⁴

Start off on the right foot

- Youth are more likely to commit to a Program when they are approached by groups or individuals who already have relationships with them.
- Youth need to understand expectations and commitments up front and be given time to think them over.

Be youth-centred

- Program activities should be youth-friendly, with incentives for participation.
- Youth need appropriate adult support to become engaged and stay involved in the Program.
- Engage youth in ways that are meaningful to them, and with things that will interest them. The best way to discover youths' interests is to let them have input into activities.

Incorporate culture

- Incorporate cultural traditions, such as sharing circles or smudging ceremonies. Including adult mentors or Elders are important components of youth engagement.
- Indigenous and immigrant and refugee community partners play a big role in this area, and can make the



integration of cultural traditions and teachings more authentic than may otherwise be the case.

- Integrating cultural activities should be done with care; for example, smudging should be introduced by an Elder or cultural advisor if the facilitator is not aware of the protocols for this custom.

Build trust

- Youth engagement emerges from a mutually beneficial relationship between counsellors and youth.
- Create an atmosphere where youth feel comfortable speaking for, and about, themselves.
- Ongoing communication will help build trust and respect.

Be flexible

- Schedule convenient Program meeting times and allow flexible structures. Decisions about scheduling may depend on numerous factors, such as transportation, availability of facilities, and other commitments of the youth.
- Program scheduling may need to change from one group of youth to the next, depending on these other factors.
- Provide a range of opportunities that facilitate different types or duration of commitment, to increase the likelihood of a diverse group of youths becoming involved.

Actions speak louder than words

- PEACE Program counsellors need to be reliable and punctual.
- Consistency will set the stage for youth to develop trusting relationships, which in turn increases engagement.

Set the right tone as a counsellor and group facilitator

- Youth will pick up on a lack of enthusiasm or genuine commitment.
- Counsellor behaviour and attitude provides important modelling and sets the stage for youth to be active participants. Youth will notice if counsellors are saying one thing, but acting in a different manner.
- Part of setting the proper tone is to convey an attitude that is non-judgmental, even when program participants disclose behaving in potentially unsafe ways.

Consider gender segregated groups when indicated

- In many types of activities, youth may feel more comfortable, or safer participating without the other gender present.
- Other sensitive topics, such as relationships and sexuality, may best be approached in a combination of gender separated and co-ed groups. In these situations, gender expressive program participants can decide which group they would feel most comfortable participating in.

VIOLENCE IS PREVENTABLE (VIP) PROGRAM

The Violence is Preventable (VIP) Program is a comprehensive provincial strategy linking British Columbia schools with PEACE Programs. The aim of VIP Programs is to break the silence on violence against women and girls, and to provide safe spaces for students to speak up about violence in their home and schools. VIP offers free educational prevention presentations to educators, caregivers and students; and links school aged children and youth to PEACE counselling services and other Programs that support children and youth with experiences of violence.

The VIP Program provides presentations in school that increase the awareness of violence against women; the companion PEACE Program provides supporting psycho-educational counselling, if the presentations result in disclosure of violence. All these complementary services are coordinated by the same Program, and in some cases, the same counsellor.

As provincial coordinator of this school-based prevention and awareness Program, BCSTH supports VIP sites to:

- Facilitate partnerships between schools and communities, to respond to the emotional, social, academic, and psychological needs of children and youth with experiences of violence in the home.
- Raise awareness among educators, school staff, parents, and students about violence against women and girls among school aged children and youth.
- Reduce the prevalence and severity of violence against women and girls by providing education and awareness.
- Break the silence around violence against women and girls, and engage children and youth in conversation.
- Change attitudes about violence against women and girls.
- Connect children and youth experiencing violence, with appropriate services and supports.

By participating in the VIP Program, the PEACE Program agrees to deliver one or a combination of the following VIP activities:

- Awareness Presentations: For the educators and/or parents, these are about violence against women and the impact it has on children and youth, and how the PEACE Program can help.
- Violence Prevention Presentations: Typically take place in classes or at a school assembly about violence against women, these are about the impact that exposure can have on children and youth.
- Group Counselling Interventions: Typically, within the school environment.

More information about how to organize and facilitate the VIP Program in your community, as well as additional resources, are listed at the end of this section.



The BELIEVE Project

Since 2004, PEACE Programs have been partnering with educators of grades K–12 in schools in their community to increase awareness about domestic violence and the impact domestic violence has on children and youth. Currently in classrooms, PEACE programs are faced with questions about experiences of sexual violence happening to girls in BC schools and the community.

As an extension of the Violence Is Preventable Program, 30 PEACE programs will pilot the BELIEVE project for one year as a coordinated provincial response to sexual violence in BC schools.

Through presentations in schools, this project is focused on helping students in grades 6-8 understand healthy relationships and sexual violence specifically on topics such as consent, sexting, sexual harassment and how one can access support.

This project is funded by a Civil Forfeiture Grant distributed by the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General. It launched in 2017 and will run to 2018.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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FINAL APPOINTMENT

The conclusion of the PEACE Program should be planned from the time of intake: From the beginning of service, the counsellor, the child, and the mother should have a sense of how long the service will last, and what goals will be accomplished. PEACE Program counsellors can remind children along the way as intermediate goals are reached, so that the conclusion does not feel abrupt. Planning for the conclusion of counselling can also be incorporated into service reviews. Of course, the counsellor must also consider the possibility of an unanticipated ending. As part of the final appointment, counsellors can offer a form of “celebration” to acknowledge the child’s or youth’s participation in the Program. Honouring their participation can be as simple as offering a small gift, doing a craft together, or bringing in a special treat to share.

Counselling may end when goals have been met, when family circumstances change, or when the child simply feels ready to stop. The conclusion of counselling and the final report will include information about recommended future services, and options for future PEACE assistance. When children leave the PEACE Program, they often continue working with another professional. The PEACE Program counsellor should discuss these options with the mother, in addition to including the options into the written closing report. (See Sample Form O, **File Closure and File Closure Report** in the **Sample Forms** section for more information.)



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The following section provides some examples of additional resources available to PEACE Program counsellors to support your work with children and youth. This is not an exhaustive list, but merely some examples to get you started. The BCSTH library also has a large catalogue of resources available to counsellors, at no cost. To access the BCSTH online library catalogue and to find out more information about how to borrow, go to [BCSTH Library Services](#).

RESOURCES FOR CHILDREN AGES 3–5

Give a Little Giggle. (2017). Handmade Puppets. Retrieved from <https://www.givealittlegiggle.com>

Holmes, M. (2000). A Terrible Thing Happened. Retrieved from <http://www.apa.org/pubs/magination/4416428.aspx>

Kerr, J., McKenzie-Cooper, & Elliot. (2006). Children Who Witness Abuse Group Program: Lesson Plans/Activities for Preschool-aged Children. Vancouver: BC/Yukon Society of Transition Houses.

Kingsley, J. (2012). Little Volcanoes: Helping young children and their parents to deal with anger. London: Warwick Pudney & Eliane Whitehouse.

Oehlberg, B. (2014). Making it Better: Activities for children living in a stressful world. 2nd ed. St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press.

Shapiro, L., Pelta-Heller, Z., & Greenwald, A. (2008). I'm Not Bad I'm Just Mad: A workbook to help kids control their anger. Retrieved from <http://baybrookecentre.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/Im-Not-Bad-Im-Just-Mad-book-anger.pdf>

Snel, E. (2013). Sitting Still Like a Frog: Mindfulness exercises for kids (and their parents). Boston: Shambhala.

Yoffe, Jeanette. "Hand model of the brain for kids." Uploaded by Yoffe Therapy, July 19, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H_dxnYhdyuY

RESOURCES FOR CHILDREN AGES 6–8

Liz's Early Learning Spot. (2017). Anger Management: 23 Calming Strategy Cards. Retrieved from <http://www.lizs-early-learning-spot.com/anger-management-23-calming-strategy-cards/>

MacLean, K. (2016). Peaceful Piggy Meditation. Toronto: Albert Whitman & Company. Retrieved from <https://www.albertwhitman.com/book/peaceful-piggy-meditation/>

Plummer, D. (2010). Helping Children to Cope with Change, Stress and Anxiety. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Temper Tamers in a Jar: Helping Kids Cool Off and Manage Anger. Retrieved from <https://www.freespirit.com/educational-games-posters-and-jars/temper-tamers-in-a-jar-helping-kids-cool-off-and-manage-anger/>

Roseby, V. et al. (2005). A Safe Place to Grow: A group treatment manual for children in conflicted, violent, and separating homes. Binghamton, NY: Hawarth Maltreatment & Trauma Press.

Shapiro, L., Sprague, R., & McKay, M. (2009). The Relaxation and Stress Reduction Workbook for Kids. Oakland: New Harbinger Publications. Retrieved from <https://www.newharbinger.com/relaxation-and-stress-reduction-workbook-kids>

US Office of Education. (n.d.). Temper Tamers Handbook. Retrieved from http://ed-psych.utah.edu/school-psych/_documents/grants/intervention-manuals/tempertaming.pdf

Yoffe, Jeanette. "Hand model of the brain for kids." Uploaded by Yoffe Therapy, July 19, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H_dxnYhdyuY



RESOURCES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH AGES 9–12

Carman, R. (2004). *Helping Kids Heal: 75 activities to help children recover from trauma and loss*. Plainview, NY: The Bureau for Youth at Risk.

Holmes, C., McGee, S., & Shapiro, L. (2007). *55 Favorite Healing Activities*. PA: Childsworld Childsplay.

Huebner, D. (2006). *What to Do When you Worry Too Much: A kid's guide to overcoming anxiety*. Washington, DC: Magination Press.

Plummer, D. (2010). *Helping Children to Cope with Change, Stress and Anxiety*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Shapiro, L. (2015). *Dr. Playwell's Don't Stress Game: Help kids cope with any kind of stress*. Revised ed. Melville, NY: Childsworld Childsplay.

Shapiro, L., Pelta-Heller, Z., & Greenwald, A. (2008). *I'm Not Bad, I'm Just Mad: A workbook to help kids control their anger*. Retrieved from <http://baybrookecentre.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/Im-Not-Bad-Im-Just-Mad-book-anger.pdf>

Simmonds, J. (2014). *Seeing Red: An anger management and anti-bullying curriculum for kids*. Revised & updated. Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers.

RESOURCES FOR YOUTH AGES 13–18

BC Children's Hospital. (2017). *Breathr App*. Retrieved from <http://keltymentalhealth.ca/breathr>

BC Society of Transition Houses. (2007). *It IS a Big Deal: Youth responses to being exposed to domestic violence*. DVD and Study Guide. Retrieved from <https://bcsth.ca/publications/it-is-a-big-deal-youth-responses-to-being-exposed-to-domestic-violence/>

Bell-Gadsby, C., Clark, N., & Hunt, S. (2006). *It's a Girl Thang!: A manual on creating girls groups*. Vancouver: McCreary Foundation. Retrieved from http://mcs.bc.ca/pdf/its_a_girl_thang.pdf

Biegel, G. (2017). *The Stress Reduction Workbook for Teens: Mindfulness skills to help you deal with stress*. Oakland: New Harbinger Publications.

Fredin, H., & Carrier, A. (2017). *Online Abuse: Virtual violence and its impact on young women and girls*. London Family Court Clinic.

Futures Without Violence. (2017). *That's Not Cool*. Retrieved from <https://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/children-youth-teens/thats-not-cool/>

Godard, L., Cory, J., Armstrong, N., & Abi-Jaoude, A. (2016). *Girls Speak Out: Support groups for young women with experiences of violence*. Vancouver: BC Women's Hospital and Health Centre. Retrieved from http://www.cw.bc.ca/library/pdf/Pamphlets/GSO_guide-insides-v11-for-PDF.pdf

Leave Out Violence Everywhere (LOVE). <http://bc.leaveoutviolence.org>

Leutenberg, E., & Liptak, J. (2011). Teen Respect of Self & Others Workbook. Boys Town, NE: Boys Town Press.

Lohmann, R., & Taylor, J. (2009). The Anger Workbook for Teens: Activities to help you deal with anger and frustration. Oakland: New Harbinger Publications.

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Project Respect (m.d.) Retrieved from <https://www.yesmeansyes.com>

The Representation Project. (2011). Miss Representation [video]. Retrieved from <http://therepresentationproject.org/film/miss-representation/>

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Schab, L. (2008). The Divorce Workbook for Teens: Activities to help you move beyond the breakup. Oakland: New Harbinger Publications.

Schab, L. (2008). The Anxiety Workbook for Teens: Activities to help you deal with anxiety and worry. Oakland: New Harbinger Publications.

Schab, L. (2013). The Self-esteem Workbook for Teens: Activities to help you build confidence and achieve your goals. Oakland: New Harbinger Publications.

Shapiro, L. (2008). Stopping the Pain: A workbook for teens who cut and self injure. Oakland: New Harbinger Publications.

Violence is Preventable (VIP) BC Society of Transition Houses. (2007). Violence is Preventable for Very Important People: Study Guide. Retrieved from https://bcsth.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Violence_Is_Preventable_for_Very_Important_People_Study_Guide.pdf

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4. WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH: SAMPLE ACTIVITIES AND FORMS

The following section provides:

- Sample activities and tools to support counsellors in their work with children and youth.
- Sample forms.

Sample activities are provided for the six primary areas of support of the PEACE Program that meet the deliverables of the program contract:

1. Building Rapport, Identity, and Self Esteem.
2. Safety Planning.
3. Violence Against Women and Healthy Relationships.
4. Feelings and Communication.
5. Anger.
6. Boundaries and Self-Care.

The activities included here have been created by PEACE Program counsellors, unless indicated otherwise. The activities are a starting place, and individual counsellors are encouraged to update the activities or find alternatives that meet the needs of children accessing their Program. Each activity listing describes the exercise, and where appropriate, includes a second page that can be photocopied for use during the activity.

Counsellors are encouraged to supplement these six themes with additional topics and activities that meet the needs of the program participant. For example, anger is an emotion that arises often in children who have lived with experiences of violence, but if a particular program participant does not describe or exhibit anger as their primary emotion, the counsellor will not need to spend much time on this topic. Adapting to the child's needs may also mean spending more time on a certain session topic, or exploring additional topics.

You may explore the following list of potential topics and sources to meet the unique needs of children and youth served by PEACE Programs.

- **Mental Health**
 - [Canadian Mental Health Association](#)
 - [Kelty Mental Health](#)
 - [Kids Help Phone](#)
 - [Youth Anxiety BC](#)
 - [Child and Teen Mental Health](#)

- **Substance Use**
 - Drug Free Kids Canada
 - Youth Addiction
- **Self-Harm**
 - CMHA Youth and Self-Injury
 - Crisis Intervention & Suicide Prevention Centre of BC
- **Harm Reduction**
 - Harm Reduction
 - Canadian Harm Reduction Network: Youth Links
- **Healthy Relationships and Dating Violence**
 - That's Not Cool: Decreasing Teen Dating Violence Online
 - Teen Relationship Abuse
 - Cup of Tea Consent Video
- **Bullying**
 - Erase Bullying
- **Internet and Tech Safety**
 - Safety Net Project
 - That's Not Cool: Decreasing Teen Dating Violence Online
- **LGBTQI+**
 - PRISM
 - It's Pronounced Metrosexual
 - QMUNITY
 - Human Rights Campaign Explore: Coming Out
- **Sexual Assault**
 - We Believe You: A colouring book for survivors and supporters
- **Indigenous Children and Youth**
 - Engaging and Empowering Aboriginal Youth
 - Indigenous Kids Right Path



SAMPLE ACTIVITIES: INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT

TOPIC 1. BUILDING RAPPORT, IDENTITY, AND SELF-ESTEEM SAMPLE ACTIVITIES

AGES 3–5

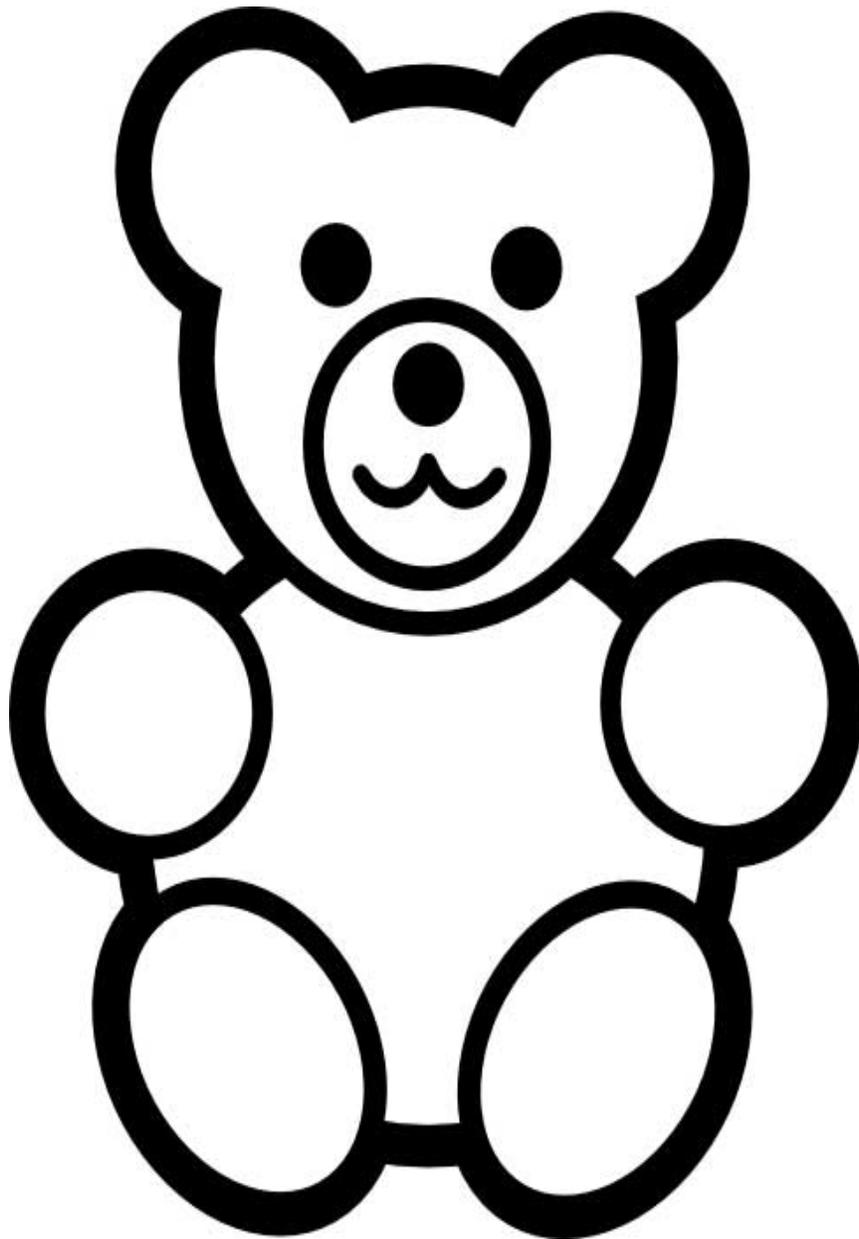
THREE THINGS THAT ARE SPECIAL ABOUT ME

This activity allows children to share three things that are special about them with PEACE Program counsellors, while building rapport. Children can either draw or list what they have decided to share, inside the Teddy. This is a great way for PEACE Program counsellors to learn more about the child they are working with, and how children view themselves.

If a child has a hard time coming up with three things that are special about them, it's an opportunity for a child to explore this further alongside their PEACE Program counsellor.

THREE THINGS THAT ARE SPECIAL ABOUT ME

Tell Teddy three things that are special about you!





AGES 3–5

USE OF PUPPETS WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

The PEACE Program includes supporting very young children. As a guiding principle, the younger the child, the more crucial the connection to the caregiver. Ideally, sessions with children less than five years of age always include the caregiver in some capacity. As 3–5 year-olds are generally non-literate, worksheets may not always be helpful.

Consider the importance of play with this (and every) age group, and the value of mothers and children reconnecting through supported play in your presence. This may include: Mom reading a story; practicing strategies to help with anger (like breathing or blowing bubbles together); and work with puppets.

Puppets can be used as a tool for modeling to help express difficult feelings and thoughts (everyone in the room can have their own puppet). Children are incredible at suspending disbelief, and puppets can very quickly become animated creatures that are safer to approach and talk to than people are!

Some tips when using puppets:

- **Find a puppet you feel comfortable with.** Not all puppets have the same personality! Give a Little Giggle (www.givealittlegiggle.com) sells compelling puppets, but if this is not within budget, even a sock can work if you get creative.
- **Puppets can act as a “silent partner” for the counsellor.** You can pose questions to the puppet that the child may help you answer, thereby inviting collaboration and ideas. For example, the puppet may be exhibiting shyness upon first meeting with the child (i.e. many children are nervous when first coming to counselling). You may ask the puppet, “I am wondering if you are feeling shy today?” To which the puppet would answer in the affirmative by simply nodding. Then the counsellor can lead this in many ways: Acknowledge this is normal, or ask the child if they might guess why the puppet could feel shy, or wonder aloud to the child what might help the puppet feel more comfortable. This activity could be done with any accompanying emotion, as the child gets to engage in ways that can help involve and reduce anxiety for the child. The only limit to work with puppets, is yours and the child’s imagination.

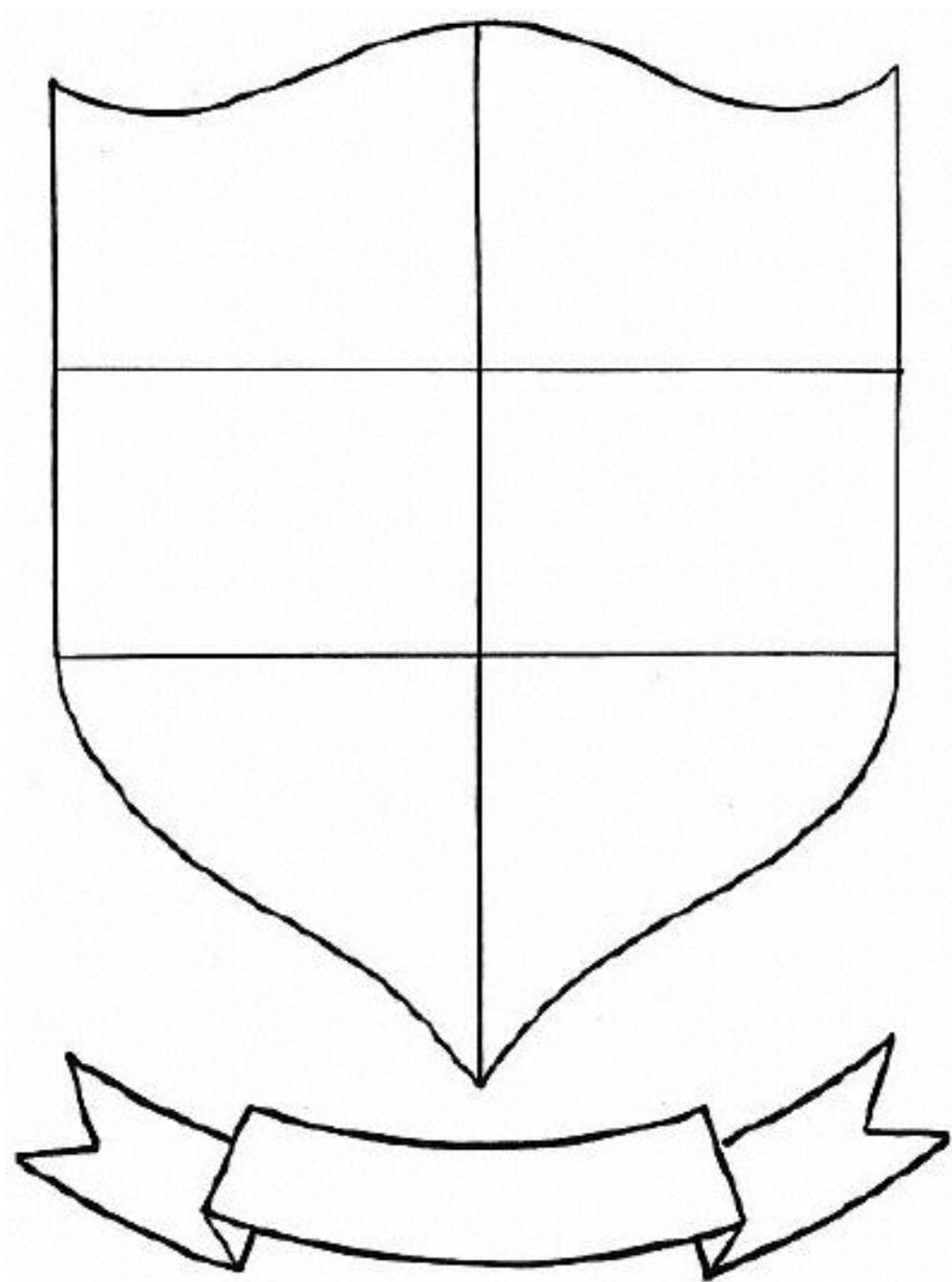
Note: Some children may have had frightening experiences in the past with puppets, as some puppet plays include “evil” characters. Take your cues from the child, and follow their lead.

AGES 3–5; 6–8

MY SHIELD

Historically, a shield or coat of arms has been described as a representation of a person, family, corporation, or country. This activity involves asking a child to draw or decorate their own personal shield that represents them. This exercise allows children to recognize their own qualities and strengths by illustrating them. This is a good activity for PEACE Program counsellors to use when getting to know, and build rapport with, children. This activity may also provide insight into how a child views their family.

MY SHIELD



AGES 6–8

SENTENCE COMPLETION

This worksheet lists several prompts to help children get engaged in a session. It is a great activity to help children “open up,” and for the PEACE Program counsellor to learn more about the child.



SENTENCE COMPLETION

My favorite colour is _____

I have fun when _____

My best friend is _____

I feel happy when _____

I feel sad when _____

School is _____

I like to _____

I feel safe when _____

I want to be a _____

I love _____

My favorite food is _____

My family is _____

AGES 9-12

“GETTING TO KNOW YOU” JENGA

This activity can be used in a group or in a one on one session: Write questions onto Jenga blocks. (This activity can be adapted and doesn't necessarily have to use a Jenga game.) This is a great way for a PEACE Program counsellor to play and build rapport with a program participant—for the counsellor to begin get to know the program participant and for the program participant to know the counsellor, and to have conversations around the answers.





AGES 9–12; 13–18

CAPTURE THE MOMENT

This worksheet asks program participants to “capture a moment” when they had a positive experience or demonstrated a positive quality. This self-esteem-building exercise allows young people to identify positive experiences, and to acknowledge and celebrate them with their PEACE Program counsellor.

CAPTURE THE MOMENT

COURAGE:

LOVE:

KINDNESS:

DETERMINATION:

GENEROSITY:

COMPASSION:

EMPATHY:

COMPROMISE:

HAPPINESS:



AGES 9–12; 13–18

I AM...

This worksheet gives program participants an opportunity to identify positive traits about themselves. This is also a great way for PEACE Program counsellors to get to know the program participant, by asking them to share a story of a time when the person displayed these positive traits. It is also a great way to build a positive self-image and self-esteem.

I AM....

FUNNY

POSITIVE

RELIABLE

RESPONSIBLE

MATURE

BRAVE

KIND

EMPATHETIC

SELFLESS

INDEPENDENT

STRONG

PATIENT

COMPASSIONATE

SILLY

GENEROUS

FOCUSED

HARD WORKING

COMMITTED

RELIABLE

TRUSTING

MODEST

LOYAL

SUPPORTIVE

COURTEOUS

RESPECTFUL

LOVING

APPRECIATIVE

THOUGHTFUL

FORGIVING

MINDFUL

SERIOUS

FRIENDLY

POSITIVE

HELPFUL

GRATEFUL

OPEN-MINDED



AGES 9–12; 13–18

SELF ESTEEM JOURNAL

This activity is a good way to introduce program participants to journaling. These prompts help young people to reflect on positive experiences, build self-esteem, and set goals for themselves. Journaling is also a great tool for program participants to express their emotions. The PEACE Program counsellor can send program participants home with the journal pages, then ask them to bring the completed responses back for the next session. Although you have invited them to bring their responses to their next session, affirm for them that they do not have to share their responses with you or anyone else unless they want to.

SELF ESTEEM JOURNAL

SOMETHING I DID FOR SOMEONE TODAY	
I FELT PROUD WHEN	
TODAY I FELT HAPPY WHEN	
SOMETHING I DID WELL TODAY	
I FELT GOOD ABOUT MYSELF WHEN	
TODAY I LAUGHED WHEN	
TODAY I ACCOMPLISHED	
TODAY I REMEMBERED TO	
TODAY I HAD FUN WHEN	
TODAY I RECEIVED A COMPLIMENT WHEN	
I WAS PROUD FOR SOMEONE ELSE WHEN	
TODAY I VOLUNTEERED TO/OFFERED ASSISTANCE TO	
TODAY I SET A GOAL TO	
TODAY I LEARNED TO	
TOMMORROW I WOULD LIKE TO	
I CAN SEE MYSELF DOING ... IN THE FUTURE	
I FORGIVE MYSELF FOR	
I WANT TO LEARN	



AGES 9–12; 13–18

JOURNALING

This worksheet provides some tips that PEACE Program counsellors can share when introducing the benefits of journaling. PEACE Program counsellors can share this worksheet with program participants, and encourage them to express their emotions by journaling. Journaling can be used for self-care; for raising self-awareness and mindfulness; as an outlet to express feelings; as a tool for healing and reflection; and for building self-confidence.

JOURNALING TIPS

Setting	Find a quiet space
Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try and make this part of your routine. • Give yourself at least 30 minutes to share your feelings and thoughts.
Spontaneity	Use your imagination; do not set limits.
Honesty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be honest with yourself. • Express true feelings. • Keep your journal confidential.
Privacy	<p>A journal is private, personal, and confidential; you do not need to share it with anyone if you don't want to.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep it in a safe place.
Selective Sharing	You may want to share selectively with someone you trust. This person should be someone who accepts you for you, and does not criticize.

AGES 9–12; 13–18

CATCHING YOUR INNER CRITIC

You've seen it a hundred times in the movies: Police agents in a fake plumber's van, clutching their earphones, listening in on conversations being held on a tapped phone line; the private eye picking up the phone to hear a conversation happening in another room or sifting through garbage to find a clue.

Catching your inner critic is like being a detective. In this case, you are tapping into your own thoughts, monitoring your internal monologue for critical self-statements.

Carry a notebook with you tomorrow. As you go about your usual routine, imagine that you are a detective, staked out in a corner of your own mind. Imagine that you can listen in on your own train of thought, like listening in on someone else's phone conversation.

When your internal monologue becomes judgmental, jot down your critic's attacks.

Here's a sample taken from the notebook of a youth:

Time	Critical Statement
<i>8:15 A.M.</i>	<i>I'm always late. Why can't I get here on time?</i>
<i>8:40 A.M.</i>	<i>I haven't finished my homework. I'm lazy.</i>
<i>9:45 A.M.</i>	<i>You're letting yourself down.</i>
<i>11:00 A.M.</i>	<i>Still haven't started working on my science fair project. I'm so disorganized.</i>
<i>12:20 P.M.</i>	<i>Stupid remark in the cafeteria.</i>
<i>2:35 P.M.</i>	<i>You're not going to pass science.</i>

When you first try this, it may be hard for your internal detective to stay detached enough from your own life, to monitor your thoughts. You might have to "rewind the tape" to notice what you have been saying to yourself. When you remember that you are supposed to be noticing your thoughts, start with whatever you just thought, about and work backward.

Let's talk about what you uncover and how you felt about the experience in our next session.



AGES 9–12; 13–18

EXPLORING STEREOTYPES

This exercise may be useful when working with youth groups. PEACE Program counsellors can use this activity to examine stereotypes and values with program participants, and discuss where stereotypes come from and how they are learned.

EXPLORING STEREOTYPES

Fill in the blanks by putting down what first comes to mind.

1. I learnt that little girls should be _____

2. I learnt that little boys should be _____

3. Women should be _____

4. Men should be _____

5. Children should be _____

6. Teenagers should be _____

7. Families are _____

8. Moms are _____

9. Dads are _____

10. Parents are _____

11. Authority figures are _____

12. Getting older is _____

13. Alcohol use is _____

14. Drug use is _____

15. Marriage is _____

16. Money is _____

17. Education is _____

18. Religion is _____

19. People from other cultures are _____

20. Mistakes are _____

21. Success is _____

22. I am _____



AGES 9–12

MAY THE FORCE BE WITH YOU

Create a force field around yourself, so that you are protected from mean words. This is done by acknowledging the things that are good about you. The more you know, the stronger your force field.

- Write down 20 things that you like about yourself. If you get stuck, ask a friend or a relative.
- This force field of your own strengths helps protect you when someone does or says something hurtful.



- When finished writing the 20 things, turn your page over and write your name in the middle of the page. Then, using any or as many colors as you want, start at the first letter of your name and trace around your name as if you were putting it in a bubble.
- Continue to do this until you have completely filled the page; you may get 30 or 40 rings around your name. The purpose of this exercise is, every time you trace around your name, you remember something you wrote on the back of your page. Every ring around your name is an added barrier to protect you from those who try and hurt you.
- Each time someone is mean or uses hurtful words towards you, always remember the positive things you have written on the backside of your page and how many protective layers you have created around your name.
- Colouring or decorating each ring can make a really nice art project.

You can also do this on your own time, without using the 20 positive words on the back. Just write your name on the page and begin to trace the circles around your name as a booster if you are in a bad situation, and need of a reminder of how good a person you are. You can simply be doodling rings around your name to reinforce your positive protective layers.

AGES 9–12; 13–18

REFLECTIONS

This exercise allows program participants to explore and reflect on their positive qualities. It can be difficult for children and youth with experiences of violence, to think about themselves positively. This exercise can help program participants start to build a positive self-image.



REFLECTIONS

WHAT I LIKE ABOUT MYSELF

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

WHAT OTHERS LIKE ABOUT ME

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

TIMES I HAVE HELPED OTHERS

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

GOALS I HAVE ACCOMPLISHED

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

THINGS I AM GOOD AT

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

MY UNIQUE QUALITIES

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

I AM RESPONSIBLE FOR

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



TIMES I HAVE MADE OTHERS HAPPY

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

TIMES I HAVE MADE MYSELF PROUD

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

TIMES A FRIEND HAS BEEN THANKFUL FOR ME

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

TOPIC 2. SAFETY PLANNING: SAMPLE ACTIVITIES

AGES 3-5; 6-8

MY SAFETY PLAN



SCHOOL



HOME



COMMUNITY



AGES 3-5

**Sometimes I need to
talk to someone. I know
I can talk to**



Reproduced from Safety Planning with Children and Youth: A Toolkit for Working with Children and Youth Exposed to Domestic Violence, Ministry of Justice.

If there is fighting in my house, I will go to a safe place. Some safe places for me to go are:



In the closet.



Under the bed.



In the backyard.



In the bathroom.



To the neighbor's.

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Reproduced from Safety Planning with Children and Youth: A Toolkit for Working with Children and Youth Exposed to Domestic Violence, Ministry of Justice.



AGES 3-5; 6-8; 9-12



Reproduced from Safety Planning with Children and Youth: A Toolkit for Working with Children and Youth Exposed to Domestic Violence, Ministry of Justice.

AGES 3-5; 6-8

I will have a special code
word with my family to
keep us safe. My
family's special code
word will be:



Reproduced from Safety Planning with Children and Youth: A Toolkit for Working with Children and Youth Exposed to Domestic Violence, Ministry of Justice.

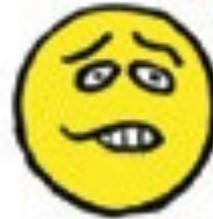
AGES 3-5; 6-8

If I feel angry,



Sad, upset

or scared about
fighting at home



I know I can talk to

?

and

?

AGES 3–5; 6–8; 9–12

SAFETY CARD

This activity creates a safety card for the child to take home. It can be made on an index card or on a piece of paper. The idea is that it this safety card be portable, and convenient for children to easily put in their pockets or backpacks.

MY NAME	
MY ADDRESS	
SAFE ADULTS FOR ME TO CALL AND THEIR PHONE NUMBERS	1. 2. 3.
WHEN THERE IS AN EMERGENCY	911 or local RCMP
ANY MEDICATIONS OR ALLERGIES I HAVE	



AGES 6-8; 9-12

EVERYONE HAS THE RIGHT TO BE SAFE AND HEARD!



If you are scared for your safety you can call 9-1-1 or the

local RCMP @ _____



If you need someone to talk to you can call:

Kids Help Phone

1 800 668 6868

Or

Make your own list of people you can call



name: _____

number: _____



name: _____

number: _____



name: _____

number: _____

AGES 6-8; 9-12; 13-18

If I had to leave my house in
a hurry, I would bring

?

?

?

?

?

?

?

?

?



if I could.

Reproduced from Safety Planning with Children and Youth: A Toolkit for Working with Children and Youth Exposed to Domestic Violence, Ministry of Justice.



AGES 6-8; 9-12

Sometimes people touch our bodies
in a confusing way that makes us
feel uncomfortable.

If someone touches my body
in a way that hurts me or
makes me uncomfortable,

I will tell



and/or





AGES 9-12

MY SAFETY PLAN



Department of Justice
Canada

Ministère de la Justice
Canada



My Safety Plan

Call 911 in an emergency

People I can call for help are:

Name	Phone number	Other number
<u>Local police</u>	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Places for me to go are: _____

I can call Kids Help Phone line at 1-800-668-6868 for advice.

Someone I trust and can talk to about my worries is: _____ Their phone number is: _____ Their address is: _____ We have agreed on the code word _____ in case I need help. They know my address and phone number. They can call help for me.

Things to take with me if I can:

- Medicines I need
- Cash if I have any
- Clothing for a few days
- Identification (like my health card or birth certificate)

In an emergency I will not worry about these, I will just get to safety.

Remember to keep this plan in a safe place where you can get it if you need it.

You may want to keep addresses, phone numbers or other information you'd need in an emergency with you.

It's a good idea to get help making a safety plan from a trusted adult or information helpline.

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AGES 9-12

A TEEN'S GUIDE TO SAFETY PLANNING



love is respect org

1-866-331-9474 1-866-331-8453 TTY

A TEEN'S GUIDE TO SAFETY PLANNING

WHY DO I NEED A SAFETY PLAN?

Everyone deserves a relationship that is healthy, safe and supportive. If you are in a relationship that is hurting you, it is important for you to know that *the abuse is not your fault*. It is also important for you to start thinking of ways to keep yourself safe from the abuse, whether you decide to end the relationship or not. While you can't control your partner's abusive behavior, you *can* take action to keep yourself as safe as possible.

WHAT IS A SAFETY PLAN?

A safety plan is a practical guide that helps lower your risk of being hurt by your abuser. It includes information *specific to you and your life* that will help keep you safe. A good safety plan helps you think through lifestyle changes that will help keep you as safe as possible at school, at home and other places that you go on a daily basis.

HOW DO I MAKE A SAFETY PLAN?

Take some time for yourself to go through each section of this safety planning workbook. You can complete the workbook on your own, or you can work through it with a friend or an adult you trust.

Keep in Mind:

- In order for this safety plan to work for you, you'll need to fill in personalized answers, so you can use the information when you most need it.
- Once you complete your safety plan, be sure to keep it in an accessible but secure location. You might also consider giving a copy of your safety plan to someone that you trust.
- Getting support from someone who has experience working with teens in abusive relationships can be very useful.

MY SAFETY WORKBOOK - PAGE 1

Staying Safe at School:

The safest way for me to get to and from school is:

_____.

If I need to leave school in an emergency, I can get home safely by:

_____.

I can make sure that a friend can walk with me between classes. I will ask:

_____ and/or _____

_____.

I will eat lunch and spend free periods in an area where there are school staff or faculty nearby. These are some areas on campus where I feel safe:

_____, and _____.

I could talk to the following people at school if I need to rearrange my schedule in order to avoid my abuser, or if I need help staying safe at school:

- School Counselor
- Coach
- Teachers: _____
- _____
- Principal
- Assistant/Vice principal
- School security
- Other: _____
- _____

If I live with my abuser, I will have a bag ready with these important items in case I need to leave quickly (check all that apply):

- Cell phone & charger
- Spare money
- Keys
- Driver's license or other form of ID
- Copy of Restraining Order
- Birth certificate, social security card, immigration papers and other important documents
- Change of clothes
- Medications
- Special photos or other valuable items
- If I have children—anything they may need (important papers, formula, diapers)

Staying Safe at Home:

I can tell this family member about what is going on in my relationship:

There may be times when no one else is home. During those times, I can have people stay with me. I will ask:

_____.

The safest way for me to leave my house in an emergency is:

_____.

If I have to leave in an emergency, I should try to go to a place that is public, safe and unknown by my abuser. I could go here:

and/or here: _____.

I will use a code word so I can alert my family, friends, and neighbors to call for help without my abuser knowing about it. My code word is:

_____.



MY SAFETY WORKBOOK - PAGE 2

Staying Safe Emotionally:

My abuser often tries to make me feel bad about myself by saying or doing this:

When he/she does this, I will think of these things I like about myself:

_____ and _____

I will do things I enjoy, like:

_____ and _____

I will join clubs or organizations that interest me, like:

_____ or _____

If I feel down, depressed or scared, I can call the following friends or family members:

Name: _____

Phone #: _____

During an emergency, I could call the following friends or family members at any time of day or night:

Name: _____

Phone #: _____

Getting Help in Your Community:

For emergencies: 911

National Teen Dating Violence Hotline: 1.866.331.9474

Local police station: _____

Phone #: _____

Address: _____

Local domestic violence organization: _____

Phone #: _____

Address: _____

Local free legal assistance: _____

Phone #: _____

Address: _____

Nearest youth shelter: _____

Phone #: _____

Address: _____

MY SAFETY WORKBOOK - PAGE 3

These are things I can do to help keep myself safe everyday:

- I will carry my cell phone and important telephone numbers with me at all times.
- I will keep in touch with someone I trust about where I am or what I am doing.
- I will stay out of isolated places and try to never walk around alone.
- I will avoid places where my abuser or his/her friends and family are likely to be.
- I will keep the doors and windows locked when I am at home, especially if I am alone.
- I will avoid speaking to my abuser. If it is unavoidable, I will make sure there are people around in case the situation becomes dangerous.
- I will call 911 if I feel my safety is at risk.
- I can look into getting a protective order so that I'll have legal support in keeping my abuser away.
- I will remember that the abuse is not my fault and that I deserve a safe and healthy relationship.

These are things I can do to help keep myself safe in my social life:

- I will ask my friends to keep their cell phones with them while they are with me in case we get separated and I need help.
- If possible, I will go to different malls, banks, grocery stores, movie theaters, etc. than the ones my abuser goes to or knows about.
- I will not go out alone, especially at night.
- No matter where I go, I will be aware of how to leave safely in case of an emergency.
- I will leave if I feel uncomfortable in a situation, no matter what my friends are doing.
- I will spend time with people who make me feel safe, supported and good about myself.

These are things I can do to stay safe online and with my cell phone:

- I will not say or do anything online that I wouldn't in person.
- I will set all my online profiles to be as private as they can be.
- I will save and keep track of any abusive, threatening or harassing comments, posts, or texts.
- I will never give my password to anyone other than my parents or guardians.
- If the abuse and harassment does not stop, I will change my usernames, email addresses, and/or cell phone number.
- I will not answer calls from unknown, blocked or private numbers.
- I can see if my phone company can block my abuser's phone number from calling my phone.
- I will not communicate with my abuser using any type of technology if unnecessary, since any form of communication can be recorded and possibly used against me in the future.



CREATE A TEEN SAFETY PLAN

You have the right to a violence free relationship. No matter what your boyfriend/girlfriend/partner says the abuse is NOT your fault.

If your safety is at risk, create a plan to keep yourself safe and find the support you need.

Here are some tips:

- If you live with your boyfriend/girlfriend/partner, try and leave your home regularly during the day. Whether you go to school, work, or the store, try to establish and maintain a regular routine. This might help you leave without drawing attention to yourself.
- Learn the best route to get to a safe location. If you have a car, keep your gas tank full and if you rely on public transportation, learn which buses, trains, or subways will get you to safety.
- Talk to a friend or adult you trust.

If you need a place to stay, contact **Victim Link at 1-800-563-0808** for information and referral to a transition house or shelter in your community.

Try to plan ahead and keep these items ready to take with you:

- Cash
- ATM cards/checkbooks
- Drivers License/ Passport/Government IDs
- Care Card and Medications
- Eyeglasses/Contact lenses
- Mobile phone
- Keys
- Legal documents, like a court order
- A change of clothes
- Cell phone and emergency contact info

If leaving with children, try to bring these things with you:

- Bottles and formula
- Diapers
- Birth Certificate
- Medical records
- Spare clothes
- Their favorite toy, stuffed animal, or security blanket

The decision to leave your boyfriend/girlfriend/partner is a tough one. For many people, the break up is the most dangerous time in an abusive relationship. Emotions are running high and your boyfriend/girlfriend/partner might become angry, even violent, when they learn they are losing control. Now, more than ever, it is important that you find support. Here are some tips:

- Call the Victim Link 1-800-563-0808 and talk someone trained to help you plan ahead and stay safe after you have ended your relationship.
- Talk to someone you trust, such as a friend, a family member, teacher, or coach.
- Choose a code word and use it to discreetly tell the people you trust that you are in danger and need immediate help.
- Pick a safe and secret location where a friend or family member can pick you up.
- If you don't feel safe, don't break up in person. If you decide to break up in person, do it in a public place and ask someone you trust to be nearby in case you need them.
- Think independently and trust your instincts. Don't let anyone talk you into doing something that's not right for you.

An abusive relationship can take a huge toll on your mental and physical health. Your partner has probably become a big part of your life; you might miss him/her or feel lonely and sad after the break up. Confide in someone you trust for support you while you adjust.

Source: Adapted from the Family Violence Prevention Fund www.endabuse.org



TOPIC 3. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS: SAMPLE ACTIVITIES

AGES 3–5; 6–8

LET'S TALK

Children can have many different feelings about violence in their families, and it can be very confusing. They may also blame themselves for what has happened. The PEACE Program counsellor can provide a safe space for children who have been with experiences of violence to share their experience, and provide them with the tools to deal with what they may be feeling.

A good introduction to talking about what has happened for a child, is to allow the child to express it through art and play:

- Provide the child with a piece of paper and art supplies. Ask them to draw a picture of their family and to share a story about them.
- Role play with toys, dolls, action figures. Ask the child to act out what a normal day at home would be like after school.

AGES 6–8; 9–12

PETER THE PANDA

PEACE Program counsellors can use this narrative to bring up the topic of violence, and explore a child's response to violence by talking about the character's story. Ask children how Peter the Panda may feel and if the child has ever felt that way, or experienced something similar

PEACE Program counsellors can use this opportunity to convey:

- The child is **NOT** alone and many children have gone through what they have
- It's understandable to have mixed feelings about your family
- It's okay to still love the offending parent and at the same time feel very angry towards them
- Violence Against Women is **NOT** your fault
- There is nothing you could have done to stop the violence from happening
- You did **NOT** do something to cause the violence in your family

PEACE Program counsellors can then go on to talk about why the children are attending the Program, and what they can expect over the next several weeks:

- Explain your role as a PEACE Program counsellor: You are a counsellor. A counsellor is safe person that helps children, youth, and adults understand their feelings. They do this by talking, doing art, and playing together.
- Explain what children will learn in sessions:
 - Explore feelings about violence against women
 - Healthy ways of dealing with your emotions; managing your anger
 - You are NOT to blame for the violence in your family
 - Violence against women is against the law in Canada
 - What violence against women is
 - Learn about power and control in relationships
 - Create a safety plan
 - Learn practical skills that will help you move forward
- End the session by perhaps setting a goal and doing a check in. Ask them to rank from 1–10, how they are feeling after talking about difficult things today. Depending on how the child is doing, do a grounding deep breathing exercise or energizer.



PETER THE PANDA

Peter: *I have moved three times since Grade 1 and don't have many friends in my new school yet. I have to take care of my little brother because my mother has two jobs now that we don't live with my dad anymore.*

*I miss my dad but I don't miss how he used to treat my mom.
We used to hear a lot of screaming and fighting when we all lived together.*

When he got angry with my mom, he would call her names and sometimes even hit her. He thought we didn't see this because we were watching TV in the other room, but we did.

How do you think this makes Peter the Panda feel?

Why does he feel this way?

Has there ever been a time when you felt this way or experienced something similar?

AGES 13–18

POWER AND CONTROL WHEEL



DOMESTIC ABUSE INTERVENTION PROJECT

202 East Superior Street
Duluth, Minnesota 55802
218-722-2781
www.duluth-model.org

Reproduced with permission from the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project.



AGES 13–18

WHAT IS VIOLENCE IN RELATIONSHIPS?

This exercise provides youth with a definition of what violence is, and gives them an opportunity to identify violence and if they are in a violent relationship. PEACE Program counsellors can ask program participants to use the checklist and check all that apply to their relationship.

Abuse is any behavior which results in actual or perceived harm towards another. Below is a list of different kinds of abuse and some examples of each. Please check any you have experienced.

- **Physical abuse:** Slapping, choking, or punching. Using hands or objects as weapons. Threatening her with a knife or gun.
- **Sexual abuse:** Using threats, intimidation, or physical force to force her into unwanted sexual acts.
- **Emotional or verbal abuse:** Threatening to kill her (or to kill the children, other family members or pets), threatening to commit suicide, making humiliating or degrading comments about her body or behaviour, forcing her to commit degrading acts, isolating her from friends or family, confining her to the house, destroying her possessions, and other actions designed to demean her or to restrict her freedom and independence.
- **Financial abuse:** Stealing or controlling her money or valuables (of particular concern to older women). Forcing her to work. Denying her the right to work.
- **Spiritual abuse:** Using her religious or spiritual beliefs to manipulate, dominate, and control her.

Source: Adapted from Canadian Women's Foundation. (n.d.) The Facts about Violence Against Women. Retrieved <http://www.canadianwomen.org/facts-about-violence?gclid=CNPR7ciZldICFQ94fgodKygOuw>

PHYSICAL ABUSE

Behaviour/Action	✓
Pushing, kicking, slapping, choking, or any kind of physical action that caused you harm/pain	
Physical abuse with objects, breaking personal objects	
Attack with any kind of a weapon	
Being held against your will	

SEXUAL ABUSE

Behaviour/Action	✓
Forcing sex or unwanted sexual activities	
Withholding sex	
Not allowing you to use birth control	

EMOTIONAL/VERBAL ABUSE

Behaviour/Action	✓
Threats of suicide or divorce	
Preventing you from going to school, work, or from seeing your family and friends	
Not allowing you to use the phone, Internet	
Insulting you	
Accusing you of having affairs with others	
Following you	

FINANCIAL ABUSE

Behaviour/Action	✓
Stealing your money	
Controlling your money	
Denying you the right to work	
Forcing you to work	

SPIRITUAL ABUSE

Behaviour/Action	✓
Denying you the ability to practice your faith freely	
Using religion/faith to control and manipulate you	

Others:



AGES 13–18

HOW DO I KNOW IF I AM EXPERIENCING ABUSE IN A RELATIONSHIP?

This exercise is a good way for youth to examine their relationships. It can be used as a checklist and a good starting point to talk about violence in relationships, to open up dialogue with the program participant about what is happening in their relationship, and offer support. Ask program participants to put a “yes” or “no” next to each statement.

HOW DO I KNOW IF I AM EXPERIENCING ABUSE IN A RELATIONSHIP?

Does your friend/partner....

- Ignore your feelings and wishes?
- Call you names and put you down?
- Tease and ridicule you about things that are important to you?
- Not keep your secrets?
- Ignore or pretend not to hear you?
- Act more, or less, friendly when you are alone vs. when his/her friends are around?
- Keep you away from your friends or puts your friends down?
- Sulk when you do not do what he/she wants?
- Threaten suicide?
- Show anger and use threats/violence to get his/her own way?
- Encourage or pressure you to do things that make you uncomfortable?
- Refuse to accept your limits about sexual activity?

HOW DO I KNOW IF MY RELATIONSHIP IS POSITIVE / NEGATIVE?

Do you...

- Listen to each other?
- Consider each other's feelings and ideas?
- Enjoy spending time with each other?
- Respect, trust, and support each other?
- Remember little things that are important to each other?
- Value and take care of yourselves?
- Respect each other's culture and beliefs?



TOPIC 4. FEELINGS AND COMMUNICATION: SAMPLE ACTIVITIES

AGES 3–5

FEELINGS COLOURING BOOK

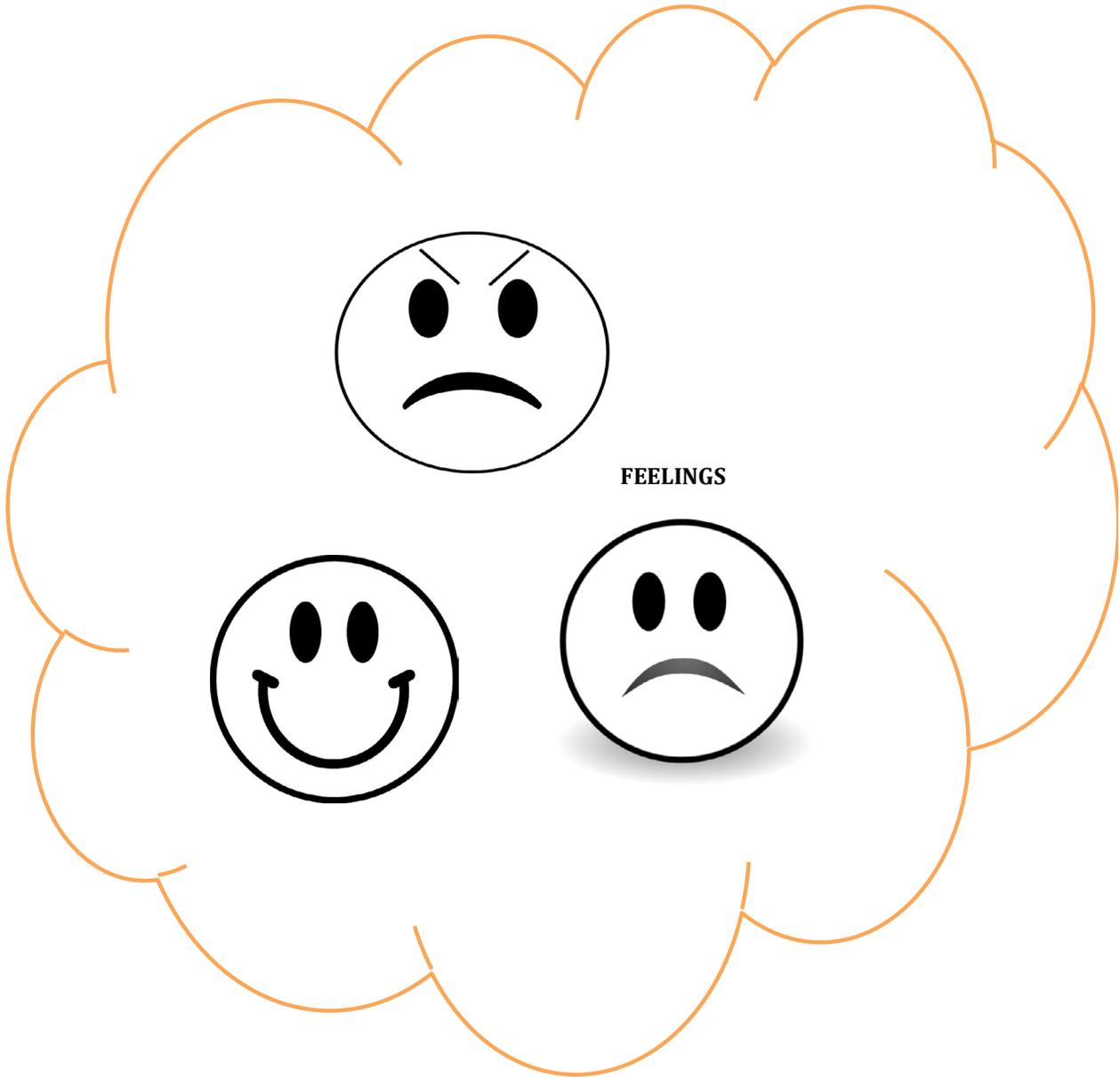
This exercise allows children to explore different feelings they may have. PEACE Program counsellors can start the session by reading different sections, which are illustrated by different feelings. Counsellors can facilitate the discussion by telling children that all emotions are important.

Allow the children to look through their colouring books, and choose how they are feeling today. After the child has coloured in their current feeling, PEACE Program counsellors can explore this more by asking questions like:

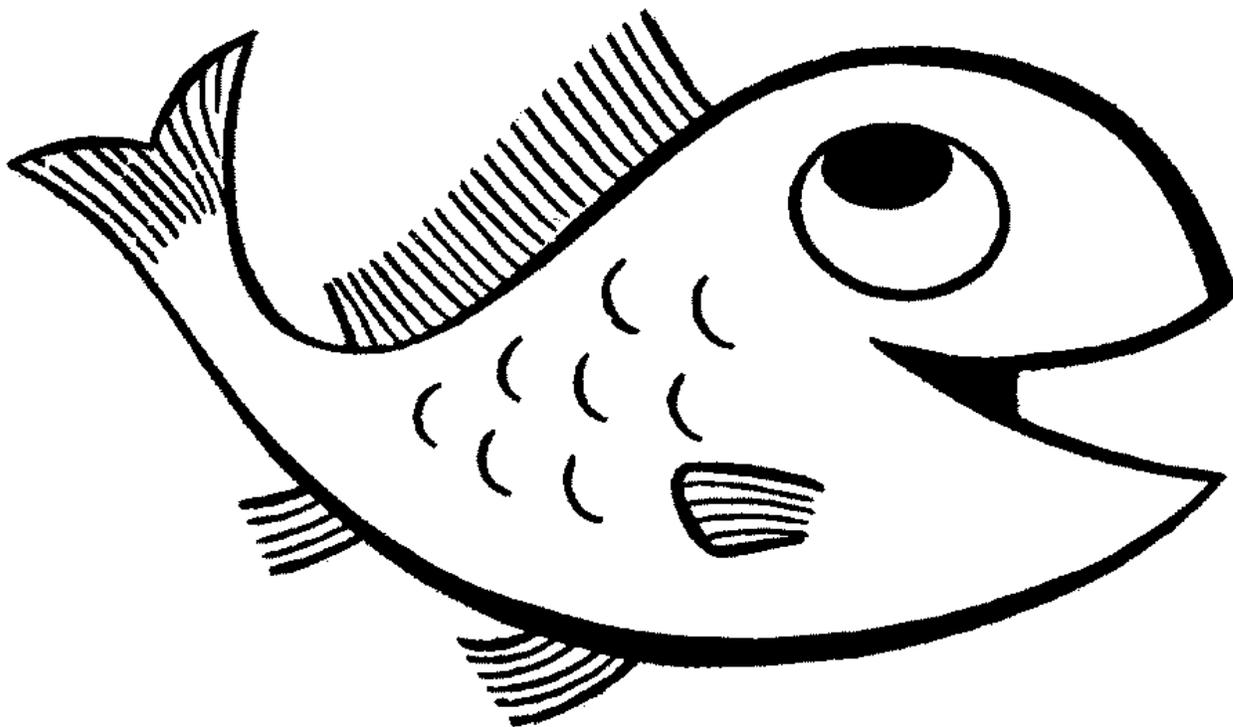
- Is it okay to feel angry? Happy?
- Can we talk about why you may be feeling _____ today?
- Let's think about ways to deal with this feeling.
- All emotions are healthy; it's what we do with our emotions that matters.

Source: Adapted from Wilder Community Assistance Program (1997). Children's Domestic Abuse Program Group manual.

FEELINGS COLOURING BOOK



SOMETIMES I FEEL HAPPY!!!!!!



Do you ever feel happy?

Can you share a time when you felt happy?

Let's talk about things that make you feel happy.

SOMETIMES I FEEL SAD!!!



Do you ever feel sad?

Can you share a time when you felt sad?

Let's think about some things you can do when you feel sad, to make you feel better.

SOMETIMES I FEEL ANGRY!!!



Do you ever feel angry?

Can you share a time when you felt angry?

Let's think about what you can do when you feel angry.

SOMETIMES I FEEL RELAXED!!!

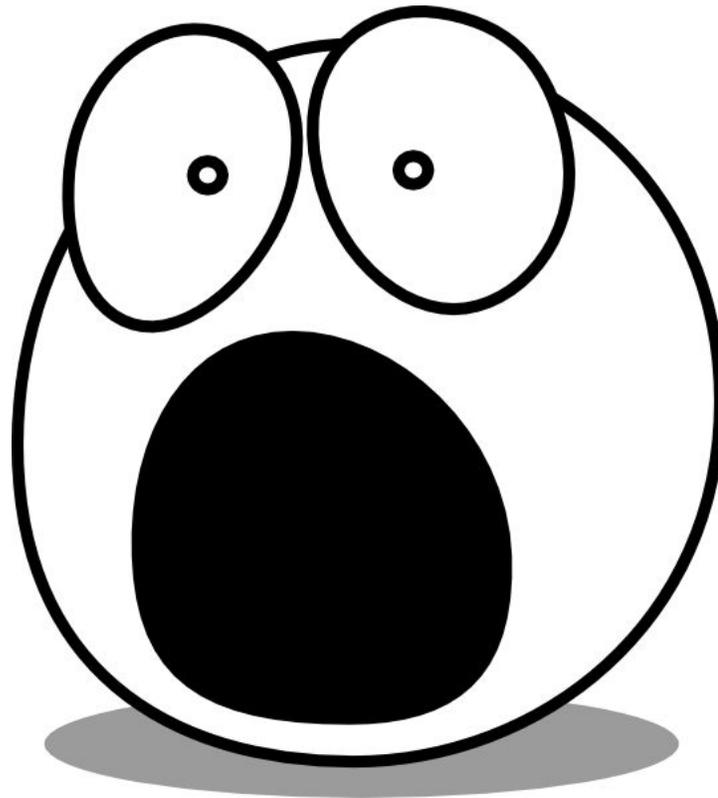


Do you ever feel relaxed?

Can you share a time when you felt relaxed?

Let's think of activities that can help you relax....

SOMETIMES I FEEL SCARED!!!

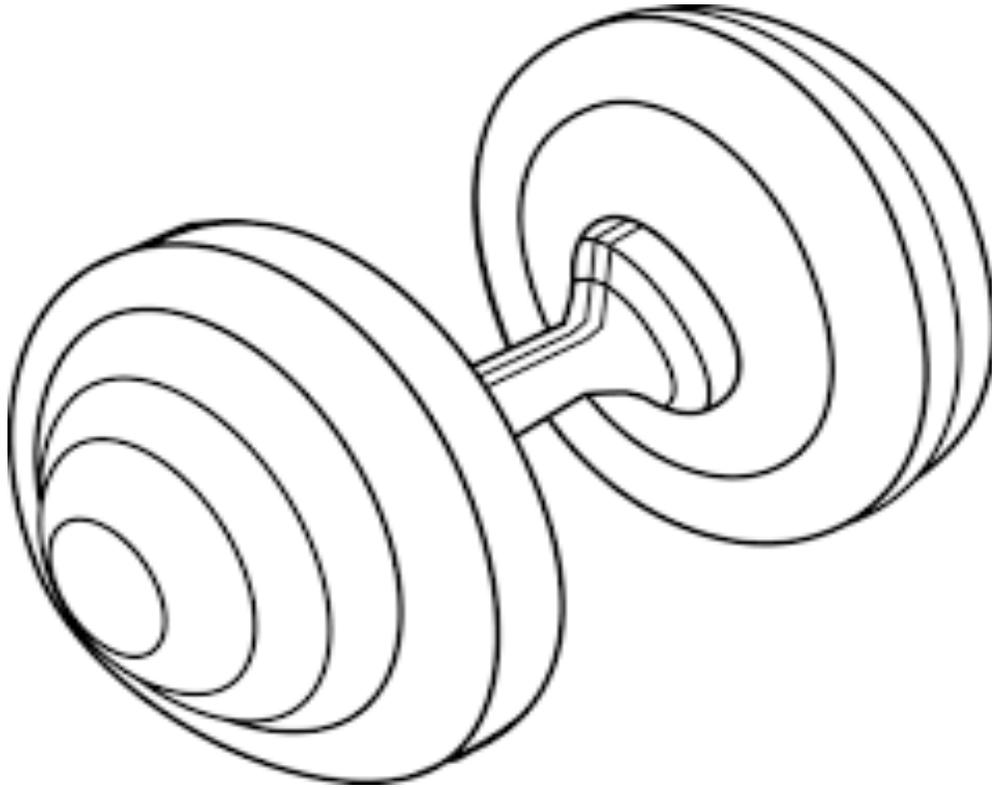


Do you ever feel scared?

Can you share a time when you felt scared?

Let's think about things you can do to help when you are feeling scared.

SOMETIMES I FEEL STRONG!!!



Do you ever feel strong?

Can you share a time when you felt strong?

Let's talk about things that make you feel strong.

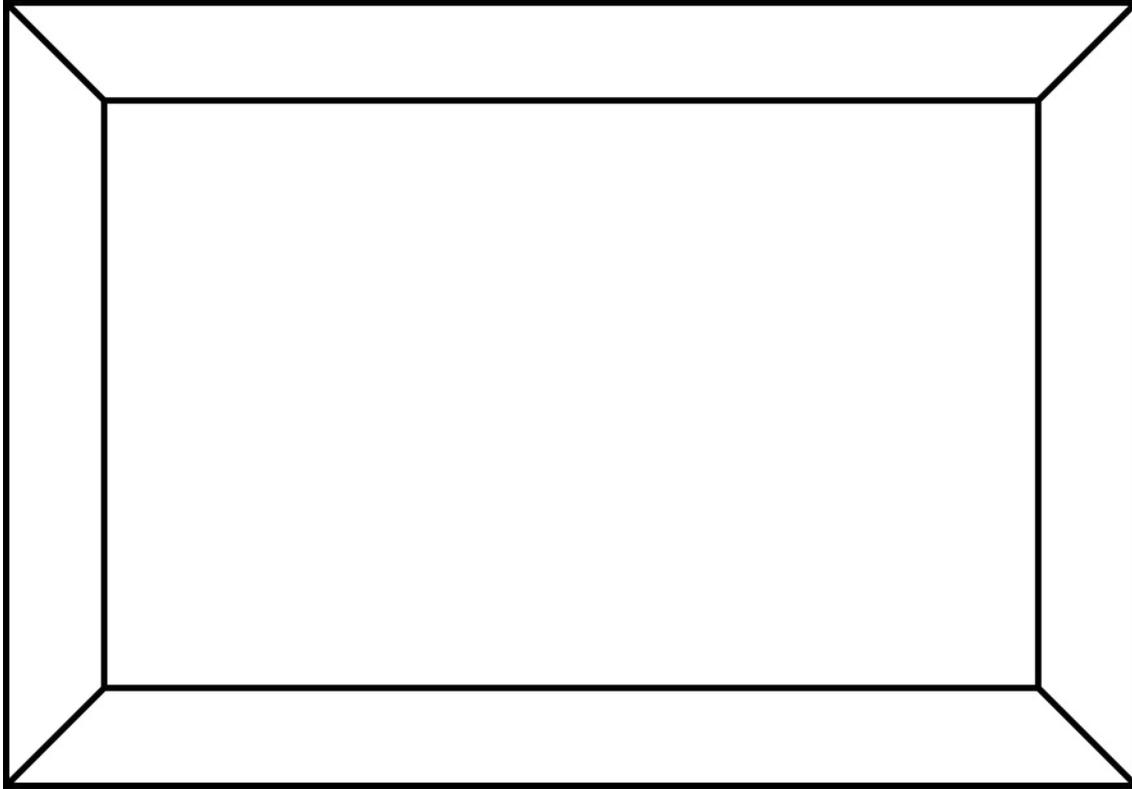


AGES 3–5; 6–8

FEELINGS EXERCISE

This exercise is designed for PEACE Program counsellors to explore feelings with children.

MY FAVORITE FEELING



My favorite feeling is: _____

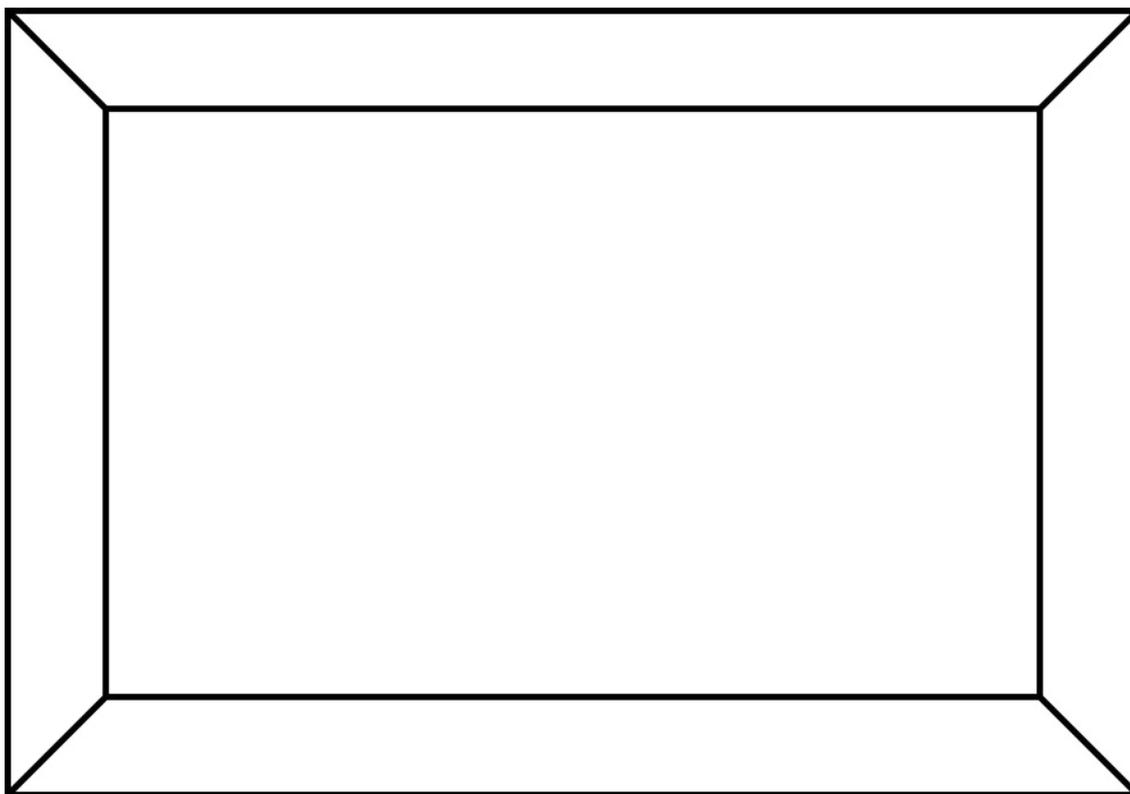
I feel this way when: _____

I can feel it in my: _____

Others can tell I feel this way because:



MY LEAST FAVORITE FEELING



My least favorite feeling is: _____

I feel this way when: _____

I can feel it in my: _____

Others can tell I feel this way because:

AGES 6–8; 9–12

INTERVIEWING YOUR “WORRY MONSTER”!

This activity helps program participants externalize a problem. The PEACE Program counsellor begins by explaining the child will be making and interviewing a “worry monster.” Create a monster from clay/Plasticine. Use different colours; get creative. Both counsellor and child can create “worry monsters,” then proceed to interview each other’s creations.

- What is your Worry Monster’s NAME?
- How OLD is your Worry Monster?
- How long has it been causing TROUBLE?
- **CIRCLE** the things it likes to cause trouble about:

making friends | having sleepovers | speaking up in class

playing with friends | trying new things | going outside

anything else? _____
- What does it like to make you THINK and FEEL?
- Does it cause other people to become ANNOYED or ANGRY with you?
- What gives it STRENGTH or makes it grow bigger?
- What kind of TRICKS does it try to play on you?
- What makes it LESS powerful?

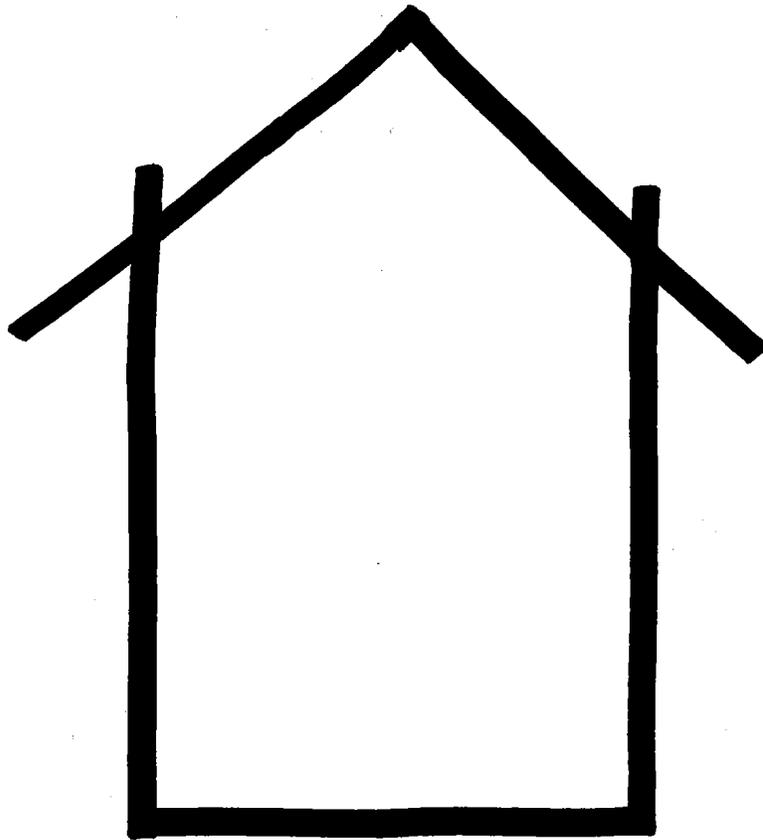


AGES 3–5; 6–8; 9–12

“HOUSE OF...” ACTIVITY

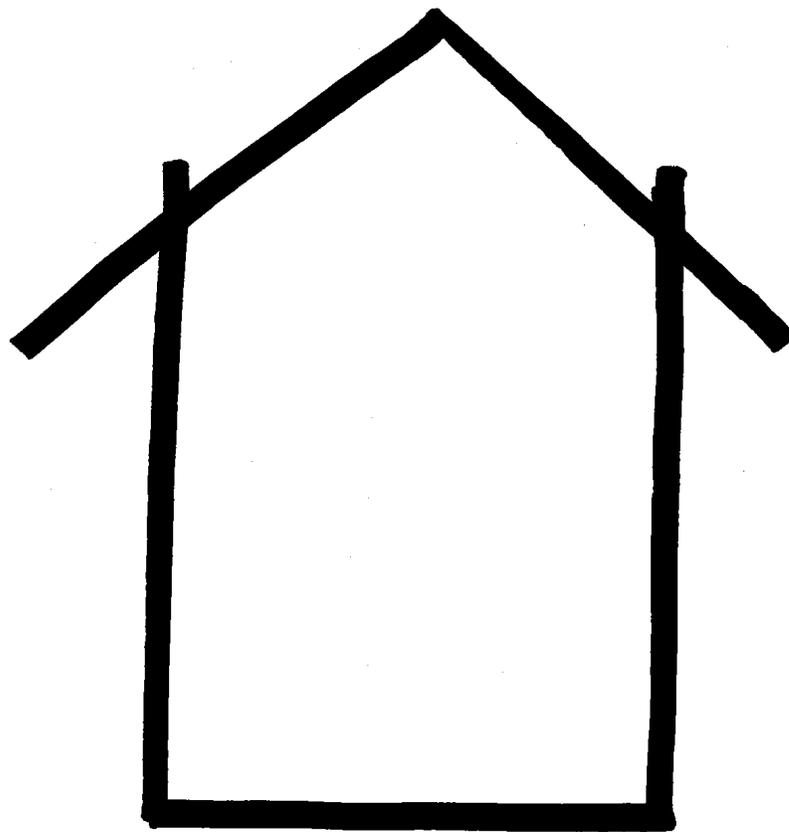
This “House of...” activity allows the PEACE Program counsellor to explore worries, hopes, and dreams with program participants, to gain some insight into both the current challenges and positive aspects in their life. Invite program participants to identify some of the good things in their life, their worries, and their hopes and dreams, and list them or draw them in the appropriate house.

House of Good Things...

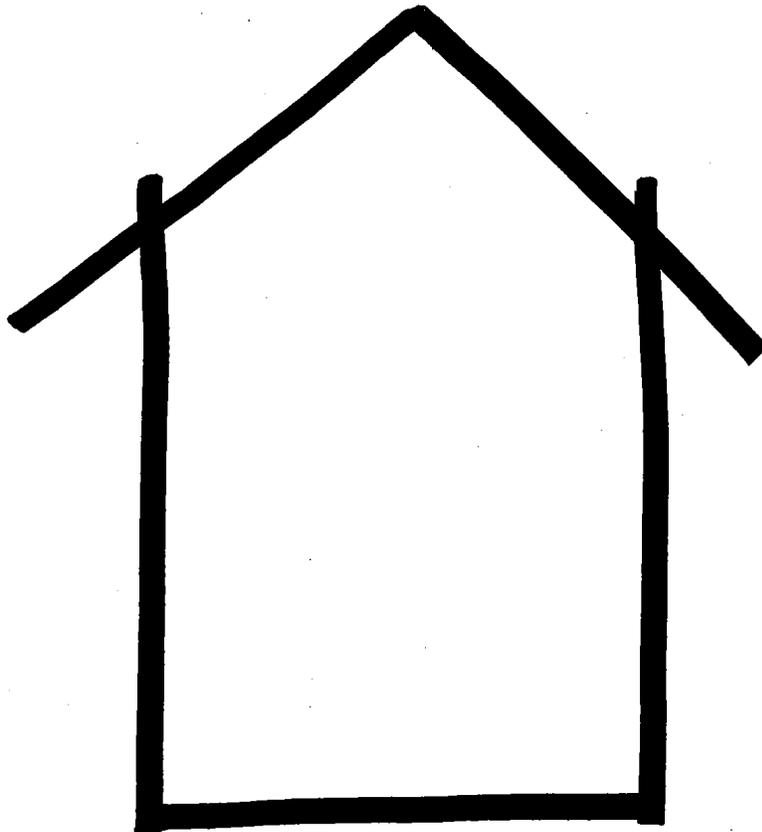




House of Worries...



House of Hopes and Dreams...





AGES 6–8; 9–12; 13–18

HOW AM I FEELING TODAY?

This exercise allows PEACE Program counsellors to explore emotions with children. This is a great exercise for counsellors to “check-in” with program participants about how they are feeling, explore their current response to emotions, and brainstorm some other healthy ways to express emotions.

Today I feel: _____

I feel this way because:

This is what I did about it:

What else I could have done:

Suggested healthy responses/expressions to emotions:

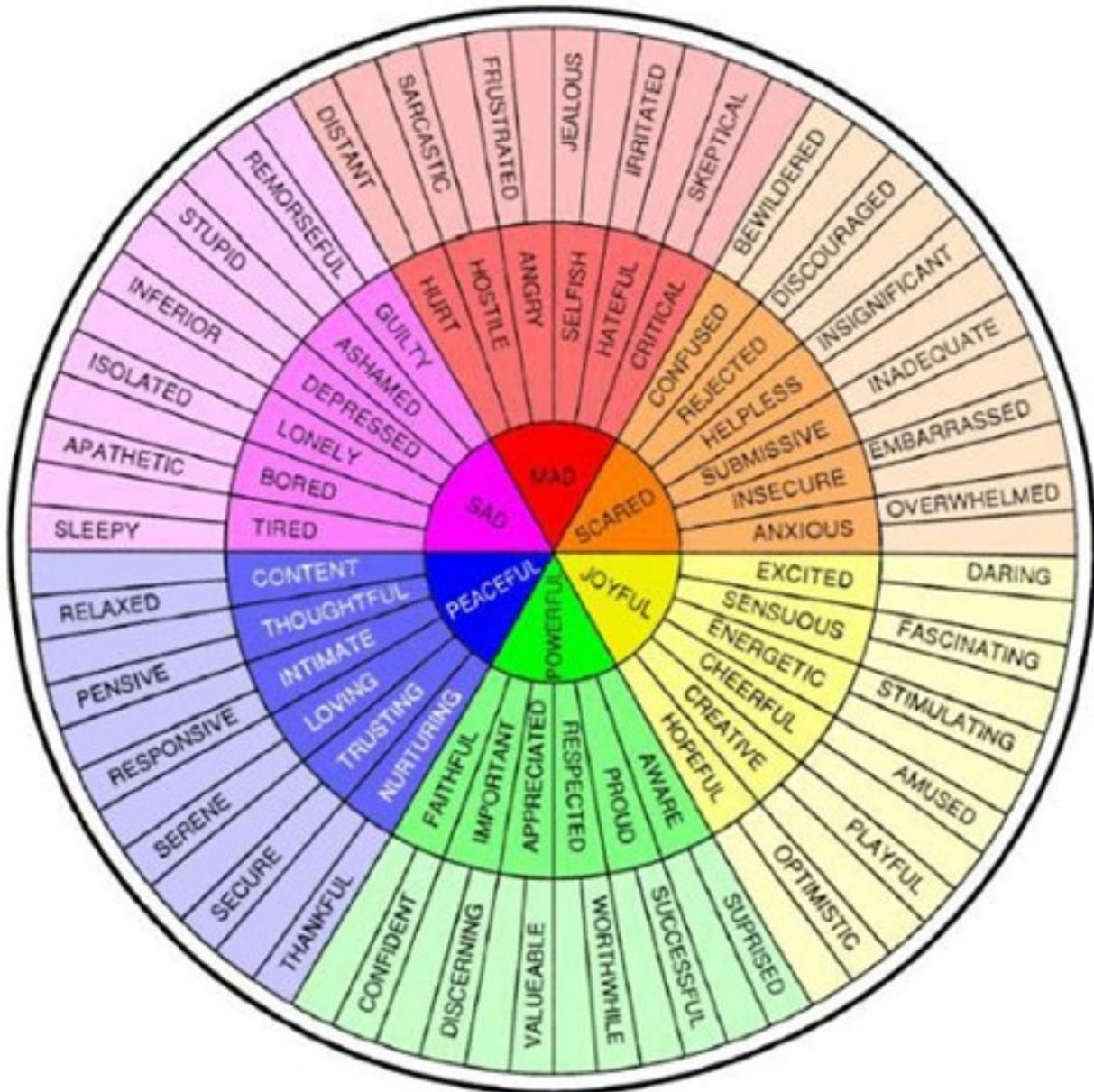
- Talk to an adult
- Ask someone for help
- Walk away
- Talk to a friend
- Journal
- Take deep breaths

AGES 9–12; 13–18

FEELINGS WHEEL

PEACE Program counsellors can use this to discuss different feelings with children and youth. The Feelings Wheel may also be used as an opportunity for program participants to identify how they are feeling, and to discuss it with their counsellor. The counsellor may then use the wheel to educate program participants about different feelings, and to work on healthy expression of these feelings.

FEELINGS WHEEL



Source: Wilcox, G. (1982). The Feeling Wheel: A tool for expanding awareness of emotions and spontaneity and intimacy. *Transactional Analysis Journal*, 12 (4).

AGES 6–8; 9–12; 13–18

“I” STATEMENT EXERCISE

This exercise allows PEACE Program counsellors to work on communication and emotional expression with children. Using “I” statements teaches children how to communicate and express what is upsetting them, without blaming another person. This is a useful technique and a good life skill. It allows them to express their emotions without blaming another person, so it prevents the other person involved from becoming defensive. This activity also teaches children how to take responsibility for their feelings.

EXAMPLE OF AN “I” STATEMENT

“I feel _____ when you _____ because _____
_____.”

EXAMPLES OF HOW TO FRAME “I” STATEMENTS

Regular: “You are so mean.”

“I” Statement: *“I feel frustrated when you take my toys without asking.”*

Regular: “You never listen to me.”

“I” Statement: *“I feel hurt when I feel like you don’t hear what I’m saying.”*

Regular: “You make me angry because you are never on time.”

“I” Statement: *“I feel frustrated when you arrive late to meet me because I worry about why you are late.”*



AGES 6–8; 9–12; 13–18

FEELINGS ACTIVITY: SEPARATION AND DIVORCE

This worksheet allows PEACE Program counsellors to explore children’s feelings around separation and divorce, and the new changes that may be happening in their lives.

FEELINGS ACTIVITY: SEPARATION AND DIVORCE

1. How do you feel about your parents living apart?

2. How do you feel about where you are living now?

3. How are you feeling about your current school?

4. How do you think that the separation/divorce will change things for you?

5. How do you think your parents will get along six months from now?

6. How do all these changes make you feel?

7. Let's think about what you can do when you are feeling _____, when thinking about divorce and all the changes to your life.



AGES 9–12; 13–18

FEELINGS ACTIVITY: GRIEF AND LOSS SENTENCE COMPLETION EXERCISE

PEACE Program counsellors can use this as a handout to discuss feelings around grief and loss with program participants. The loss can be associated with family, friends, pets, old home, old school, and more.

FEELINGS ACTIVITY: GRIEF AND LOSS SENTENCE COMPLETION EXERCISE

1. Today I feel

2. I feel the saddest when

3. The thing I miss the most about who or what I lost is

4. Since the loss, things have been different because

5. My worst memory is

6. One thing I learned from the what I lost is

7. My best memory is



AGES 9–12; 13–18

FEELINGS ACTIVITY: EXPLORING GRIEF AND LOSS

Often, we experience grief in stages. It may differ for each person. PEACE Program counsellors can use this worksheet to explore the stages of grief with program participants. This worksheet may help participants examine each stage and process their feelings regarding the grief and loss of family, pets, home, school, friends, and more.

FEELINGS ACTIVITY: EXPLORING GRIEF AND LOSS

Describe how each of these stages of grief has impacted you.

1. Denial: "This can't be happening to me."

2. Anger: "Why did this happen to me?"

3. Negotiating: "What can I do to change this?"

4. Depression: "I can't go on after this loss!"

5. Acceptance: "It's going to be okay."



TOPIC 5. ANGER: SAMPLE ACTIVITIES

All emotions are healthy and can be discussed in the PEACE Program. The practice pages here focus on anger, as this is a common emotion expressed by children and youth who have experiences of gender-based violence.

We also encourage PEACE Program counsellors to explore other emotions being experienced and expressed by the child you are working with. (See Topic 4: Feelings and Communication.)

PEACE Program counsellors may wish to start this section with an introduction to anger:

- Anger is a healthy emotion.
- Anger is NOT bad.
- We should be aware of what we do with our anger and find safe ways to express it.

AGES 3–5; 6–8; 9–12; 13–18

HEALTHY RESPONSES TO ANGER

PEACE Program counsellors can use this as a handout for healthy ways to manage anger.

HEALTHY RESPONSES TO ANGER

TAKE 25 DEEP BREATHS



USE ART TO EXPRESS YOUR ANGER



EXERCISE



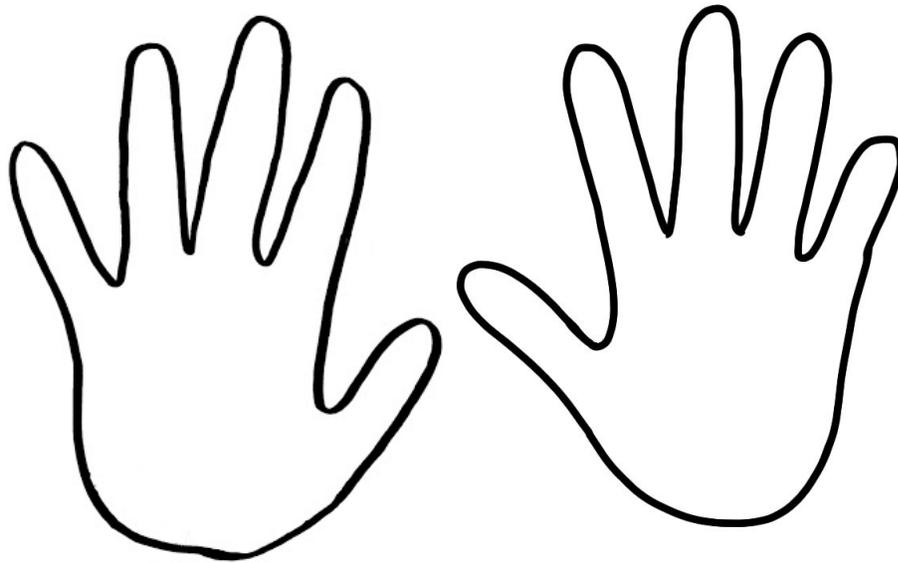
WRITE ABOUT YOUR ANGER



AGES 3–5

HELPING HANDS EXERCISE

This activity allows children to explore five ways they can use their hands to be helpful. The PEACE Program counsellor can ask the child to trace their hands on a piece of blank paper, and to list five helpful things they can use their hands for. The child can write the five things on their fingers, and the worksheet will have a list which corresponds. This activity pairs well with the children’s book [“Hands are Not for Hitting.”](#) by Martine Agassi.



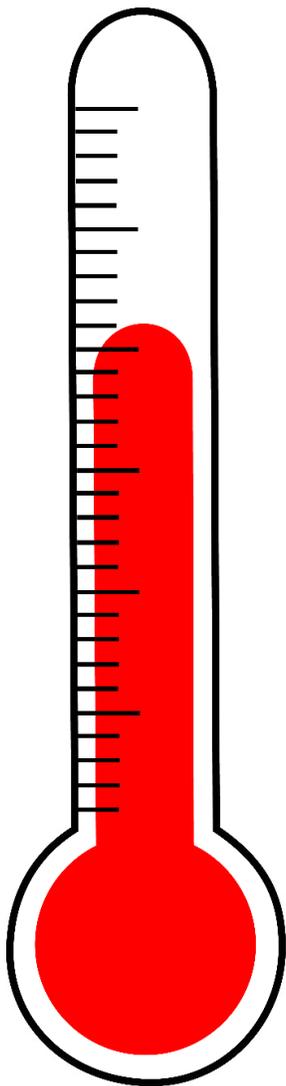
HANDS ARE FOR:

1. Waving
2. Washing
3. Clapping
4. Holding
5. Drawing

HANDS ARE NOT FOR HITTING

ANGER THERMOMETER

Children can use this thermometer to share experiences they have had with anger on a scale of 1–10. This exercise should include a short description of the angry experience, the reaction, and what the consequences were.



10 _____

9 _____

8 _____

7 _____

6 _____

5 _____

4 _____

3 _____

2 _____

1 _____



AGES 3-5; 6-8

WHAT IS ANGER?

Provide the program participant with a blank piece of paper and some art supplies. Ask them to draw a picture of what they look like when they are angry, and to write down something they say when they are angry.

After the child is done, have a discussion around what the child shared in this activity.

PEACE Program counsellors can use this opportunity to discuss ideas about what the child could do when she is angry. Make a list of things that the child can take home with them, and use the next time they feel angry.

Anger can be a confusing and difficult feeling. It's okay for us to be angry and it is in fact healthy. It is important for us to know what to do when we are angry.

AGES 6–8

MY ANGER PLAN

PEACE Program counsellors can use this worksheet to help children plan for what they will do when they feel angry. Have children review the list, and write or draw a picture of their plan on a piece of paper.



MY ANGER PLAN

What to do with my ANGER?

Choose ideas from the list and write or draw them onto a blank sheet of paper, labelled "MY PLAN."

Ways to let out my anger "OUTSIDE":

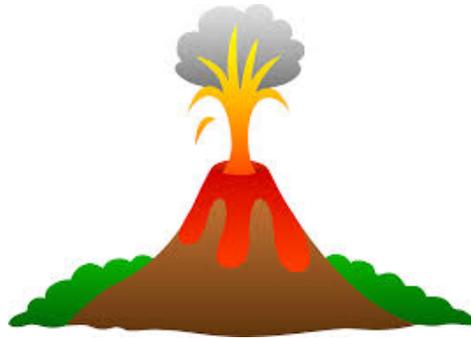
- Bounce or kick a ball
- Run or Jump
- Do an angry dance
- Breathe deeply
- Jump on a trampoline
- Jump on egg cartons
- Stomp your feet
- Dig in the dirt or sand
- Yell "I am so angry"

Ways to let out my anger in "MY ROOM":

- Draw an angry picture
- Write down how I feel
- Cry
- Hit a pillow
- Tear and crumple up old newspapers and magazines
- Knead and squeeze Playdoh or clay
- Give myself a hug
- Beat a drum
- Lie in my bed and kick my feet up in the air
- Do jumping jacks

AGES 6–8; 9–12

ANGER MOUNTAIN EXERCISE



This is a great exercise for children to physically compare the Anger Mountain, or volcano, to how anger may feel inside them: Explosive! The Anger Mountain can be made with very simple ingredients, and can be built by the PEACE Program counsellor together with the child.

This exercise can also be healthy way for a child to release or let go of feelings they may be holding onto. The PEACE Program counsellor can ask the child to write down what they would like to let go of, and it can be tossed into the “fire.” This activity shows children how anger, if not dealt with in a healthy way, can build up inside them like a volcano and erupt. PEACE Program counsellors can help children brainstorm ideas to avoid the metaphorical eruption, or negative reaction to anger.

For some children, anger may be a slow burning or a melting emotion (like a melting iceberg or ice cube), instead of a hot or angry emotion. Counsellors can explore other ways to present this exercise, depending on the children and youth they are working with. This is simply one example of a possible exercise.

Anger Mountain ingredients:

- Baking soda (not baking powder)
- Vinegar
- A container to hold everything (e.g. plastic cup, water bottle)
- Paper towels for clean up

Instructions:

1. Place some baking soda into your container.
2. Pour in some of the vinegar.
3. Watch as the reaction takes place.



AGES 9–12; 13–18

MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT ANGER

PEACE Program counsellors can use this worksheet to challenge the child’s or youth’s knowledge of anger. Invite program participants to answer the questions with either “True” or “False.” Discuss how the program participants answered, compared to the correct answers.

MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT ANGER

	True	False
1. Anger happens instantly.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Thoughts are the cause of anger.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Anger can be productive.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Inappropriately expressed anger can cause hypertension, addiction, and weight gain.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. We should always express anger immediately.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Depression can sometimes be anger that we direct against ourselves.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Hurt and fear are the basic feelings underlying anger.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Each person is responsible for their own anger.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Throwing things and yelling are appropriate ways to express anger without hurting others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Answer Key

1. **False:** Anger does not happen instantly. There are triggers, cues, and clues. This gives us an opportunity to take responsibility for our behaviour.
2. **True:** Situations don't cause feelings, as some would assume; thoughts cause feelings. To control our angry feelings, we need to change angry thinking and substitute more moderate thoughts, to use our anger productively.
3. **True:** Anger can be productive. Anger is a neutral emotion. Young children and babies express anger when they are tired, cold, hungry, or frustrated. Dogs will get angry to protect their turf or food. We get angry when someone abuses our rights, treats us disrespectfully, or takes something from us.
4. **True:** Inappropriately expressed anger can cause physiological changes to the body such as ulcers, migraines, headaches, weight gain, or loss. It can also cause family feuds, loss of friendship or jobs, or relationship problems. It can cause anxiety attacks, depression, suicide, guilt, and sleep problems. All are good reasons to become more aware of anger and abuse.
5. **False:** At one time, it was considered best to release anger at any cost because to hold back anger would cause health problems and emotional problems. Now advocates for anger programs suggest we should direct our anger in a controlled fashion, problem-solve regarding the cause of the angry feeling, relax and reduce the tension, get along with others, and involve them in the problem-solving process.
6. **True:** Depression is sometimes anger turned inward. When we set high expectations for ourselves and are hard on ourselves not giving ourselves room for mistakes and learning, we get depressed. However, depression can arise for other reasons as well.
7. **True:** Anger is a secondary emotion; fear or hurt feelings usually cause anger. So next time you are angry, ask yourself what other feelings are underneath your anger and why you are feeling this way. You can then problem solve the "why."
8. **True:** We are always responsible for how we deal with our own anger.
9. **False:** Throwing objects around the room and yelling are both forms of intimidation and are described as forms of physical abuse.

AGES 9–12; 13–18

ANGER WARNING SIGNS

Anger can influence how we act, and the decisions we make, without us recognizing it or being aware of it. PEACE Program counsellors can help program participants recognize the personal warning signs they may feel when they are starting to get angry. This is a useful way for children and youth to be aware that they are becoming angry, and for them to stay in control of their behaviour. This may be beneficial in preventing program participants from taking an angry action, thus avoiding any negative consequences the angry action may have.

Ask program participants to review the list, and check off the warning signs they may experience when getting angry. They can also add to this list.

Tell me what happens to you when you become angry.

ANGER WARNING SIGNS

- FACE TURNS RED
- BODY OR HANDS SHAKE
- START SWEATING
- FEEL HOT
- CRYING
- FOCUS ON PROBLEM CONTINUOUSLY
- PACE
- PUNCH WALLS
- HEAVY BREATHING
- THROW THINGS
- RAISE VOICE
- STOMACH HURTS
- CLENCH FISTS OR TEETH
- BECOME ARGUMENTATIVE
- SCREAM
- SCOWL
- OTHER?



TOPIC 6. BOUNDARIES AND SELF-CARE: SAMPLE ACTIVITIES

AGES 3–5; 6–8

SPACE SPIN: THE CASE FOR PERSONAL SPACE

Some children have difficulty with the concept of “personal space.” The Space Spin is an activity PEACE Program counsellors can do with program participants to help teach the concept.

The basic concept of personal space is an important social rule and a simple idea: Each of us has an “invisible bubble” around us where we feel safe, and if someone crosses into it we become uncomfortable. Most children instinctively sense when they enter someone else’s personal space and when theirs is crossed, but some children may need help learning these boundaries. They might forcefully invade their peer’s space, oblivious to how their action makes others feel; this could cause them to be rejected by their peers, and to have difficulty making friends. A child’s inability to recognize when her own personal space has been invaded, could also potentially make her vulnerable to inappropriate conduct.

Space Spin:

- Have the child stretch out her arms out straight on both sides, and turn her slowly in place, in a complete circle. Explain that this area is his “personal space.”
- The counsellor should do the same, and demonstrate “your” space. This helps the child to visualize what your personal space “looks” like.
- Put your arms down at your sides and have the child slowly walk toward you. Tell her to stop just before she thinks she has reached the edge of your personal space.
- When she has made her guess and stops, raise your arms out straight and slowly turn in place. If you bump her with your arm, she must try again: “Nope, you’ve invaded my personal space and you’re cast out of the galaxy!”

The “arms outstretched circle” created in this example may create a bigger bubble than what true personal space encompasses for some people, but it doesn’t hurt to exaggerate when first teaching the concept. The counsellor can explain that the bubble changes in size, depending on our relationship to others and how safe we feel.

Adapted from Crow, K. (2017). Activities that Teach—# 7 The Case for Personal Space. Retrieved from <https://www.families.com/blog/activities-that-teach-7-the-case-for-personal-space>

AGES 3–5; 6–8

HELPING YOUR CHILD GROUND, SETTLE, AND BE PRESENT WITH YOU

This form outlines some exercises and activities for PEACE Program counsellors to use when a program participant needs support to be grounded, settled, and present during a session. These exercises may also be good tips to suggest to the mother, to support her child.

- Milkshake straw breath—inhale like you were sucking a milkshake through a small straw!
- Run cool, or warm water over hands
- Balloon belly breath—exhale like you were blowing up a balloon
- Breathing ball (Hoberman Sphere)
- Rubbing hands together
- Rubbing feet
- Listening for nature sounds outside
- Visualize a peaceful place
- Sand play in a tray
- Fanning face
- Humming a song
- Drumming
- Buddha Board
- Naming as many of a specific thing as you can (e.g. fruit)
- Stroking a pet
- Cuddling a stuffy
- Hugging a hot water bottle

AGES 3-5; 6-8

COOL-IT KIT

Creating a Cool-It Kit can help teach children ways they can help themselves “cool down” when their emotions are high. This can be a great activity for the PEACE Program counsellor to do together with the child, so that you can share ideas on what helps you to cool-down.

Begin by finding a box, basket, or bag to put items in. This will be a work in progress, as you may need time to pull some of these tools together. Next, brainstorm things that help the child cool-down (some ideas are listed here). Finally, have the child put their kit in a special spot that is accessible to them.

Ideas for cooling down:

- **Create a set of flash cards with techniques like:**
 - Count to 10 (or 5 depending on age)
 - Take a deep breath then blow out your upset feelings
 - Think of 3 happy thoughts (or have them write down 3 happy thoughts they can read)
 - Ask for a hug
 - Whisper the alphabet
 - Read a book
 - Write down or scribble out your feelings
 - Do a dance
 - Sing a song
 - Pray
 - Wrap yourself in a blanket
 - Do some jumping jacks (or other exercise)
- **Items you may want to include:**
 - A CD with calming music (e.g. waves, drums)
 - A fuzzy blanket
 - Stress balls (or squishy balls)
 - Bubbles
 - A picture album with pictures they like
 - A stuffed animal
 - Smooth worry rock
 - A massage tool (rolling balls they could run along their arms or back)
 - A small windmill (they could blow on and make spin)



AGES 3-5; 6-8

THE MAGIC SHELL MEDITATION

This script is for younger children and can help when worry and anxiety are a concern.

Place yourself in a comfy, cozy position. Close your eyes and take a long slow deep breath. As you breathe out relax your body.

Imagine that you are standing on a beach. See the beach in your mind. Think about a beach that you may have visited, or you could use an imaginary beach if you like. You can feel the sand beneath your toes and the sun is warm on your face. Look around you. In front of you is a huge ocean. It looks a silvery-blue colour and the sunlight sparkles like tiny stars dancing on the surface.

You look at the ground and in front of you in the sand is the most glorious shell you have ever seen. You pick it up. It feels warm. Notice how smooth the shell is. Feel it with your fingers. This is your magic shell. You can tell it your secrets and it will keep them. You can also tell your shell any worries that you may have. Tell it about any problems that may be troubling you at the moment. No matter how big or how small they are. The shell wants to hear them.

Whenever you have worried feelings you can tell your shell about them and it will magically take those horrid feelings and turn them into good ones.

Now see yourself holding the shell close to your mouth. In your mind silently tell it whatever you wish. No one else will know what you say. Only you and your shell! As you say your words they go right into the middle of the shell so that it can take them away for you. Tell your shell your worries right now....

Now you do not have to feel yucky feelings anymore. The shell has made them disappear. Just like magic!

They are gone!

As you hold your shell close all you feel is calm and happiness. You feel peaceful all the way from the tips of your toes, to the tip of your nose. Feel it right now. Notice how it feels.

It is important for you to know that you can imagine your shell whenever you wish to make yucky thoughts and feelings disappear, whenever you wish to feel calm. Your shell will always be there waiting in your imagination.

Of course, if you visit the seaside you can always look for your own real magic shell. How will you know it is magic? Just choose the shell that feels right for you, this will be the magic one. You can also use a magic stone if you like.

Find one of these in your garden, or in the street.

Here is an idea! Keep your magic shell or stone under your pillow to take away bad dreams and always bring you a peaceful sleep.

Perfect!

Reproduced with permission from Wildi, D. (2010). Meditations for Mini's. North Carolina: Lulu Press.



AGES 3-5; 6-8; 9-12; 13-18

WHAT IS A BOUNDARY?

A Boundary is:
A “force field” or invisible fence that surrounds us and has an alarm system to alert us when our emotional or physical space is being invaded.

AGES 3-5; 6-8; 9-12

SCRIBBLE TAG



This game is a fun icebreaker to do at the beginning of a session on boundaries and self-care. Scribble Tag is a variation of the chasing game “tag,” played on paper. With markers, pens, or pencils, the PEACE Program counsellor and the child will both block off a certain area of the sheet of paper they are playing on, to be their “home base” or “safe zone.” This safe zone is considered out-of-bounds for the other player. Both players can retreat to their safe zone when they choose. Both players will chase each other on the paper using crayons, coloured pencils, or markers. Each player should use a different color.

Scribble Tag allows the PEACE Program counsellor to gain insight to the child’s concept of safety and boundaries, by looking at how large or small the child’s safe zone is, and the amount of time they spend in and out of their safe zone.

AGES 3-5; 6-8; 9-12

HOW IS YOUR BUCKET?

Everyone has an imaginary bucket they carry around with them. Our job is to try and keep our buckets as full as we can. There are people, places and things that help to keep our buckets full. Someone that makes you feel good about yourself helps to fill your bucket up, or doing an activity that you're good at, or being somewhere you feel safe. These are things that help keep our buckets full or help us to re-fill them if they are low.

There are also people, places, and things that can take from our buckets such as when someone says or does something mean to us, or when we can't seem to get the hang of something we are trying hard to do.

Our bodies have ways to tell us when are buckets are full or getting low. When our buckets are full we usually feel pretty good about ourselves and the way things are going. When our buckets are low you might feel sad or down, or maybe you get a bit grumpy or mad. Sometimes if our buckets are really low then we might get tummy aches, headaches, or act out at home or school by saying or doing things that are hurtful to ourselves or others - which makes our buckets go even lower.

This is when we have a job to do! We need to fill up our buckets! Let's think of some ways that we can fill up our buckets when they are low - Here are some examples to get you started but remember this is your bucket and only you know what helps to make you feel better, so be creative!!



Ways to fill up your bucket:

- Talk to someone that makes you feel good
- Write in a journal
- Take a really deep breath
- Have a bubble bath
- Play or cuddle with your pet
- Blow some bubbles
- Have a rest
- Think of a time you felt proud of yourself
- Think of 3 things you like about yourself

AGES 13-18

BOUNDARIES

We all need boundaries. They keep us safe emotionally, physically, spiritually and sexually. Boundaries help us maintain a sense of self and promotes integrity. Healthy boundaries can be difficult to establish if they were violated as a child. We may need to re-evaluate how we want to exercise our boundaries so that we are comfortable in dealing with others, and that we are respectful of others' boundaries as well.

Take some time to consider the following and whether you would like to re-think your personal boundaries. Remember that they may be different for different people, depending on the relationship.

- It is important to assert your needs, wants and limits without guilt.
- Learn to trust others as they earn your trust.
- Listen to your inner voice. Pay attention to your gut instinct.
- You have the right to say NO.
- Focus on your own problems, rather than everyone else's. Focus on the solutions, not the causes.
- Get out of the blame game. Take responsibility for your own actions and feelings.
- Do not take on other's responsibilities or emotions.
- Healthy relationships support separateness. It does not indicate abandonment or betrayal.
- Learn to negotiate. Agree to disagree. Sometimes things are not black and white, they are grey.
- Be who you want to be, not who others want you to be.
- Take relationships one-step at a time. Allow them time to develop naturally. Do not force them into being something they are not.
- Recognize and respect others' boundaries.
- Know that you can experience intimacy without losing control of yourself.
- Learn to take care of yourself first without expecting others to take care of you.
- Trust your feelings, instincts and experience – especially in conflict.
- Protect yourself in situations that you find overwhelming. Give yourself some space to breath.
- Allow yourself to make mistakes and give yourself permission not to be perfect.
- Mistakes create opportunity to grow.
- Allow others the opportunity to work out their own problems. Resist the urge to "fix."



- Change is always an option for the future, but not one for the past.
- Do not let others define you or your reality.
- Your feelings are not right or wrong – they just are.
- If something or someone makes you feel uncomfortable or unsafe emotionally, spiritually, physically or sexually, you have the right to remove yourself from that situation or person.
- Identify what you like as well as what you do not like; what you believe and what you do not.
- Be honest and accept only honesty.
- Be active, not reactive.

AGES 13-18

Coping Skills

Coping skills help us get through difficult times - they can give us an important break from mental and emotional distress, and sometimes they are literally life-saving.

Keep this list of coping skills handy for when you need it... folded up in your wallet or bag or post it up on the wall somewhere handy at home.



Make this list work for you
Use a highlighter pen to mark the skills that work best for you & add your own ideas over the page.

<p>Distraction</p> <p>Absorb your mind in something else</p>	<p>Conversation, listen to talk radio, read, do puzzles, TV, computer games, jigsaws, solve a problem, make a list, learn something new, cleaning & tidying, gardening, arts & crafts.</p>	<p>Pros</p> <p>Gives your heart & mind a break. Great for short term relief. Great to get through a crisis.</p>	<p>Cons</p> <p>Can't do it for too long. Doesn't resolve any underlying issues. Meds can make it hard to concentrate.</p>
<p>Grounding</p> <p>Get out of your head & into your body & the world</p>	<p>Use body & senses: smell fragrances, slowly taste food, notice the colours around you. Walk on the grass barefoot, squeeze clay or mud, do yoga, meditate, exercise.</p>	<p>Pros</p> <p>Helps slow or stop 'dissociation' (feeling numb, floaty or disconnected). Reduces physicality of anxiety.</p>	<p>Cons</p> <p>Sometimes it's better to stay a bit dissociated (that's how your mind protects you).</p>
<p>Emotional Release</p> <p>Let it out!</p>	<p>Yell, scream, run! Try a cold shower. Let yourself cry... and sob. Put on a funny DVD and let yourself laugh! Try boxing, popping balloons, or crank up some music & dance crazy!</p>	<p>Pros</p> <p>Great for anger and fear. Releases the pressure of overwhelming emotion.</p>	<p>Cons</p> <p>Hard to do in every situation. Feels odd. Some people might think you're acting 'crazier' (be selective with how & where you do this)</p>
<p>Self Love</p>	<p>Massage hands with nice cream, manicure your nails, cook a special meal, clean your house (or just make your bed), bubble bath or long shower, brush hair, buy a small treat.</p>	<p>Pros</p> <p>Become your own best friend, your own support worker. Great for guilt or shame. You deserve it!</p>	<p>Cons</p> <p>Sometimes can feel really hard to do, or feel superficial (but it's not).</p>
<p>Thought challenge</p>	<p>Write down negative thoughts then list all the reasons they may not be true. Imagine someone you love had these thoughts - what advice would you give them?</p>	<p>Pros</p> <p>Can help to shift long-term, negative thinking habits. Trying to be more logical can help reduce extreme emotion.</p>	<p>Cons</p> <p>The more emotional you feel, the harder this is to do. In particular, feelings of shame can make this very hard.</p>
<p>Access your higher self</p>	<p>Help someone else, smile at strangers (see how many smiles you get back), pray, volunteer, do randomly kind things for others, pat dogs at the local park, join a cause</p>	<p>Pros</p> <p>Reminds us that everyone has value and that purpose can be found in small as well as large things.</p>	<p>Cons</p> <p>Don't get stuck trying to save everyone else and forget about you!</p>

Find out more online at www.indigodaya.com



Your Personal Coping Skills List



Use this page to write your own list of coping skills. You might take some from my list, some that you already know, and others may still be out there for you to discover...

Distraction Absorb your mind in something else	
Grounding Get out of your head & into your body	
Emotional Release Let it out!	
Self Love	
Thought challenge	
Access your higher self	

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SAMPLE ACTIVITIES: GROUP SUPPORT

The following activities are examples of activities to be used specifically with groups. There are not group activities for each age group for each topic, however, as stated in the previous individual support section, many of the sample activities included in the individual sessions for children and youth can also be adapted to be used in group.

In a group environment, it is best to invite children and youth to participate in the activities and to share their thoughts and experiences, but not require them to do so. Some program participants might feel shy or nervous speaking in a group; it is important to respect this and not push them to do anything they do not want to do. For the group to feel like a safe space children and youth need to have choice about what and how they participate in the activities and in the group circle. Always have resources and activities available for program participants to do if they decide they feel uncomfortable participating in a certain activity and always provide children and youth with the option of passing if they do not feel comfortable speaking in the group.



TOPIC 1. BUILDING RAPPORT, IDENTITY AND SELF-ESTEEM: SAMPLE GROUP ACTIVITIES

AGES 9-12; 13-18

STEP INSIDE THE CIRCLE/COME ON THE BOAT IF...

The PEACE Program counsellor invites program participants to form a large circle, then invites them to step inside the circle if they have experienced any of the things as they are read out loud.

Step Inside the Circle if:

- I live with my mom
- I live with my mom and dad
- I live with someone other than my mom or dad
- I live with my dad
- I have a sister
- I have more than one brother
- My parents live together
- My parents are separated or divorced
- I have a pet
- I have changed schools before
- I have moved houses before
- I have a step-parent
- My father lives out of town
- My father lives in a different country
- I can speak another language
- My dad has a new girlfriend
- My mom has a new boyfriend
- My mom is afraid of my dad
- My dad has hurt my mom
- My mom has hurt my dad
- I have seen or heard my mom being hurt
- I have seen or heard my dad being hurt
- I sometimes feel sad about the hurt that has happened in my family

Come on the Boat If:

- You have a parent who lives out of town
- You have ever heard your parents yelling at each other
- You ever have nightmares
- You ever heard or saw your dad hit your mom
- You ever hear or saw your mom hit your dad
- The police ever came to your house
- Your mom or dad ever had to go to the hospital because they were hurt
- You have ever been to a shelter
- You have ever had to go to relatives or friends houses to be safe
- You have ever felt like running away from home
- You have ever lived with someone other than your mom or dad
- You have ever been scared when you're your parents were fighting
- You have ever been physically hurt when your parents were fighting
- You have ever tried to tell someone that there was violence in your family
- You have ever had trouble listening because you were worried or scared about your mom or dad
- Your mom or dad has ever been to court
- You have ever been to court
- Someone in your family has ever been to jail
- You have ever had to move because of the violence
- You have ever been confused or worried about where you were going to live
- You have ever had to lie to hide the violence in your family
- You have ever felt confused about whether it was okay to love both your parents
- You have ever felt like you have to take care of or protect your mom or dad
- You have ever felt sad about the violence in your family
- You have ever felt so bad about the violence in your family that you felt like hurting yourself
- You have ever wanted the violence to stop.



AGES 9-12; 13-18

NAMING VIOLENCE IN OUR LIVES

This exercise is designed to help program participants identify, name, and acknowledge the violence that is in their lives. This can be a difficult thing to do; the violence in our culture has many forms, and lives in many places.

Invite the group to name a few places where they encounter violence (e.g. home, school, T.V., movies, music, magazines, newspapers, news, sports fields, community centres, the street). Then as the PEACE Program counsellor reads the list below, the program participants are asked to notice how they feel. (The bead portion of the exercise is done in silence.)

Place a jar in the middle of the circle.

Invite program participants to place a bead (or a few beads) in the jar if they or someone they know has ever...

- Had their feelings or wishes ignored
- Been put down by an older person
- Been called names and ridiculed
- Not had their secrets kept
- Been ignored
- Been hit
- Been kicked
- Been punched
- Been physically hurt by an adult or someone older
- Been threatened
- Been afraid because of violence that was around them
- Been bothered by someone on the internet
- Had their boundaries ignored
- Had someone close to them threaten suicide
- Been pressured to do something that made them uncomfortable
- Been pressured sexually

This exercise is best followed by an exercise related to creating safety, and collectively coming up with group rules and a commitment to a violence-free zone.

TOPIC 4. FEELINGS AND COMMUNICATION: SAMPLE GROUP ACTIVITIES

AGES 3-5

FEELINGS MASKS GROUP ACTIVITY

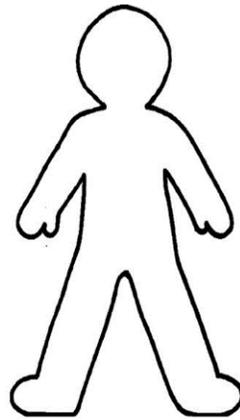


Using paper plates and popsicle sticks, ask the children to draw how they are feeling today on their feelings masks. After they have completed this exercise, ask the children to form a circle. Go around the circle, and ask each child to share their feelings mask and how they are feeling today.



AGES 3-5; 6-8; 9-12

ANGER IN MY BODY



Use this group activity when discussing anger and emotions in our bodies. Ask the program participants where in their bodies they feel anger, sadness, or fear. The goal behind this activity is for children to become aware of what their bodies are telling them, and for them to proceed with caution; for example, once they recognize they are getting angry, they can start doing anger management techniques to bring themselves down. This is a tool which they can use to hopefully prevent a negative reaction to anger, or to use an alternative reaction to express anger.

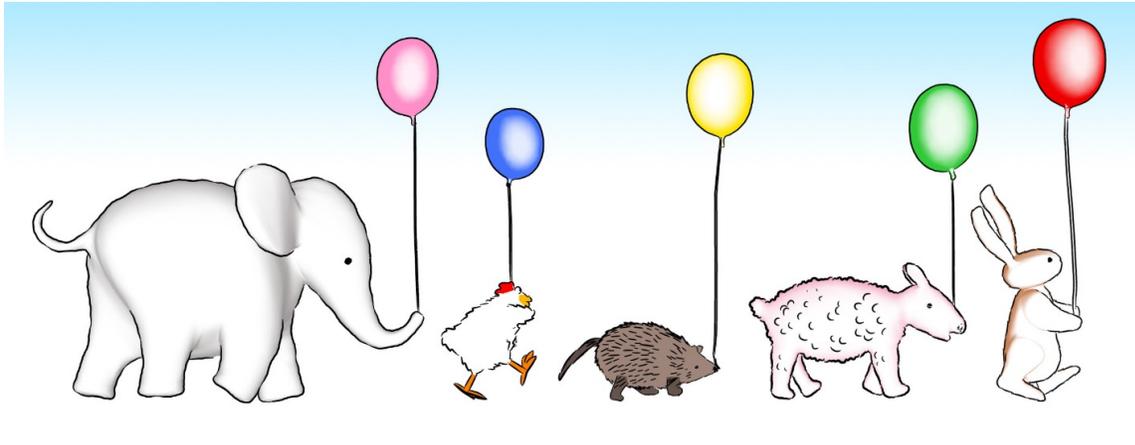
Provide the program participants with a body outline cut out, ask them to draw a body outline on a piece of paper, or have them outline their bodies on a large piece of paper.

Ask them to choose a color to represent the different feelings and to colour or draw the feeling on the part of the body where they are having that feeling. This activity allows children to think of the warning signs they experience in their bodies, when they feel a certain emotion.

After the program participants have completed this activity, put all the body outlines on the wall and have each child explain theirs to the rest of the group. Also use this as an opportunity to brainstorm ideas for what the children can alternatively do when feeling angry.

AGES 3-5; 6-8

ANGRY ANIMAL PARADE



This is a good group activity when discussing anger, and it is a good icebreaker as it gets program participants up and moving. It also encourages them to think of how angry animals would behave, and to notice warning signs of anger, and how anger makes them feel.

- Ask children to imagine what animal they would be if they were angry.
- Have each child demonstrate their angry animal.
- Have a parade, where all the children act out their angry animals.
- After the parade, have children go around the circle and discuss their animal, how they were feeling, what it felt like, and behaviors.

End the group by making a list together, on a flip chart or poster board, about ideas on how they can manage their anger. Discuss together ideas for anger management strategies that are appropriate behaviors for both inside/outside the house.

TOPIC 6. BOUNDARIES AND SELF-CARE: SAMPLE GROUP ACTIVITIES

AGES 3-5; 6-8

MY BOUNDARY GROUP EXERCISE

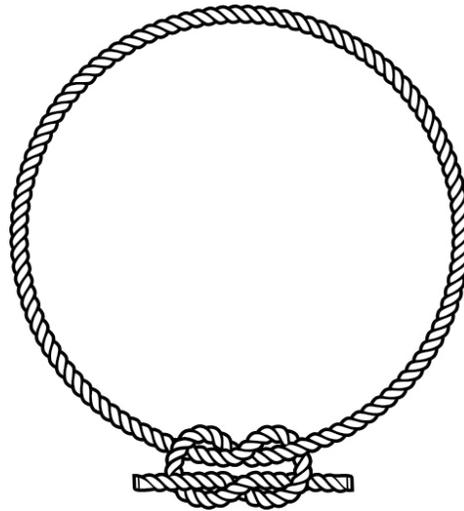


This activity is useful during a group session on “boundaries and self-care”. The PEACE Program counsellor divides the group into pairs. Each pair stands across the room from one another. One person is invited to start walking towards the other, while the other stands still. The person standing still is examining their boundary. As the person walks towards you, you say “STOP” when you don’t want them to be any closer. This is a kind of boundary.

Ask the program participants to remain in eye contact while they do this. PEACE Program counsellors can normalize that this may feel very silly, and we all feel like giggling when we do this. It is a difficult exercise. Everyone’s boundaries will be different, and at certain parts of the exercise, ask the children to freeze, look around the room and take note of this.

AGES 3-5; 6-8

MY SAFE SPACE EXERCISE



Use a skipping rope or yarn and have each program participant make a circle around them. They can make it whatever size they need. Have another child stand outside the boundary and make eye contact. Notice how this feels. Then have the partner step inside the boundary, notice how this feels.

Come together as a large group and have each child share their experience, and their understanding of boundaries.



SAMPLE FORMS



The following section provides counsellors with sample forms to use in various aspects of their work with children, youth, and their caregivers. All of the following forms have been created by the BC Society of Transition Houses to reflect best practices, including collecting only the minimum amount of information required to provide services. PEACE counsellors are invited to adapt the forms to suit their program needs.

SAMPLE FORM A: REFERRAL FOR PEACE PROGRAM FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH EXPERIENCING VIOLENCE

**PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence
Referral for PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence**

Date: _____

Name of referee: _____

Referral Agency: _____

Contact #: _____ Voice Messages OK? _____

Children and Youth Referred to Program:

Name: _____ Age: _____

Name: _____ Age: _____

Name: _____ Age: _____

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Phone #: _____ Voice Messages OK? _____

Services Requested

- Parenting information**
- Children's Groups**
- Individual Counselling**

Comments:



SAMPLE FORM AA: MATURE MINOR INTAKE FOR GROUP OR INDIVIDUAL COUNSELLING

**PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence
Mature Minor Intake for Group or Individual Counselling**

Today's Date: _____

Name: _____ Also Known As: _____

DOB: _____ Gender: _____ School: _____

Address: _____

Home phone: _____

Cell: _____ E-mail address: _____

Is it safe to leave a message? YES NO Is it safe to email? YES NO

Preferred Type of Contact: In-person Phone E-mail

Preferred Type of Service: Group Individual

Parent/Guardian's Name: _____

Relationship: _____

Parent/Guardian's contact number: _____

Service Considerations: _____

Court orders or agreements that impact mature minor: _____

Diversity Requirements /Accessibility or Special Needs: _____

Medical Considerations: _____

Is there any information you'd like to provide so we can best support you?

Emergency Contact Information:

Name: _____

Relationship to the mature minor: _____

Telephone: _____ Cell: _____

Address: _____

Complaint procedure discussed? Yes No



SAMPLE FORM B: ORIENTATION

PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence Orientation

- Welcome the mother and child (ren) and offer the family a drink and opportunity to use the washroom.
- Give family a tour of the office. Let them know where emergency exits are if needed.
- Get settled in a private meeting space.
- Give a brief overview of agencies Programs and services.
- Explain the PEACE Program:
 - The PEACE Program is a short-term psycho-educational program, not deep therapy.
 - Group:
 - Grouped by age
 - Show sample group outline and review topics
 - Value for children to know they are not alone
 - Learning and sharing that comes from peers
 - Shorter waitlist.
 - Individual:
 - Preferably after group is completed, or for older children that a group is not available, or for children who may not be a good fit for group.
 - Explain waitlists and length of service.
- Safety Planning: if there are immediate concerns for child's or youth's safety, offer 1–3 sessions depending on their needs.
- Find out:
 - What brings the program participant here today: "What has led you to the PEACE Program?"
 - Are there any other family members who should be involved?
 - What are the needs of program participant, and expectations of the mother?

- Work through the Intake Form together.
- Provide any handouts and resources, including contact information for the PEACE Program and counsellor.
- As part of the orientation, explain:
 - Limits of confidentiality
 - Use of personal information and release of information
 - Program participant's rights and responsibilities
 - Any restrictions (if applicable):
 - Ask about identified guardians and parental responsibilities and parenting time:
 - "What is the relationship with the father?"
 - "What does communication look like?"
 - "Are there legal agreements for parental responsibilities, parenting time?"
 - "Are there current ongoing court actions? Family, civil, criminal?"
 - Complaint and appeal procedure
 - Service plan and goals:
 - Group, individual, parenting support, referrals
 - Transition plan
 - What to expect at the end of the service
- Any questions from the program participant or mother?



SAMPLE FORM C: INITIAL CONTACT/PHONE ASSESSMENT WITH PARENT/GUARDIAN(S)

**PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence
Initial Contact/Phone Assessment with Parent/Guardian(s)**

Today's Date: _____

Parent/Guardian's Name: _____ Relationship _____

Parent/Guardian's Name: _____ Relationship _____

Address: _____

Home phone: _____ Cell: _____

Is it safe to leave message? YES NO

E-mail address: _____

Is it safe to email? YES NO

Preferred Type of Contact: In-person Phone E-mail

Referral Source:

- Self
- Family/Friend
- Alcohol & Drug
- Victim Services
- Agency
- School/Daycare
- Hospital/Doctor
- Transition Housing Program
- MCFD
- Mental Health
- Police
- Settlement Program

Other: _____

Reason for Referral:

PEACE PROGRAM TOOLKIT

Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence

Child's Name: _____

DOB: _____ Gender: _____

Child's Name: _____

DOB: _____ Gender: _____

Child's Name: _____

DOB: _____ Gender: _____

School: _____

Daytime Availability: Yes No

Interested In: Individual Group Parenting Support

Eligible: No Yes Waitlist

Intake Appointment set: _____

Counsellor's Notes/Assessment:

Referrals to program participant:

___ Stopping the Violence Program

___ Alcohol and Drug Counselling

___ Victim Services

___ Transition House

___ Mental Health Services

___ Family Doctor

___ Community Services

___ Child and Youth Mental Health

___ Youth Centre

___ HPOP/HPP

___ Parent Support Group

___ Legal Advocate/Support

___ Children's Group

___ Income Assistance/EI

___ Settlement Service

___ Other _____

Counsellor Signature: _____



SAMPLE FORM D: PARENT/GUARDIAN INTAKE FOR CHILD’S GROUP OR INDIVIDUAL COUNSELLING

**PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence
Parent/Guardian Intake for Child’s Group or Individual Counselling**

Today’s Date: _____

Parent/Guardian’s Name: _____

Relationship: _____

Address: _____

Home phone: _____ Cell: _____

E-mail address: _____

Is it safe to leave message? YES NO Is it safe to email? YES NO

Preferred Type of Contact: In-person Phone E-mail

Information for Child receiving service:

Child’s Name: _____

DOB: _____ Gender: _____

School: _____

Court Orders and agreements that impact the child: _____

Diversity and accessibility requirements or special needs: _____

Medical Considerations: _____

Any information we need so we can best support you and your child? _____

Preferred type of service: Group Individual

Emergency Contact Information:

Name: _____

Relationship to the child: _____

Telephone: _____ Cell: _____

Address: _____



SAMPLE FORM E: INTERVIEW WITH PARENT/GUARDIAN

**PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence
Interview with Parent/Guardian**

Name: _____

Date: _____

Child's Name: _____

Gender: _____ Age: _____

Available times for counselling: _____

Name and relationship of other significant family members: _____

Family's connection with other agencies or services: _____

Are there any court orders or agreements? _____

Are there court orders or agreements for parenting responsibilities, parenting time and contact? _____

How is your relationship with your (ex) partner? _____

How is your child/ren's relationship with their father/mother? _____

Key Information Related to Violent Parent

Name: _____

Relationship to Child: _____

Police Involvement: _____

Court Involvement: _____

Transition House Accessed: Yes No

Whereabouts of violent person: In-home Out of home

Violence witnessed by the child (type, frequency, severity, impact)

Is it safe to involve the violent parent in the counselling process? Yes No

Are there any safety concerns that you could tell me about (e.g. personal safety of the child, participation in the Program at risk due to recent separation, parental responsibilities, time and contact issues)?

What are your child's strengths? (e.g. What is your child good at? What does your child do that impresses you/ others? Unique thoughts? Dreams? Problem solving abilities and communication?) _____



How does your child express anger, fear, sadness, and affection? _____

How does your child deal with stress/anxiety?

- _____ withdrawing
- _____ bed wetting
- _____ concentration concerns
- _____ fears
- _____ eating or appetite concerns
- _____ harms self
- _____ temper, outbursts, crying, whining, yelling
- _____ destruction of property
- _____ sleep concerns
- _____ missing school
- _____ somatic (headaches, stomach aches, etc.)

Other: _____

What do you think would be most helpful if your child was to continue with the PEACE Program? _____

How does your child play? (What types of activities do they like/not like?)

What are you doing now that is working? What are you doing that your child responds to in a positive manner?
What are you doing or have done that you are proud of?

How is affection shown in your family?

Can you tell me who your supports are?

Is there anything else that you feel would be helpful for us to know?



SAMPLE FORM F: CONSENT TO PROVIDE PEACE PROGRAM SUPPORT TO MINORS

**PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence
Consent to Provide PEACE Program Support to Minors**

I give **[Agency Name]** permission to provide PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence counselling services for my minor child.

I give consent for my child to receive the following service(s):

- Individual counselling
- Group counselling
- Safety Plan Development
- Other: _____

I understand that this consent is part of an application and does not guarantee that my child will receive all of the services indicated.

In signing the consent form I give consent for my child to participate in Program evaluation activities such as feedback surveys and/or a closing interview. I understand that if I choose for my child to not participate in Program evaluation this will have no impact on their ability to access services or the services they will receive.

By checking this box I request that my child be excluded from participating in Program evaluation activities.

This agreement is in effect for as long as this document is kept on file by the PEACE Program. This means a minimum of 7 years after my child reaches the age of majority which is 19 in BC. However, my child can withdraw from participating in the PEACE Program at any time.

Child's Name: _____

Name of Parent/Guardian (print): _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian _____

Signature of Counsellor _____ Date: _____

SAMPLE FORM FF: CONSENT TO RECEIVE PEACE PROGRAM COUNSELLING: MATURE MINOR

**PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence
Consent to Receive PEACE Program Counselling: Mature Minor**

I consent to receive PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence counselling services provided by **[Agency Name]**.

I consent to receive the following service(s):

- Individual counselling
- Group counselling
- Safety Plan Development
- Other: _____

I understand that this consent is part of an application and does not guarantee that I will receive all of the services indicated.

In signing this form I consent to participate in Program evaluation activities such as feedback surveys and/or a closing interview. I understand that if I choose not to participate in Program evaluation activities that it will have no impact on my ability to access services or the services I will receive.

By checking this box I request to be excluded from participating in Program evaluation activities.

This agreement is in effect for as long as this document is kept on file by the PEACE Program. The PEACE Program will retain this document for a minimum of 7 years after I reach the age of majority which is 19 in BC. However, I understand that can withdraw from participating in the PEACE Program at any time.

Program Participant's Name (print): _____

Signature of Program Participant _____

Signature of Counsellor _____ Date: _____



SAMPLE FORM G: PARENT/GUARDIAN CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT FOR MINOR CHILD

**PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence
Parent/Guardian Confidentiality Agreement for Minor Child**

I consent to having the staff from the **[Agency Name]**'s PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence Program to collect personal information for the purpose of delivering services to my minor child.

I understand that the personal information I provide on behalf of my minor child and by my minor child is confidential. The release of any information regarding our involvement with the PEACE Program may occur only with written and signed consent subject to certain legal exceptions.

These legal exceptions are:

- If PEACE Program staff have reason to believe that a child needs protection under Section 13 of the Child, Family and Community Service Act, they are obligated (as are the general public) to inform the Ministry of Children and Family Development.
- If PEACE Program staff have reason to believe that I or my child is likely to cause serious physical harm to myself/themselves or another, they are obligated to inform the appropriate authorities.
- If PEACE Program staff are required by court order to disclose specific records or go to court to testify.

I understand that my child's records will be kept for 7 years after they reach the age of majority which is 19 in BC and that they will be destroyed after that time.

I understand that my child's records will be kept in a database that is connected to the Internet which may run the risk of the records being intercepted and potentially accessed by other employees and volunteers of **[Agency name]**.

I understand that my child's records may be shared with an authorized supervisor of the PEACE Program staff in order to provide professional consultation. All identifying information about me and my child will be removed before this consultation occurs.

I understand that information about **[Agency's name]** privacy and confidentiality policy can be obtained by contacting **[Program contact]** at **[Program contact name's phone number]**.

PEACE PROGRAM TOOLKIT

Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence

I understand that I can revoke consent to collect personal information at any time. The PEACE Program will retain this agreement until my child reaches 7 years after the age of majority, which is 19 in BC.

Program Participant's Name (print): _____

Parent/Guardian's Name (print): _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian _____

Signature of Counsellor _____ Date: _____



SAMPLE FORM GG: MATURE MINOR CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

**PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence
Mature Minor Confidentiality Agreement**

I consent to having the staff from the **[Agency Name]**'s PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence Program to collect personal information for the purpose of delivering services as indicated on my consent to service form.

I understand that the personal information I provide is confidential. The release of any information regarding my involvement with the PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence may occur only with my written and signed consent subject to certain legal exceptions.

These legal exceptions are:

- If PEACE Program staff have reason to believe that a minor needs protection under section 13 of the Child, Family and Community Service Act, they are obligated (as are the general public) to inform the Ministry of Children and Family Development.
- If PEACE Program staff have reason to believe that I am likely to cause serious physical harm to myself or another, they are obligated to inform the appropriate authorities.
- If PEACE Program staff are required by court order to disclose specific records or to go to court to testify.

I understand that my records will be kept for 7 years after I reach the age of maturity (19 in BC) and that they will be destroyed after that time.

I understand that my records will be kept in a database that is connected to the Internet which can run the risk of being intercepted and potentially accessed by other employees and volunteers of **[Agency name]**.

I understand that my records may be shared with an authorized supervisor of the PEACE Program staff in order to provide professional consultation. All identifying information about me will be removed before this consultation occurs.

I understand that information about **[Agency's name]** privacy and confidentiality policy can be obtained by contacting **[Program contact]** at **[Program contact name's phone number]**.

PEACE PROGRAM TOOLKIT

Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence

I understand that I can revoke consent to collect personal information at any time. The PEACE Program will retain this agreement until I reach 7 years after age of maturity, which is 19 in BC.

Program Participant's Name (print): _____

Signature of Program Participant _____

Signature of Counsellor _____ Date: _____



SAMPLE FORM H: INTERVIEW ASSESSMENT WITH A CHILD

**PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence
Interview Assessment with a Child**

Date: _____

Name: _____

Also Known As: _____

Age: _____ Gender: _____

School: _____

Do you know why you are here today? Can you tell me more about it?

Tell me about your family, brothers, and sisters? How old are they?

Tell me about yourself. What do you like to do? (e.g. Activities, Sports, Groups) What are you good at doing?

Tell me about school. What do you like about it? What do you not like about it?

What kinds of things make you mad? What do you do when you are mad?

What do you think is the best way to deal with something when you're mad?

In your family how do people act when they are mad at each other or fighting?

What can you tell me about the fighting at home?

How do you feel when there is fighting going on at home?

Has there been a time that you did not feel safe at home?



What did you do?

Can you tell me who you talk to when you feel mad or unsafe?

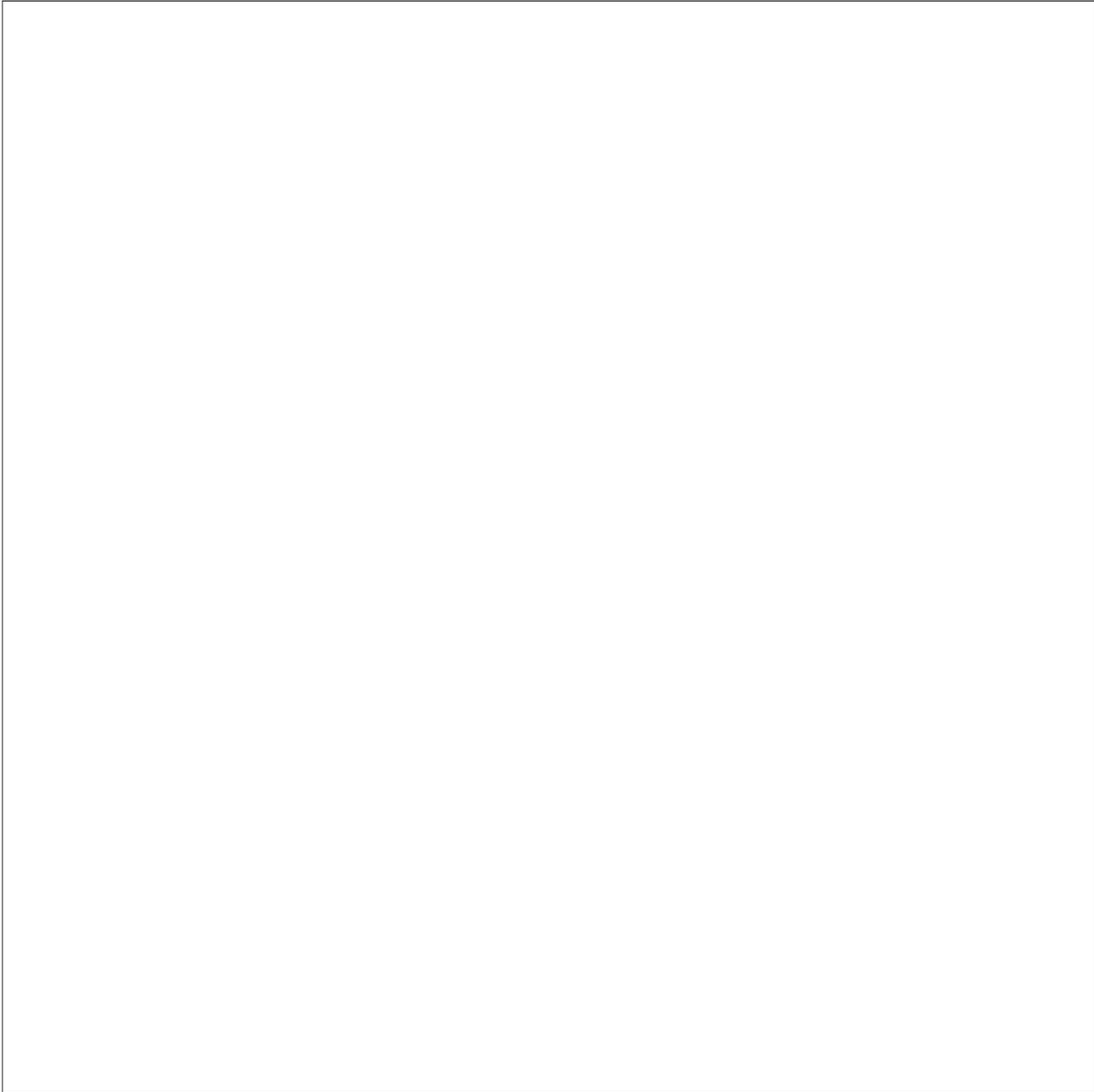
What do you think the word abuse means?

What do you want to know about this Program?

What aspects of the PEACE Program do you think would be most helpful for you?

Is there anything else that you feel would be helpful for me to know?

Please draw me a picture of your family. Can you tell me about it?

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a child to draw a picture of their family. The box is centered on the page and occupies most of the lower half of the page.



SAMPLE FORM HH: INTERVIEW ASSESSMENT WITH YOUTH

**PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence
Interview Assessment with Youth**

Date: _____

Name: _____

Also Known As: _____

Age: _____ Gender: _____

School: _____

Available times for counselling: _____

Tell me why you're here today:

Do you have siblings? Can you tell me about them?

Tell me about your parents. What's your relationship like with them?

Do you want your parents to know that you're receiving support through the PEACE Program?
Can you tell me why or why not?

Tell me about yourself. Why do you like to do in your spare time? Activities/Sports/Groups?

What are you good at doing?

Tell me what school is like for you (likes/dislikes).

Tell me about the violence you have experienced.

How have these experiences impacted you?

Are there any safety concerns that you could tell me about (personal safety of the youth participating in the Program)?

What do you do when you're mad or upset/sad?



What are you doing now that is helping?

Could you tell me who your supports are?

What do you want to know about the PEACE Program?

What aspects of the PEACE Program do you think would be most helpful for you?

Is there anything else that you feel would be helpful for us to know?

SAMPLE FORM I: EMERGENCY MEDICAL FORM

**PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence
Emergency Medical Form**

This form is for emergency use only.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Doctor: _____ Phone: _____

Health Care Number: _____

Allergies: _____

Other Medical Conditions: _____

Medications: _____

EMERGENCY CONTACT: _____

Telephone: _____

Relationship: _____

I authorize **[Agency's Name]** PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence Staff to use the information in this form for medical emergencies **ONLY**.

Parent/Guardian Signature(s): _____

Counsellor Signature _____ Date: _____



SAMPLE FORM J: SERVICE PLAN

**PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence
Service Plan**

Goal	Action Steps	Outcome

Notes: _____

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature(s): _____

Counsellor Name: _____

Counsellor Signature: _____ Date: _____



SAMPLE FORM JJ: SERVICE PLAN WITH MATURE MINOR

**PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence
Service Plan with Mature Minor**

Goal	Action Steps	Outcome

Notes: _____

Program Participant Name: _____

Program Participant Signature: _____

Counsellor Name: _____

Counsellor Signature: _____ Date: _____



SAMPLE FORM K: GROUP SESSION SUMMARY

**PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence
Group Session Summary**

Date of Session: _____

Program Participant Name: _____

Group Session Topic: _____

Brief summary of today's session:

Goals or follow-up for next session:

SAMPLE FORM L: SESSION SUMMARY

**PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence
Individual Session Summary**

Date of Session: _____

Program Participant Name: _____

Session Topic: _____

Brief summary of today's session:

Goals or follow-up for next session:



SAMPLE FORM M: PARENT/GUARDIAN RELEASE OF INFORMATION

**PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence
Parent/Guardian Release of Information for Minor Child**

[Agency Name]'s PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence Program will not release any personal information about your minor child without your permission unless a legal exception exists as explained on the Program's confidentiality form.

If you sign an authorization to release personal information, you can revoke this authorization at a later date. Please note this means from the date of revocation onwards.

I, _____ (print name of parent/guardian), authorize this PEACE Program to release the following specific personal information about my minor child (print name of minor child): _____

To (name of organization): _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____

Email: _____

For the following purpose: _____

I understand that I can revoke my authorization to release personal information at any time.

This authorization is good until _____ (expiry date).

Program Participant's Name (print): _____

Parent/Guardian's Name (print): _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian _____

Signature of Counsellor _____ Date _____

SAMPLE FORM MM: RELEASE OF INFORMATION FOR A MATURE MINOR

**PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence
Release of Information for Mature Minor**

[Agency Name]'s PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence will not release any personal information about you without your permission unless a legal exception exists as explained on the Program's confidentiality form.

If you sign an authorization to release personal information, you can revoke this authorization at a later date. Please note this means from the date of revocation onwards.

I, _____ (print name of program participant), authorize this PEACE Program to release the following specific personal information:

To (**name of organization**): _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____

Email: _____

For the following purpose: _____

I understand that I can revoke my authorization to release personal information at any time.

This authorization is good until _____ (expiry date).

Program Participant's Name (print): _____

Signature of Program Participant _____

Signature of Counsellor _____ Date _____



SAMPLE FORM N: REVOCATION OF RELEASE OF INFORMATION FOR A MINOR CHILD

**PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence
Revocation of Release of Information for Minor Child**

I, _____ (print name of parent/guardian), revoke the authorization to
release personal information of my minor child _____
(print name of minor child).

To **(name of organization)**: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____

Email: _____

That was signed on this date: _____

I revoke my authorization to release personal information on this date: _____

Program Participant's Name (print): _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian _____

Signature of Counsellor _____ Date _____

SAMPLE FORM NN: REVOCATION OF RELEASE OF INFORMATION FOR A MATURE MINOR

**PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence
Revocation of Release of Information for Mature Minor**

I, _____ (print name of program participant), revoke the authorization to release personal information.

To (**name of organization**): _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____

Email: _____

That was signed on this date: _____

I revoke my authorization to release personal information on this date: _____

Program Participant's Name (print): _____

Signature of Program Participant _____

Signature of Counsellor _____ Date _____



SAMPLE FORM 0: FILE CLOSURE

**PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence
File Closure**

Program Participant Name: _____

Number of Sessions Seen: _____

Reason for ending Program participation:

Review of goals:

Additional comments:

Is follow-up service or referral requested? Yes _____ No _____

If yes, describe:

Program Participant/Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Program Participant/Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

PEACE Program Counsellor Name: _____

PEACE Program Counsellor Signature: _____ Date: _____



5. WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH: EXTRA SUPPORTS

WHEN THERE ARE SUBSTANCE USE AND/OR MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS

Intersecting factors contribute to the mental health and substance use behaviours of children and youth:

- Individual (personality, developmental delays, early use of substances, social skills deficits).^{1,2}
- Family and other adults (e.g. low family economic status, mental illness, family conflict, coercive or poor parenting skills, lack of parental monitoring, neglect, sexual and physical abuse).^{3,4}
- Peer (e.g. peer rejection, peer influence on risk-taking behaviours).
- School (e.g. lack of academic progress and success, lack of commitment to school).
- Community (e.g. neighbourhood poverty, income disparity).
- Government policies that can have a direct impact on the lives of individuals (e.g. residential schools, lack of access to health care, lack of evidence-based public health policies on alcohol and other drugs).^{5,6}

Adverse experiences early in development may predispose individuals to mental health and substance use challenges. In one Canadian study of youth with both mental health and substance use challenges, almost all

SUBSTANCE USE: LANGUAGE MATTERS

Substance use among individuals who have experienced violence can be a form of resistance and a coping strategy. Using the term substance use vs. substance abuse is recommended, as “terms such as ‘substance abuse’ have moral overtones. The term ‘abuse’ suggests moral culpability of the person using the substance and this is inaccurate and unhelpful.” (Here to Help, 2013). Because youth accessing CWWA Programs will have suffered abuse, “calling their relationship with substances ‘abuse’ is potentially triggering and clinically inaccurate.”

(ibid., p.6.)

participants had experiences of violence and almost half had PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder] responses.⁷ Experiences of emotional abuse and neglect, predict severity of substance use problems.⁸ These experiences of abuse and trauma in childhood predispose youth to mental health and substance use challenges. Further, “substance use disorders also increase the chance of further ongoing traumatic experiences which, in turn, can fuel further substance use and worsening mental health.”⁹ “Youth with mental health or emotional concerns were more likely than their peers to use substances to manage stress or sadness and were more likely to have used substances other than marijuana and alcohol.”¹⁰

Acknowledge that some level of risk-taking by youth is natural, and that young people, like adults, use substances for a variety of reasons:

- To feel good: Have increased feelings of power, self-confidence, increased energy, or to relax and promote satisfaction.
- To feel better: Reduce social anxiety and stress, or to relieve the distress associated with trauma and abuse.
- To do better: Increasing performance, “keep going.”
- To discover: New feelings/insights, out of curiosity.¹¹

Understanding the reasons youth use substances, are important to understanding their risks (e.g. using substances because of curiosity vs. using substances to compensate or cope with past experiences of violence). Some groups of youth are “at higher risk of experiencing problematic substance use, Métis youth, gay, lesbian, bisexual and questioning teens, and youth who have been maltreated.”¹²

Whether a youth’s mental health issues are primary, and the substance use is a way of coping with the mental health symptoms; or the mental health issues arise from the substance use, mental health is the primary concern and priority for treatment for most youth, while having little concern about getting help for their substance use challenges. “Heavy and long-term substance use may exacerbate pre-existing mental health issues such as depression and anxiety, or in extreme cases may lead to psychosis.”¹³

For youth who are using substances and have mental health concerns, residential treatment services may be a necessary component of a system of services. However, community-based services such as the PEACE Program—that offer outreach and face-to-face supports such as counselling—can often meet the needs of youth. Counsellors can consult with a supervisor, peer, or partnering agency that provides mental health and substance use support to youth, about how to best support a program participant. This often includes a referral to a partnering agency. However, it is essential that the links between experiences of violence, and the development of mental health and substance use issues, be acknowledged in the recommended support and treatment approach. Most often, an individual’s mental health and substance use challenges cannot be resolved if the root causes of violence are not addressed.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

First Nations Health Authority, the British Columbia Ministry of Health and Health Canada. (2013). A Path Forward: BC First Nations and Indigenous People's Mental Wellness and Substance Use—10 Year Plan. Retrieved from http://www.fnha.ca/Documents/FNHA_MWSU.pdf

Here to Help. (2015). Retrieved from <http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca>

Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre <http://keltymentalhealth.ca>

Representative of Children and Youth. (2016). Review of Youth Substance Use Services in BC. Retrieved from https://www.rcybc.ca/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/reports_publications/rcy_reviewyouthsubstance-final.pdf

WHEN A CHILD OR YOUTH IS SUICIDAL

Working with program participants that are having suicidal thoughts or intentions, is outside the scope of the PEACE mandate. However, counsellors may encounter children or youth who are suicidal. PEACE Program counsellors should work within their skill level and comfort zone, always consult with an experienced peer and/or supervisor, and make appropriate referrals to ensure that the program participant gets the help they need.

Suicide is the second leading cause of death among youth in British Columbia between the ages of 15–18.¹⁴ A retrospective review of child and youth deaths by suicide, completed by the BC Coroner's Service in 2013, found that those who are at greatest risk for suicide are older youth; males; Indigenous children and youth; children and youth who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, two spirit, or queer; and children in care. Youth who have been in government care were significantly more likely to have either considered suicide or to have attempted suicide one or more times in the past year, compared to youth who were never in care. The following factors increased the risk of suicide:

- A history of suicidal behaviour, including previous non-fatal attempts and suicidal ideation.
- A history of use of alcohol and/or illicit drugs.
- Mental disorders.
- Bullying.
- Stressful life events.

In 2008, the BC Coroner's Office studied youth suicides and found:

- Almost half of the children and youth studied had diagnosed mental health problems, commonly depression.
- Almost half of the children and youth studied had experienced the death by suicide of a family member or peer.
- Almost half of the children and youth studied lived with family dysfunction, including abuse, neglect, mental health problems, and exposure to family violence.
- Poverty was a factor for one-fifth of the children and youth studied.
- Nearly one-quarter of those studied were known to have been violent towards others.

PEACE Program counsellors must be aware of the risk factors that children and youth bring to the Program, know how to identify them, and when to refer/seek immediate intervention.



According to the BC Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention Centre, about 80% of people who attempt or complete suicide, send out warning signs to those around them, although they may not make a direct plea for help. Some warning signs may include:

- Talking or joking about suicide or dying.
- Preparing for death, such as giving away significant possessions, making a will, writing a suicide note, clearing up loose ends.
- A previous suicide attempt; the suicide of someone important.
- Being persistently depressed or down for more than a couple of weeks; protracted anxiety or agitation; extreme mood swings/bipolarity; outbursts of rage, grief, violence.
- Isolation, withdrawal from previously enjoyed relationships and activities.
- Lethargy, lack of interest, low energy, insomnia, or over-sleeping.
- Increased use of alcohol or drugs.
- Uncharacteristic high-risk activity, impulsive behaviours.
- Expressions of hopelessness, helplessness, purposelessness.
- Low self-esteem, low self-worth, self-contempt, anger toward self.
- Significant loss(es), such as important relationship, health, identity, economic security, freedom.¹⁵

If a child appears very depressed or talks with the counsellor about suicide:

- Explain to the program participant about your legal “duty to report.”
- Consult with an experienced peer and/or supervisor.
- Follow your agency’s protocol regarding disclosures of suicidal thoughts or intentions.
- Make the appropriate referral to mental health services and/or the family doctor.

A program participant who is suicidal may need additional support prior to being ready for the PEACE Program. In these situations, place the child or youth on the Program waitlist, and assure them that you look forward to working with them when they are ready.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Crisis Centre <https://crisiscentre.bc.ca/distress-services/>.

Ministry of Health. Child and Teen Suicide Prevention. Retrieved from <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/managing-your-health/mental-health-substance-use/child-teen-mental-health/child-teen-suicide-prevention>

Salt Spring Island Youth Suicide Intervention Toolkit: Reach Out. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://www.divisionsbc.ca/CMSMedia/WebPageRevisions/PageRev-12471/SuicidePreventionToolkit_youth_web.pdf

WHEN A CHILD OR YOUTH IS SELF-HARMING

Children and youth cope with difficult thoughts, feelings, and experiences in different ways; some cope by injuring themselves on purpose, most common during the teenage years among females and children who have experienced stressful or traumatic experiences, such as violence.¹⁶ Most children and youth who self-harm have no intention of ending their life.^{17,18} It is not a mental illness, but may mean that a program participant needs additional support. There are many reasons for self-harming:

- To cope with depression or anxiety.
- To cope with loss, trauma, violence, or other difficult situations.
- To “punish” themselves.
- To turn emotional pain into physical pain.
- Getting relief from painful or distressing feelings.
- To counter feelings of emptiness or numbness.
- To feel euphoria.
- To regain control of their bodies.
- Communicating pain or distress to others.
- To simply feel better.¹⁹



Common ways that youth harm themselves:

- Cutting themselves.
- Scratching themselves.
- Burning their skin.
- Taking too much medication, but not enough to kill themselves (“minor overdosing”).
- Hitting one’s head.

If a program participant talks with the PEACE Program counsellor about self-harming, be sure not to judge or shame her for these behaviours. Discuss what triggers her to self-harm, and introduce other alternate coping strategies. Seek consultation with an experienced peer or supervisor. Referral to child and youth mental health services may be appropriate.

CONTAINMENT

When working with children and youth experiencing violence, situations may arise when a program participant discloses and discusses a traumatic experience that you may not feel prepared or equipped to support; feel that it is not an appropriate environment for disclosure (e.g. group setting); or notice that the program participant is getting very distressed talking about their experience.

When this happens, do not shame the program participant for their disclosure. They need to know that their story and experience is important, and that it is important to talk about it.

Ensure that the program participant feels safe and supported, then refocus the discussion. Suggestions of what to say to help containment include:

- “I think this is too much for us to talk about right now. Can you and I finish this conversation after group?” Or if you have a co-facilitator, “This is a really important story you are telling. Why don’t you and I go to my office and talk about this more?”
- “Imagine your story on film. Fast-forward through the parts that are too difficult to remember right now. Turn it off if it becomes too much. Turn it on again when and if you feel ready.”
- “Let’s talk about how you make yourself feel better in those moments. What helps you feel better when you have those feelings?”
- “Put all the feelings that are difficult in a container. Put a lock on the container. Only you can access it. You are in control of when you want to talk about those feelings. Pick a time when it is safe and someone you trust is there to help you with the feelings.”

In these instances, the program participant may need to process her experiences of violence and trauma in a way that is outside the scope of the PEACE mandate of providing psycho-education. PEACE Program counsellors should consult with an experienced peer or supervisor, and obtain a referral to a child and youth therapist that can help the program participant process both her experiences of violence, and her feelings related to it.

WHEN A CHILD OR YOUTH IS COPING THROUGH DISSOCIATION OR AVOIDANCE

Experiences of violence can lead some children and youth to dissociate. In many instances dissociation can be considered natural or non-problematic:

- A child or youth becomes completely absorbed in an activity and then is not aware of what is around him (e.g. when playing a video game).
- A child or youth develops “a make-believe world,” but knows the difference between fantasy and reality.
- A child (even an adult) can read to the end of a page and not know what he has read because his mind has gone somewhere else.
- A child can block out something unpleasant (e.g. a painful injury), without harming his overall functioning.²⁰

However, some children—particularly those who have had to cope with an overwhelming or frightening event; with multiple frightening events; or with a confusing living situation—can have problematic dissociation. When a child or youth feels very afraid and helpless and cannot escape from, or survive, the situation, she “finds a way to ‘escape’ by blocking off (dissociating) the terrifying event(s) from her memory, by blocking off feelings of pain, hurt, and rage, and by blocking off bad thoughts about herself and those hurting her. She may go into a trance state or ‘space out’ (zone out, go blank, or shut down) and not be aware of her surroundings.”²¹

Dissociation is a survival technique used at the time of the frightening event and can be helpful to the child or youth at the time. “However, this “zoning out” may continue to happen in other circumstances, which may prevent them from developing normally—meeting social and academic expectations, appropriately managing emotions, and forming healthy attachments.”²²

PEACE Program counsellors should be aware that some psycho-education strategies may trigger program participants, regardless of how professionally they are offered. As such, counsellors are encouraged to be aware of this possibility even if a program participant is not showing any concerning behavior, and always respond accordingly following the principle of “do no harm.” If a counsellor is concerned that a program participant may be dissociating, acknowledge the behaviours, and offer some tools to manage it. Don’t use the language of dissociation when discussing what you observe happening; it can be discussed, and thought of as an adaptive tool that we use to save our spirits (e.g. when you observe a program participant dissociating, ask, “Where did you just go?”).



Seek consultation with an experienced peer or supervisor. Referral to child and youth mental health services may be appropriate.

WHEN A CHILD OR YOUTH IS RELUCTANT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PEACE PROGRAM

As discussed in the beginning of the Toolkit, participating in a PEACE Program is **voluntary**. However, some children and youth may have parents or ministries that are more interested in their participation than they are.

Reasons a child or youth may be reluctant to participate in the PEACE Program:

- An act of resistance in response to something that is happening at home (e.g. ongoing issues of violence).
- An act of resistance to feelings of helplessness and lack of control in one's life.
- The PEACE Program content may be too emotionally or psychologically difficult to deal with at that time.
- Having to miss a favorite activity to attend the Program.
- The child or youth is not connecting with, or is possibly disliking, the PEACE Program counsellor.

It can be helpful to explore where the reluctance is coming from if the child or youth is willing. If reluctance occurs, be patient and recognize that it is their choice to participate.

Request that the child or youth consider attending one session, as a start. Perhaps make an agreement with them that if, after the first session, they are still reluctant to attend, you will speak with their mother and inform them that the Program is not a fit for them at this time. Reinforce that children and youth have the choice to attend; that you respect their feelings around not wanting to participate; and that they are in control. If a child or youth decides not to participate, counsellors can still offer to work with the mother—letting her know that her child will benefit from her participation in the Program.

Keep in mind that children and youth are still “participating” in a group session even if they do not contribute verbally to the group. The fact that they are showing up for group, is a sign of engagement.

WHEN RISK OF ABUSE IS ONGOING

When the PEACE Programs were first initiated in British Columbia in the early 1990s (at that time, the Children Who Witness Abuse Program), it was acknowledged that they were not crisis programs, but were designed to support children and youth after they had stopped living in a violent situation. Program developers feared that many of the strategies taught to children and youth to support their developing sense of safety and strength, could put them at increased risk if used in a home where violence was still present.

Most PEACE Programs have adopted a principle of not working with a child or youth who is living with, or has extended visitation with, the offending parent. Providing support to a child or youth if they are still living with the offending parent may make her more vulnerable to emotional and physical harm.

However, PEACE Program counsellors have had to make difficult decisions regarding this principle; for example, what should be done if a child begins in the Program, then the offender returns to the family home? If counsellors have been working with a child and it becomes known she is still living with the offender, counsellors can assess on a case-by-case basis: What are the benefits and risks for a child's continued participation?

The 2013 BC Family Law Act (FLA) is less adversarial than the previous Family Relations Act and the law no longer uses the terms "custody" and "access," but the term "guardianship" instead. Guardianship is defined as parenting responsibilities and parenting time and the law allows for flexible parenting arrangements regarding raising children that involve day-to-day care of the children, and their support, well-being, and development. The FLA assumes that each parent or guardian should play a role regarding parental responsibilities and parenting time unless there is evidence to the contrary. The FLA encourages collaborative, alternative dispute resolution mechanisms such as mediation and parenting coordinators. If parents cannot agree amicably on their own or through these mechanisms regarding parenting responsibilities and time only then is a court hearing recommended.

Because of the FLA's focus on collaboration and shared parental responsibilities, children may still have a relationship with the offending parent while these FLA alternatives are being explored. Despite the initial Program's intention to serve children and youth who were no longer at risk of violence, PEACE Program counsellors may have to reconsider this approach given the FLA. In these cases, counsellors can work with children and youth, modifying their practice slightly when necessary; for example, counsellors can discuss safety planning, particularly around visits with the offending parent. Counsellors can also consider running separate groups for children and youth who have parents with shared parental responsibilities and parenting time or whose parents are engaged in alternative dispute resolution procedures or court hearings.

PEACE Program counsellors should also be aware that women are often representing themselves in Family Court matters in and across Canada, another dynamic that affects the family: In 2015/2016, there were 29,904 new cases filed in BC Family Court, of which 39% (or 11,662 cases) had at least one self-representing party.

In the above scenarios it can be helpful for counsellors to discuss their concerns with the mother, and seek consultation with an experienced peer or supervisor.



WHEN A CHILD OR YOUTH HAS LIMITED INTERNAL STATE OF SAFETY

One component of the PEACE Program counsellor's role, is to help foster safety in the internal and external world of a program participant. However, some children and youth with experiences of violence, have never known what it feels like to feel safe—and may not have any internal state of safety.

If you are working with a child or youth and recognize that they cannot identify a time or place where they felt safe:

- Begin with a discussion about what safety is.
- Acknowledge and validate for them that every child and youth has a right to safety.
- Work towards building a safe space in the counselling sessions; recognizing that identifying and understanding safety may take several sessions.
- Be curious and open to the child's experience with safety.
- Use engagement strategies to try and build rapport.
- Use developmental, age-appropriate activities to begin to explore how to create safety for the participant.

WORKING WITH YOUTH WHEN THERE IS A YOUTH AGREEMENT

PEACE Programs regularly get referrals from the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD). (See **Working with Other Professionals** section.) A youth being referred to services by MCFD might be particularly resistant to participating in the Program. Follow the same strategies outlined above (See **When a Child or Youth is Reluctant to Participate** section), reassuring the program participant that what they share with you is confidential unless it falls within the three legal exceptions to confidentiality.

Counsellors can get requests from MCFD to share information disclosed during the PEACE sessions with the program participant. In such cases, it can be helpful for the counsellor to remind MCFD social workers that PEACE Programs are voluntary, and that the counsellor's primary responsibility is to the program participant—while assuring MCFD that the counsellor is aware of their legal responsibilities toward the program participant's safety, and the safety of others. Agencies should have a working relationship with MCFD that outlines clear parameters and guidelines regarding confidentiality and sharing of information.

The MCFD's Best Practice Approaches: Child Protection and Violence Against Women (2014) reinforces that: "Creating safety for children requires both sectors to respond to reduce the risks that children and their mothers face. To ensure the safety and well-being of children and the non-abusing mother, all relevant services must work together for a coordinated, collaborative response....A mutual understanding and respect of roles, responsibilities, and areas of expertise, as well as clear ongoing communication throughout our involvement, will assist in establishing a co-operative working relationship which in turn, will help to support and ensure the safety of mothers and children." (p. 7)

WORKING WITH A CHILD OR YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE

Children and youth in foster care have been separated from their parents, home, and community, in addition to their experiences of violence. Counsellors must recognize that program participants who have been separated from their family due to a child protection removal will have experienced losses and may have feelings of abandonment or rejection.

PEACE Programs should attempt to foster a collaborative working relationship with the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) in their community, to best serve the children and youth that access PEACE services. In situations where counsellors would involve the program participant's parent in her support and service plan, they should likewise involve the foster parent(s).

WORKING WITH A CHILD OR YOUTH WHO DISCLOSES VIOLENCE

While some children and youth will casually relate information about their family, children and youth some who grow up with violence may be the opposite. They may be warned or know instinctively that revealing family secrets will invite scrutiny and may have consequences.

Despite this, PEACE Program counsellors will most likely have program participants disclose experiences of violence. They may also disclose experiences of sexual abuse, or their feelings about harming themselves or others. If and when a disclosure arises, counsellors need to be familiar with your agency's protocols about when it is necessary to report and how to respond effectively and in a way that does not disrupt the relationship you built with the program participant.

When a program participant discloses abuse, it is an opportunity to provide immediate support and comfort. How counsellors respond can have an impact on if, and how, a child or youth seeks out or responds to support services in the future.



When a program participant makes a disclosure of abuse:

- Give the program participant your full attention.
- Maintain a calm appearance.
- Don't be afraid of saying the "wrong" thing.
- Assume the program participant has decided that help is needed.
- Appreciate how difficult it was to disclose.
- Understand the risk to the program participant if you don't respond appropriately.
- Failure to act may discourage a child or youth from telling anyone again for a long time, and place her at risk of further harm.
- Validate the program participant's feelings.
- Don't criticize or speak negatively about the offender. Children and youth often have confused feelings around their experiences of violence and may feel a sense of loyalty or protectiveness towards them.
- Allow the program participant to tell her story.
- Use active listening.
- Let the program participant use her own words, in her own time.
- Do not pressure her to talk. Accept that the program participant will disclose only what is comfortable and recognize her bravery and strength.
- Don't make promises you can't keep. It can be helpful to say, "I can't make promises, but I can tell you I will do my best to keep you safe."
- If the program participant asks you not to tell anyone, remind her that it is your job to help keep her safe and you will do your best to do that.
- Your role is not to gather evidence or conduct an investigation.
- Tell the program participant what you plan to do next.

(See **Reporting Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect in the Administrative and Legal Issues** section.)

POST-DISCLOSURE FOLLOW UP ACTIVITY

The following exercise is an example of an activity to use with children and youth after they have disclosed. It can provide program participants with ways to express how they are feeling about what has happened, following a disclosure about abuse. PEACE Program counsellors can use what a program participant has colored and written on this activity sheet to begin a follow up conversation.

POST-DISCLOSURE FOLLOW UP ACTIVITY

<p>Changes At Home</p> 	 <p>Changes at Home</p>
<p>Changes At School</p> 	 <p>Changes At School</p>
<p>Changes in How I Feel</p> 	 <p>Changes in How I Feel</p>



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Australian Institute of Family Studies (2015). Responding to children and young people's disclosures of abuse. Retrieved from <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/responding-children-and-young-people-s-disclosures-abu>

BC Society of Transition Houses. (2009). The Strength-Based Approach to Helping Children Who Witness Abuse. Vancouver: BC Society of Transition Houses.

Edleson, J.L., Nguyen, H.T., Kimball, E. (2011). Honour Our Voices: A guide for practice when responding to children exposed to domestic violence. Minnesota Center Against Violence and Abuse. Retrieved from <http://www.honourourvoices.org/docs/GuideforPractice.pdf>

Futures Without Violence. (2015). Everyday Magic: 16 Ways Adults can Support Children Exposed to Violence and Trauma. <http://d3vc4vygg8dc62.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/Everyday-Magic-16-Ways-Adult-Can-Support-Children-2015.pdf>

Harris, K. (2017). Helping Children Exposed to Violence at Home: An Essentials Guide. London Family Court Clinic.

Sharpen, J. (2009). Improving Safety, Reducing Harm: Children, young people and domestic violence. A practical Toolkit for front-line professionals. London. Greater London Domestic Violence Project. Retrieved from http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130107105354/http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/@dh/@en/@ps/documents/digitalasset/dh_116914.pdf

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- ³ Ryzin, M.J., Fosco, G.M., & Dishion, T.J. (2012). Family and peer predictors of substance use from early adolescence to early adulthood: an 11-year prospective analysis. *Addictive Behaviours*, 37, 1314–1324.
- ⁴ Feldstein, S.W., & Miller, W.R. (2006). Substance use and risk-taking among adolescents. *Journal of Mental Health*, 15(6), 633–643
- ⁵ Allison, K.W. et al. (1999). Adolescent substance use: Preliminary examination of school and neighbourhood context. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 27(2), 111–114.
- ⁶ Connell, C.M. et al. (2010). Social-ecological influences on patterns of substance use among non- metropolitan high school students. *American journal of Community Psychology*, 45, 36–48. As cited in Representative for Children and Youth. (2016). A Review of Youth Substance Use Services in BC. (p. 9).
- ⁷ Catchpole, R., & Brownlie, E.B. (2016). Characteristics of Youth Presenting to a Canadian Youth Concurrent Disorders Program: Clinical Complexity, Trauma, Adaptive Functioning and Treatment Priorities, *Journal of the Canadian Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*. 2016 Spring; 25(2): 106–115.
- ⁸ Rosenkranz, S.E., Muller, R.T., Henderson, J.L. The role of complex PTSD in mediating childhood maltreatment and substance abuse severity among youth seeking substance abuse treatment. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*. 2014;6(1):25–33. doi: 10.1037/a0031920. As cited in Catchpole, R., & Brownlie, E.B. (2016). Characteristics of Youth Presenting to a Canadian Youth Concurrent Disorders Program: Clinical Complexity, Trauma, Adaptive Functioning and Treatment Priorities, *Journal of the Canadian Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*. 2016 Spring; 25(2): 106–115.
- ⁹ Haller, M., Chassin, L. Risk pathways among traumatic stress, posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms, and alcohol and drug problems: A test of four hypotheses. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*. 2014;28(3):841–851. doi: 10.1037/a0035878., as cited in Catchpole, R., & Brownlie, E.B. (2016). Characteristics of Youth Presenting to a Canadian Youth Concurrent Disorders Program: Clinical Complexity, Trauma, Adaptive Functioning and Treatment Priorities, *Journal of the Canadian Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*. 2016 Spring; 25(2): 106–115. (p. 112).
- ¹⁰ Representative for Children and Youth. (2016). A Review of Youth Substance Use Services in BC.
- ¹¹ Here to Help (Website) (p. 3). Retrieved from <http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca>
- ¹² Ministry of Health Promotion (Ontario). (2010). Prevention of Substance Misuse: Guidance Document. Queen's Printer for Ontario. Retrieved from <http://www.mhp.gov.on.ca/en/healthy-communities/public-health/guidance-docs/PreventionOfSubstanceMisuse.PDF>
- ¹³ Representative for Children and Youth. (2016). A Review of Youth Substance Use Services in BC. (p.10).
- ¹⁴ BC Coroner's Service. (2013). BC Coroners Service Child Death Review Panel: A Review of Child and Youth Suicides 2008–2012. Report to the Chief Coroner of British Columbia, September 2013.
- ¹⁵ Crisis Centre. (2013). FAQs about Suicide. Retrieved from <https://crisiscentre.bc.ca/frequently-asked-questions-about-suicide/>
- ¹⁶ Canadian Mental Health Association (2014). Youth and Self-injury.
- ¹⁷ Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (2010). Helping Children and Youth with Self-Harm Behaviours: Information for Parent and Caregivers. Retrieved from http://www.cheo.on.ca/uploads/12810_Self-Harm.pdf
- ¹⁸ Canadian Mental Health Association (2014). Youth and Self-injury.
- ¹⁹ Canadian Mental Health Association (2014). Youth and Self-injury.
- ²⁰ International Society of the Study of Trauma and Dissociation. (2015). Child and Adolescent FAQs. Retrieved from <http://www.isst-d.org/default.asp?contentID=100>
- ²¹ International Society of the Study of Trauma and Dissociation. (2015). Child and Adolescent FAQs. Retrieved from <http://www.isst-d.org/default.asp?contentID=100>
- ²² International Society of the Study of Trauma and Dissociation. (2015). Child and Adolescent FAQs. Retrieved from <http://www.isst-d.org/default.asp?contentID=100>



6. WORKING WITH PARENTS

This section is designed to support counsellors in working with parents and caregivers whose children are participating in PEACE Programs.

WORKING WITH MOTHERS

To support the program participant and foster the mother-child relationship, counsellors need to work with and have the support of the mother. (See *Working with Children and Youth* section.) Fostering and nurturing the relationship between a child and their mother is primary. What does this look like in practice? Depending on the needs of the program participant and their mother, elements may include:

- Providing the mother with information about PEACE Program services; developing safety plans with children and youth; and providing referrals for mothers to support groups and individual support sessions.
- Helping the mother understand the effects of violence against women, on their child.
- Helping the mother to help their child heal, through:
 - Helping the mother understand how to create an environment where their child can heal.
 - Helping the mother understand how they and their child have been affected.
 - Helping the mother begin to learn ways to talk with and listen to her child about her experiences, and begin to repair their relationship.
 - Communicating your optimism about a child's or youth's ability to heal, and your belief that the mother is an important part of the healing process.
- Helping the mother understand violence against women as unilateral and deliberate, to disrupt ideas of woman-blaming.
- Asking the mother about her resistance to the violence.
 - Women often minimize their efforts to resist, and this conversation can be illuminating and powerful for them.
- Asking the mother about how her child resists the violence.
 - Help the mother to see her child's behaviours as resisting the violence.
- Referring the mother to an agency outreach worker, who can provide support with practical issues such as housing and food security.

SUPPORTING THE MOTHER

In our work as PEACE Program counsellors, acknowledge:

- Mothers are doing the best they can with what they know, and the resources they have available to them.
- Mothers have wisdom about their children that no one else does.
- The stronger and more effective the mother is, the better it is for the child.

Mothers are an important source of knowledge about their child's attributes, and provide important information when supporting and safety planning with a program participant. There are several reasons for working closely with the mother of children in PEACE Programs:

- The short term Program goals relate to changes within the program participant, but the long-term goal of keeping family members safe, and reducing violence against women and children, requires support be provided to the program participant's mother.
- The support provided by the Program is short-term and professional. Mothers provide the long-term, consistent environment in which children and youth will achieve their real healing from the abuse.
- PEACE Programs usually work with children and youth after their stay in a transition house; in some cases, the mother of a program participant in the PEACE Program is not connected to many support services and would benefit from knowing about services.

The MCFD's Best Practice Approaches: Child Protection and Violence Against Women (2014) reinforces the "understanding that the safety and well-being of children are often dependent on the safety of the non-abusing mother and that whenever possible, supportive services should be offered to the mother in order to enhance her ability to care safely for her children." (pg. 6)

MCFD stresses that:

"In situations where there is violence against the mother, the safety of the child is usually connected to her safety."

"A best practice approach with women who have been abused would support workers to view mothers as the source of protection, safety, and security for children and youth."



PEACE Program counsellors have many opportunities to connect with the mother, including:

Orientation Session:

- Begin to establish a relationship of open communication with the mother.
- Provide information about the Program.
- Let the mother know that supporting her relationship with her child is one of your primary concerns, and that working together with her as you support the program participant is going to be integral to helping her child heal.

Intake Meeting with Mother:

- See the Working with Children and Youth: Stages of Service section for a detailed outline of the intake meeting with the mother, and how to promote her involvement.
- Stress the need for the mother to keep you informed of any changes in the family situation, so that safety plans can be adjusted.
- Encourage questions and expressions of concern. Ask the mother to call you should any issues arise that they would like to discuss, and explain that you will do the same.
- Emphasize the importance of ongoing and open communication between yourself and the mother. This will help you provide support to the program participant, and ultimately strengthen the relationship between the mother and child.

Support Groups:

- Depending on the availability of your time and resources, PEACE Program counsellors can provide support groups for mothers, which would ideally run parallel to the children's groups.
- The goals of the mother's support group are:
 - To support each woman in her experiences as a mother.
 - To provide a safe, trusting environment for program participants to discuss common issues.
 - To assist each mother in developing a realistic and feasible safety plan for themselves and their children.
 - To assist mothers in understanding how they and their children have been impacted by the violence perpetrated against them.
 - To increase awareness of skills and resources that may assist mothers in their parenting role.
- If your Program does not have the resources to provide a support group for mothers, the same goals apply to individual support. However, if a mother needs significant personal support, refer her to a Stopping the Violence (STV) counsellor or a similar Program in the community.

Advocacy:

- Women who have experienced violence can have multiple, often integrated needs (e.g. for housing, income assistance, legal advocacy).
- PEACE Program counsellors can support women in accessing the services they need, by making appropriate referrals.

Weekly Letters:

- PEACE Program counsellors can send standard letters home each week after group, to briefly explain the group activities and to suggest how the mother might reinforce what was learned at home.

Final Interview:

- At the end of each group or set of individual sessions, invite the mother to meet to discuss their child's participation in the Program.
- Share the strengths you observed in the program participant, and discuss any concerns and referrals you may have.

HOW TO HELP

The goal is to support the mother from a strength-based perspective. By building on her abilities and reminding her of her strengths, while offering concrete educational information, a PEACE Program counsellor can support the program participant's mother responses to violence, and in her role as the mother of a child or youth who experienced violence. Counsellors should use language that is accessible. Information may need to be shared and modified several times to support a mother's full understanding, particularly when she too is addressing the impacts of violence.

Below are some important components of a PEACE Program counsellor's role in supporting the mothers of program participants.

Supporting the Bond between Mother and Child

Children's emotions may include anger at their mother, a sense of betrayal, fear of abandonment, grief, and confusion. Children need to know that their mother loves them, does not blame them for anything that happened, and will keep them safe.



PEACE Program counsellors can:

- Provide children with a safe space to begin to acknowledge and process grief, loss, and pain.
- Create opportunities for children to safely reconnect with their mother around what has often been a shared experience of violence.
- Facilitate a positive shared experience between the child or youth and their mother, opening the way for them to communicate about past issues.

Counsellors can also support the mother-child relationship by encouraging them to participate in fun activities together. This can include letting the mother know about free events in the community, lending her board games, and when possible, providing coupons to events and attractions in the community.

Help with Behaviour and Parenting

Helping a mother address a child's behaviour removes a major stressor from the mother's life. PEACE Program counsellors can share their knowledge about child development, attachment, and how to respond to the child's behaviour.

PEACE Program counsellors should keep in mind it can be difficult, and not particularly helpful, to engage mothers in the difficult emotional work related to parenting after violence when they are pressed with other concerns that need priority. However, when mothers are settled and safe, parenting education and support groups support a mother's improved abilities to cope with the demands of her parenting.

Suggestions for talking with mothers who have experienced violence, about their efforts as a parent:

- Begin with the assumption that her behavior is logical, and that anyone might do the same in her circumstances.
- Reassure her that you want to understand her situation from her perspective.
- Tell her that you understand how difficult it can be to share parenting with an offender.
- Ask her what the offender has done to manipulate her and the children, and to undermine her role as mother.
- Ask what actions she has taken to protect her children, and how she altered her behavior to avoid violence. Answering this question might be difficult for her because of defensiveness, fear of reprisals, or lack of faith in her own parenting.
- Don't blame her for attempts to protect her children, or to seek help, that were not successful.
- Help her identify and connect with social supports. Isolating her and making him her only point of reference is how the offender has controlled her and degraded her parenting.
- Let her know how important she is to her children's resiliency.
- Help restore her belief in her own parenting.¹

Understanding How Children are Affected

One of the primary goals of supporting the mother, is to help her see things from her child's perspective. In the midst of her own trauma, she may require help understanding her child's reactions, including anger that may be directed at her as the protective parent. She may not understand why several months after leaving the violence, the child or youth is still displaying anger.

Mothers are highly motivated to help their children and want to know how they can support the development of healthy coping skills. Mothers can help their children respond to the violence at home, and they can be supported in seeing how their children have been affected in a unique way.

Asking about Her Resistance to the Violence

When we hear the word resistance, yelling "No!" and actively, physically struggling is likely the image that comes to mind. But remember: When working with children, youth, and caregivers who have experienced violence, that resistance can look and sound like an infinite number of things.

Resistance is any act or thought that helps someone maintain even a little bit of their dignity; for example, it might be walking home from school really slowly to avoid being alone with an unsafe person, or mentally leaving your body during an assault and "going to a better place."

"Whenever people are abused, they do many things to oppose the abuse and to keep their dignity and their self-respect. This is called resistance. The resistance might include not doing what the perpetrator wants them to do, standing up against, and trying to stop or prevent violence, disrespect, or oppression. Imagining a better life may also be a way that victims resist abuse."²

Knowing that people resist violence interrupts victim-blaming, because if we resist then we understand we did not want, nor ask, for this treatment—*as no one ever does*. Response-based practice is very clear in its stance towards violence, and firm on interrupting victim-blaming. The following four statements can help us stand in solidarity with victims of violence, rather than collude with the dominant messaging that blames them:

Violence is unilateral: This means, something one person does to another—it is never mutual.

Resistance is ever-present: Resistance is always there in the face of violence, though sometimes we must look specifically for it. We may need to assist children, youth, and their mothers to see and be aware of their own resistance, as they often minimize their efforts—especially if they were "unsuccessful" in stopping it. Resistance does not stop violence; only the person enacting violence can stop it; but conversations about resistance can be illuminating and powerful for children, youth, and mothers who experience violence.



It is also important to discuss the child's resistance, as the mother may not see some behaviours in this light. Much understanding and healing can emerge from the reference point of assuming resistance. This position means the counsellor understands that no one asks for violence; the responsibility for the violence and harm to the family can be placed where it needs to be, and the mother's actions are clearly seen within this context.

Violence is deliberate: Dominant ideas about violence give rise to phrases such as, "He just lost it," "I saw red," or "She pushed my buttons," all expressions of the idea that violence is an out-of-control experience. This is not true. Violence is very much a deliberate choice. Understanding that another person is making choices about their behaviour demands accountability, and this also interrupts victim-blaming.

Violence is social: Violence involves at least two people and occurs on the level of social action. Understanding violence and abuse is incomplete without knowing and naming the resistance to it. Standing in solidarity, and holding these statements to be true, is powerful ally work—and is part of the role of a PEACE Program counsellor.

Connecting Her with Appropriate Support Services and Resources

Women, children, and youth experiencing violence often have multiple needs that range far beyond those that can be met within the PEACE Program; for example, they may need assistance with practical issues such as housing, legal advocacy, income support, education and employment . PEACE Program counsellors can offer them support by providing useful information and referrals. Partnerships and professional relationships with other community organizations can help facilitate the referral process for mothers in need of additional support.

The Importance of Listening/Witnessing

Listening and witnessing is a vital step in creating a trusting relationship. Mothers, as with children and youth, respond to being listened to with close attention—without interrupting, commenting, fixing, or solving—while being encouraged to give voice to their experiences, sadness, fears, and hopes. Our capacity to bring full attention and awareness to a program participant's or mother's experience is critical to healing. It also helps mothers learn the importance and value of listening, making it possible for them to extend that experience to their children.

When working with a mother there are times to provide guidance and advice, and times to just listen. When a woman is sharing her experience, do not interrupt. Keep questions non-judgmental and to a minimum, such as "Can you say more about that?"

When the Mother is Struggling to Meet the Needs of the Child

Women who have experienced violence are often dealing with their own complex emotions, as well as trying to navigate all the challenges of leaving the violence –including securing affordable housing, income insecurity, legal battles, child protection involvement, and upheaval from home and community. Despite being out of the violent situation, women face another set of stresses and challenges as they try to establish safety for themselves and their children.

Mothering children who have experienced violence can be very challenging. Children may:

- Express anger at their mother and blame her for the violence and/or the disruption in lives since a separation.
- Miss their father or other caregiver, and be angry that they are no longer in their lives.
- Test limits with their mother; in many relationships, the father or male caregiver has assumed a primary role in disciplining the children but now that the mother is on her own, the children may not respect her authority or may act out in ways that test her ability to discipline them.

Children may also “remind” the mother of the offender, which can be particularly challenging because it triggers feelings of fear, anger, and powerlessness associated with the violence:

“The anger directed at the children is really misplaced anger (and maybe rage) that “belongs” to the abuser. On the other hand, some children’s behavior may actually remind the victim of herself. When she sees a child acting passively or “not defending herself,” the mother may become angry at the child. This is also misplaced anger—and connected to the anger that a woman may feel towards herself about the violence and related to feelings of self-blame.”³

PEACE Program counsellors should be aware of the complexities of these dynamics, and acknowledge that mothers are doing the best they can with what they know, and with the resources available to them. Counsellors can work with the mother by providing her with information and resources on boundaries, communication, and discipline; referrals to other programs that can assist her with the family’s essential needs (e.g. housing, income, legal); and that can help her identify strategies to build on her parenting skills.



Support Groups for Mothers

A PEACE Program's ability to offer support groups for mothers will vary based on the agency's contract, and resources. Groups are useful for a counsellor to serve and support several women at one time, and at the same time as supporting their children. In both groups and one-to-one counselling, PEACE Program counsellors can affirm the mother as a supportive parent, and help her discover and nurture her strengths and resiliency.

PEACE Program counsellors can provide supportive and educational groups and workshops that address topics such as:

- How a violent partner can affect a mother's ability to parent.
- How violent men parent.
- How a child or youth may be thinking and feeling about what happened.
- How the mother can promote their child's healing.
- How to help the mother deal with their own feelings.
- How to establish boundaries and positive discipline within the family.
- Everyday essentials of parenting, when children have lived with violence.
- Guidelines for setting family rules that are respectful of everyone.

However, it can be challenging at times to maintain a psycho-educational approach within the group. Some ways to ensure this include:

- Focusing on parenting concerns rather than on a mother's personal issues.
- Staying grounded in the present rather than in past issues.
- Avoiding the probing questions that might lead to deeper therapeutic work, which is inappropriate in this context and outside the mandate of the Program.
- Using instructional materials such as films, exercises, and handouts.
- Ensuring that women who need and desire individual support or counselling are referred to an appropriate resource, such as a Stopping the Violence (STV) Program.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR MOTHERS

Alberta Health Services. (2009). Terrific Toddlers: A facilitator's resource guide.

BC Children's Hospital. (2005). Helping my Child: A guide to supporting children exposed to Domestic Violence. Retrieved from <http://goldenfamilycentre.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/helping-my-child.pdf>

Baker, L., & Cunningham, A. (2004). Helping Children Thrive: Supporting Woman Abuse Survivors as Mothers. Centre for Children & Families in the Justice System, London Family Court Clinic, Inc. Retrieved from http://www.lfcc.on.ca/HCT_SWASM.pdf

Caring for Children Who Have Experienced Trauma: A Workshop for Resource Parents. Retrieved from http://nctsn.org/nctsn_assets/pdfs/rpc/RPC_ParticipantHandbook_FINAL.pdf

Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2013). Parenting a Child Who has Experienced Abuse or Neglect. Retrieved from https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/parenting_CAN.pdf

Coffery, D. (2009). Parenting After Violence. A Guide for Practitioners. Institute for Safe Families. <http://www.instituteforsafefamilies.org/sites/default/files/isfFiles/Parenting-After-Violence.pdf>

Promising Futures (2016). The Magic of Everyday Gestures: 8 Ways Parents and Caregivers can Support Children Healing from Trauma <http://promising.futureswithoutviolence.org/files/2012/08/Everyday-Gestures-Brochure.pdf>



HANDOUTS FOR MOTHERS



The following section provides some sample handouts for mothers.

SUPPORTING CHILDREN WITH EXPERIENCES OF VIOLENCE

How you can support your child:

- Spend extra time with children, making an extra effort to show children you love them.
- Encourage them to be open with you about their feelings and thoughts.
- Praise them for their successes, no matter how small or big.
- Provide babies and young children with the extra physical attention they may need, such as holding or comforting.
- Work on building or improving trust between you and your children.
- Reassure them that you will do your best to be there for them.
- Be clear on what they can expect from you, and at home. Having a routine is helpful: Mealtimes, bedtimes, wake-up times, homework, and self-care such as teeth cleaning and showering.
- Encourage positive behaviour by introducing consequences for negative behavior, such as time-outs and removal of privileges.
- Create household rules such as “no hitting.”
- Use non-violent methods of discipline, such as time-outs, star charts, and giving consequences that avoid exposing children to hurtful punishment.
- As older children also need guidance, come up with a check-in system, and a curfew for youth.
- Make sure children know that violence is NOT okay.
- Help create a safety plan.
- Have a safety plan for yourself.
- Be available for support, encouragement, and help with homework and school projects.
- If you are able to take them to parks, libraries, community centres, or museums, do so.
- Learn about what your child is interested in, and encourage this.
- When children are angry:
 - Calm yourself first if necessary.
 - Take deep breaths.
 - Think calming thoughts.
 - Perhaps leave the room for a few minutes.
 - Remind yourself, “They are just kids,” and, “They are not doing this to deliberately bug me.”



- Accept their feelings: Try saying, “You are really angry,” but tell them it is NOT okay to hit/swear at/be disrespectful to others.
- Be sure that you are setting a good example, and are respectful. You are an important role model for your children.
- If your child continues to hit/swear, send them into another room to cool off. If you have concerns that they are so angry that they might hurt themselves or destroy property, ask them to sit quietly where you can see them. You may need to hold a younger child.
- When they are calm, problem-solve with them about other ways to handle the issue, such as teaching them to use “I” statements: “When you take my doll without permission, I feel angry/hurt/sad.”
- Teach them other ways to express anger: Exercise, talking, writing/drawing about their feelings, skipping, scribbling on paper then tearing it up.

Things that aren’t supportive:

- Don’t give mixed messages to children such as, “Do as I say, but not as I do.” Set a good example.
- Never hit the child as punishment. No hitting, shoving, or pushing.
- Don’t get angry and say things you don’t mean, such as, “You’re just like your father,” or, “I wish you’d never been born.”

What you can say to children:

- Violence is never OK.
- I’m sorry that you heard /saw/ are aware of it. It must have been very scary for you.
- You didn’t cause it; it’s not your fault.
- There was nothing you could do to stop it or prevent it.
- Tell me how you feel about it.
- No kid deserves to experience violence in their family.
- I will do my best to keep you safe.
- We need to talk about what to do to keep you safe if it happens again.
- I care about you. You are important.

Source: Adapted from BC Children’s Hospital. (2005).

Helping My Child: A guide to supporting children exposed to domestic violence.

A NURTURING ENVIRONMENT FOR CHILDREN



DOMESTIC ABUSE INTERVENTION PROGRAMS
 202 East Superior Street
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THE MAGIC OF EVERYDAY GESTURES: EIGHT WAYS PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS CAN SUPPORT CHILDREN HEALING FROM TRAUMA

8 Everyday Gestures

- 1. Play with your child and enter their world.** Find activities that you can do together, like reading stories, playing video games, playing pretend, or playing sports.
- 2. Listen to your child** to help them feel seen, heard, and valued. Show them you are listening by bending down to their level, making eye contact, and putting down your phone.
- 3. Be your child's cheerleader.** Tell your child what you love about them. Inspire your child to discover activities that interest them, like sports, art, music or theatre.
- 4. Comfort your child** when they feel scared or overwhelmed, and practice techniques such as taking deep breaths and counting to ten. Help your child find other people and places that help them feel safe and supported.
- 5. Talk to your child about their feelings.** Help them to be able to label their emotions by using a feelings chart, and model healthy ways to express feelings. Ask your child about events from their day and how they made them feel.
- 6. Create calm and predictable environments.** Help your child know what to expect whenever possible by creating habits and routines. Ask yourself, what rituals would work for my family each day to make it more predictable?
- 7. Set clear rules and expectations** about your child's behavior and use positive reinforcement whenever possible. Clear rules might include "no name-calling" and how often they can watch TV. Reward your child's efforts to follow family rules.
- 8. Create a network of support** for you and your child, and be a support for other parents. At some point, we all need to ask for help. Whether you're helping someone else or needing it yourself, it's good to know what health, counseling, and recreation resources are part of your community.

Care for yourself, too!

Remember to take care of your own health and wellness so you can be there for your child. When life gets hectic, it can be hard to focus on your health. Whenever possible, take care of yourself by getting enough sleep, eating well, exercising, and going to the doctor regularly.

Focus on your healing. Hard parts of our lives can affect our health, relationships, and parenting in ways that aren't always obvious. Reach out for help — coming back from your own bad experiences will make it easier for your child to do the same.

Source: Promising Futures (2016). The Magic of Everyday Gestures: 8 Ways Parents and Caregivers Can Support Children Healing from Trauma. Retrieved from <http://promising.futureswithoutviolence.org/files/2012/08/Everyday-Gestures-Brochure.pdf>

THE POWER OF WORDS

One-liners that build:

- I am proud of you.
- You can be proud of yourself.
- Excellent job.
- Way to go.
- I know you can do it.
- I am so proud to be your parent.
- I am glad you are my child.
- Thank you.
- I believe in you.
- Do you want to tell me about it?
- You are very important to me.
- You're good at that.
- You are loved.
- You are special.
- You make me smile.
- I like spending time with you.
- I love you.

One-liners that destroy:

- What is wrong with you?
- Can't you ever listen to me?
- You did that wrong.
- How many times do I have to tell you?
- Go away, you're being a pest.
- Why can't you be like your sister?
- Shut up!
- Can you do anything right?
- That's just stupid!
- You make me so mad!
- You are just like your father!
- You are so lazy!
- Don't act like a wild animal.
- Stop acting crazy!
- It's all your fault!
- You're driving me crazy!
- You are not helpful.
- You NEVER....
- You ALWAYS....



SIBLING RELATIONSHIPS

- **Allow children their feelings:** Give children the permission to have whatever feelings they have towards siblings. Let them know you understand it can be unpleasant living with older/younger siblings. Try and understand where they are coming from.
- **Set rules around behavior:** All feelings are okay, but NOT all actions are. Explain to your children, that it is okay to feel _____ about their sibling, but it is NOT okay to hurt them in any way.
- **Share how you felt:** Children appreciate when you share your own personal experiences and challenges with them. Use this opportunity to share a story with them about your experience with your own siblings, whether positive or negative.
- **Avoid adjustment:** Try to actively listen to what is happening between the children, and help them work it out on their own. Empower children to look for their own solutions.
- **Understand your biases:** Be aware of your own dynamics with siblings. It's helpful to try and understand what our own issues are around competition and rivalry, and how they intersect with our parenting.
- **Build on strengths of each child:** Help children recognize their own strengths. Support each child, as the feelings will vary between youngest, middle, and eldest child.
- **Allow them time together:** Siblings can fight all day, then want to sleep together at night. Allow them time to be together.
- **Be prepared:** Try to plan ahead, anticipating situations where your children may need distractions. If you are going to a place where there will be long waits, take along books or drawing materials, so that sibling warfare doesn't become the entertainment.
- **Separate them:** If children are at risk of hurting themselves or each other physically, you may have to separate them until they are able to calm down and work things out.
- **Declare "off limits":** Allow children to own their favourite things that are "off limits" to their siblings.

Source: Adapted from an article in Today's Parent Magazine, February 1999.

WORKING WITH THE OFFENDING PARENT

Working with both parents together is not advised unless one can be absolutely certain that all violence and controlling behaviour has ceased and that the offender has made a commitment to non-violent behaviour.

Without certainty that the violence has stopped, at best it is impossible to create the necessary context of safety for full participation; at worst, the dangers for the woman and her children may increase.

Can the PEACE Program serve a child whose offending parent still lives in the family home, but who has taken responsibility for his offenses and ended his violence?

Some models of PEACE Programs encourage the participation of the offending parent as long as he is no longer using violence against the mother or the child. If the safety of the mother and child are assured, and if the child will have an ongoing relationship with him, some PEACE Programs believe that the participation of the offending parent is productive and ultimately helpful for the program participant. It may be helpful for the offending parent to learn how to respond to his children's ambivalent feelings towards him, and how to engage in the non-violent management of children's behaviour.

Each PEACE Program must review their Program mandate and funding contract, review this specific issue, and create a policy that clarifies whether offending parents who are taking responsibility for their past behaviours should be involved in a PEACE Program. If they choose to allow offending parents to be involved, the policy should provide direction on screening the offending parent for appropriateness, and describe the ways in which they can participate in the Program. Taking the time to create a policy ahead of time, that anticipates different possibilities, will guide the counsellor in making case-by-case decisions about inclusion or exclusion. Counsellors who are not sure whether to work with a particular offending parent should seek consultation from an experienced peer or a supervisor.

Things to Consider

How to address parenting after past violence is a developing topic, and there may be positive reasons to pursue the engagement of offending parents in their relationships with their children. Many mothers want to support the relationship between the children and their father/father figure, in spite of the violence.

In developing a policy to help PEACE Program counsellors decide whether and when to work with an offending parent, consider:

- Are the mother and child currently safe from violence?
- Has the offending parent taken responsibility for the violence?
- Do both the mother and the child wish the offending parent to be involved?



- Might the offending parent be using his participation in the Program as a means of increasing his control over the mother and child?
- Might the offending parent be using his participation in the Program to gain leverage in Family Court?
- Might the offending parent use the Program material to harass or intimidate the mother or the child?

The offending parent should be prepared to talk with their children about the violence. This is a difficult conversation to have, but in the same way that children need to hear certain messages from their mother, they need to hear from the offending parent that violence is not okay, and that the children are not responsible for the violence. Specific messages could include:

- My behavior was not okay, and violence is not okay.
- I am responsible.
- It's not your fault.
- It's not your mother's fault.
- I am sorry you had to experience my violence.
- You must have been scared.
- I will listen to you.
- It is okay if you are mad at me, scared of me. I would be too.
- You should not have to have this happen in your family.
- Your feelings are important.
- I am getting help so you can feel safer.⁴

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR WORKING WITH OFFENDING PARENTS

Across BC there are some programs currently available to support a formerly violent parent in learning healthier ways to act within a family including:

West Coast Men's Support Society <http://www.westcoastmen.org/Programs-all>

Parent Support Services Society of BC http://parentsupportbc.ca/parenting_education

Parenting After Separation Courses http://www.familylaw.lss.bc.ca/resources/fact_sheets/parent_after_separation.php

Managing Anger Through Intelligent Compassion <http://www.options.bc.ca/families-children/family-strengthening-development/men-s-owning-my-anger>

WORKING WITH MANDATED FAMILIES

PEACE Program counsellors may receive referrals from individuals or families that are court ordered or mandated to participate in PEACE Programming. For instance, the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) might include in a case plan that children need to participate in the PEACE Program, for the children to remain with the mother.

In these situations, where a child or youth might not want to attend the PEACE Program and/or when a child and their mother is feeling pressured into participating, the PEACE Program counsellors should discuss the referral with their supervisor. Together they could consider discussing the PEACE Program mandate and referrals with MCFD personnel to ensure that they are aware of any of the following issues:

- The Program is **voluntary**.
- Counselling is not successful if a child or youth does not want to participate.
- There is an existing waitlist.
- Individuals need to meet the contracted program criteria, which should not be overridden by the mandates of other programs or statutory authorities.

The Program can also consider meeting with the child or youth and their mother to provide an overview of the Program.

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² Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter. (2007). Honouring Resistance: How Women Resist Abuse in Intimate Relationships (formerly Resistance to Violence and Abuse in Intimate Relationships: A Response-Based Perspective). (p. 5). Retrieved from <https://www.calgarywomensshelter.com/images/pdf/cwesResistancebookletfinalweb.pdf>

³ Coffey, D. (2009). Parenting After Violence: A Guide for Practitioners. Pennsylvania: Institute for Safe Families. Retrieved from <http://www.instituteforsafe-families.org/sites/default/files/isfFiles/Parenting-After-Violence.pdf>

⁴ ibid



7. THEORY AND PRACTICE

GUIDING FRAMEWORK

The primary approaches that guide how PEACE Program counsellors work with children and youth with experiences of violence, and with their mothers:

- Child- and youth-centred.
- Feminist and intersectional.
- Strengths-based.
- Response-based.
- Violence- and trauma-informed.
- Anti-oppressive.

This section explores these approaches, and how they can be integrated into the PEACE Program counsellor's practice. Counsellors will ideally combine all these approaches into their practice; these approaches are connected, complement each other, and provide the essential framework for the counsellors' dynamic work.

CHILD- AND YOUTH-CENTERED

A child- and youth-centred approach recognizes that children and youth have particular needs and experiences that need to be addressed, and that these needs and experiences vary based on developmental stage and age. This approach relies on the commitment of PEACE Programs to be built around these unique experiences and needs, and on counsellors and parents to empower the children and youth—allowing them as much control over their lives, and the decisions that affect them, as possible.

Characteristics of child- and youth-centred practices:

- Seeing the child or youth as the primary program participant.
- Providing emotional and practical support.
- Recognizing that children's and youth's experiences of violence are not homogenous, and that each individual needs to have their experience understood within their individual context.
- Providing support and psycho-education that reflects the age, cognitive and social development, gender, socio-economic background, and ethnicity of program participants.
- Supporting children and youth to make sense of their experience.

- Giving voice to children and youth.
- Seeing children and youth as their own social agents, with their own issues and concerns.
- Questioning any practice or policy that disempowers children.
- Inclusiveness.
- Supportiveness and safety.
- Fun.
- Recognizing critical timeframes in providing support and thus provide relevant and timely services.
- Providing children and youth with direct and indirect opportunities to express their feelings and wishes.
- Promoting a collaborative approach to influencing children and youth's multiple environments (e.g. family and home, school, community and society).

Recognizing and acknowledging each program participant's unique experience includes recognizing the factors in their lives that can either create protection and safety, or risk. In identifying these protective and risk factors, PEACE Program counsellors can help promote and develop the protective factors, and help mitigate the potential risks. A counsellors' capacity to bring full attention and awareness to a program participant's experience is critical to healing; the alienating and disconnecting experience of violence and abuse requires connected relationships for healing. Witnessing is the first step to creating relationship.

The PEACE Program upholds that all children and youth have the right to:

- Access our free services.
- Know they will receive safe and supportive services.
- Be treated with respect and compassion.
- Be met where they are at.
- Privacy and confidentiality of information.
- Physical, psychological, and emotional safety.
- Know they are not responsible for the abuse.

Adolescence

Looking specifically at a youth-centred approach, a positive youth development perspective understands that adolescence is a period characterised by tremendous growth and potential, even in the face of adversity. It "recognises that there are diverse pathways through adolescence, and that these pathways reflect the dynamic interplay between each young person's own individual characteristics and the resources and risks arrayed around them."¹



PEACE Program counsellors, in the development of empowering and respectful relationships with youth, must take into account “cultural identity, family circumstances and values, and encourage active involvement of youth in resolving the issues or challenges they were confronting (i.e. encouraging youth agency).”² This will influence the positive healing and growth of the program participants they support.

INTERSECTIONAL FEMINIST FRAMEWORK

PEACE Programs are informed by their Transition House grassroots history and embody the same feminist principles of gender inequality, and a recognition of women and girls as the primary victims of gender-based violence. Feminism acknowledges the role of patriarchy in privileging men, maintaining the oppression of women and girls, and condoning gender-based violence.

An intersectional lens takes this understanding of gender inequality one step further to recognize that individuals have multiple aspects to their identities which shape and restrict their lives, including experiences of violence, power, and privilege; and multiple forms of systemic oppression.³ A woman may experience various forms of discrimination (e.g. racism, classism, misogyny, colonialism) at any one time, which intersect to compound and further marginalize her and put her at increased risk of violence.

An intersectional feminist framework includes applying a critical lens to these interconnected systems of power that influence a woman’s ability to access resources—such as social or economic status, ability, citizenship/nationality, class, education, ethnicity, experience of colonization, gender, geographic location, health, occupation, refugee/immigrant status, religion, and sexuality. The framework also promotes ways to disrupt these systems of power that marginalize and disempower women and girls.

Intersectional feminist practices are those that:

- Acknowledge gender inequality.
- Recognize that feminism means different things to different people.
- Acknowledge the diversity and intersectionality of children’s and women’s identities and experiences.
- Value each woman, child, and youth as the expert of their own experiences.
- Place priority on emotional and physical safety.
- Place responsibility of abuse on the perpetrator.
- Validate each woman’s, child’s, and youth’s experience.
- Provide non-judgmental, non-labeling services.
- Respect self-determination.
- Foster self-empowerment.

- View behaviours as responses to experiences of abuse, not symptoms or pathologies.
- Understand violence as a systemic issue not an individual problem.
- Acknowledge resistance to violence.
- Nurture an individual's sense of self.
- Ensure that Program activities and resources portray a wide range of experiences and identities, so that children, youth, and women can see themselves and their experiences reflected in PEACE Program content.
- Acknowledge and seek to reduce the power differential between the counsellor and women, children, and youth.
- Build a woman's, child's, and youth's support and safety network.

STRENGTH-BASED APPROACH

PEACE Programs work from a strength-based perspective, meaning that counsellors support children and youth and non-offending parents to identify their strengths; name them; and celebrate them. Strength-based counselling can enhance psycho-educational counselling by focusing on the program participant's emotional and behavioural skills, competencies, and characteristics that (a) create a sense of personal accomplishment; (b) contribute to satisfying relationships with family members, peers, and adults; (c) enhance one's ability to deal with stress and adversity; and (d) promote one's personal, social, and academic development. Opportunities to see themselves as being able to "succeed despite the odds" helps build initiative, motivation, and resilience.

Strength-based practices avoid the use of stigmatizing and pathologizing language, and provide alternatives to victim identities. Counsellors view children's and youth's symptoms as natural responses to their experiences of violence, as opposed to deficits or pathologies that need to be treated. A strength-based approach asks, "What happened to this child?" instead of "What is wrong with this child?"

Strength based practices are those that:

- Engage in activities and dialogue that highlight and enhance existing skills and strengths.
- Honour and illuminate the ways the child or youth has resisted the violence.
- Avoid the use of stigmatizing and blaming language.
- Encourage and assist with reframing program participants' negative perceptions of themselves.
- Help foster self-esteem.
- Teach new skills and strategies to help with coping and minimizing impacts.
- Foster hope by reminding program participants of their abilities, and how they have used strategies and resistance in the past to successfully cope with adversity.



- Offer reassurance that the child's or youth's reactions are natural under the circumstances.
- Design and offer groups to match program participants who are at approximately the same developmental stage.
- Adapt individual counselling to suit the child's or youth's developmental and support needs.

RESPONSE-BASED APPROACH

The response-based approach arose out of supporting individuals who had experienced violence and mistreatment. Taking a response-based approach to the work means drawing attention to the ways that children, youth, and their mothers have resisted (overtly or covertly) the violence and other forms of oppression in their lives. In PEACE work, when we meet with children and youth about their experiences of violence, we aim to understand their story and the effects that the violence has on their life. This is often the first story that is brought to our attention, and this story requires recognition.⁴

“Children are oriented to dignity, protection of self, and loved ones, and they strive for balance in their relationships and life at home. Young children are attuned to fairness and justice in adult decisions and learning environments; they seek to have their perspectives heard.”

Richardson & Wade, (2015). p. 203

There is also a second, important story: How the program participant has responded to these experiences of violence. Children and youth experiencing abuse actively interpret, predict, assess, problem-solve, and take measures to protect themselves and others. However:

“this second story is often overlooked. No-one is a passive recipient of trauma. Even children respond in ways to lessen the effects of the trauma, to seek comfort, to try to preserve what is precious to them, and so on. The ways in which children respond to trauma are based on certain skills. These skills reflect what the child gives value to. And what the child gives value to is linked to the child's history, to their family, to their community, and to their culture.”⁵

This second story, of how a child or youth has historically responded to violence, is part of the response-based approach to working with program participants.

There are many physical, mental and social impacts of experiencing violence (See the ***Child Development Theory*** section), and it is essential to acknowledge the many ways a program participant responds to, and actively resists, violence:

- Running away.
- Hiding.
- Making themselves invisible.
- Protecting siblings or their mother.
- Crying.
- Yelling.
- Becoming silent.
- Refereeing.
- Trying to negotiate with a violent father.
- Experiencing despair and distrust.
- Seeking outside help.

We can honour [program participants'] experience of responding to violence as evidence of their capacity to act, care, and reflect as spirited beings. We can take children's resistance seriously, not as symptoms of mental illness, but rather as a clear sign of mental wellness."

Richardson & Wade, (2015). p. 212

Children and youth describe many ways in which they respond to and resist the violence: "Children are not just passive recipients of experience – recipients who merely replicate and reproduce what they see, hear, taste, touch, and feel; they also interpret their experiences and use their interpretations to draw conclusions about self, others, and the world."⁶ Children who experience violence become skilled at assessing for safety and risk, as well as intervening in the violence to influence the outcome and ultimately maximize safety. As children and youth grow, their understanding of violence—and their responses to experiences of violence—will change.

Response based practices include those that:

- Shift the focus from how a program participant has been affected, to the ways in which she responded to the violence.
- Assume that children and youth have resisted the violence, and explore the ways they have done so; for example, when a program participant is describing what happened, you can ask questions such as:
 - "How did you respond?"
 - "Where did you go?"
 - "How did you (and your siblings) comfort yourself/each other?"
 - "Was there anything that you did that made you feel better?"
- Be an ally.
- Restore dignity.



Framing our questions as response-based, rather than effects-based, can result in a positive change in PEACE practice—as illustrated in the following table:

Effects-based Questions	Response-based Questions
Passive	Active, responding
Incapable	Competent
Failed	Did what they could
Went along with it	Opposed it
Re-enacts violence	Re-enacts resistance
Pathological	Natural responses
I am the problem	Violence is the problem
Inner problem	Social problem

By naming and acknowledging the ways in which children and youth respond and resist, we highlight for them their own wisdom and agency within adverse situations. In highlighting a program participant’s resistance, counsellors disrupt victim blaming—children and youth can feel and know that the violence is not their fault—and restore dignity.

VIOLENCE-AND TRAUMA- INFORMED APPROACH

Trauma is often understood as an individual experience and response to an overwhelmingly negative event. For children, youth, and women who are living in a context of violence, these experiences, and responses to it, are ongoing: Trauma is one of the many possible effects of experiencing violence. Adding violence to the notion of a trauma-informed approach draws explicit attention to the gendered violence that results in women’s and children’s trauma response; as well as to “the intersection of women’s experiences of violence and social and structural inequities, including structural violence.”⁷ A violence-and trauma-informed approach expands the current notion of trauma-informed to counter the dominant tendency to entrench the focus on the individual woman and her experiences of violence as both the problem and the solution, and acknowledges that gender-based violence—as a structural and systemic issue—requires structural and systemic solutions.⁸ By broadening our understanding of violence and trauma, we respond to the physical, economic, political, and social impacts—on the individual woman and child, and on society as a whole.

Violence- and trauma-informed practices are those that include:

- Not requiring a program participant to disclose experiences of violence to provide services.
- Creating emotionally and physically safe environments.
- Fostering a sense of choice, collaboration, and connection to build trust.
- Ensuring control remains in the hands of the program participant as much as possible and that explicit consent is obtained.
- Focusing on minimizing the potential for service to cause further harm by triggering or re-traumatizing.
- Being attuned to the social and economic impacts of violence, in addition to physical and mental health impacts.
- Understands that emotional, mental, physical and behavioural issues arise as a result of abuse— that they are not an inherent deficit in the woman, child, or youth, but a natural response to their experiences of violence.

A violence- and trauma-informed approach also acknowledges that for PEACE Program counsellors in this work, the impacts of often and repeatedly hearing children, youth, and women’s experiences of violence, takes its toll and can result in vicarious or secondary trauma.⁹ A violence-and trauma-informed workplace acknowledges the challenges and risks of this work, and aims to mitigate harm for the counsellors by providing a compassionate and supportive environment that encourages self-care. (See **Support for PEACE Program Counsellors** section.)

CULTURAL SAFETY

Cultural safety is not limited to ethnic differences; it can also be applied to the broader culture of children and youth. A cultural safety approach applies to all children and youth PEACE Program counsellors work with. There can be significant variations within a culture, and we must be careful not to make assumptions either about the child or youth we are supporting, or about their culture or community. Culturally responsive approaches exist on a continuum, from cultural awareness to cultural safety.

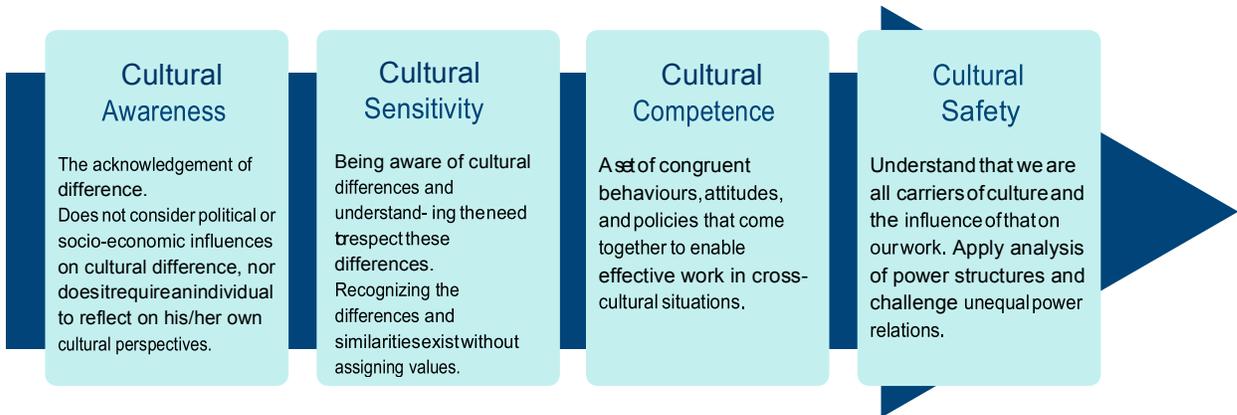


FIGURE 9: CONTINUUM OF CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE APPROACHES

Cultural safety is defined as “an environment that is safe for people; where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience, of learning together with dignity and truly listening.”¹⁰ Cultural safety requires the provider to be intuitive, curious, and responsive to each child and youth, and to critically examine and equalize power relations in every interaction.

Culturally safe practices include:

- Understanding that we are all carriers of culture, and the influence of that on our work.
- Awareness of our own values, assumptions, and beliefs.
- Applying analysis of power structures, and challenging unequal power relations.
- Recognizing and respecting differences between nations and peoples.
- Treating each program participant as an individual with their own experiences and context.
- Determining success by a child’s or youth’s perception of whether the interaction and support is culturally safe.
- Not categorizing or labeling individuals.
- Asking instead of assuming how someone identifies.
- Ensure open, respectful, and non-judgmental communication.
- Placing the onus on our agency and ourselves to create safety, instead of requiring the program participant to adapt to one style or structure of support.
- Ensuring that actions do not “diminish, demean, or disempower the cultural identity and well-being of an individual.”¹¹
- Hire staff that represent commitment to cultural diversity and awareness.
- Collaborate with other agencies to enhance PEACE Programs’ ability to provide culturally safe services.

ANTI-OPPRESSIVE FRAMEWORK

Anti-oppression refers to the “strategies, theories, and actions that challenge socially and historically built inequalities and injustices that are ingrained in our systems and institutions, by policies and practices that allow certain groups to dominate other groups.”¹² Individuals can be both victims and perpetrators of oppression. For example, a white woman may experience gender inequality because of being a woman, and may also experience privilege because of belonging to the dominant white culture. These identities intersect and impact a child’s or youth’s access to resources, power, and safety.

Anti-oppressive practices include:

- Inviting service providers and agencies to reflect on their own power and privilege, and how this may be perceived and experienced by the children, youth, and women they support.
- Service providers being attune to, and actively countering, any power imbalances between program participants and themselves.
- Ensuring that services are inclusive and accessible to all women, children, and youth.
- Not making assumptions about who the children and youth are, and about what is important to them.
- Fostering choice, control, agency, and autonomy.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ON THEORY AND PRACTICE

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CHILD DEVELOPMENT THEORY

Children grow and develop over the course of childhood, affecting their physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development. Heredity and environmental factors, including violence, influence a child's development. In this section we will generally explore how a child's environment, particularly their experiences of violence, influences their development and their cognitive, emotional, psychological, and social functioning. In the ***Working with Children*** section, impacts of experiences of violence on child development will be explored in more detail for each age group.

ATTACHMENT THEORY

Attachment theory was founded by John Bowlby, a child psychiatrist, and provides a framework for understanding relationships between individuals—in the context of PEACE Programs, between parent and child. Human beings are social creatures and create many different kinds of bonds between themselves and other humans. A bond is simply a connection between one person and another. "Attachment" is the term used to describe a strong affectionate bond that leads us to experience pleasure when we interact, and comfort from nearness in times of stress; this is most obvious in the relationship between an infant and her primary caregiver.

To work effectively with children and youth, particularly those who have been with experiences of violence, a counsellor should understand how attachment develops; the consequences of not being securely attached; and how to mitigate harms and support the mother to repair the attachment. This section outlines Attachment Theory and how it relates to the work of PEACE Program counsellors.

What is Attachment?

The importance of a child's close relationship with a caregiver cannot be overestimated. Close emotional bonds between a child and their primary caregiver promote healthy attachment, which is necessary to promote healthy social and emotional development. Through relationships with important attachment figures, children learn to trust others, regulate their emotions, and interact with the world. According to Attachment Theory, the quality of the attachment a child forms with her primary caregiver influences how she behaves as an adult and is the foundation for all the relationships she will develop throughout her life. For example, if a child's caregiver has consistently responded to their attachment behaviours and needs (e.g. attending to them when they cry), the child is more likely to see the world as good, responsive, and safe; and see the self as worthy of love and care.¹³

Attachment is not an "all or nothing" process—all children attach to their caregivers in some way. There are four distinct styles of attachment:

- Secure
- Insecure Avoidant
- Insecure Resistant
- Insecure Disorganized/Disoriented

Four Styles of Attachment			
Type of Attachment	Description of Child's behavior	Description of Mother's Behaviour	Percentage of children that exhibit this style of attachment
Secure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upset, subdued when mother leaves, happy on reunion. Avoidant of strangers when mother not there, but okay when mother present. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sensitive and responsive. Child feels positive and loved. 	50%–70%
Insecure Avoidant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unconcerned by mother's absence. Unresponsive on return. Strongly avoidant of mother and strangers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unresponsive. Child feels unloved and rejected. 	10%–20%
Insecure Resistant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intense distress on separation. Fear of stranger. Clingy and rejecting on return. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inconsistent. Child feels angry and confused. 	10%–20%
Insecure Disorganized/ Disorientated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No consistent way of dealing with stress. Insecure. Shows confused and contradictory behavior. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fails to interact. Typical attachment style when child is abused or neglected. 	5%–10%

FIGURE 10: FOUR STYLES OF ATTACHMENT

(Source: Adapted from Balan, P. (2013). Bowlby's Theory of Attachment.)



How does Attachment Develop?

As a child interacts with her environment the child will encounter changes that generate stress, such as hunger or thirst, and being cold, wet, or fearful. Mothers who are available and responsive to their child's needs establish a sense of security—the child knows the caregiver is dependable, which creates a secure base for the child to explore the world.¹⁴

The attachment bond has the following key elements:

- An enduring emotional relationship with a specific person.
- The relationship brings safety, comfort, and pleasure.
- Loss or threat of loss of the person evokes intense distress.

When an infant is alarmed or distressed, whether by hunger, pain, fear, or any other stressor, she seeks out soothing physical contact with her primary caregiver through behaviours that change with age. These "attachment behaviours" include crying, grasping, clinging, approaching, following, smiling, reaching, and vocalizing. These behaviours are used by the infant/child to seek contact with her caregiver and to elicit a comforting response. In most families, these needs are met quickly and consistently by one of a few caregivers. Stability and continuity of care build trust, and over time the infant/child develops deeper and deeper levels of attachment to these caregivers. The caregivers provide an infant with feelings of safety and security, allowing the child to explore her world and know that if she is frightened or distressed, she will be safe, soothed, or comforted when returning to the secure base of the caregiver.

Children and youth who have developed healthy attachments are more likely to be able to build and sustain other relationships, to be independent, and to develop a conscience and self-discipline.¹⁵ If early relationships are characterized by trust, reciprocity, consistency, and child-centred nurturing activities, the child's propensity to develop positive, desirable relations with peers and other adults is enhanced.

Attachment in Children Who Experience Violence

On the other hand, an early parent/child relationship marked by fear, inconsistency, and unmet physical and psychological needs is associated with poor formation of peer relationships and a higher frequency of behavioural and emotional disorders.¹⁶

Violence disrupts healthy attachment. When children grow up in a household where their mother is being abused there are several potential negative impacts on both a child's development, and on the development of secure attachment between the mother and child. Because of their dependence, children are vulnerable to threats and acts of violence aimed at their mother, especially when the source of the violence is another caregiver—such as their father, or their mother's partner. Abusers have been shown to deliberately target a woman's mothering role as an abusive tactic to disrupt the mother-child bond—to undermine her confidence, and thus her ability to be

emotionally and physically available and responsive to the child. However, women are extremely resourceful in violent circumstances and many work to compensate by providing especially attentive parenting when possible.

A woman living with an abusive partner also experiences negative impacts on her health and well-being, which can affect her ability to connect with and support her child. Living with an abuser can undermine a woman's efforts, as well as her confidence, to parent. The behaviour of the abusive partner clearly disrupts the child's and the mother's sense of safety, and creates fright in addition to any emotional and physical harm.¹⁷ Further disruptions to attachment relationships result from many other stressors in some children's environments when there is violence—including poverty, homelessness and/or housing insecurity, and separation from their caregiver. As a result, a child may be denied potential sources of love, nurturing, and support, and learns to see the world as scary and unsafe. These negative outcomes can have consequences in adulthood.

How to Repair Mother and Child Attachment?

When a woman experiences violence, she may be less able to develop a secure attachment with her child. Without secure attachment, a child is at higher risk for emotional, behavioural, and relationship problems as a teen and as an adult. (See *Impacts of Experiencing Violence in the Research Highlights* section.) However, longitudinal studies have also shown that attachment status can change over time, with changes in environment. Some studies have shown that the mother-child relationship improves following the end of the violence; the mother's safety, health, and well-being restored; and increased stability in living conditions.

PEACE Program counsellors, in collaboration with women's support workers in their organization, can do several things to support and repair the mother-child relationship, and to foster security and safety:

- Inspire and empower women in their mothering role.
- Reinforce and validate a woman's pre-existing mothering strategies to increase self-confidence in her ability.
- Affirm the ways that mothers have acted resourcefully and in the best interests of their child.
- Support mothers to accept the impacts of the abuse on their child, while reinforcing that the abuse was not their fault.
- Assist mothers to reflect on their child's experiences and impacts of abuse to support increasing empathy and maternal sensitivity.
- Foster a mother's emotional literacy—their ability to understand their child's verbal and non-verbal cues.
- Support and educate mothers and children about how to discuss and express their feelings and experiences; improved communication can improve attachment security.



- Reinforce that everyone has the right to live safe from abuse, and that nobody is responsible for the violence except the perpetrator.
- Promote positive representations of self to affirm that they are worthy of love and respect.¹⁸

“Early experience influences later development, but it isn’t fate: therapeutic experiences can profoundly alter an individual’s life course.”¹⁹ Counsellors can create opportunities for children and youth to safely connect with their mother, help to facilitate a shared experience between them, and open a way to communicate about the abuse. By fostering the mother-child relationship through communication and emotional connection, counsellors can help to repair the attachment bond and to mitigate some of the potentially negative outcomes of insecure attachment.

(See **Supporting the Mother in the Working with Parents** section for further exploration of how to support the non-offending parent.)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ON CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND VIOLENCE

Center on the Developing Child, (2016) 8 Things to Remember about Child Development. Harvard University. Retrieved from <http://46y5eh11fhgw3ve3ytpwxt9r.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/8-Things-to-Remember-About-Child-Development.pdf>

Cunningham, A., & Baker, L. (2007). Little eyes, Little Ears: How violence against a mother shapes children as they grow. London: Centre for Children & Families in the Justice System

Infant Mental Health Promotion. (2012). The Impact of Domestic Violence on Infants and Young Children. Toronto: The Hospital for Sick Children. Retrieved from <http://www.imhpromotion.ca/portals/0/IMHP%20PDFs/Domestic%20Violence%20Brief.pdf>

Siegel, D. (2010). Dr. Daniel Siegel: Resources. Retrieved from <http://www.drdansiegel.com/resources/>

ATTACHMENT, TRAUMA, AND THE BRAIN

Science and research have shown that a consistently caring adult in the life of a child is one of the most important protective factors towards healing. Child traumatic stress is defined by The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) as stress that “occurs when a child experiences an intense event that threatens or causes harm to his or her emotional and physical well-being”²⁰ (e.g. violence against their mother, neglect). Children who suffer from child traumatic stress, such as violence in the home, may develop reactions that continue to affect their daily lives long after the violence has ended.

“The capacity to deal with stress is controlled by a set of interrelated brain circuits and hormone systems that are specifically designed to respond adaptively to environmental challenges.”²¹ Experiencing violence can impact and impair the physical development of a child’s brain, potentially leading to lifelong health and social issues.

If a child’s world is safe and predictable, she is more likely to grow up to be a self-regulating, thoughtful, and productive member of family, community, and society. In contrast, if the developing child’s world is chaotic and threatening, she may become impulsive, aggressive, and inattentive, and may have difficulties with relationships.²² However, the young brain is malleable. Fostering stable, supportive relationships can reverse the damage to the brain.

How the Brain Develops

The brain’s communication system begins with nerve cells called neurons, most of which develop connections to each other by a complicated network made up of nerve fibres called axons and dendrites. An axon is a fibre that extends from a neuron. *Axons transmit electrochemical impulses* from that neuron to the dendrites of other neurons. A dendrite is another type of fibre that extends from a neuron. *Dendrites receive electrochemical impulses* transmitted from other neurons via their axons. Synapses are the tiny gaps between the axon of one neuron and the dendrite of the next. Neurons communicate by sending electrochemical impulses, through their axons, to synapses, where they are picked up by the dendrites of another neuron.

At birth, the brain contains more than 100 billion neurons, far more than one person will ever use in a lifetime. On the other hand, the newborn brain has far fewer dendrites and synapses than the person will eventually possess. During the first months and years of life, a great many new axons, dendrites, and synapses develop, especially in the part of the brain most responsible for thinking, feeling, and sensing. Dendrite growth is the major reason that brain weight triples in the first two years of a child’s life.



This early rapid growth is followed by a process called “pruning,” in which unused neurons and misconnected dendrites atrophy and die to make way for the growth of those that are healthy and being used most. The process is called pruning because it is similar to the way a gardener might prune a bush or tree, removing dead or misshapen branches to allow room for the development of healthy ones. It seems ironic, but the brain’s ability to think more complex thoughts as a child grows is related to a loss, rather than a gain, of synapses. Synapses, dendrites, and even neurons continue to form and die throughout a person’s life, but never as rapidly as in infancy.

Early experiences, before age two, help to decide which dendrites will continue to develop and which will be “pruned.” These experiences affect the brain’s physical structure in ways that last throughout the person’s lifetime.

Brain Development in the Context of Abuse

Extensive research over recent years has helped to understand the impact of chronic stress on the brain. Continued direct or indirect exposure to violence activates a child’s “fight or flight” stress response system, causing a release of chemicals and stress hormones. When a person experiences stress, cortisol and other hormones are released into the brain. Cortisol is often referred to as the “stress hormone” because it helps the body respond to stress; for example, by raising blood pressure and blood sugar. Cortisol also affects other systems within the body; for example, by reducing the immune response and increasing stomach acids. It can also affect memory and other cognitive functions.

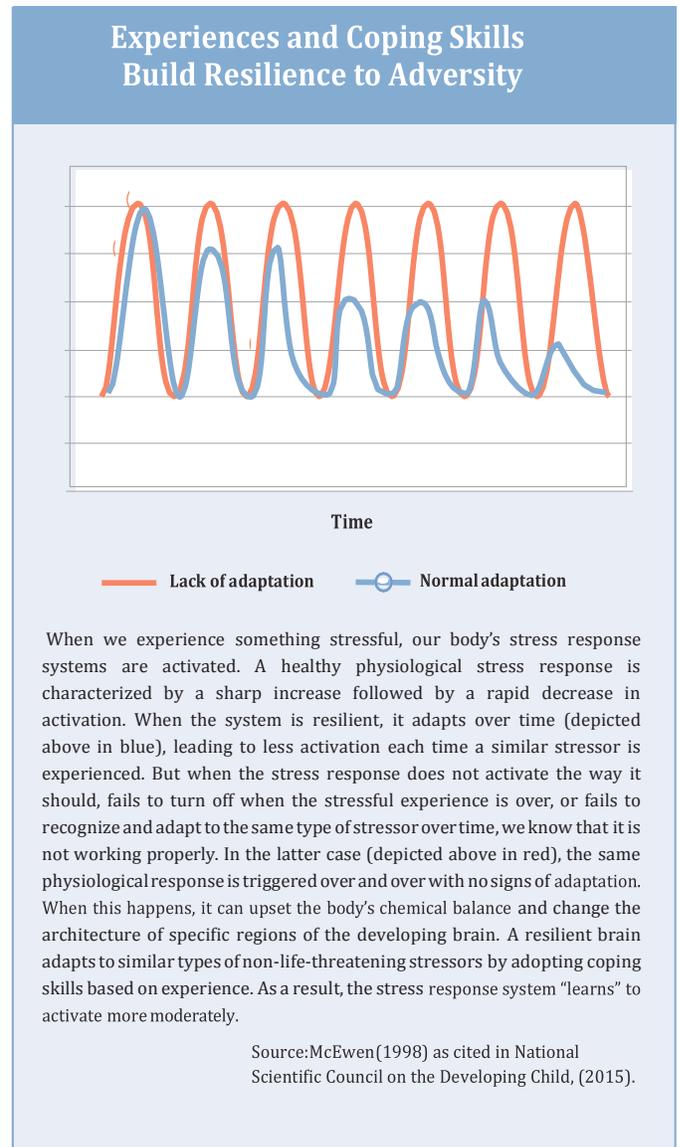


FIGURE 11: EXPERIENCES AND COPING SKILLS BUILD RESILIENCY TO ADVERSITY

Reproduced with permission from the Centre on the Developing Child at Harvard University. <https://developingchild.harvard.edu>

Cortisol is a wonderful thing in a crisis, but is harmful if the body doesn't have the opportunity to relax and return to normal after a crisis episode. If the stress is relieved, as when a child receives comfort and support from a caregiver, the stress response can return to normal. However, the effect of ongoing stress and prolonged activation of a child's stress response system results in high arousal, and can cause damage that can lead to toxic stress.²³

Research shows that the cortisol-flooded brain of a young child is changed in significant ways. If the amygdala is overstimulated, the function of the hippocampus can be suppressed and can actually reduce the size of the hippocampus by 15%.²⁴ When that individual is older, her brain may either overproduce stress hormones, making her hypervigilant, or underproduce them, making her emotionally flat.²⁵ Long-term elevations of cortisol can change the architecture of regions of the brain that are essential for learning and memory.²⁶

The more violence and traumatic stress a child is exposed to, "the more neural connections are created in regions of the brain involving fear, anxiety, and impulsiveness; and underproduced in regions involving reasoning, planning, and behaviour control."²⁷ This can lead to long-term behavioural and physiological problems such as depression, substance use, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, immunology, and inflammation patterns, as well as poorly controlled stress response systems that can be overly reactive—or slow to shut down—when faced with threats.^{28,29}

The time of early brain growth and development, up to age four, provides an opportunity referred to as a "biological gift." In a nurturing environment, a child can grow to achieve the full potential preordained by underlying genetics. If the brain produces too much cortisol early in life however, as happens when an infant is frequently terrified, brain development is affected and the brain may become incapable of normal stress responses. Fear is something that we're all biologically wired to experience when we're in danger. We share this with other animals. When we perceive danger, we alert, we startle, we look around, do a quick appraisal of the situation, and we either fight or flight, or freeze. But this doesn't work in conditions of terror and helplessness. Under those conditions, it appears that even after the danger is over, the person continues to react to reminders of the terrifying event—both to specific reminders and to generally threatening situations. **It is as though this terrifying event were still occurring in the present.** The result is often the hypervigilance or emotional flatness described above. A suppressed hippocampus can also affect an individual's context for memories, where past and present can become confused and dissociation can occur.

High levels of cortisol in the brain affect health, well-being, and the ability to cope. In a hypervigilant child, a small stressor, such as an argument with a peer or a demanding school task, can cause the child to escalate to a state of fear very quickly. Compared with their peers, therefore, traumatized children may have less capacity to tolerate the normal demands and stresses of school, home, and social life. Children and youth who regularly produce higher levels of cortisol show more difficulties in sustaining attention, poorer memory, and a decreased ability to control their behaviour.

Fear and Anxiety Affect the Brain Architecture of Learning and Memory

PREFRONTAL CORTEX

Center of executive functions; regulates thought, emotions, and actions. Especially vulnerable to elevation of brain chemicals caused by stress. Matures later in childhood.

AMYGDALA

Triggers emotional responses; detects whether a stimulus is threatening. Elevated cortisol levels caused by stress can affect activity. Matures in early years of life.

HIPPOCAMPUS

Center of short-term memory; connects emotion of fear to the context in which the threatening event occurs. Elevated cortisol levels caused by stress can affect growth and performance. Matures in early years of life.

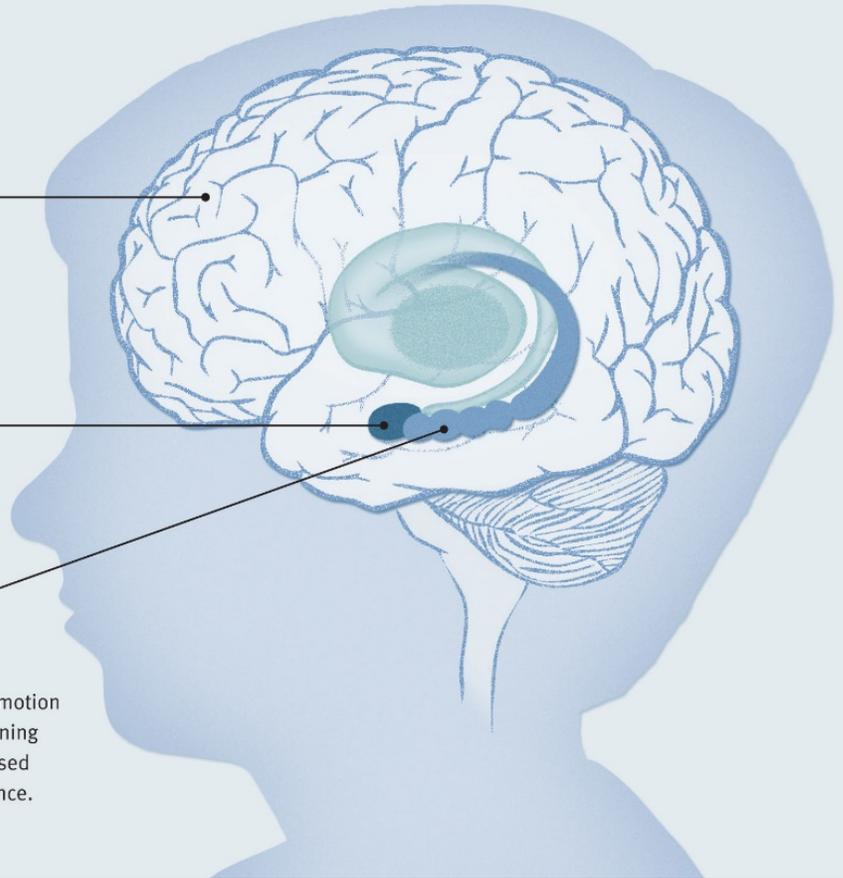


FIGURE 12: FEAR AND ANXIETY AFFECT THE BRAIN ARCHITECTURE OF LEARNING AND MEMORY

(Source: National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2010). Persistent Fear and Anxiety Can Affect Young Children's Learning and Development: Working Paper No. 9. <http://www.developingchild.net>, p.4)

Reproduced with permission from the Centre on the Developing Child at Harvard University. <https://developingchild.harvard.edu>

Fully understanding the impacts of violence on a child or youth include considering the potential impacts on the brain while also acknowledging the social context in which they live.

How Attachment Repairs

Attachment, and a supportive relationship with caregivers, assists a child's brain's ability to regulate stress hormone production during the early years of life.

Children:

"...who experience the benefits of secure relationships have a more controlled stress hormone reaction when they are upset or frightened. This means that they are able to explore the world, meet challenges, and be frightened at times without sustaining the adverse neurological impacts of chronically elevated levels of hormones such as cortisol that increase reactivity of selected brain systems to stress and threat. In contrast, children whose relationships are insecure or disorganized demonstrate higher stress hormone levels even when they are mildly frightened."³⁰

The importance of connection, relationship, and a caring attuned individual who can listen and help regulate the child, cannot be overstated. It is a significant buffer against stress hormone exposure, and ameliorates the impacts of trauma and violence. This connection can be fostered by the child's mother, and can also be provided by other individuals who have an opportunity to listen to and support the child.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ON ATTACHMENT, TRAUMA, AND THE BRAIN

Child Trauma Academy. (2016) Retrieved from <http://childtrauma.org>

Children Without a Voice USA. "First Impressions: Exposure to Violence on the Child's Developing Brain." YouTube, uploaded by Children Without a Voice USA September 22, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=brVOYtNMmKk>

Futures without Violence. (2016). Childhood Trauma: Changing Minds. Retrieved from <http://changingmindsnow.org>

National Centre on Domestic Violence, Trauma & Mental Health. (2012). Tips for Supporting Children and Youth Exposed to Domestic Violence: What you Might See and What you Can Do. Retrieved from http://www.nationalcentredvtraumamh.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Tipsheet_Children-Exposed_NCDVTMH_May2012.pdf

The National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. (2010). Persistent Fear and Anxiety Can Affect Young Children's Learning and Development: Working Paper No. 9. Retrieved from <http://46y5eh11fhgw3ve3ytpwxt9r.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/Persistent-Fear-and-Anxiety-Can-Affect-Young-Childrens-Learning-and-Development.pdf>

Siegel, D. "Hand model of the brain." YouTube, uploaded by Peter Hanson September 25, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1XbZNpIEs9U>



IMPACTS OF ABUSE

Studies indicate that children’s experiences of violence against their mother significantly disrupt their development, resulting in disturbed patterns of cognitive, emotional and/or behavioural adjustment, and physical health symptoms. These impacts are interrelated and influence and compound upon one another, with the potential for lifelong negative outcomes.

POSSIBLE IMPACTS ON CHILDREN EXPERIENCING VIOLENCE ^{31,32,33,34,35}

BEHAVIOURAL

- Aggression
- Temper tantrums
- Anti-social behaviour
- Social and interpersonal challenges
- Bullying
- Being bullied
- Non-compliant
- Isolation
- Difficulty trusting others
- Difficulties in peer relationships
- Sleep disturbances & nightmares
- Flashbacks
- Poor relationship skills
- Truancy
- Substance Use
- Problems with attachment
- Suicidal behaviours
- Self-harm

MENTAL HEALTH

- Developmental regression
- Separation issues
- Fear and anxiety
- Internalizing problems
- Depression
- Low self-esteem and self-worth
- Trauma responses such as flashbacks, hyperarousal, or emotional withdrawal
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Emotional regulation deficits
- Guilt
- Self-blame

NEUROLOGICAL

- High cortisol reactivity and chronic stress
- Elevated stress hormones (i.e. cortisol) affect the growth and performance of the hippocampus and amygdala
- Dysregulation of stress regulation system
- Impaired development of prefrontal cortex critical for controlling and focusing attention and inhibiting impulsive behaviours
- Speech and language difficulties
- Concentration challenges
- Increased vulnerability towards psychopathology



COGNITIVE/ATTITUDINAL

- Delayed cognitive development
- Lower assessment scores—verbal, motor, and cognitive skills
- Distortions in attitudes and beliefs about violence and abuse:
 - Pro-violence attitudes
 - Rigid gender stereotypes
 - Violence as an appropriate form of conflict resolution
 - Violence has a place within the family interaction
 - If violence is reported to others in the community, including mental health and criminal justice professionals, there are few, if any, consequences
 - Sexism, as defined by an inequality of power, decision-making ability, and roles within the family, is to be encouraged
 - Violence is an appropriate means of stress management
 - Victims of violence are to tolerate this behaviour or to assume that they are responsible for the violence

PHYSICAL HEALTH

- Eating complaints (e.g. overweight, constipation, nausea)
- Sleeping complaints (e.g. overtired, trouble sleeping, nightmares)
- Pain (e.g. aches and pains, headaches, stomach aches, dizziness)
- Asthma
- Auto-immune diseases
- Malnutrition
- Early initiation of sexual activity
- Unintended pregnancy
- Sexually transmitted Infections
- Chronic pulmonary disease
- Premature aging
- Premature death

DELINQUENCY, CRIME AND VICTIMIZATION

- Males are more likely to use aggression, and engage in dating violence and adult perpetration of violence against their partners
- Women are more likely to experience violence in their relationships as an adult
- Criminal behaviour in adolescence and adulthood
- Adjustment difficulties

ACADEMICS AND EMPLOYMENT

- Educational deficits
- Poor academic progress and performance
- High achiever and appear to cope well
- Absenteeism
- Suspension or expulsion from school
- Financial stress
- Unemployment/poor employment outcomes

(See the ***Working with Children and Youth: Research Highlights*** section for a further exploration of the impacts of experiencing abuse, specific to a child's age.)

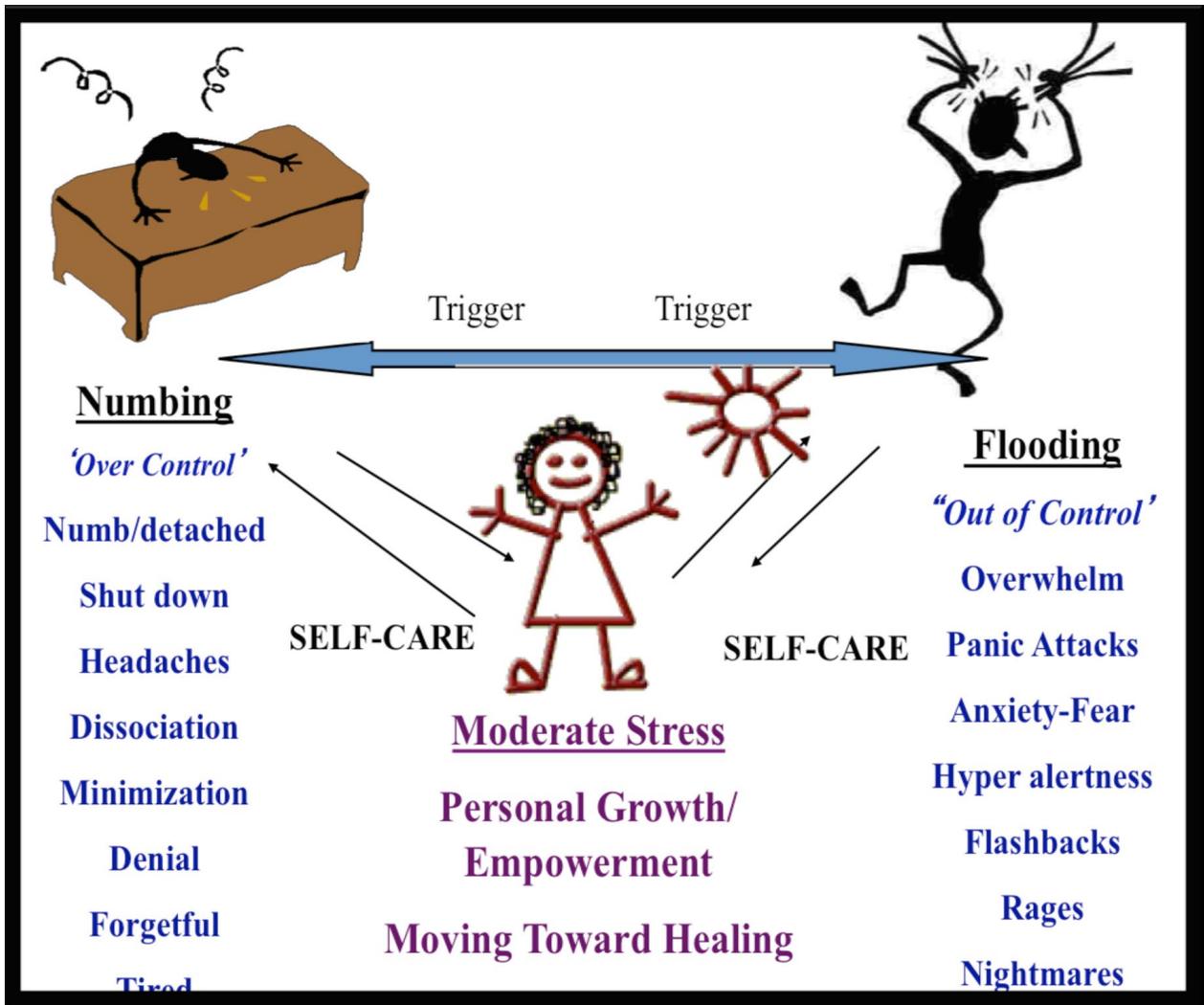


FIGURE 14: AN EXAMPLE OF A CHILD'S RESPONSE TO AND POTENTIAL IMPACTS OF VIOLENCE

(Source: Haven Society, n.d.)

What Influences the Degree to Which a Child is Affected?

There are many factors that influence the extent of how a child is affected, including those discussed previously in the **Child Development Theory** section. The type or degree of impact depends on a variety of contextual and protective factors; for example, a child's or youth's perception of their role in the violence significantly contributes to the overall impact of the violence on their self-esteem and well-being. Children and youth who believe they are to blame for the violence, or feel guilty because they were unable to protect their mothers or other siblings, will experience more long-term effects than children who are able to distance themselves from the violence.

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network Domestic Violence Working Group³⁶ identified the following factors that affect how an individual child or youth will respond to living with violence:

- How serious and how frequent is the violence or threat?
- Was the child or youth physically hurt or put in danger?
- What is the child's or youth's relationship with the victim?
- What is the child's or youth's relationship with perpetrator?
- How old is the child or youth?
- What other stress is going on in the child's or youth's life?
- What positive activities and relationships are in the child's or youth's life?
- How does the child or youth usually cope with problems?

The overall impacts on children and youth varies based on their age, sex, role within the family, and their stage of development. (See the ***Working with Children*** section for further exploration of these impacts, based on age groupings.)



Risk and Protective Factors

The science about resilience—and how a child or youth copes or develops adaptive capacities, and why others do not in the face of similar experiences of violence and adversity—is explained by a dynamic interplay between internal predispositions and external experiences.³⁷ The following table outlines possible risk and protective factors that may create harm, or mitigate harm and negative outcomes for children and youth:

<p>Risk Factors: Variables that are associated with an increased likelihood of poor physical, emotional, and behavioural outcomes</p>	<p>Protective Factors: Conditions or attributes of individuals, families, communities or society that when present, promote well-being and reduce the risk for negative outcomes</p>
<p>Child’s Age Gender Genetics/gene expression</p>	<p>Individual Level factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of purpose • Sense of optimism • Self-regulation skills • Intellectual capacity • Relational skills • Problem-solving skills • Child’s age • Developmental age • Gender
<p>Child abuse or neglect Experiencing abuse of caregiver Caregiver substance use</p>	<p>Relationship level factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure attachments to caregiver(s) • Parenting competencies • Parent well-being • Positive peers • Intrapersonal strengths • Presence of at least one stable, caring and supportive relationship with an adult

<p>Separation from family</p> <p>Community violence</p> <p>Homelessness and housing insecurity</p> <p>Economic insecurity and poverty</p>	<p>Community level factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive school environment • Types of interventions and supports provided to the child • Caring adults • Supportive cultural, ethnic, or community environment
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FIGURE 13: RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS

(Sources: Hjelm, (2014); Developmental Services Group, (n.d.); National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, (2015))

Interventions provided by PEACE Programs are essential to promote attitudinal and behavioural change in ways that will help children and youth feel safe, adapt, and better able to succeed socially and academically. PEACE Program counsellors can also help children mitigate and recover from the mental and emotional impacts of violence, by creating a safe and supportive environment for program participants to talk about their feelings; by providing new coping strategies; and by fostering the mother-child relationship, and supporting attachment repair.

Amongst all the risk and protective factors, the presence of one stable and committed relationship with a supportive parent, caregiver, or other adult is the biggest predictor of how children will fare in the face of adversity. These relationships “buffer children from developmental disruption.”

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ON THE IMPACTS OF VIOLENCE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Harris, N. “How Childhood trauma affects health across the lifetime.” YouTube, uploaded by TEDTalk, February 17, 2015 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=95ovlJ3dsNk>

Hjelm, R. (2014). Facing the Facts: Impact of Exposure to Intimate Partner Violence on Children in the Home. Virginia: The Family and Children’s Trust Fund. Retrieved from http://www.fact.virginia.gov/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/FACT-V-Issue-Brief_FINAL.pdf

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (n.d.). The National Child Traumatic Stress Network Resources. Retrieved from <http://www.nctsnet.org/resources>

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network. (2017). What is Complex Trauma? A Resource Guide for Youth and Those that Care About Them. Retrieved from http://www.nctsnet.org/sites/default/files/assets/pdfs/ct_guide_final.pdf



SUPPORTING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

In the *Theory and Practice* section we discussed the importance of counsellors acknowledging and accounting for the many intersecting identities that every program participant carries, and the ways in which differing relationships of power operate on a family; for example, a child may belong to certain dominant groups (e.g. the child is male and able-bodied, the child's parents have higher levels of education) or other oppressed groups (e.g. the child is of colour, the child's parents are living in poverty). A key goal of the PEACE Program is to be adaptable and responsive to the diverse needs presented by the families they serve.

In this section we discuss supporting program participants who identify as having a disability, as Indigenous, as an immigrant and/or refugee, as gender variant, and individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or intersex (LGBTQI). In their role, PEACE Program counsellors will encounter a diverse group of program participants. The populations discussed in this section are not inclusive of all the diversity counsellors will encounter in their work—they solely reflect the populations identified by the counsellors.

DIFFERING ABILITIES AND ACCESSIBILITY

Existing federal and provincial laws require and encourage service programs to provide services to individuals regardless of their health status or mental or physical ability. PEACE Programs should regularly review their policies and the physical barriers that may prevent individual's access to their services, taking steps as appropriate and possible to ensure that their Programs are fully accessible to the children and youth who need them. For example, the federal government through Employment and Social Development provides resources, support, and financial assistance to people with disabilities, along with their families; their [website](#) provides an Accessible Resource Center which lists federal resources and tools that may be useful to PEACE Programs assessing their environment. Particular to service providers, it has resources regarding inclusive meetings and accessibility.

Accessibility in this context includes ensuring that the physical space is welcoming to program participants from all cultures, as well as to individuals with physical disabilities. It is helpful to invite program participants to discuss any special needs they may have that are pertinent to the service. Counsellors should also document the fact that they have had this conversation, and any adaptations that they have made to accommodate program participants.

Besides the issues associated with providing service to children with differing abilities, PEACE Program counsellors should also consider the concerns of the mother. The Ministry of Children and Family Development's ***Best Practice Approaches: Child Protection and Violence against Women*** (2014) notes that women with disabilities who experience abuse may face particular obstacles to services:

- Violence may be committed by individuals on whom the woman is quite dependent, such as the husband or family member who is the woman's primary caregiver.
- In some situations, the woman is unable to give free and informed consent.
- Because of her dependency on others for her daily needs, the woman may fear the consequences of reporting abuse.
- Women with disabilities are aware that they may not be considered "adequate" mothers by some.

Any of these factors may make it particularly difficult for the mother to seek service for her child, as well as contribute to an abrupt ending of any Program that may have started.

Ways to support a child or youth with a disability:

- Ask what you can do to better accommodate the program participant.
- Adapt the environment, based on Program's resources and ability (e.g. remove rugs that can be tripped over or tape them down; be sure objects and activities are age and developmentally appropriate; provide materials of different textures; place tape on crayons and markers to make them easier to grip).
- Educate yourself.
- Identify what kind of learner the program participant is (e.g. visual, auditory, kinesthetic).
- Take the child's or youth's lead.
- Support and empower the program participant to do developmentally appropriate activities independently, to foster self-confidence.

INDIGENOUS FAMILIES

Violence against Indigenous Women and Girls

Violence against Indigenous women and girls is intrinsically linked to colonial policies and attitudes. Since the time of contact, the Government of Canada has enacted a highly intentional strategy of assimilation, dispossession, and removal of Indigenous peoples from their lands and resources, for capital gain. Historically, these strategies have targeted Indigenous women, the life givers of their traditionally matriarchal nations.

Gendered Canadian policies, such as the **Indian Act**, have had far reaching material and psychological impacts on Indigenous women. Through the discriminatory regulation of Indian status, the **Indian Act** displaced thousands of Indigenous women and their children from their home communities.

For a long time, the **Indian Act** denied Indigenous women the right to participate in community governance; severed the ability of Indigenous mothers to parent their children; and until very recently, distributed matrimonial



property to men in the event of marital breakup. Such policies have shaped social and cultural norms, and attitudes, in harmful and complex ways. There are significant disparities in Indigenous women's economic, social, political, and cultural rights. Indigenous women are marginalized in every aspect of Canadian society.

The historical racialization and sexualization of Indigenous women and girls continues today, impacting and perpetuating negative cultural attitudes and stereotypes, particularly those that accept violence; for example, there are disproportionately high numbers of Indigenous women in Canadian prisons who themselves have often had experiences of violence. Violence against Indigenous women is often met with inadequate and negligent police responses. One of the most tragic manifestations of this human rights issue is the staggering number of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.

Devastatingly high rates of gender violence, is the outcome of a patriarchal system that relied on the destruction and oppression of Indigenous women. This continues today: Indigenous women in Canada are almost four times more likely to experience gender violence³⁸ and in some communities, the rates of violence against Indigenous women are as high as 90%.³⁹ Given these statistics, resources that can provide safety are critical to the well-being of Indigenous women. PEACE Programs and Transition houses are among those resources.

Barriers to Service for Indigenous Families

Indigenous women who have experienced violence face unique barriers to service, including:

- Difficulty naming the behaviour as abuse.
- Difficulty assessing oneself as “battered” or “abused” when violence has become normalized in a closed or isolated community.
- Fear of retaliation or of being banned from the community.
- Fear of children being removed by child protection authorities, as has happened disproportionately to Indigenous families both in the past and today.
- Fear of racist stereotypes and judgements.
- Family or community pressure to remain in the relationship, especially given the important role of the family and the family unit in the community.
- Loss of self-esteem because of the cumulative impact of colonization and residential schools.
- Geographic isolation, poverty, or lack of housing options.
- Loss of indigenous language and cultural traditions while at the same time having limited English vocabulary, due to learning under traumatic conditions.⁴⁰

Supporting Indigenous Children and their Mothers

Understanding the intersections between the ongoing legacy of colonialism, the gendered nature of violence, and the unique experiences of Indigenous women, is integral to creating safety for, and supporting, Indigenous women, children, and youth. When working with Indigenous children and youth, PEACE Program counsellors should bear in mind the historical and social dynamics of colonialism and racism from which many Indigenous communities are still affected, and the impact of this history on Indigenous families. This includes the continued disruption of Indigenous communities resulting from the historic and ongoing removal of children from Indigenous families and communities, at a disproportionately high rate.

The PEACE Program will need to be adapted for use in Indigenous communities, recognizing Indigenous perspectives within both rural and urban areas. Although Indigenous persons are often considered to belong to one group, in reality, hundreds of cultures and languages are represented by First Nations across Canada.

When developing a PEACE Program that is sensitive to all Indigenous cultures, be aware of and consider the following:

- In First Nations cultures, many Indigenous communities were matriarchal and did not tolerate violence or disrespect in relationships.
- Many Indigenous communities trace social problems—including violence, loss of traditional ways, racism, and abuse—to colonization, the Residential School System, and colonial policies that deprived women of their traditional rights and roles.
- A disproportionate number of Indigenous children (4% of Indigenous children) are removed from their homes and placed in foster care, compared to non-Indigenous children (.3% of non-Indigenous children) in care.⁴¹ This translates into Indigenous children on reserves being thirteen times more likely than other children to be taken into care.
- Many Indigenous communities seek solutions to end violence that are holistic and involve the entire community, rather than individual solutions that involve institutions such as the police.
- Current evidence and Indigenous leaders acknowledge higher rates of abuse and violence against women and girls within Indigenous communities.



Ways to support Indigenous children and youth:

- Create a safe, welcoming and inclusive space.
- Understand and integrate cultural identity into your Program practices and policies.
- Increase child and youth engagement.
- Foster child and youth empowerment.
- Introduce the language of resistance and acknowledge the ways that they resisted the violence.
- Ask permission.
- Offer choices whenever possible.
- Restore dignity.
- Enhance personal resources such as sense of well-being, belonging, security, identity, and self-esteem.
- Facilitate/support meaningful relationships between child or youth, their mother, and other family members, including elders.
- Develop and maintain partnerships with Indigenous serving agencies.
- Educate yourself about First Nations history.
- Be aware of and address (when possible) barriers to access, such as transportation.
- When possible, have at least two Indigenous children or youth in a group.

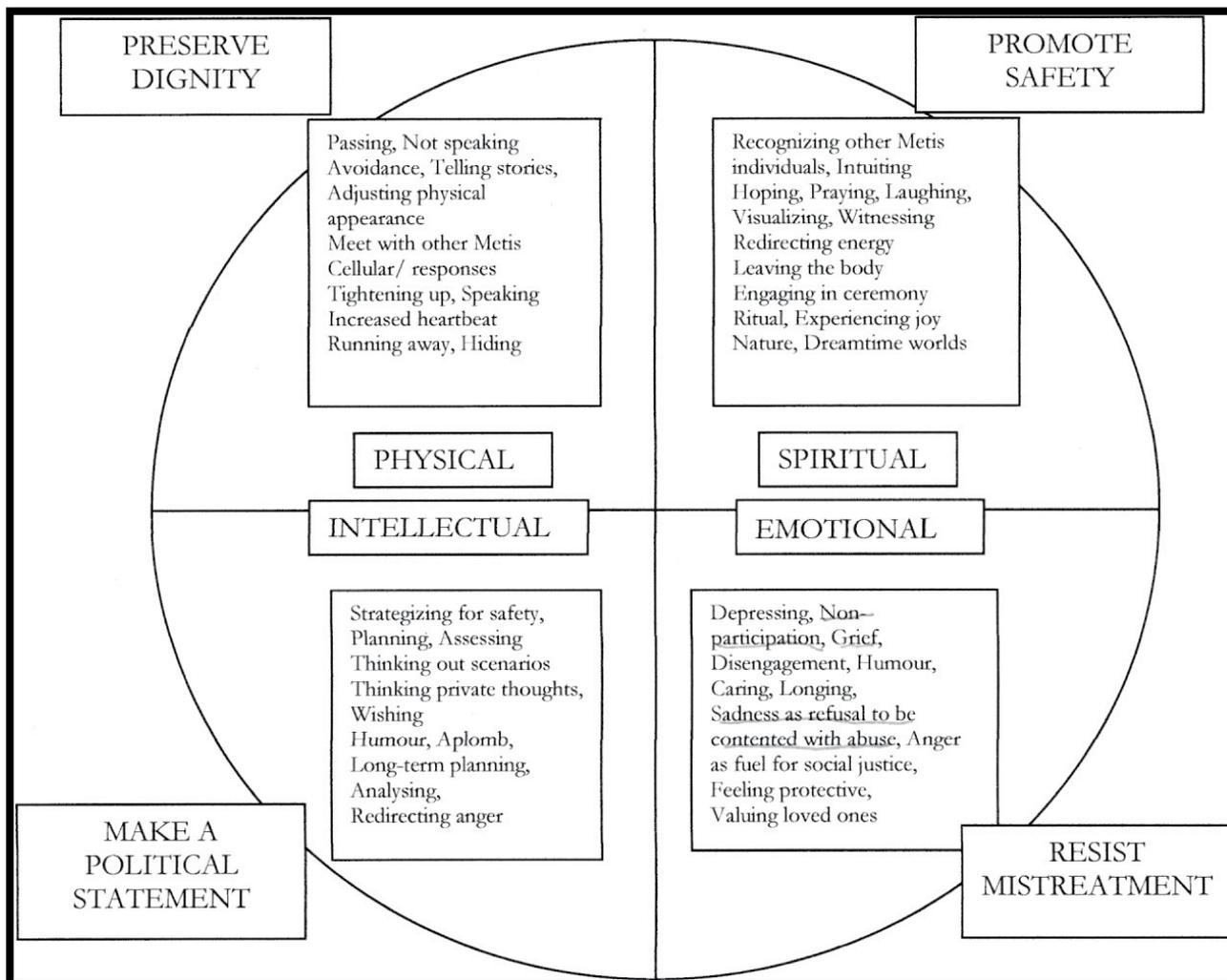


FIGURE 15: THE MEDICINE WHEEL OF RESPONSES TO OPPRESSION

(Source: Richardson, C., & Wade, A. (2009). Taking Resistance Seriously: A response-based approach to social work in cases of violence against Indigenous women. In J. Carriere & S. Stengra (Eds.), *Walking this path together: Anti-racist and anti-oppressive child welfare practice*. Winnipeg, Canada. Fernwood.)

Figure 15 provides an overview of some of the responses Indigenous children, youth, and mothers might have to their experiences of abuse and adversity. Using a format like this can help counsellors identify and honour the ways in which program participants have responded to and resisted the violence. When program participants can see for themselves the ways that they have resisted, it can help shift some of the “deficiency statements” that blame them for the behaviours of the offending parent, or counter their thoughts about passivity (e.g. they didn’t do enough to stop the violence).



Indigenous Health and Healing

When working with Indigenous families, children, and youth, PEACE Programs should familiarize themselves with, and (if relevant) incorporate knowledge of, Indigenous concepts of health and healing. The Indigenous concept of health is holistic. From this perspective, physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual components are interconnected and must be in balance with each other for optimum health. Keeping the four elements healthy can be achieved only by living in harmony with nature. From this holistic perspective, the solution does not lie in punishing the abuser, but in resolving the conflict through traditional healing. This involves rehabilitation that is focused on achieving balance and harmony, for both the survivor and the offender. It also encourages the active participation of the offender through the healing process. While the focus should be on healing rather than punishment, it is equally important to create circumstances within which the offender can be invited to take responsibility.

However, as discussed earlier, individuals carry identities which intersect. We cannot assume to understand or know how an Indigenous woman, child, or youth identifies herself, and what this looks like in her life; in some cases, despite their Indigenous heritage, a program participant may have grown up in a Christian community and may not follow traditional ways. Counsellors should explore a program participant's connection to their Indigenous heritage. This conversation will help counsellors get a sense of what is important, and of how Indigenous ways of being are, if at all, reflected in her life and belief systems—as well as in her preferences for exploring and healing her experiences of violence.

Some people within Indigenous communities believe that taking the offender to court is helpful and perhaps even necessary for him to fully acknowledge his responsibility and begin the healing. Others disagree, arguing that the Canadian justice system does more harm than good for most Indigenous people, often stands in the way of true accountability, and impedes the healing that is necessary for both the offender and the family.

Connecting with Indigenous Communities

We recommend that PEACE Program counsellors familiarize themselves with Indigenous perspectives in both urban and rural settings as they adapt their Program. As stated previously, many Indigenous women, families, and communities need holistic solutions to end and heal from violence, that involve the entire family and/or community—rather than individual solutions that involve institutions such as the police. Some suggestions to begin these conversations and work:

- Acknowledge the abuse of Indigenous persons by the dominant white culture for over 500 years. Experiences include the physical, sexual, and spiritual abuse of many Indigenous children and adolescents in residential schools throughout Canada.
- Learn about local traditions and ceremonies.
- Learn about the history of the land and the people.

- Offer to provide a group within the Indigenous community, perhaps on reserve.
- Co-facilitate with an Indigenous facilitator.
- Incorporate culturally specific exercises, material, and examples into your Program.
- Include talking circles for children and youth, for dealing with the long-term impacts of witnessing violence.
- Include and encourage storytelling in your approach.
- Foster youth empowerment, support skills development, and encourage youth to use their skills for positive social change.
- Endeavour to assess the specific needs of Indigenous children/youth before you start the group.
- Before beginning any intervention, engage and meet with the community, community leaders, and local Elders to seek their permission and guidance.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR SUPPORTING INDIGENOUS CHILDREN AND YOUTH

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IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE FAMILIES

PEACE Program counsellors work with families from a wide range of life experiences, including those who have recently come to Canada either as immigrants or as refugees. Women, children, and youth from immigrant and refugee communities may have different attitudes and expectations of the social services and the criminal justice system. These varying attitudes and expectations will extend to the PEACE Program.

When working with children and youth from ethno-cultural communities, remember:

- The immigrant and refugee women's and children's experience of violence is not homogenous. Different cultures have different perspectives on violence and the role of men and women, in relationships and in society.
- It can be difficult for immigrant and refugee participants to disclose violence. Violence in the home may be seen as a private problem, one that is not discussed outside the immediate family. Women may not want to disclose, or may be fearful of discussing theirs or their children's experiences of violence, for fear of ruining their family name, reputation, and honour. A woman, child, or youth experiencing violence may feel a considerable amount of shame and guilt, if she were to share what was happening. In many circumstances, victims of violence feel they are not only betraying their partner, but also their culture and family in disclosing the violence.
- Immigrant and refugee women, children, and youth may feel extreme pressure from their extended family and community to stay with an abusive partner. She may be afraid of disclosing abuse and leaving, for fear of being excluded or shunned from the community and being further isolated in a country that is already foreign to her.
- Immigrant and refugee women, children, and youth may have a general mistrust of the system and of service providers, based on experiences of abuse of power, violence, and corruption in their country of origin. Authority figures may be viewed as political agents of the state who could compromise safety and citizenship rather than provide assistance. Authority figures, such as school principals and police officers, may not be trusted to deal with disclosures in a culturally safe manner. Be attuned to your own perceived and actual power.
- Immigrant and refugee women, children, and youth may face barriers in accessing support services that are available in their language and that are culturally safe. Program participants may be able to carry on a conversation in English, but may not be able to describe their experiences of violence effectively in English. Avoid using jargon, and explain things in plain language. Ask if they would like an interpreter. Never deny access to services because the mother cannot communicate English.
- Additional barriers to disclosure and leaving, may also include precarious immigration status; lack of financial stability or independence; concern around child protection involvement; fear of deportation; inability to communicate in English; or lack of employment or employability.

Some suggestions for practicing cultural safety with program participants from immigrant or refugee families:

- Be aware of personal judgments and bias.
- Be aware of and critical of your own personal and cultural values, beliefs, biases, and attitudes, and of how they may be perceived by the children and youth you work with.
- Ask the program participant, or non-offending parent or caregiver if relevant, how they would like to be supported to meet their needs. Alternatively, consult with local community groups and multicultural serving agencies for suggestions on culturally safe service delivery.
- When working with participants from various ethno-cultural communities, determine and respect culturally learned methods of interaction and communication:

Language:

- Literal translation can create confusion. This is particularly true when slang is used either in the original language or in the translation.
- Those with English as an additional language may have difficulty understanding how connotation and context can change the meaning of words and phrases.
- Some cultures use metaphor extensively. This less direct method of explaining is often met with impatience and suspicion in North America.

Rules of conversation:

- The patterns of greeting one another vary considerably from culture to culture.
- Use of and reaction to silence, is culturally conditioned. Many Western societies tend to react to silence negatively and with discomfort. Other societies may use silence as a sign of respect, to guard their privacy, or as an expression of politeness.
- The volume and directness of speech also varies with culture. What some cultures may value as forthright, may strike members of other cultural groups as immature, clumsy, aggressive, or even rude. What some groups may value as subtle and sensitive, may be interpreted as evasive or non-committal by others.

Expressing emotion:

- Emotion expressed openly and spontaneously through gestures, facial expression, and tone of voice have a positive value for some cultural groups, while the masking of feelings may be taken as a sign of maturity and social politeness by other groups.



Eye contact:

- As previously mentioned, some cultures regard averting the eyes as a sign of respect. This is in direct contrast to the Canadian expectation that we should be direct and look one another right in the eye.

Touching and personal space:

- Comfortable speaking distance varies between cultures. This distance may range from inches, to several feet. With respect to touch, in some cultures physical contact is frequent. In others, contact is less frequent or may even be taboo.

Privacy:

- Some cultures value individual privacy very highly. In others, very few occasions are deemed private.
- Canadian culture, and more broadly North American culture, can be confusing in this regard: Though this right to privacy is highly valued, some individuals may be quite public about issues and feelings that others would invariably view as private.

Within any culture, there may be a range of culturally acceptable responses along any of the dimensions noted above. The range of acceptable responses within any culture will vary over time as well, because every culture is dynamic and experiences change.

Partner with immigrant serving agencies and consult with and involve service providers who know the child's language and customs:

- Have a working knowledge of immigration and refugee law, and the resources available to women and their children.
- Discuss with the child or youth, and the mother when relevant, their particular needs related to their culture and religion (e.g. restrictions on meeting times, dietary needs). Also discuss their strengths, and how these strengths can be accessed to provide support and protection in culturally appropriate ways.
- Where possible, have at least two children from the same ethnic group in each group.
- Consider working with community leaders within immigrant or refugee groups to identify ways to design the service, especially the intake process. Work to balance the need for providing safety and health-related information, with the need to respect the dignity and privacy of the program participant.
- Immigrant and refugee women may be unfamiliar with Canadian systems and support services, and of how to navigate them. Additional assistance when making a referral can be very helpful in ensuring that the referral is successful.

- Some women, children, and youth may understand their experiences of violence as the norm. When relevant, provide information on Canadian laws, norms, and socially acceptable behaviors. Explain that women and girls have the right to be safe, and that violence against women and girls is a criminal offence and is not acceptable in Canada. Advise them of support services to help women, children, and youth who are experiencing violence—including transition homes, safe homes, second stage housing, Stopping the Violence (STV) Programs, and PEACE Programs.
- Engage with communities, community leaders, immigrant youth, and parents as a means of gaining knowledge. Ask questions, hold dialogue sessions, and most importantly listen. Engage immigrant youth and families to get their buy-in, ownership, and input when designing PEACE Programs and services for them.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR SUPPORTING IMMIGRANT AND/OR REFUGEE CHILDREN AND YOUTH

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GENDER EXPANSIVE CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Gender expansive, gender non-conforming, gender independent, and gender variant are all terms to describe individuals whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from what others expect of their assigned sex.⁴² Gender expansive children and youth are very diverse. Some may strongly and consistently identify with a gender role, which differs from their assigned sex.⁴³ However others may express their gender in ways that is fluid and changing, and blends aspects of multiple genders. Gender nonconforming behavior does not necessarily mean that a child is transgender, but it can—for example, if a 4-year-old boy wants to wear a dress or says he wants to be a girl once or twice, he probably is not transgender; but if a child who was assigned male at birth repeatedly insists over the course of several months that she is a girl, then she is probably transgender. However, there are endless variations in the ways that children and youth express themselves, so take the child's or youth's lead in how they define themselves.

Gender non-conformity is a matter of diversity, not pathology. However, social pressure, social rejection, stigma, hostility, and violence all impact on gender independent children's emotional and psychological well-being; mental health challenges can arise, often manifesting in the form of depression and anxiety. Gender independent children are more likely to experience violence from family members⁴⁴ and have been found to be more likely to acquire post-traumatic stress disorder by early adulthood. In older trans youth, studies have found very high rates of suicidality. For some gender expansive youth, the onset of puberty may bring on emotional distress as their bodies develop in a direction they are profoundly uncomfortable with. This type of distress is referred to as Gender Dysphoria and can manifest in depression, suicidality, and self-harm. For these young people, gender transition is an important consideration.

Ways to support a gender expressive child:

- Provide safe, welcoming and inclusive environments.
- Don't assume gender normativity. Ask how a child or youth identifies.
- Honour diversity and respect the rights of children and youth.
- Ensure practices and policies are affirming of gender expressive program participants.
- Use gender inclusive language e.g. "folks," "everyone," "you all," as opposed to "guys" or "girls."
- Ask what name and pronoun they prefer.
- Always use the program participant's preferred gender pronouns and preferred names.
- Be an advocate—call out transphobia when you see it, and ask that others respect the program participant's identity.
- Educate yourself about the concerns facing gender expressive youth and adults.

- Assist and refer mothers to work through difficult emotions related to their child's gender independence. Given support, most parents of gender independent children can learn to respond positively to their child.
- Affirm the program participant's gender identities and expressions.
- Create safety plans that extend safety outside of the home (e.g. school).
- Mothers, counsellors, and anyone else in the child's or youth's life should be encouraged to take the child's or youth's lead and avoid imposing their preferences.
- Pay attention to signs of distress.
- Encourage and refer to peer support opportunities with other gender variant individuals and families.

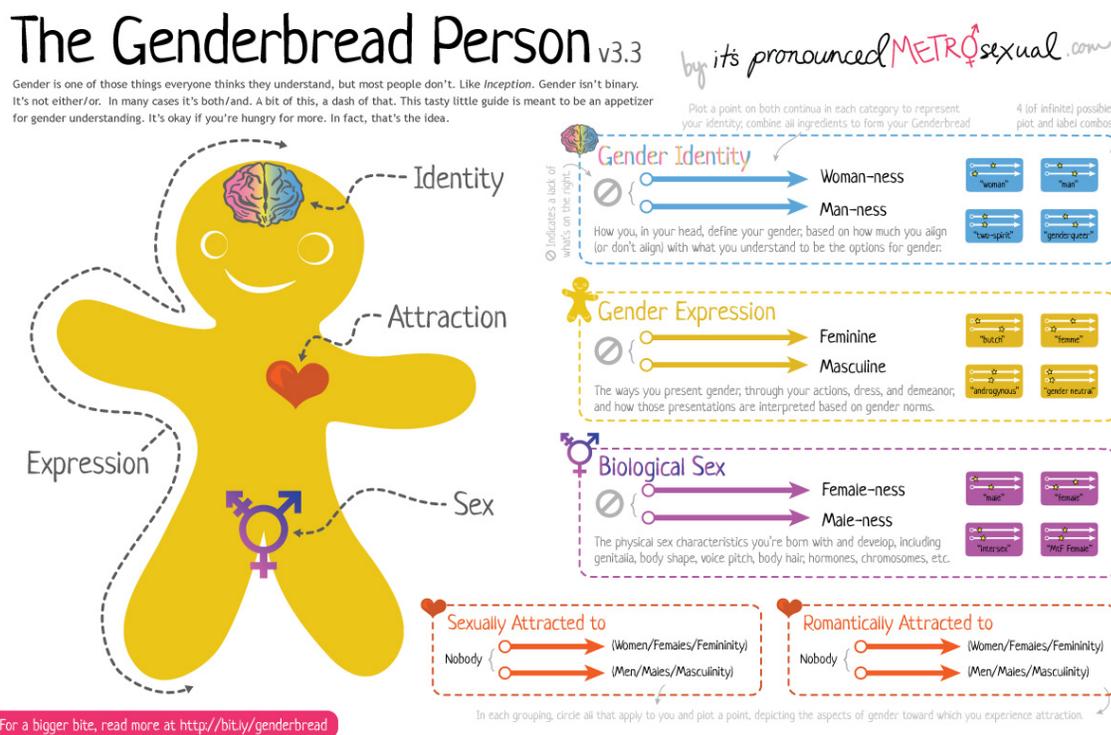


FIGURE 16: THE GENDERBREAD PERSON

(Source: Killerman, S. (2015). The Genderbread Person V3.3. It's Pronounced Metrosexual. Retrieved from <http://itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/2015/03/the-genderbread-person-v3/#sthash.l6WCd56i.dpbs>)



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR GENDER EXPRESSIVE CHILDREN AND YOUTH

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CHILDREN AND YOUTH WHO IDENTIFY AS LGBTQI

Many children and youth who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual express gender-expansive behaviors. Gender identity and sexual orientation are two different things. Being transgender is about an individual's gender identity, while being gay is about an individual's sexual orientation. Sexual orientation is our sexual or romantic attraction to people of the same gender (homosexual), different genders (heterosexual), both (bisexual), or neither (asexual). Everyone possesses both a gender identity and a sexual orientation; in other words, a transgender person can also identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual.

Some children and youth are certain about their sexual orientation, while others may not be. Children and youth who identify as LGBTQI might be concerned about disclosing this information for fear of being rejected by their parents, family, and friends, as well as of being bullied or teased. LGBTQI children and youth can feel very isolated and alone, which can lead to depression and anxiety.

How to support a child or youth who identifies as LGBTQI:

- Don't assume heterosexuality. Ask how a child or youth identifies.
- Create a welcome inclusive space for open and non-judgmental conversation.
- Validate their feelings.
- Acknowledge their sexual orientation.
- See child or youth as whole, not just their sexual orientation.
- Educate yourself and examine your own beliefs and attitudes that might impact your ability to support LGBTQI program participants.
- Respect their privacy and confidentiality and allow them to decide who they tell and when.
- Know that acceptance or rejection affects the health and well-being of LGBTQI children and youth.
- Be an advocate.
- Educate the mother when necessary about LGBTQI and connect her to resources.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR SUPPORTING LGBTQI CHILDREN AND YOUTH

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PARENTS IN SAME-SEX RELATIONSHIPS

Violence in same-sex relationships includes physical, emotional/psychological, sexual, spiritual, cultural, and economic violence; as well as property destruction, stalking, and harassment. The offender may also extend their tactics to custody disputes, and include using heterosexist and/or transphobic tactics to control their partners—threatening to “out” them to their family, friends, or community, and insulting their sexual and/or gender identity.

Best Practice Approaches: Child Protection and Violence against Women notes that lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgendered and queer women (LGBTQI) have identified the following obstacles to reaching out for support:

- Fear of being “outed” to family, friends, or community, and of experiencing homophobia, transphobia, and other forms of oppression.
- Fear of discrimination for herself and her abusive partner.
- Fear of isolation from other LGBTQI/queer people.
- Fear of experiencing abusive tactics, and that her sexual or gender identity will be used against her in custody and access disputes.
- Fear that by leaving, she will lose custody or access to the children and thus will stay to protect the children.

Safety

Sometimes, the small and insular nature of LGBTQI communities means it can be very hard for individuals to avoid abusive ex-partners. This is even truer for women of colour, immigrant women, and Indigenous women residing in rural areas and small cities. It may be much easier for abusive partners to gather information and stalk their partners or ex-partners in small, insular communities. In a heterosexist and homophobic culture, there are a limited number of places where LGBTQI people can go to socialize comfortably and openly.

The Ministry of Children and Family Development’s **Best Practice Approaches: Child Protection and Violence against Women** notes that children in families that are closeted, may not have the language to talk about their parents’ relationship; for example, they may refer to their parent’s partner as a “roommate” even though the “roommate” may have been significantly involved in rearing that child for many years. Even in households where there is much openness, children may be reluctant to talk about their parents’ relationship for fear of being ostracized or discriminated against.

To best support the program participant, the PEACE Program counsellor must be able to understand the family context. Without making assumptions about a program participant's family, the counsellor should but ask them (and the mother when relevant) to explain who the program participant's family members are, and what their relationship is to the child or youth. It is the PEACE Program counsellor's responsibility to accept and validate that family, and to reassure the program participant that the Program is welcoming and does not discriminate against *anyone's* family.



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8. PRACTICE ISSUES

WAITLIST MANAGEMENT

In the 2017 survey of PEACE services, in a single 24-hour period in British Columbia there were 925 children, youth, and women on the waitlist for PEACE services across the province. Over the course of an eight-hour workday, counsellors can expect to support:

- A maximum of 4–5 children on an individual basis.
- Three children on an individual basis, on a day that they are also facilitating a group.

This ratio allows for counsellors to also have time for intakes, orientations, note-taking, outside collaborations, meetings, and professional development.

Most PEACE Programs find that they have more prospective program participants than they can reasonably accommodate, and use a range of strategies to manage this situation. Children and youth and their mothers not able to begin the Program immediately may be disappointed and sometimes frustrated by this. A mother may see this as yet another barrier. If you are unable to support a child or youth immediately:

- Let them know about other services that may be relevant at the same agency and elsewhere in the community, and help connect them to those services.
- Connect with the mother and child or youth until they are off the waitlist; for example, through periodic phone calls.

To manage the waitlist, the most important thing a counsellor can do is design clear, fair procedures; communicate them transparently to the person; and follow the process consistently:

- Most Programs adopt a first-come, first-served policy, but other elements may be taken into account, such as priority of service (e.g. based on risk) or accepting program participants to create an appropriate group (e.g. a group for younger children is held in September, while the group for adolescents runs in November).
- The acceptance policy should also include provisions for returning program participants, and should explain whether the Program prioritizes those returning, or requires them to re-join the waitlist.

NETWORKING AND COLLABORATION

Developing collegial working relationships with other related service providers in your community can support your work as a PEACE Program counsellor, and the safety and well-being of the children, youth, and their mothers.

WORKING WITH OTHER PROFESSIONALS

The children and youth served in PEACE Programs often have multiple, complex needs that require and benefit from the support of more than one service provider. Children and youth may have struggles in school, mental health or substance use concerns, and/or have contact with the juvenile justice system or child protection services. Each sector brings its own approach, framework, and mandate to working with and supporting children and youth. Sometimes these different philosophies and approaches across the sectors are not aligned, and create additional barriers and challenges for the children and youth who access them.

Formal opportunities to collaborate and communicate helps minimize the service barriers and conflicting messages that children and youth may receive. It also helps avoid gaps in services, and allows the service providers to work together to ensure the best possible support for the children and youth and their mothers. Collaboration includes:

- Productive working relationships.
- Mutual education about each others' services.
- Cross training.
- Creating joint committees.
- Consultation.
- Formal case management.
- Partnering on joint initiatives (e.g. violence prevention, public awareness campaigns).
- Discussing and resolving conflicting inter-agency protocols.
- Identifying and addressing gaps in services.

Opportunities for collaboration and knowledge sharing arise through networking, both formal and informal. If you are working in an isolated geographic area, it may be helpful for PEACE Program counsellors to connect with service providers in other locations.



Working with Child Protection

PEACE Programs and the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) both have the best interest of the child—including safety—as a primary goal. However, disagreements about a child’s, youth’s, or a mother’s needs, and how best to support them, can arise. Coordinated supportive services and collaboration between PEACE Programs and the MCFD helps both organizations better support the safety and well-being of children, youth, and their mothers. It is beneficial for counsellors to identify allies within their local child protection services.

The MCFD’s *Best Practice Approaches Child Protection and Violence Against Women* (2014) reinforces that: “Creating safety for children requires both sectors to respond, to reduce the risks that children and their mothers face. To ensure the safety and well-being of children and the non-abusing mother, all relevant services must work together for a coordinated, collaborative response....A mutual understanding and respect of roles, responsibilities, and areas of expertise, as well as clear ongoing communication throughout our involvement, will assist in establishing a co-operative working relationship which in turn, will help to support and ensure the safety of mothers and children.” (p. 7)

Strategies for working together as highlighted by the MCFD’s *Best Practice Approaches* can include:

- A collaborative policy review to see where gaps and barriers exist, to reduce the risks that children and their mothers face and how to remedy.
- Discussing and formalizing joint practice protocols to provide supportive services to mothers and their children.
- Cross sector training that reinforces a mutual respect of roles, responsibilities, and areas of expertise.

As noted above by MCFD, collaboratively building a respectful relationship, can promote the safety and well-being of children and their mothers.

Working with Schools

As a PEACE Program counsellor, you can become involved in existing school-based Programs such as the Violence Is Preventable Program (VIP) or A School Based Anti-Violence Program (ASAP). These Programs provide a link to students in the community who may not know about or have access to PEACE Programs and information.

Violence Is Preventable Program

BCSTH developed the Violence Is Preventable Program (VIP) in 2004 for children and youth ages 6–18. This Program links existing PEACE Programs to schools in their community. The *Violence Is Preventable: Enhancing Partnerships Between Children Who Witness Abuse Programs and BC Schools Manual* includes information on pre-group interviews, consent, and sample group outlines and activities.

The manual also includes information to help PEACE Programs better support children and youth through prevention presentations and group intervention in a school setting. (See **Working with Children: Stages of Service** section on group support, for more information on the VIP Program and the BELIEVE Program.)

Issues of Confidentiality

When working with other professionals and across agencies, maintaining program participant confidentiality is essential. No information about a program participant, unless it is information that falls under the exceptions of confidentiality, should be shared without the participant's direct consent and the signing of a Release of Information form by the program participant (or their parent, if not a mature minor).

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Introducing the PEACE Program to your community, community agencies and schools is beneficial for referrals, as it reaches children and youth who may not be aware that the PEACE Program exists:

- Draft a letter to community agencies and schools, including: Mental health agencies; health care providers; social workers; family court services; women's centres; children, youth, and family centres; service agencies; legal clinics; community and drop in centres; advocacy organizations; counselling agencies; elementary, middle, and high schools:
 - Include PEACE Program pamphlets in your mailing.
- Follow-up with phone calls.
- Get on the agenda for a staff meeting or Professional Development Day.
 - Offer to make a presentation providing information on the Program services and the impact of violence on children and youth.



- Ask local radio/TV for free air time to advertise.
- Run a small ad in the local paper(s).
- Distribute pamphlets to doctors' offices, libraries, laundromats, daycare centres, hair salons, community centres, schools, legal clinics, shelters, drop-in centres, and any other places that children, youth, and their families may frequent.
- Post information about your Program on your agency website.
- Let women in safe homes, transition, second, and third stage housing programs know about your PEACE Program.

SUPPORT FOR PEACE PROGRAM COUNSELLORS

PEACE Program counsellors and colleagues who work in the anti-violence field are faced daily with personal stories of violence and trauma. To remain healthy and avoid becoming “burned out,” workers must receive active support from their Programs and agencies. This is a field in which the anti-violence worker is exposed to painful, frightening stories and events that are hidden or ignored from most of the world. Bearing witness to the stories told by women, children, and youth who experience abuse makes anti-violence workers particularly vulnerable to vicarious trauma and burnout.

It is especially important for PEACE Program counsellors and their colleagues who work in transition houses and related counselling Programs to remain psychologically and mentally healthy, available for their program participants, and able to advocate for themselves. This section provides suggestions for how to maintain personal wellness and balance in this work.

COUNSELLOR SAFETY

All PEACE Programs must have a plan for ensuring counsellor safety. The Workers' Compensation Board (WorkSafeBC) requires that employers have a policy that ensures the safety of anyone who is required to work alone or in isolation. This applies to counsellors who regularly work alone in the office, for example, when seeing program participants in the evening or on weekends. It also applies to counsellors who see program participants outside of the office, for example, meeting them in their homes or driving program participants to and from sessions.

PEACE Program counsellors should also consider ways to promote their safety while on the job, but away from the office. Examples will be specific to each situation, but might include phone check-ins as appropriate, and direction regarding assessing the danger of a situation—for example, driving a child home and finding that the offending parent is there. Programs should also consider providing specific training to counsellors, perhaps collaboratively with transition house staff, regarding assessing, managing, and responding to dangerous situations.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In addition to staying current with the literature, PEACE Program counsellors need opportunities to train and attend conferences that enable them to acquire new information, perspectives, and to network with peers. PEACE Programs acknowledge the importance of counsellors having the information and skills to effectively and safely do their jobs, and to make time and funds available for these purposes.

Ongoing training and professional development are crucial. There is a wide range of educational material and resources available for PEACE Program counsellors. The Additional Resources sections throughout this Toolkit provide lists of relevant resources and literature that can support counsellors' self-directed professional growth. Many of the resources mentioned throughout the Toolkit are available at no cost via Internet download. If you cannot find or access the resources online, contact the BCSTH library, which has an extensive collection of relevant, current material to support PEACE Program counsellors; or connect with other counsellors through the PEACE Program listserv.

CLINICAL SUPERVISION

PEACE Program counsellors require frequent, competent, and meaningful supervision—to help them make difficult decisions related to the program participants they are supporting; to provide support in managing their feelings that may arise from the work; and to protect against burnout. Supervision can be provided through peer meetings, and one-to-one meetings with a clinical supervisor.

A counsellor's clinical supervisor should be someone outside of the agency, to ensure a neutral, confidential, and safe environment. It is very important that counsellors have regular opportunities to discuss their work, and the impacts of work, in a safe environment—without fear of stigmatization or questioning of their competence.

Clinical supervision can be useful for:

- Clinical skill building.
- Seeking support, empathy, and a non-judgemental space.
- Developing fresh perspectives.
- Addressing confidentiality, conflicts of interest, and ethical dilemmas.



- Helping plan services for groups or individuals.
- Problem-solving complicated situations.
- Debriefing particularly difficult or traumatic work.
- Helping resolve concerns over whether and when to refer program participants to more intensive services.
- Providing support during times of personal stress, to avoid having that stress spill over into the counsellor's work.
- Helping manage workloads to avoid burnout.
- Reducing compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma.
- Reducing a counsellor's isolation.
- Providing ongoing support and reassurance.

PEACE Program counsellors report that clinical supervision provides them with perspective, helps them solve problems, and helps protect them from isolation and burnout. It also helps counsellors make decisions related to safety issues, especially those related to legal problems.

It is good practice to develop a supervision agreement that outlines the purpose of supervision, individual and organizational responsibilities, and the boundaries of worker confidentiality.

As part of their contract for service, all counsellors have a designated clinical supervisor and supervision time built into their workload. While it is true that in more remote locations the counsellor may have only phone contact with her clinical supervisor, it is still important to build that relationship through regular conversations. The importance of clinical supervision in supporting counsellor well-being and maintaining good clinical practice cannot be overstated.

VICARIOUS TRAUMA AND BURNOUT

It is natural that counsellors will experience a degree of distress when having repeated exposure to individual's stories of violence, injustice, and suffering. Vicarious trauma is defined as, when "(i)n the role of witness to acts of violence, the therapist feels, at times, overwhelmed and experiences, to a lesser degree, the same terror, rage and despair as the program participant."¹ It has a cumulative transformative effect on the counsellor, both positive and negative. The impacts on the counsellor's thoughts, feelings, behaviours, and general sense of self can be similar to the difficulties faced by the individuals they are supporting, and can result in a shift in world view.^{2,3}

PEACE Program counsellors will be on the receiving end of children's and mother's stories of violence. Listening to their experiences of violence, in addition to the injustice of the experiences, their suffering, and the complex emotions, responses, and impacts that arise, can also impact the counsellor—both positively and negatively: "it can be experienced as privilege, bringing an added sense of connection, value, and meaning to our own lives. It can also become personally draining and overwhelming."⁴

The list in Figure 17 shows the many ways a counsellor can experience or respond to vicarious trauma. Be aware of these responses in yourself and in your colleagues.

SIGNS OF VICARIOUS TRAUMA				
Emotional	Behavioural	Physical/ Physiological	Spiritual	Cognitive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prolonged grief • Prolonged anxiety • Prolonged sadness • Irritability • Labile mood • Depression • Agitation/anger • Changed sense of humour • Tuning out • Feeling less safe in the world 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isolation • Avoidance • Numbing • Staying at work longer • Not being able to separate work from personal life • Increased alcohol consumption • Undertaking risky behaviours • Avoiding people or duties • Difficulty sleeping • Changed eating habits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Headaches • Hives or rashes • Heartburn • Migraines • Stomach ulcers • Tics • Anxiety • Hot Sweats 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changed relationship with meaning and hope • Lack of sense of purpose • Decreased sense of agency • Reduced sense of connection to others • Challenged to maintain a sense of self as viable, worth loving, deserving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cynicism • Becoming judgmental of others • Negativity • Thinking about program participants' traumas when at home/not at work • Difficulty thinking clearly, concentrating, and remembering things • Difficulty making day-to-day decisions

FIGURE 17: SIGNS OF VICARIOUS TRAUMA

Source: Catanese, (2010) and Working with Trauma Survivors, (2016) as cited in Living Well, (n.d.)



Resisting Burnout

“The people we work alongside don’t burn me out, and they don’t hurt me: They transform me, challenge me, and inspire me. We’re not ‘burning out,’ we’re resisting being blown up! What is threatening to blow me up is an inability to work in line with my ethics, and my frustrating failure to personally challenge social contexts of injustice that clients wrestle and live in.”

and violence committed towards children, youth, and women. A perspective of burnout that moves beyond seeing it as an individual deficit, towards a broader understanding of how the societal dimensions of the work can support counsellors.

Burnout is more about society collectively where there is a lack of social justice. It refers to the sense of despair that can arise from knowledge of the overwhelmingly large scale of violence against women, repeatedly bearing witness to the devastating impacts on many lives, the frustrations that arise from inadequate responses and outcomes in the justice system.⁵ The societal contexts of violence

against women, children and youth persist regardless of the efforts and dedication of workers. Bringing hope into a seemingly hopeless situation, can be challenging. In this sense, Vikki Reynolds refers to burnout not in clinical terms—or in relation to trauma itself—but as “ethical or spiritual pain” that results when counsellors are unable to act in line with their ethics or in ways that feel respectful.

Burnout has been described in terms of three key elements that can occur among individuals who do “people work”:

- Emotional exhaustion
- Depersonalization
- Reduced personal accomplishment.⁶

Compassion stress, compassion fatigue, or burnout are non-pathological terms to describe the stress of working with individuals who have experienced violence, injustice, and suffering. It is experienced as physical, emotional, and psychological exhaustion. Unlike vicarious trauma, it does not involve a traumatic event.

In their daily work, PEACE Program counsellors bear witness to the injustice

PEACE counsellors and anti-violence workers can be harmed and experience pain related to their work, but this is not a result of their work with the children and women they support—instead, it is a result of the context of social injustice within which counsellors do their work.

Resisting burnout is not about denying the experience of vicarious trauma, but about challenging “the prescriptive and individualized aspects of burnout talk” where the counsellor’s distress can be:

- Interpreted as a sign that the counsellor needs to deal with or process some personal issue that has been triggered for them.
- Regarded as a sign of vicarious trauma, prompting well-intended suggestions about how the counsellor might engage in better self-care.
- Deemed to be a consequence of the counsellor’s engagement with a particularly “difficult” client or horrendous story.⁷

Alternately, this distress can be related to a counsellor’s ethics:

- When a counsellor acts against her own ethics, such as not challenging another worker who is woman-blaming.
- When a counsellor is limited in her individual therapeutic interventions, when a program participant is facing housing and food insecurity.
- When Program practices and policies are disrespectful of program participants, or are not reflective of their realities.
- When Program funding gets cut, and consequently limit available resources and the accessibility of services.
- When a program participant shares unjust and harmful treatment from the criminal justice system.

These examples show how the distress and pain experienced by the counsellor is not only about witnessing the individual stories of injustice and suffering, but also about feeling powerless—in spite of best efforts—against the larger patterns of injustice and harm that exist within and across our communities and systems (e.g. lack of safe and affordable housing, limited legal aid, and when offenders face no consequences in the justice system) and how despite the work of the counsellor individual’s lives do not improve.

“As community workers and therapists, we do more than survive this most difficult work: we are transformed in the doing of it alongside co-workers and Program participants. There are always unexpected possibilities and hopes for transformations. Engaging with a spirit of solidarity invites us to witness and connect with the most important work of others, witnessing our spirited success, while also knowing that much more must be done. This collectivity helps us to envision our work as both do-able and sustainable.”

Reynolds, V. (2011). p. 41



Self-Care Practices

Counsellors have an ethical responsibility to engage with enough self-care to be able to be fully present with program participants, keep their [program participants] suffering at the centre, and bring hope to the work.⁸

However, “(w)hen self-care is prescribed as the antidote for burnout, it puts the burden of working in unjust contexts onto the backs of us as individual workers.”⁹ Self-care is not only about individual workers, it is also about organisations and communities; that is, collective care.

It is imperative to acknowledge the importance of self-care, while recognizing that self-care cannot offset the issues of violence, poverty, and basic dignity that many counsellors come into contact with, and struggle with.¹⁰

Counsellors can perhaps frame the work as “justice-doing”—to use our power as community workers to challenge the status quo, address the political and social issues of our times, and transform the social contexts of oppression.¹¹ What this looks like in practice will vary, based on a counsellor’s time and resources.

Acknowledging the work as justice-doing, can be empowering, and can mitigate some of the feelings of frustration and helplessness that may arise for counsellors. It can also foster solidarity, recognition of the importance of the work, and collective ethics, which can support individual sustainability in this work. However, it is also important to recognize that counsellors may be limited in time and resources, which limits their ability to be change-agents outside of their role as PEACE Program counsellors; being reasonable about what is within our power to change and accomplish, also supports sustainability in this work.

Not all organizations and work environments are engaged in collective care. Counsellors can practice self-reflection about their ethics and values, and begin to build collaborative and supportive practice. Counsellors can also advocate for themselves when it comes to working hours, vacation time, or leave of absences, which can be challenging depending on the Program’s organizational culture. To support participants and counsellor’s longevity in this work, have personal, professional, and organizational practices in place that prioritize care, and an understanding of the ethical distress that can occur.

Examples of how to practice self-care, for both the individual and organization:

- **Caseload:** Have realistic expectations of caseloads and the number of individuals a counsellor can support in one day/week.
- **Clinical Supervision:** Have regular access to individual supervision where counsellors can discuss challenges they are encountering in their work with particular program participants, as well as discuss the impacts of the work on themselves, without fear of stigmatization or questioning of their competence.

- **Peer Supervision:** Having access to peer supervision in addition to clinical supervision, can help to normalize how a counsellor's work and personal life is affected; provide social support; reduce feelings of isolation; and increase empathy and compassion.
- **Education and Training:** Create opportunities for professional development and networking.
- **Personal Coping Mechanisms:** Counsellors are encouraged to maintain a balance of work, play, and rest, and to focus on their health and well-being including:
 - Taking vacation/time off.
 - Using humour.
 - Practicing good nutritional habits.
 - Exercise.
 - Getting adequate sleep.
 - Making time to relax.
 - Developing and maintaining good support networks, both on and off the job.

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9. ADMINISTRATIVE AND LEGAL ISSUES

PROGRAM PARTICIPANT RECORDS

All service-providing programs maintain records of some kind. In the anti-violence field, there has been much discussion regarding what and how much information should be included in records, and the best ways to maintain their security. Because of the risk of program participant records being subpoenaed, many workers in this field are reluctant to gather and store sensitive personal information. On the other hand, there are compelling reasons to keep accurate, up-to-date program participant records—ranging from the planning and provision of service, to accountability for services, to helping mitigate any allegations raised against a counsellor.

Personal information means information that can identify an individual directly, such as a person's name, address, phone number, identifying numbers, or employee personal information. It also includes information that could link to the identified person, such as physical descriptions, educational background, or blood type. It does not include business contact information.

PROGRAM PARTICIPANT RECORDS AND NOTE-TAKING

In their role working with children, youth, and mothers, PEACE Program counsellors are privy to personal and sensitive information. Counsellors need to document their interactions with program participants and with their mothers, for Program and service planning, reporting, accountability, and possible liability. But what and how much needs to be recorded? (See Sample Forms in ***Working with Children and Youth: Sample Activities and Forms*** section.) The amount of information required to collect and record is in fact quite minimal, because:

- Anything that is recorded or collected may be subpoenaed or requested in a criminal, civil, or family court case.
- The more program participant data collected, the greater the potential confidentiality risks.
- The more information collected, the more steps are needed to protect the large amount of data.
- Certain information has the potential to undermine a program participant's safety, particularly if disclosed to a third party.
- A program participant or their mother may be comfortable disclosing certain information to one counsellor, but not want the information shared with all staff.

Best practice is to collect the minimal amount of information required to provide services. Children, youth, and mothers participating in PEACE Programs can also request access to their files at any time. This fact can be helpful in determining what and how information is recorded in a file. Before asking or recording information about a program participant, determine:

- What is the purpose of collecting or recording the information?
- Will the recorded information improve services for her?
- Is the information necessary to determine and deliver the appropriate services?
- Is the recorded information your subjective perspective of the program participant's situation, or is it fact based?
- What will you do with that information once collected?
- Could the collection of the information be harmful to the program participant in terms of gaining access to services, or in a legal setting?
- Could the information be harmful if subpoenaed and disclosed to third parties?

Once your PEACE Program has established what kind of information is collected from program participants, consider how that information is recorded. Program participant notes should be objective, clear, and fact based. Detailed case notes or narratives describing conversations with a child or parent are often unnecessary.

Program Participant Record

Generally, a program participant record is opened when a child or youth is ready to begin service, not when she is on the waitlist for service. The exception to this is when the program participant is involved in legal proceedings, or when the PEACE Program counsellor has reason to believe that there is a higher than usual risk of liability in relation to a particular program participant and the counsellor provides crisis support.

The program participant record should follow a standard format (see Sample Forms in ***Working with Children and Youth: Sample Activities and Forms*** section) designed by the Program. The content of program participant files and other written documentation should be limited to information that is required for statistical and funding purposes, and for documenting the need for and delivery of services, as discussed above. All entries in a program participant file must be legible and must use language familiar to program participants.

Program participant records can include:

- Intake forms and demographic data.
- Initial contact/phone assessment.
- Telephone logs should use only the first name or initials of program participants whenever reasonable.



- Interview with parent form.
- Interview with child/minor form.
- Informed consent form.
- Confidentiality form.
- Release of Information forms (including releases to and from third parties).
- Revocation of Release of Information forms (including releases to and from third parties).
- Assessments completed by the Program.
- Emergency medical form.
- Service plans, both individual and group.
- Case notes.
- Session summary.
- Third-party reports.
- Correspondence regarding program participant.
- Court and legal documents regarding program participant.
- Referrals to other services documentation.
- Mandatory reporting referrals.
- Safety plans.
- File closure.

Documents from Outside Sources

Information received from sources other than the program participant, such as third-party reports or correspondence, may sometimes be included in the file; these are discoverable, in court proceedings. Copies of protection orders, peace bonds, as well as legal agreements and orders, can be retained in the file, but they are also discoverable. Some counsellors recommend keeping a copy of family court orders regarding parental responsibilities in the file, to help guide the counsellor in interactions with the parents—for example, if the offending parent phones the PEACE Program counsellor requesting details about his child’s service. However, program participant files should not contain legal documents or statements containing legal conclusions that potentially may be used against a program participant or their mother.

Summarizing documents obtained from other sources, if relevant, should be maintained in the program participant’s file until the end of service delivery. Normally a program participant record will not include personal materials created by the participant, such as journals, letters, or artwork, unless they are required for the

provision of service. When a program participant asks the agency to hold personal papers (e.g. diary, journal) for safekeeping, these documents—if held in the Program’s records—could be subject to disclosure under a subpoena or record request. An option would be for the counsellor to suggest that the program participant give the items to a local trusted family member or friend to safeguard.

Working Case Notes

Ongoing session notes and service plans should:

- Be kept up-to-date and recorded as soon as possible after every session, and initialled and dated by the author.
- Reflect notes about the session, not historical or legal facts.
- Record information needed to provide service and what is needed for colleagues to provide service.
- Be brief and note major topics and themes, and keep details to a minimum.
- Avoid documenting verbatim accounts.
- Document the methodologies used.
- Be objective and not include subjective comments.
- Be fact based and avoid speculation.
- Avoid information about people other than the program participant, except when necessary.
- Be in a common format.
- Be legible.
- Indicate if information is from a third party.
- Be kept in ink, with corrections made by crossing out deleted material so that it can still be read.
- If applicable, reflect that the program participant has read the file and whether any information has been recorded or changed at their request.

File Closure Report

A file closure report (See Sample Forms in *Working with Children and Youth: Sample Activities and Forms* section) is kept in the program participant’s file. It provides the start and end date of services, and a summary of services and referrals. The report should reflect that a departure interview was offered to the program participant, and mother where relevant; and that they were given the opportunity to provide feedback into the Program. The report should be signed by the PEACE Program counsellor that worked with the program participant, and by the Program manager or supervisor.



PRIVACY AND RECORD KEEPING

PEACE Program counsellors have a responsibility to record only the information necessary to deliver the specific service being requested, at the time it is needed; and to safeguard that information to protect both the privacy and the safety of their program participants. In this section we explore the legislation that governs privacy for program participants, as well as ways to ensure privacy protection in your practice.

RELEVANT LEGISLATION

Legislation and contractual obligations that govern your Program and your Program's funding sources, as well as the type of the records kept, should guide your records management. The laws that govern privacy and personal information in British Columbia, are the **Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA)** and the **Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA)**. How do they relate to the record-keeping practices of PEACE Programs?

Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA)

The British Columbia **Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA)** is an act about privacy in the private sector, covering private businesses, charities, non-profit associations, and labour organizations.

PIPA governs how private sector organizations must handle the personal information of its employees and the public. PIPA balances an individual's right to privacy and an organization's need to collect, use, or disclose personal information for reasonable purposes. PIPA applies to more than 350,000 private sector organizations in BC. PIPA uses the "reasonable person standard" in deciding whether an organization has met its statutory duty—which means that a reasonable person would think the action is appropriate, under the circumstances.

PIPA covers non-profit organizations such as PEACE Programs, along with unincorporated associations, trade unions, and charities. Exceptions to this general rule, are where BC's other privacy law, the **Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA)**, discussed in more detail below) applies. FIPPA may apply to some PEACE Programs that are contracted to perform tasks for public bodies, for example provincial ministries such as the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD). PIPA does not apply if FIPPA applies.

Whether your Program is covered by FIPPA or PIPA, depends on the wording of your contract with your funders. If the wording of the contract suggests that your records are under your Program's "custody or control," the PIPA rules apply. In general, the wording of front line Program contracts in the past has been interpreted as retaining "custody or control" of their records, meaning they would be governed by PIPA.

However, if a government ministry discloses personal information to a non-profit contractor carrying out work for that ministry, but maintains control over that information under the contract terms, FIPPA applies to that personal information under the ministry's control.

As contract wording can vary, the Program should review the contract terms each fiscal year for the following factors:

- Does your contract define custody or control?
- Does your funder have the right to review service related records?
- Does the funder have input into use or disposition of records?
- Who created the records?

Whether PIPA or FIPPA applies to your Program, they both require that personal information be kept for at least one year. And unless otherwise required by law or contract, your Program should keep records for a minimum of seven years. Importantly, for the personal information of a child or youth, the seven-year period is calculated from the 19th birthday of the minor program participant.

At the end of the seven-year period the Program should transfer critical information from the record into a file closing form, summary form, or database to keep indefinitely, then shred or destroy the balance of the record. Some Programs may have the capacity to retain all records and may choose to do so, but the Program should then develop a procedure and directory of stored files that allows for easy access to the information if needed.

Collection of Records Under PIPA

If PIPA applies to your Program, the organization may collect personal information only for reasonable purposes that fulfill the purposes disclosed and permitted by PIPA. A Program needs consent from the program participant to collect information and must notify the individual of the purposes for collection.

Under PIPA, non-profits may collect personal information without consent, or with consent from a source other than the individual, when:

- The collection is in the interest of the individual and consent cannot be obtained in a timely way. *Section 12(1)(a)*
- The collection with consent would compromise the availability or accuracy of information and the collection is for an investigation or proceeding. *Section (1)(c)*
- The information was disclosed to the organization under PIPA. *Sections 18–22*
- The information was disclosed to the Program before the adoption of PIPA in January 1, 2004 (*Section 3(2)(i)*) and you are continuing to use the information for reasonable purposes, to fulfill the original purpose of the collection. If the Program wants to use the information for a new purpose, they would need to obtain consent from the affected person.



PIPA also has rules for employee personal information. An employee is a person who is employed by the organization or performs a service for the organization, including Program volunteers. The collection, use, and disclosure of employee personal information must be reasonable for the purpose of starting, managing, or ending an employment relationship. “Managing” means human resource responsibilities as an employer, and does not include oversight of contractors or consultants:

- If the PEACE Program collects, uses, or discloses employee personal information without consent, they must notify the employee. (*Section 12(1)*) PIPA specifies limited and specific circumstances where this may happen, discussed below.
- If the Program uses an employee’s personal information to make a decision that affects the employee, the Program must retain that information for at least one year after using it so that the employee has reasonable access to the information. (*Section 35(1)*)
- In other circumstances, the organization should destroy documents containing personal information once the original purpose for collecting the information is no longer served, and there are no other legal, contractual, or business reasons to maintain the records. (*Section 35(2)*)

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA)

The British Columbia **Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA)** applies to public bodies, and to contracted service providers performing services for a public body. FIPPA makes public bodies more open and accountable, by providing the public with a legislated right of access to government records; and it protects an individual’s right to personal privacy by prohibiting the unauthorized collection, use, or disclosure of personal information by public bodies.

FIPPA covers all provincial government public bodies, including provincial government ministries such as the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD), agencies, boards, commissions, and Crown corporations such as BC Housing. FIPPA also covers what is referred to as “local public bodies” such as municipalities, universities, colleges, and school boards, and contracted service providers performing services for a public body.

Under FIPPA the wording of the funding contract when the records were created, determines whether the act applies; each individual contract should be reviewed. If your agency runs more than one Program, some records may be governed by the **Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA)** and some by FIPPA. When working under contract for a public body, Programs should clarify which entity has control of the personal information and should state this clearly in the contract. If you are uncertain how to proceed, you should contact your Program manager at your funding entity to consult and establish a procedure that meets your contractual and legal obligations.

If your Program has determined that your funder has custody and control of your records, then requests for access to those records would fall under FIPPA and the requests would be handled by the Ministry and their Privacy Officer. If you receive a request for access to records or for a correction, your Program should inform your Ministry contact or Program manager, who will refer the matter to their Privacy Officer. Under FIPPA, there are similar statutory obligations regarding collection, use, access, and disclosure of personal information.

Your Program should work together with the Ministry to meet all contractual and legal obligations. For example, if your Program is or was once funded by the MCFD (governed by FIPPA), Part 5 of the **Child, Family and Community Service Act (CFSA)** details how FIPPA applies, and the access and disclosure steps taken if a record is in the custody and control of the MCFD. The CFSA may apply to records you have created to serve program participants, such as counselling records or other ongoing service records. The Program should review your contract language and contact your MCFD program manager, to establish a procedure that meets the contractual and legal obligations.

PROTECTING PROGRAM PARTICIPANT PRIVACY

PEACE Program counsellors have a legal and ethical responsibility to protect the physical security and privacy of program participant records (both print and electronic versions). This means not disclosing the identity of a program participant to anyone unless that person has the program participant's permission (and/or the permission of the mother, as appropriate), or is a member of your staff who is providing service to the program participant. This includes non-disclosure to supervisory staff, administrative support, board members, and volunteers, except as required to provide service.

Program participant records should be protected from unauthorized access, duplication, or theft:

- All staff, contractors, volunteers, student interns, and board members should sign an agreement to maintain the confidentiality of program participant communications, records, and written documentation—including miscellaneous documentation such as call logs, emails, and sticky notes. (See the sample **Confidentiality Form** at the end of this section.)
- All program participants, whether they are receiving services in person or over the telephone, should be informed of the agency's record-keeping practices and the legal exceptions to confidentiality, including:
 - If Program staff have reason to believe that a child needs protection under Section 13 of the Child, Family and Community Service Act (CFSA) they are obligated to inform the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD).
 - If Program staff have reason to believe that the program participant is likely to cause serious physical harm to herself or another, they are obligated to inform the appropriate authorities.
 - If Program staff are required by court order to disclose specific records or to attend court and testify.
 - If the program participant expressly consents to the release of records.



- If a program participant's personally identifying information must be disclosed because of a legal exception to confidentiality, the PEACE Program will take all necessary steps to protect the individual's safety and privacy.
- Contents of program participant files and other written documentation should be limited to information that is required for statistical and funding purposes, and to document the need for services. (See ***Program Participant Records and Note Taking*** section.)
- Emails and other electronic records stored on agency computers should be treated in the same manner as paper records, for the purposes of confidentiality and record-keeping.
- Information that identifies program participants should not be disclosed in email messages, either between Program staff or to external parties; appropriate steps should be taken to ensure the security of the Program's computer network.
- Some recommend that the physical server holding sensitive and personal information, should not be connected to the Internet. Because technology is advancing so rapidly in this field, PEACE Programs should regularly revisit this question and seek up-to-date advice from an expert.
- All computers should be protected through up-to-date antivirus software and appropriate firewalls.
- Programs that need to use cloud-based databases should have the data encrypted (locked), with only Program staff holding the encryption key.
- Electronic information should also be protected by a system of regular backups stored away from the physical Program site.
- Electronic information should be password-protected:
 - Computers should be password protected.
 - Voicemail should be password-protected.
- Have a clear policy regarding emailing and faxing personal information:
 - Many Programs do not allow personal information to be transmitted by fax or email because of the danger of sending it to the wrong person. Others allow the use of fax and email when necessary. PEACE Program counsellors can increase the security of fax transmission by taking precautions—such as phoning first to ensure that the intended recipient is the right person; confirming the fax number; and asking the recipient to confirm receipt. Consider using codes or abbreviations, such as a program participant number or initials, to help protect the identity of the program participant.
- All program participant records are confidential, even when shared by the program participant in the presence of an advocate and any third parties who are working on behalf of the program participant.
- Requests by any third party for information or records, including the program participant's status as a program participant, should not be honoured without express written consent from the program participant (unless there are legal exceptions). Third parties would include, but are not limited to: The program participant's attorney; representatives of the criminal justice system; mental health or medical

providers; social service workers; housing or child protective services; coordinated community response committees; inter-agency or integrated case assessment teams; or friends and family.

- If the Program is required to disclose a program participant's personal information or records under a legal exception, the Program should make reasonable efforts to notify the program participant that this has occurred.
- If you have clinical students or interns working in the Program, and if any student or intern notes are released to college instructors, all identifying material must be removed from these notes—including the names of staff, volunteers, program participants, and other students.
- The agency should inform the program participant of the retention and destruction procedures regarding Program files:
 - The Program should provide the record-keeping policy and supporting documents (e.g. written releases) in appropriate languages (e.g. basic literacy level, language translations) and accessible formats (e.g. audio, large print) to the program participant, as relevant. All program participant files should be routinely reviewed and unnecessary documents purged from the files, including electronically stored documents. Unnecessary paper documents that are removed should be shredded.
- The Program should develop a process for responding to subpoenas for records, other work products, or communications between the program participant and staff/volunteers.
- The Program should establish a relationship with an attorney who understands the Program's purpose, legal obligations, and potential liability under federal and provincial confidentiality laws.
- The Program should provide periodic training for staff, contractors, volunteers, and board members regarding the legal obligations for records held by the Program, and the importance of maintaining the confidentiality of program participants' records.
- The Program should monitor the implementation of the record-keeping policy and workplace practices.
- The executive director or a delegate should be the contact person regarding record-keeping obligations.

If PEACE Program Counsellor is a Member of a Professional Association or if the Organization Has Become Accredited

If the PEACE Program counsellor is a member of a professional association, they may be ethically required to follow certain practices regarding records management. They should consult with their professional associations, and discuss these obligations with their Program supervisors. For example, the code of ethical conduct and standards of practice for the [BC Association of Clinical Counsellors](#) recommends the maintenance of program participant records under the Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA), and provides practical guidance as to clinician's notes and records.



When auditing and accrediting an organization, professional accreditation organizations provide records management guidelines and recommended best practices as part of their contracted services. For example, the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) and Community Living BC (CLBC) both have approved [Council of Accreditation for Child and Family Services \(CARF\)](#) accreditation for community living agencies that work with children, youth, and families. The [Council on Accreditation \(COA\)](#), also a non-profit organization operating in Canada, may provide records management guidance to BC community organizations as part of their contracted services.

**PEACE PROGRAM FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH EXPERIENCING VIOLENCE
CONFIDENTIALITY FORM FOR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS**

It is the policy of **[Name of Program]** that board members, employees, volunteers, and student interns of **[Name of Program]** will not disclose confidential information belonging to, or obtained through their affiliation with **[Name of Program]** to any person, including their relatives, friends, and business and professional associates, unless **[Name of Program]** has authorized disclosure. This policy is not intended to prevent disclosure where disclosure is required by law.

Board members, employees, volunteers, and student interns are cautioned to demonstrate professionalism and care to avoid unauthorized or inadvertent disclosures of confidential information and should, for example, refrain from leaving confidential information contained in documents or on computer screens in plain view.

Upon separation of employment, internship, or at the end of a board member's term, he or she shall return, all documents, papers, and other materials, that may contain confidential information.

Failure to adhere to this policy will result in discipline, up to and including separation of employment or service with **[Name of Program]**.

I have read **[Name of Program]**'s policy on confidentiality and the Statement of Confidentiality presented above. I agree to abide by the requirements of the policy and inform my supervisor immediately if I believe any violation (unintentional or otherwise) of the policy has occurred. I understand that violation of this policy will lead to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of my service with **[Name of Program]**.

Signature: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

Program Role: _____



INFORMING THE PROGRAM PARTICIPANT OF RECORD KEEPING PRACTICES

All program participants, and their mothers where appropriate—whether they are receiving services in person or over the telephone—should be informed of the PEACE Program’s record-keeping practices, privacy protection, and the legal exceptions to confidentiality.

On the Phone

The counsellor should:

- Explain the Program’s record-keeping policy.
- Not document the program participant’s full name in the call log.
- Explain to the program participant that their full name will not be documented in the crisis log.
- Explain that records are maintained for statistical and informational purposes.
- Explain that the Program follows privacy legislation, and that their personal information will be protected unless it falls within an exception to confidentiality.

In Person

The counsellor should:

- Explain that contact between the counsellor, the program participant, and the mother (where relevant) is documented for statistical and informational purposes.
- Explain what information will be kept in the program participant file.
- Explain the Program’s record-keeping and privacy policy and procedures, and the legal exceptions to confidentiality.
- Explain that files are kept in a locked place, with limited access by staff.
- Explain who has access to the program participant file.
- Explain that program participants have the right to review the contents of their file, and request the correction or removal of inaccurate, irrelevant, outdated, or incomplete information.
- Explain that information received from sources other than the program participant or their mother, may be included in the program participant’s file.
- Explain to the program participant and mother if relevant, that if she needs the agency to hold papers for safekeeping, those papers will be part of the program participant’s file and may be subject to disclosure. Program staff can explore alternative safekeeping places, such as trusted friends or family, or a safe deposit box.
- When age-appropriate, ask the program participant (or the mother, where relevant) to sign an informed consent form that states she has been informed of the agency record-keeping policy and procedures, and place the signed form in the program participant’s file. (See the sample **Consent Form** in the **Working with Children and Youth: Sample Activities and Forms** section.)

ACCESS TO PROGRAM PARTICIPANT RECORDS

Staff Access

- Access to program participant records is only permitted by Program staff who:
 - Are present when the information is shared, and are working to provide services to the program participant.
 - Are working both for the Program and on behalf of the program participant, such as the executive director, staff, student interns, and volunteers.
- Access to program participant records files should be controlled and monitored by the executive director, or their delegate when needed. Access to program participant records should be on a need-to-know basis, and the executive director should establish clear protocols within the Program as to who can access the records, and for what purpose.

Sharing Participant Records with Programs Within the Agency

In some Programs, files related to the program participant may be held in more than one location, or be tied to different kinds of advocacy services. Agencies should develop procedures that allow for the sharing of limited, relevant written information between staff regarding the program participant. Essential communications about individual program participants that cannot effectively be made orally to other workers in the Program, should be made in memo form; be factual; and relate only to the delivery of services.

For example, PEACE Program counsellors and the Transition House Program maintain separate files on the same program participant. Separate Programs within the same organizations often have separate funders and mandates, and should use a request for information memo between the Programs—along with program participant authorizations—to release information maintained by the separate Program. After receiving the request for information and program participant authorization, the counsellor can send a memo to the Transition House worker that briefly and factually summarizes contact with the participant. This memo should be dated and signed by the PEACE Program counsellor and Transition House provider, and inserted into the file.

Program Participant Access

Individuals have the right to access their own personal information held by your Program, to know how you use this information, and to whom and when you disclose this information. Agency policy should outline the procedures for program participants to review their record. This is particularly important in the case of child program participants, who may want to review their record years later when they are adults.



Your Program has a duty to help individuals with their requests, and to respond within 30 days. You can extend the response time in certain circumstances; in other circumstances, you are authorized to refuse access. If the individual is dissatisfied, she may ask the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner (OIPC) for a review. Your Program may charge individuals a minimal fee for access to their personal information, but may not charge employees. After individuals have been granted access, they can request that information be corrected if they think the information is inaccurate or incomplete.

Requests by program participants or their parents to review their files must be honoured, except where precluded by law (e.g. in a child protection matter). In cases of mature minors, parents must obtain written permission from the child or youth, to access their file. The file should be reviewed in the presence of Program staff. There may be some data authored by third parties being stored temporarily in the file, to better serve the program participant.

Requests by any third party, including but not limited to a program participant or parent's attorney, should not be honoured without the participant's informed written consent. (See **Release of Information Form** in the **Working with Children and Youth: Sample Activities and Forms** section.)

The program participant, parent, or an authorized third party, may make notes about the contents of her file and make a written request for a copy of those portions of the file that are not the work product of the agency. That request would be kept in the file to document the request, and the release of any records should be documented in the file summary form. The program participant should be informed that a copy of her file released to any third party may no longer be covered by confidentiality and privacy laws, and that the information it contains could be used against her in proceedings. The Program should refer the participant to available legal counsel, to provide advice on the status of this information.

The program participant may request the correction or removal of inaccurate, irrelevant, out-of-date, or incomplete information from her file. However, any document or notation required by a funding or legal obligation, must remain in the file. If the Program disputes the accuracy of a proposed correction, the dispute should be noted in the file, but the file would remain unchanged. In response, the program participant may submit information or a written statement supporting her proposed correction, to her file. If information is corrected, the Program must send the corrected information to any organization that received the previous information.

If documents or materials are held by the Program for safekeeping, they are discoverable if kept in the program participant's file as noted above, and must be returned to her upon her request.

Program participant files may not be removed from the Program except with written permission of the executive director or her delegate.

When it is Okay to Deny Access

According to the Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA), a Program can refuse all or partial access to a program participant's records if:

- The information is protected by the solicitor-program participant privilege.
- The information contains confidential commercial information.
- The information was collected for an investigation or proceeding that is ongoing, including appeals.
- The information was collected by a mediator or arbitrator during a sanctioned mediation.
- The information is subject to a solicitor's lien. (*Section 23(3)*)

Your Program must refuse access and can redact in whole or part if any of the following circumstances are present:

- The disclosure could threaten the safety or physical or mental health of another individual.
- The disclosure could reasonably be expected to cause immediate or serious harm to the safety or to the physical or mental health of the applicant.
- The disclosure would release personal information about another person.
- The disclosure would reveal the identity of the person who provided you with the applicant's personal information, and that person does not consent to disclosure. (*Section 23(4) and (5)*)

In the above cases, your Program should provide the reason(s) for refusal; identify a contact person, such as a privacy officer in your organization; and advise the applicant that they may ask the Commissioner to review the Program's decision.

Program Participant Request for Corrections to Records

After a program participant has reviewed her file, she may ask for things to be corrected. Under the Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA), individuals may ask an organization to correct their personal information if they believe the information contains omissions or errors. The PEACE Program has a responsibility to maintain accurate and complete records. To request a correction, the program participant must make a written request. The Program should not charge a fee for addressing correction requests. Your Program should review the request, and if you agree with the correction, should act as soon as possible. The Program must also send the corrected information to organizations that received the previous incorrect information from you. If your organization does not make the requested change, you must record the request and your decision, and include the person's request in the file.



Access by Board Members

- All members of the Program's board of directors are required to sign an agreement to maintain confidentiality, and are informed of the Program's privacy obligations. (See sample **Confidentiality Form for Staff and Volunteers** above.)
- Board members do not have access to program participant files or to information that would identify a program participant, except with authorization of the program participant or the executive director. Generally, this authorization is given under the following circumstances: in specific administrative situations; for handling a subpoena or records request of a program participant's file; or if there is litigation against the agency related to the program participant.

Disclosing Information Without Consent

"Using program participant personal information" means it is used in the organization for its intended purpose. Without consent, PEACE Program counsellors should only disclose or share personal information of program participants under limited and legally justified circumstances.

Does the **Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA)** legislation apply to your Program? If you receive a third-party request for Program records which includes personal program participant information, and the individual has not given consent, PIPA authorizes disclosure in the following circumstances:

- When a Treaty requires or allows for it.
- To comply with a subpoena, warrant, or order of the court or other agency.
- To a public body or law enforcement agency in Canada to assist in an investigation of an offence.
- To respond to an emergency that threatens the health or safety of any individual or the public, and notice is sent to the last known address of the individual to whom the personal information relates.
- To contact next of kin or a friend of an injured, ill or deceased individual.
- To a lawyer representing your organization.
- To an archival institution if the collection is reasonable for research or archival purposes.

PIPA also allows an organization to disclose personal information to another organization without consent, if:

- The individual consented to the original collection
- The personal information is disclosed to the other organization solely for the purposes for which the information was collected
- The personal information is to assist the other organization in carrying out work on behalf of the first organization.

What about information collected before the passage of PIPA? British Columbia law allows the Program to disclose without consent, if it is consistent with the purposes behind the original collection. However, if the purpose has changed, the Program should get consent from the program participant. Also, if the initial purpose is unclear, the Program should get consent from the program participant before disclosing the information.

The Program records and summary should document the disclosure of records with and without consent, and list the PIPA statute sections that support the disclosure.

Access by General Public

- The general public is not entitled to access the Program's records. Names and other case information that could identify a program participant must never be used in meetings, trainings, or in public speaking. Disclosure should be made only with the express written consent of the program participant. (See ***Release of Information Form in the Working with Children and Youth: Sample Activities and Forms*** section.)
- Program records that are subpoenaed or subject to a records request should not be surrendered before consulting with a lawyer. Upon receipt of a subpoena, the Program could consider sending a letter to the requesting party acknowledging receipt, and advising them of their intention to consult with legal counsel.

RECORDS MANAGEMENT

As previously discussed, maintaining PEACE Program records is necessary for Program management, statistical and funding obligations, and accountability. However, program participant records that are necessary to provide services to participants, can also raise confidentiality and privacy issues. (See *Privacy and Record Keeping* section.) Clear record-keeping policies and procedures that are clearly conveyed to program participants, allows a Program to administer programming effectively, ethically, and provide a responsive service to program participants.

RECORD-KEEPING AND PLANNING

Consistent, complete record-keeping that follows a standard procedure helps a PEACE Program counsellor develop best practice habits, such as thorough intake procedures; what to keep in session notes; how and when to write reports; and the best ways to maintain all documentation of service.

Child or youth records should be maintained separately from a mother's records, even if both family members are working with the same Program.



A complete program participant record should provide information that will help with safety planning, locating and accessing related services, and any advocacy required on behalf of the program participant. Regular program participant record reviews help a counsellor more effectively supervise and evaluate how well the service is benefiting a particular child or youth. A complete record also helps ensure consistent service, if the program participant is transferred to another staff member.

Child or youth records should be maintained separately from a mother's records, even if both family members are working with the same Program. The child or youth, and mother, are separate individuals, and their files should also be kept separate. This allows a clear approach and response to subpoenas or records requests.

RECORD-KEEPING AND LIABILITY

Proper, complete documentation protects the PEACE Program counsellor and the agency against allegations that appropriate steps were not followed. Keep complete records, to show:

- The program participant and/or their mother provided informed consent.
- The program participant and/or their mother consented in writing to the release of any information to third parties (except as required by law).
- The program participant, and their mother when appropriate, took part in planning for services.

Documentation of the counsellor's activities with the program participant can also help in cases where the counsellor is alleged to have acted negligently or improperly. This is particularly important in situations that involve mandated reporting of child abuse or neglect, under the **Child, Family and Community Service Act (CFSA)**. Finally, a complete record can assist agency management and board members if they are faced with potential legal liability for the actions of their staff.

RECORD KEEPING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

PEACE Programs and counsellors are accountable for the information collected from program participants. What and how much information is collected, must comply with program participant rights, privacy legislation, and reporting to the Program funder.

Reporting to the PEACE Program Funder: Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General (MPSSG)

PEACE Programs, STV Programs, and outreach and multicultural outreach programs, are required to submit quarterly statistics to the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General (MPSSG) using the Stopping the Violence-System-Online Data Entry System (STV-DES). Program Managers at the Victim Services and Crime Prevention Division, review and approve monthly Program reports. Statistics provided by PEACE Programs are

analyzed annually for trends, and are not used to assess Program performance.

STV-DES is a web-based, monthly reporting system which counsellors need a BCeID and password to access.

Are you a new user to the system? Your first step is to create a BCeID (<https://www.bceid.ca/>). This requires a PEACE Program counsellor to accept the BCeID terms of use, and to provide:

- User name
- User email address
- Password reset question and response
- A password

New users must be assigned appropriate permissions by the Primary Web User (or Profile Manager), BEFORE the new user attempts to log on to STV-DES. Once logged into the system, counsellors will provide information related to:

- Section A. Referral Information
- Section B. Women/Children Not Served
- Section C. New Client Information
- Section D. End of Service
- Section E. General Program Service

Questions about reporting? Need assistance using the reporting system?

Contact Diane Nguyen, Victims Services and Crime Prevention Division,
MPSSG, at diane.nguyen@gov.bc.ca or 604-660-5199.



RECORD RETENTION AND DESTRUCTION

Program records consist of operational, administrative and program participant records that contain personal information. The term “record” is defined broadly to include all recorded information regardless of physical format, including books, documents, maps, drawings, photographs, video or audio tape, letters, vouchers, papers, and any item on which information is stored or recorded—whether graphic or electronic. Emails are records, and need to be managed in the same way as paper records.

How long do records need to be kept? It depends on the legislation and contractual obligations that govern your PEACE Program and your Program’s funding sources, as well as the type of record involved. Each PEACE Program should maintain records and information for the appropriate time; provide a secure method to dispose of records that are no longer required; and provide a transparent public record of the Program’s recordkeeping process.

- Operational records relate to the operations and services of the Program. Program participant records and files would be considered operational records.
- Administrative records relate to the management of the Program and would include corporate records; policies and procedures; legal documents; financial records; employee, personnel, or human relations records; and facilities and property records.

RECORDS MAINTENANCE

Paper Records

- Program participant files should always be kept in locked file cabinets or in a secure locked area. Keys to the file cabinets or locked area should be in a secure and restricted location.
- All paper files should be maintained and destroyed as contractually and legally required.
- The program participants, or their mother when appropriate, should sign a statement that can be part of their informed consent, which acknowledges that she has been notified of the retention and destruction procedures regarding agency files.
- The executive director or her delegate will supervise the destruction of program participant files and Program logs. Under no circumstances should a file, or any part thereof, be destroyed to avoid a subpoena.

Online Databases

Considering using an online database to store program participant files, instead of or in addition to paper files? If your PEACE Program is considering adopting an online database, or currently has an online database of program participant information, adopt these cautionary steps:

- The Program should have full ownership of the database and must ensure that it cannot be accessed by anyone else.
- Databases should be maintained by and within individual Programs. Safeguard computers, to protect participants' personally identifiable information; for example, some Programs keep sensitive program participant-level information on computers that are not connected to the Internet. Programs that need to use cloud-based databases, should have the data encrypted (locked), and only the Program's staff should have the encryption key.
- A recommended practice is to always get consent by a program participant and/or their mother when appropriate, or at least provide notice, for all the ways their personal information may be used. Program participants, and their parents where relevant, should be fully informed of the Program's data collection processes and of the risks and the uses of databases. The Program should consider including this information in their informed consent form.
- Programs should annually assess online forms and the database, to ensure they are only collecting the minimal information required to provide the requested services. This assists the tasks of front-line workers, while respecting the privacy of children and their parents. (See Sample Forms in the ***Working with Children and Youth: Sample Activities and Forms*** section.)
- Programs should recognize that databases are often not time-limited. Databases offer multiple opportunities for exporting data (e.g. creating backup copies in multiple locations, merging or re-bundling data). This means that even if a program participant's information is later deleted from the Program database, there is a risk that a backup of the database has been created. The program participant's information will be stored for as long as that backup is retained by the agency administering the databases. The potential permanency of Program database information, may conflict with a time-limited authorization to access information from a program participant.
- Programs should establish clear operating policies that address these concerns. (Support can be found at [Technology Safety](#).)



PROGRAM PARTICIPANT RECORD RETENTION

How long should you keep your records? British Columbia legislation states that the personal information of program participants must be kept for a minimum of one year, but the same legislation does not identify the maximum timeframe for record-keeping.

To make a determination, BC legislation recommends that your organization review your current grant, financial, legal, regulatory, operational, audit, or archival requirements. However, seven years has been identified as the timeframe that may meet some of these requirements: Under this general rule, adult program participant records should be kept for a minimum of seven years, while the records of a child program participant should be kept seven years after they reach the age of 19.

The seven-year retention period is consistent with:

- The BC **Document Disposal Act**, which governs ministries, branches and institutions of the BC government.
- Current practices in related fields, along with the Council on Accreditation Standards' general rule—that organizations should maintain case records for at least seven years after termination of services unless otherwise mandated by law.

At the end of the seven-year period, critical information from the record can be transferred into a file summary form and/or database to be kept indefinitely, and the Program can then destroy the balance of the record. (See a **Sample Records Summary Form** at the end of this section.)

In determining what records to keep, consider:

- Governing legislation and potential legal implications.
- Evidential value to demonstrate that certain steps were taken.
- Historical value to record how a policy or process has changed with time.
- Financial records to document required financial transactions.

Also consider other legal implications, such as future criminal or civil actions that may be related to the Program's services.

In Canada, there is no statute of limitations that prevents the prosecution of a serious indictable offense. However, summary offences (punishable by six months incarceration and/or a \$5,000 fine) have a six-month limitation period for prosecution, along with a three-year limitation period for treason.

In civil cases, limitation periods do apply. Under the 2012 Limitation Act, the basic limitation for many claims is two years from the date of discovery, except for debts owed to the government (six years) and enforcement of civil judgments (10 years). The ultimate limitation period under the British Columbia *Limitation Act* is 15 years from the act or omission, except for some exempted civil claims which have no limitation period (e.g. actions that relate to sexual assault, arrears of child and spousal support).

Personal information contained in employee files is governed by special rules, discussed below. In general, if the Program using employee personal information makes a decision that directly affects an employee, the Program must keep the information used for that decision for at least one year.

DESTRUCTION OF PROGRAM PARTICIPANT RECORDS

All files should be maintained, and destroyed, as contractually and legally required. A records schedule—a timetable describing the lifespan of a program participant's records—should be kept indefinitely, along with a file closure report. (See a sample **Records Summary Form** at the end of this section.)

The program participant, or their mother when appropriate, should sign a statement acknowledging she has been notified of the retention and destruction procedures regarding agency files.

A privacy officer, or the executive director, should supervise the destruction of program participant files and Program logs. Under no circumstances is a file, or any part thereof, to be destroyed to avoid a subpoena. Paper Program records being destroyed should not be placed in recycling or garbage bins, but should be shredded. Computer discs or hard drives containing personal information should also be wiped clean, and any other computer records must be rendered unreadable through appropriate and effective measures.



**PEACE PROGRAM FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH EXPERIENCING VIOLENCE
RECORDS SUMMARY**

Program Participant Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Services provided: _____

Dates of Contact: _____

Dates of any Disclosed Records and Recipient: _____

Dates and Description of Archived Records: _____

Dates of Description of Records Destroyed and Method of Destruction: _____

INFORMED CONSENT

PEACE Programs are voluntary. Program participants must consent to participate in these services, and that consent must be informed. During the initial call, orientation, or screening process, PEACE Program counsellors should discuss with potential program participants that Program participation is voluntary, especially if there are concerns that participants are not aware of the voluntary nature of the support services. For example, if another Program, ministry, or agency mandates that a woman and/or children attend the Program, the counsellor can discuss the voluntary nature of the services, and explore options with her. To provide informed consent, the program participant and/or their mother when appropriate must be fully informed regarding what she is consenting to, and must have the legal capacity to consent. PEACE Program counsellors are required to ensure that both these elements are present.

As part of the intake process, PEACE Program counsellors should document that the program participant and/or their mother has provided informed consent (See sample Consent Forms in the ***Working with Children and Youth: Sample Activities and Forms*** section) which assures:

- Being informed of information and services that enable her to explore her options.
- The program participant, in partnership with the mother when appropriate, being central to planning and decision making by being informed.
- Being informed of Program policies that have a direct impact on her, such as:
 - How the Program intends to use and disclose any collected information.
 - The legal exceptions to confidentiality.
 - The Program's privacy policy and records management policy.

Consent forms vary based on the age and development of the child. Be sure to use the appropriate consent form (e.g. mature minor), and obtain informed consent from the mother in the case of minors.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

Parental Consent for a Minor

Children coming into a PEACE Program often have only the mother or caregiver bringing them to the Program. In situations where there has been a separation and the court has provided joint custody, each parent is considered a guardian of the child. Counsellors often wonder if in these cases, it is necessary for both parents to provide consent for a minor child to participate in the Program, even if it is only the mother that knows about or is supporting the child. The short answer to this, is no.



The British Columbia **Family Law Act (FLA)** provides the framework to analyze who needs to consent to allow a minor child (under 19) access PEACE Program services. Section 39 of the FLA specifies that if parents are living together or living separately, each parent is a guardian of that child. As a guardian, a parent has parental responsibilities towards the child, to be exercised in the child’s best interest. Section 41 of the FLA discusses the parental responsibility to give, refuse, or withdraw consent to medical, dental, and other health-related treatments subject to the child’s ability to give their own informed consent under the British Columbia *Infants Act*. A minor child’s participation in PEACE Program services would fall under these responsibilities.

The FLA makes the best interest of the child the only consideration when decisions affecting the child are made: “To be in the best interest of a child, the decisions must, to the extent possible, protect the child’s physical, psychological, and emotional safety, security, and well-being.”

After the parents are separated, both parents retain guardianship of their children unless they agree to—or the court orders—a different status. Each parent could register a child independently into a counselling Program, unless there is an order or agreement giving the Section 41 FLA responsibilities to only one parent, or requires that both parents consent to services. This authority would also extend to guardians and caregivers taking care of minor children.

Section 40 of the FLA requires the parent or guardian who wishes to register a child in a PEACE Program, to consult with the other parent, unless it would be unreasonable or inappropriate. This decision would depend on the circumstances of the case. ***Consultation may be unreasonable or inappropriate if there is a safety risk, allegations of abuse, or the other party is unavailable.*** Importantly, an obligation to consult is not the same as requiring the other parent’s consent.

If the non-offending parent or guardian determines that it is the best interest of the child to access PEACE services; and that consultation with the other parent is unreasonable or inappropriate; the non-offending parent or guardian can provide informed consent for the child to participate, without the other parent’s consent. The factual reasons for that conclusion could be documented in the case file of the PEACE service provided.

To help analyze if the FLA applies, a PEACE Program could ask the following questions to the parent or guardian they are working with:

- Is there a court order or any type of agreement in place that specifically requires consent of all guardians for health-related decisions for the child?
- Is there a court order or any type of agreement in place that allocates the health-related decisions to only one guardian?

If the answer is “yes” to either question above, the PEACE Program could ask the parent for copies of the relevant paperwork, and review the terms with the parent. If the order or agreement allows for the presenting parent to authorize PEACE counselling, then the counselling could proceed. If the order or agreement would not allow counselling, the Program could discuss whether the order/agreement is in the best interest of the child and if not, determine together with the parent, next steps for revising the order/agreement (which may involve court action).

If the answer is “no” to both questions, and there is no order or agreement in place, the PEACE Program could provide services to the child with one parent’s consent until they learn otherwise. For example, if counsellors are provided with an order or agreement from a court, or from the opposing parent that controls the issue.

If the PEACE Program has done this analysis and they determine they can provide PEACE services to a child, and the other parent subsequently objects to the services, the PEACE Program can continue to serve that child until they are served with a court order that requires them to stop the services. The best interest of the child is the primary factor under the FLA that should support the PEACE Program’s actions.

MATURE MINORS

When working with children and youth, a PEACE Program counsellor normally obtains the informed consent of the mother. However, sometimes counsellors encounter children and youth who are interested in accessing PEACE Programming without a parent or guardian’s knowledge or consent. In these situations, a counsellor needs to assess whether the child or youth would be considered a “mature minor” and able to provide informed consent on their own.

A minor child is a person under the age of 19, as established by the Age of Majority Act. Persons 19 and over can make decisions regarding their welfare. For children and youth under 19, the **Child, Family and Community Service Act (CFCSA)** assumes throughout the Act that if a child is under 12, the child lacks capacity to consent unless the child’s developmental level and maturity indicate that the child has the capacity to consent.

Therefore, according to CFCSA: Anyone under the age of 19, even someone as young as the age of 10, can consent to participate in a PEACE Program provided they:

- Have the developmental maturity.
- Understand the nature and consequences of service.
- Understand the associated benefits and risks of service.
- Understand the care is in their best interest.



In practice, however, the age of 12 is often used by public agencies and service providers as a benchmark to help determine whether a child has the legal capacity to consent. Some PEACE Programs still require parental consent for applicants who are the age of 12, but under the CFCSA, children under the age of 12 can provide informed consent to PEACE services if they are assessed as capable of providing it, and that the consent is voluntary and not the result of undue pressure.

When Canadian courts have reviewed informed consent cases for minors, the courts have not established a specific age when children have the capacity to consent to or refuse treatment. Every case has been addressed on an individual basis, and the courts have been flexible in their determinations. The courts tend to focus on the developmental maturity of the child, along with the seriousness of the proposed health care treatment and the risks and benefits. There are no reported cases that have considered a mature minor's consent or refusal, regarding counselling services; however, court cases have discussed medical treatments.

Reviewing the services your PEACE Program provides will help guide your Program's informed consent practice. For example, if the PEACE services provided fall under the health care provisions of the **BC Infants Act**, that statute identifies the informed consent steps to be taken. If your PEACE Program services do not fall under these health care provisions, then common law practices regarding a minor's capacity to consent apply. (See **Other PEACE Services** section.) Both informed consent practices focus on the maturity of the child, rather than a particular age.

Health Care Services Under the BC Infants Act

In British Columbia, there is no legal age for consent for health care. The BC Infants Act states that children and youth under the age of 19 have the right to consent to their own health care from a health care provider, which is defined as "a person licensed, certified, or registered in BC to provide health care." Health care "means anything that is done for therapeutic, preventative, palliative, diagnostic, cosmetic, or other health-related purpose, and includes a course of health care." If the PEACE Program counsellors within your agency are licensed, certified, or registered, your Program would follow this health care policy.

Under the Infants Act, it is not necessary to obtain consent from the "infant's" parent or guardian, if the child under the age of 19 can provide legal consent to services. The Act considers the child has the legal capacity to consent, if:

- The provider explains the treatment to the child.
- The child understands the nature and consequences and the reasonable foreseeable benefits and risks of the care.
- The provider has made reasonable efforts to determine their comprehension.
- The provider has concluded the health care is in the child's best interest.

If the PEACE Program counsellor explains these steps to the program participant and determines that she has the legal capacity to consent, and that the consent is voluntary, the counsellor can provide support without permission from a parent or guardian. Consent which is voluntary would be a free act, and not the result of pressure or fraud. If the Program supports a child under the age of 19 without parent or guardian consent, the PEACE Program should consider documenting that the above steps have been followed, and the documents kept in the program participant's file for the recommended retention period.

If the program participant has difficulty reading a written consent form due to language difficulties, a low level of literacy, or a disability, the service provider should document the fact that oral consent was obtained from the program participant and perhaps have the oral consent witnessed by another staff member.

Other PEACE Program Services

If the PEACE Program does not follow the health care policy approach described in the BC Infants Act, the "mature minor" doctrine established at common law would apply. Common law means laws that are based on custom, practice, or court decisions, rather than statutes. The common law doctrine of a "mature minor" involves an analysis like the *Infants Act* criteria.

These PEACE Programs could consider the following "mature minor" factors:

- The child or youth must be capable of a decision about whether to give or refuse consent.
- The child's or youth's consent must relate to the proposed services.
- The child's or youth's consent must be voluntary, which is a free act and not due to fraud or misrepresentation.
- The service provider must provide the child or youth with information that would allow a reasonable person to understand the proposed services, and to decide.
- The child or youth should have an opportunity to ask questions and receive answers.
- The services must be in the child's or youth's best interest.

If the PEACE Program counsellor explains these steps to the program participant and determines that she has the legal capacity to consent, the counsellor could provide services without permission from, or notice to, a parent or guardian. Again, it is good practice for the Program to document that these steps have been followed, and to keep the documentation in the program participant's file for the recommended retention period.

If the program participant has difficulty reading a written consent form due to language difficulties, a low level of literacy, or a disability, the service provider should document the fact that oral consent was obtained from the program participant and perhaps have the oral consent witnessed by another staff member.



PEACE Program Services to Minors if None of the Above Apply

Once the PEACE Program decides the nature of their services and how to analyze the informed consent issue, there may be circumstances where a minor asks for PEACE Program services but the counsellor concludes that the minor does not meet the informed consent factors. In making this determination, a PEACE Program counsellor may want to consult with colleagues or supervisors as to the minor's capacity to provide informed consent.

If after consultation, the PEACE Program determines the minor child does not meet the capacity criteria, the PEACE Program would then need to seek the parent's informed consent to provide services to the child. The PEACE Program could consult with one or both parents. As discussed in the ***Parental Consent for a Minor*** section, there are circumstances when one parent can give consent to PEACE Program services without consulting with the other parent.

REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT

In British Columbia, under the Child, Family and Community Service Act (CFSA), anyone who "has reason to believe a child needs protection" must "promptly" make a report to a child protection authority. Each PEACE Program will have its own procedures for making this report, and most require consultation, before or afterwards, with a supervisor. The PEACE Program counsellor is not legally mandated to determine whether a child or youth was abused or neglected. Reports must be made based on a counsellor's concerns, and a Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) worker will make the decision regarding whether to investigate.

If a report to the MCFD needs to be made, the PEACE Program counsellors should inform the program participant (and mother if relevant) of the need to share the information that was disclosed. Speak to the program participant about why you need to share the information she has shared with you. Remind her of the limits to confidentiality, and that because of your concerns for her safety you need to share the information. Explain your concerns to the mother prior to making the call. Be aware that there may be circumstances when involving the mother in the disclosure could pose harm to the child and/or endanger her participation in the Program, potentially limiting her access to support and increasing her isolation. Depending on the age and maturity of the program participant, discuss these concerns with her. If relevant and appropriate, counsellors can support the mother to make a call to the MCFD.

Some PEACE Program counsellors worry that child protection authorities will blame the mother, undermine her abilities as a mother to keep her children safe, and cause more harm to the children and woman if a report is made. However, counsellors can help mitigate some of these possible harms by having a working relationship with the MCFD in your community, encouraging and supporting the woman to make the call herself, and advocating for the woman with the MCFD.

A 2014 publication by the MCFD outlines best practices for coordination between child protection, and other agencies that work with women and their children who have experienced abuse.[^] This can be a helpful resource for counsellors to refer to on their own, and when advocating for women and children with the MCFD.

WORKING WITH THE MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT (MCFD)

The role of a PEACE Program counsellor can be challenging as you balance the needs and safety of the program participant, the non-offending parent or caregiver, and the requests of child protection workers. It can be difficult to know what requests are within the scope of a counsellor's role. For example, when a counsellor is asked to:

- Report to MCFD if a particular woman and child are participating in the PEACE Program.
- Sign information sharing forms.
- Provide supervised visitation for free.

The above are beyond the scope of the PEACE Program counsellor's role. However, maintaining a positive relationship with the local MCFD office and child protection workers can support your work. Discuss these requests with your supervisor or manager to determine your response.

Contact your local MCFD community service manager if you have concerns or complaints about child protection workers' responses to women and children experiencing violence; or about requests and pressure on you from child protection workers. Counsellors are also invited to connect with BCSTH about their concerns.

CHILDREN AS WITNESSES IN COURT

Sometimes children and youth are called to testify in court regarding the violence they have been exposed to. This experience can be difficult and anxiety-provoking because:

- Courtrooms are formal and adult-oriented and may be daunting for a child or youth.
- The language and procedures of a courtroom may be difficult for children or youth to understand.
- A child or youth who testifies in court is being asked to reveal family secrets that may result in further harm to themselves, siblings and their mother.
- The testimony may have long-term effects for the child/parent relationship.¹

[^] 2014 publication by the MCFD outlines best practices for coordination between child protection, and other agencies that work with women and their children who have experienced abuse. This document is not available online but can be accessed through the BCSTH library <https://bcsth.ca/resources/library-services-2/>



There has been increasing sensitivity and attention toward the challenges that children face in the courtroom. The Crown Counsel policy manual recognizes that “children have to be treated differently by the criminal justice system, in order to provide them with the protections to which they are rightly entitled and which they deserve.” This has led to the development of support services designed to prepare children and youth for the experience of testifying. Any child or youth required to testify in court, is eligible for Victim Services to support them and prepare them for court. It is best to have time to prepare children and youth. Also, starting the preparation by connecting with Victim Services—to begin informing the program participant about the process and what to expect—can help mitigate some of the fears and apprehension they may have.

The Crown Counsel policy recommends that all children and youth, victims, and their parents and guardians, be advised of available specialized streamlined services along with Victims Services. It also encourages Crown Counsel to provide timely information to social workers, parents, and guardians who are supporting the child or youth.

Furthermore, Crown Counsel policy recommends that their offices provide for:

- Early identification and assignment of the case.
- Wherever possible, assignment of the case to Crown Counsel that has received specialized training.
- Early identification and notice to the victim of accommodations available under the Criminal Code.
- Vertical prosecution, meaning that every effort should be made to have cases handled by the same Crown Counsel from beginning to end. If positive rapport has been developed with the child or youth, Crown Counsel should remain with the case until final disposition.
- Priority in scheduling to ensure that the case moves expeditiously through the criminal justice system.

Sections 13 and 19 of the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights provide that every victim has the right to request protective testimonial aids when appearing as a witness, including:

- Identifying the child or youth by initials only.
- Publication and broadcast ban on identity of child witness or victim.
- Non-disclosure of identity of witnesses.
- Presentation of evidence by videotape.
- Direct indictment to avoid multiple court proceedings.

Crown Counsel should also advise witnesses and their parents about testimonial aids or accommodations they can request, such as:

- The exclusion of the public or testimony given out of public view.
- A support person.
- Testimony given from a different room or behind a screen or other device.
- Cross-examination by appointed counsel when accused is self-represented.
- An order protecting the security of the witness that is in the interest of “proper administration of justice.”²

The “Bill of Rights” for Child Witnesses:

1. Every child has the right to court preparation tailored to his or her individual needs.
2. Every child should have easy access to testimonial aids.
3. Every child has the right to be treated with respect during his or her involvement in the criminal justice system.
4. Every child has the right to feel safe and protected in a courtroom.
5. A child should be questioned by adults who adapt their communication to his or her developmental age and linguistic ability.
6. A child should have the opportunity to meet with the Crown well in advance of the court date.
7. A child and his or her family should be advised of all court dates, adjournments, and guilty pleas as soon as that information becomes available.
8. A child’s special needs and vulnerabilities should be addressed.
9. A child-friendly courtroom, or routine accommodations, should be made available for every child who is called upon to testify.
10. Expedited case should be the norm when children are witnesses.

London Family Court Clinic, Child Witness Project



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ON LEGAL ISSUES SPECIFIC TO PEACE PROGRAMS

- BC Society of Transition Houses. (2016). Legal Toolkit: General Information about Legal Issues and Court Matters in BC. Vancouver: BC Society of Transition Houses. Retrieved from <https://bcsth.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/BCSTH-Legal-Toolkit-2016-1.pdf>
- Clicklaw. (2015). Young People and the Law. Retrieved from http://wiki.clicklaw.bc.ca/index.php/Young_People_and_the_Law
- Criminal Justice Branch, Ministry of Justice. (2015). Crown Counsel Policy Manual. Retrieved from <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/law-crime-and-justice/criminal-justice/prosecution-service/crown-counsel-policy-manual/chi-1-children-vulnerable-youth-crimes-against.pdf>
- Cunningham, A., & Stevens, L. (2011). Helping a Child be a Witness in Court: 101 things to know, say and do. London: Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System. Retrieved from http://www.lfcc.on.ca/Helping_a_Child_Witness.pdf
- Hurley, P. (2017). Preparing and Supporting Young Witnesses: An Essentials Guide. London Family Court Clinic.
- Ministry of Children and Family Development. (2010). Best Practice Approaches: Child Protection and Violence against Women. Retrieved from http://endingviolence.org/files/uploads/MCFD_best_practice_approaches_nov2010.pdf
- Ministry of Children and Family Development. (2010). Best Practice Approaches: Child Protection and Violence against Women. Retrieved from http://endingviolence.org/files/uploads/MCFD_best_practice_approaches_nov2010.pdf
- The Canadian Bar Association. (2017). Children's Rights. Retrieved from <http://www.cbabc.org/For-the-Public/Dial-A-Law/Scripts/Your-Rights/238>

PROGRAM PLANNING

This section describes issues that are under the control of the agency that operates the PEACE Program, and that most likely fall outside of the sole responsibility of the PEACE Program counsellor. Delivering a high-quality Program depends in large part on careful planning, including Program planning and development, and implementation of policies and procedures.

All PEACE Programs should make time to plan their service delivery on a regular basis; most Programs choose to do this once a year: To review the past year, including activities and outcomes, and to make plans to continue improving the Program in the coming year. Budget considerations and Program evaluation are usually part of this planning. It is also helpful in this planning for Programs to have a clear framework that describes:

- Program mandate.
- Program goals and objectives.
- The philosophy and approaches that guide the Program.
- Intended target group(s).
- The services offered.
- How to access services.
- Hours of operation.
- Length of service.
- Methods of monitoring the Program plan.
- Evaluation of Program goals and objectives.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

To help guide the actions of PEACE Program counsellors, the benefits of having clear and written Program and human resource policies and procedures cannot be overstated. Policies can:

- Help establish a professional and effective Program.
- Provide consistency.
- Assist in the equitable and transparent functioning of a Program.
- Help Program staff make difficult decisions.
- Prevent ambiguity about handling any situation.
- Provide accountability and protection from liability, when implemented accurately.
- Support the well-being and safety of program participants and counsellors.



- Promote harmony among PEACE Program staff.
- Promote more efficient and effective service delivery.

In addition to Program delivery policies, agencies should have comprehensive human resources policies that ensure consistent, equitable treatment for all employees, volunteers, and students who work in the agency. These policies should include hiring practices; maintaining complete, up-to-date staff records; and conducting regular, useful performance evaluations.

The BCSTH has a [Policy Template Guide](#) that provides sample policies for Transition Houses, Safe Homes and Second Stage Housing. Some of these policies can provide guidance to PEACE Programs policy development. At time of writing, BCSTH is developing a Policy Template Guide for PEACE Programs. When completed the guide will be distributed to all PEACE Programs. In the meantime, below are some examples of policies and procedures that are integral to the functioning of a professional, effective, and safe PEACE Program for both program participants and staff.

Accessibility, Equality, and Diversity

Working from an anti-oppressive framework, PEACE Programs should provide equal and socially inclusive services so that no one faces discrimination based on race, culture, national origin, ethnicity, religion, spirituality, sexual orientation, gender identity, health, social condition, and mental or physical disability or ability. PEACE Programs strongly value equality and diversity, and recognize that providing equality of access and opportunity means challenging discrimination and removing barriers to accessing services.

Where possible, the location and interior of a PEACE Program should be planned in consideration of program participants' accessibility. For example, the interior should ideally be free from physical barriers and have accessible washroom facilities; the Program location should be accessible to public transit, and have available vehicle parking. As limited resources can restrict a Program's ability to address issues of accessibility, Programs and agencies should do their best to ensure accessibility concerns are addressed in Program planning, and if the opportunity arises for renovation or an agency move.

As the majority of PEACE Programs are located within a larger agency whose services are directed towards adults, effort should be made to ensure the agency environment and the PEACE office is welcoming, inviting, and comfortable for children and youth of all ages, and for their families. This could include having furniture and décor that is child-friendly.

Providing a Safe and Hygienic Environment

Since promoting safety for program participant and their mothers is one of the primary goals of the PEACE Program, the Programs should have written policies that promote the safety of program participants and staff, and consider potential safety concerns when setting up the PEACE office. This can include the location of windows, and ensuring they can be locked; ensuring that the toys and play equipment are regularly maintained and cleaned; and having panic buttons available. To help promote safety, it also helpful for staff to be trained to address unsafe situations in a timely and effective way.

Programs should have a written policy that addresses:

- Safety for those working alone or in isolation.
- Emergency plans that include evacuation procedures.
- Universal precautions and infection control.
- Regular inspection of the service and administrative environments, including all furniture, toys, and safety equipment.
- The handling and storage of hazardous materials.
- Transportation of program participants in agency vehicles and in staff vehicles, including requirements for appropriate licensing and insurance.
- First aid training for staff.
- Critical incident reporting.
- Food preparation and food safety, including any staff training required.

Transportation

Any agency that allows or requires employees to transport program participants, either in agency vehicles or in their own personal vehicles, should have a policy governing:

- Licensing and safety inspections for vehicles.
- Licensing of the driver, including adequate insurance coverage.
- Use of appropriate child restraint systems when transporting children.

PEACE Programs and counsellors should be familiar with and abide by [BC's infant and child seat regulations](#).



Emergency Preparedness Planning

All organizations should have comprehensive written policies and procedures that deal with emergency preparedness. The purpose of the emergency plan is to prepare agency employees to respond to an emergency effectively, efficiently, and without confusion. A good emergency plan enhances personal safety and security, and minimizes the potential for trauma and injury to both program participants and agency staff. The plan should include information for responding to:

- Fire.
- Earthquake, flooding, and other natural disasters.
- Medical emergencies.
- Hazardous material spills.
- Utility damage or outage.
- Threats to the organization, such as a bomb threat.

All employees should be trained on the emergency plan, and able to guide and direct program participants in an emergency. For example, PEACE Program counsellors should know where the emergency exits are (e.g. site maps posted in the office), and where the fire extinguisher(s), flashlight(s), and first aid kit(s) are located.

The emergency plan should be reviewed annually and updated as necessary. Agencies should also have written procedures regarding critical incident reporting, including who is notified of a critical incident (e.g. executive director, board of directors, the program participant's parents). Procedures regarding critical incident reporting should provide for regular review of critical incidents, such as quarterly review by an agency committee.

ACCREDITATION

Is your organization considering becoming accredited, or already accredited? Accreditation is a process that “acknowledges that your organization successfully completed a peer review by an objective third party, met (or exceeded) the independent accreditor’s pre-established quality standards, and demonstrated excellence in areas including but not limited to: Board governance, participant programs and services, employee and volunteer engagement, internal business processes, financial responsibility, and fund development.”³

Reasons organizations consider becoming accredited:

- Investing in your organization’s future and sustainability. Seeing “accredited” inspires confidence in your stakeholders, including individuals using your services.
- Showcasing your organization’s excellence, quality, transparency, and accountability, as evaluated by an objective third party.
- Focusing on child-centred programs and services.
- Engaging employees and volunteers in high-performing teams.
- Increasing each team member’s learning and growth and to manage and transfer key knowledge.
- Decreasing silos via systems thinking and process mapping.
- Maximizing the effectiveness, efficiency, economy, and equity of all internal processes.
- Tailoring global best practices to suit your organizational culture.
- Ensuring financial accountability, transparency, and sustainability.
- Boosting funding (e.g. government, donors, social enterprise). People want to do business with people who think like they do. Accreditation reinforces their trust to invest in you.⁴

However, accreditation is not necessary to doing PEACE work. Consider the following challenges:

- Accreditation requires a significant amount of time, resources, paperwork, and cost.
- Once an agency is accredited, additional paperwork is required from the accrediting body on an ongoing basis. This can impact day to day practice, and the amount of time counsellors can spend working with program participants.
- Accreditor policies may conflict with privacy laws. This can complicate record-keeping practices and require negotiation regarding program obligations under federal and provincial privacy laws.

Carefully consider both the benefits and potential challenges of accreditation prior to embarking on the process.



Guidelines if your organization is considering becoming accredited:

- **Build your business case.** If you're not the executive director, confirm buy-in from your organization's leaders; advise your board of directors of your plan.
- **Do your research** and discuss the process with at least one organization in your sector that has already been accredited. Why did they choose to go through the process? Why did they choose the accreditor they did? What went well? What didn't go so well? How much time and how many resources did they invest in the process? What did they learn? What did they value most from the process? The service provider that shares your values will likely be the best fit for you.
- **Choose your accreditation agency carefully.** Research those who have written standards for your sector, and those who understand your work and challenges. Whichever accreditor you choose, you'll be given a self-assessment questionnaire to help you prepare. This will help you identify which of the accreditor's standards you currently meet, partially meet, and do not meet.
- **Establish a small team** that is representative of a wide range of stakeholders to lead your organization through the accreditation process. This is an excellent opportunity to engage high-performing staff at all levels to work collaboratively on a strategic project, and to continue their learning and development.
- **Take the time to educate all stakeholders**, including staff, the board, and community partners, about how this process will make your agency the best at what you do. Especially for smaller agencies, this step is critical as the buy-in of staff and your board is needed for a successful outcome.
- **Draft an action plan** to help you plot out how you plan to meet all standards; what resources (both human and financial) you'll need to invest in the process; and a realistic timeframe (approximately one year of preparation is typical for a first accreditation). Your accreditor can provide both resources and coaching along the way.
- **Get help.** Preparing for accreditation takes time—lots of time! If you are a small agency, seriously consider hiring someone to help with the workload and paperwork that accreditation creates.
- **Be open to rethinking everything about your organization.** You may believe your agency has a foundation of acceptable policies and procedures. As you make your way through the process, you may discover that some of your policies and procedures are unclear or inconsistent.
- **Your accreditation agency is a great resource and support.** Their job is to research and document best practices for your field of work. Take advantage of their expertise. When you're ready, your accreditor will send a team of professionals to meet with your stakeholders on-site to review policies and procedures, and to ask questions about actual practices. Most organizations express some anxiety about this, but soon discover they're offered valuable coaching to position them for success.

- **Consider taking validator training**, if you have not previously worked with an accredited agency (validators are the on-site people who come and collect the evidence and observe your agency).
- **Keep your primary funders informed of your progress.** They have a big stake in your agency and will be interested in the process.
- **Organize your accreditation “stuff” carefully from Day One.** A recommendation is to employ the same numbering and organization system as the accreditation domains and standards, to make it easier to retrieve information.⁵

After the accreditation, the team of accreditors will send a report with their findings, both in the areas your organization performed well, and the areas that might need to be addressed for the future. This report becomes a reference document, not only for continuous quality improvement, but also for organizational knowledge transfer and succession management.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ON ACCREDITATION

Accreditation Canada <https://www.accreditation.ca>

Canadian Accreditation Council <http://www.canadianaccreditation.ca>

Canadian Centre for Accreditation <https://www.canadiancentreforaccreditation.ca>

CARF International <http://www.carf.org/home/>



PROGRAM EVALUATION

Good quality service provision depends on the ongoing development and evaluation of services. PEACE Program counsellors should continually look for ways to improve their services and to prioritize the need for ongoing Program evaluation. PEACE Programs collect data and use the data to improve the quality of Programs, including providing consistent and responsive services; ensuring accountability; and facilitating Program decision-making and strategic planning.

Evaluation of a Program can take different forms and achieve a wide range of ends, all aimed at continually improving service delivery. Meaningful evaluation generates information that is understandable and clearly linked to outcomes that staff understand and commit to. Program evaluation is worth undertaking because:

- It helps counsellors see what is working and not working in their Program.
- It gives counsellors language and examples to illustrate to funders and community partners how the PEACE Program makes a difference in the lives of children and youth who experience violence.
- It can generate information that will help in fundraising.
- It helps improve a counsellor's practice by highlighting hers and the Program's strengths, and areas for improvement.

Creating an evaluation plan takes time, energy, and expertise. This section outlines the basic steps in developing a system for evaluating a PEACE Program.

Most Programs are accustomed to gathering program participant satisfaction data, usually through written surveys or feedback forms. The consent form should state that by signing it, the program participant also agrees to participate in evaluation activities such as feedback surveys and/or a closing interview. Equally important, your consent form should state that program participants have the right to be excluded from Program evaluation, with no impact on their ability to access current services or the services they will receive.

Satisfaction surveys ask questions related to whether the program participant enjoyed the Program; whether it was conveniently scheduled; whether the program participant felt respected; and other questions geared towards an evaluation of the program participant's experience with the Program. Satisfaction data can yield rich information that counsellors use to better meet their program participants' needs, and often to increase the reach of their Program.

Program outcome evaluations answer the questions: “How will I know if my Program was effective?” and “How will I know if I’ve done what I set out to do?” A Program outcome is a measure of how the program participant has changed as a result of the Program. The program participant may have learned new information, developed new skills, or come to a new understanding of past events. Some examples of program participant outcomes for a PEACE Program may include, but are not limited to:

- Children and youth report that they feel less isolated in their experience.
- Children and youth report that they have learned new ways of coping with their experiences of abuse.
- Relevant to small children: Mothers report an improvement in their child’s behaviours, such as “acting out,” as well as an improvement in their child’s emotions and ability to self-regulate.
- Relevant to mothers: Mothers report an increase in their knowledge of child development and appropriate behaviours.

These are just a few examples of possible program participant outcomes. Each Program should assess its own specific goals, and create outcomes that reflect success relative to those goals.

It is possible for a program participant to change in a positive way (e.g. learn a new skill) even if she reported not being happy with some elements of the Program (e.g. the time was inconvenient; she felt the group ran too long). On the other hand, a program participant can enjoy the elements in a Program, connect with other participants, and leave feeling positive about the experience—but still not have changed in the ways that the Program planners hoped (e.g. no new knowledge or understanding; no new coping skills, or improvements in behaviour).

This highlights the difference between satisfaction data and outcomes data. A comprehensive evaluation program will include both, as each generates information that is important to Program success.

METHODS FOR GATHERING DATA

Evaluation data can be gathered in a variety of ways. Written surveys are commonly used, as are feedback interviews, either over the phone or in person. Focus groups are another way to solicit feedback. To ensure that program participants feel free to give fully honest answers, it is a good idea to allow for anonymity. The easiest way to do this is through a written survey, but this may not be appropriate for younger children; program participants for whom English is not the preferred language; or program participants whose literacy is lower. Programs will also have to adapt the format of the evaluation to be accessible to children and youth at different developmental stages. When choosing the method for gathering feedback, a Program will have to balance all factors.



Printed evaluations can be given to program participants, along with a stamped and addressed envelope. Program participants can complete the feedback form at their convenience, and mail the completed feedback form back to the Program while maintaining anonymity.

Interviews are another good way to gather feedback from children and youth, but the lack of anonymity may lead to answers that are aimed at pleasing the interviewer. Interviews are also time-consuming.

In addition to counsellors employing the regular gathering of feedback from program participants as part of their role, PEACE Programs can also consider hiring an external evaluator to elicit satisfaction and outcomes data from program participants. Using someone from outside the Program can also enable program participants to feel more comfortable and safe to speak freely about their experiences in the Program.

SATISFACTION DATA

Satisfaction data should be gathered from a range of stakeholder groups—including program participants, mothers, and community partners such as referring professionals, and others who work with the same children and youth. (See sample *Program Evaluation surveys* at the end of this section.)

OUTCOMES MEASURES

As discussed above, outcomes provide one way of measuring the effect that a Program is having on program participants. Outcomes measures could include Program effectiveness, efficiency, and accessibility of services. While gathering outcomes data, it is also important to gather demographic data on the survey participants as this will assist with comparing survey results with similar populations (e.g. age, gender); a Program might be doing a really good job at serving younger children, but may find that youth are not satisfied, or are not experiencing any changes in themselves over the course of their participation in the Program.

Creating and measuring basic program participant outcomes does not have to be complex or difficult. It does not have to involve expensive tools or a great deal of staff time, if it is properly planned. Gathering and analyzing program participant outcomes can help a Program discover how it is making a difference for program participants. It can also give Program staff the language to explain Program successes, and it can help point to areas within the Program that could be improved. Outcomes measurement can enhance a Program's credibility in the community by demonstrating its impact. Excellent resources are available, both in print and online, to help an organization begin to measure program participant outcomes. (See *Additional Resources* at the end of this section.)

Outcomes measurement is a helpful management tool that can be used to improve Programs. However, some Programs worry that they cannot use outcomes data unless it would be considered reliable from a research perspective: A Program might gather outcomes information from only a very small number of program participants; perhaps there are only five children in the Program—or, a Program may be large, but have a very low rate of return of program participant surveys. But while a Program hopes to gather data from as many sources as possible, it remains true that useful information can be learned from a relatively small number of program participants. Changes to a Program will be made based on the judgement of those who run the Program, and that judgement will be informed by the data gathered.

The following steps, adapted from the *BC Association of Family Resource Programs Provincial Standards of Practice*,⁶ provide guidance in developing outcomes measures for a PEACE Program. At time of writing this Toolkit, PEACE Programs are not required by funders to measure outcomes for their program participants. Some have outcomes measurement in place to comply with accreditation standards, whereas others have chosen to implement them for the internal benefits.

Step 1: Identify Program Participant Outcomes

- Ask yourself what you are hoping to accomplish in this Program. How will you know if you are successful?
- Outcomes describe the ways in which a program participant will change for the better if your Program is successful.
- Outcomes must be realistic, specific, and measurable.
- Most outcomes measures describe growth in knowledge, skills, understanding, and development.
- Most PEACE Programs will identify four to five outcomes.

Step 2: Identify Success Indicators

- For each outcome, identify two to three indicators of success:
 - If the outcome being measured is, “Program participants experience increased safety in their lives,” indicators could include:
 - Program participant can name at least one person outside their family whom they can talk with about the abuse.
 - Program participant has a plan for how to stay safe if there is violence in their home.
 - Program participant reports feeling safer, more often than they did before starting the Program.
- Ensure that indicators are precise and measurable, and that they clarify the outcome.



Step 3: Develop Evaluation Tools

- What type of evaluation tool(s) will gather information in the most appropriate way? Consider resources available within the Program (e.g. time available, experience with developing evaluation tools), and program participant needs (e.g. literacy, time, availability).
- What type of evaluation tool(s) will get the highest response rate?
- Who and how many people should receive the evaluation tool or be involved in the data gathering? Consider the amount of time required for data analysis.
- What questions should be asked? Questions should relate directly to the success indicators.
- Consider the use of pre- and post-surveys to collect outcome data. Pre-service and post-service surveys are most helpful in quantifying any changes in a program participant over the course of their involvement with the Program. The pre-service survey helps provide a baseline of where the child is at when they come into the Program, against which any future changes can be assessed. Pre- and post-surveys can be used in both individual and group Programs.
- Some agencies prefer to use one tool (usually a survey) to gather both satisfaction and outcome data.
- It is helpful to include one or two open-ended questions at the end of a survey to allow respondents to provide their own comments.

Step 4: Gather the Data

- Prepare the evaluation tool, and test and revise it as necessary prior to using it.
- Administer the evaluation tool: Explain it; ensure confidentiality and when possible, anonymity; hand it out in person, do a mail/email send-out, conduct interviews (in person or over the phone), or focus groups.
- Manage the returned data: Record the number of evaluations completed and store the data safely and securely to ensure protection of privacy.

Step 5: Analyze the Data

- Count the numerical responses.
- Sort and label the descriptive responses.
- Analyze the numerical and descriptive data. What are the overall patterns and trends of response?
- Interpret the data. What do the sorted and counted data reveal? What can be learned from this about the Program, and about results for program participants?
- Check the data against the original outcomes and success indicators. Ask questions such as: Have we achieved our desired outcomes? If not, why not? Are some met and not others? Why might this be so?

Step 6: Use the Results

- Some Programs prepare a formal evaluation report. At the very least, the evaluation findings should be summarized in a concise, readable manner for general Program use.
- Use the results to improve the Program. What do the results suggest about what is working, or what can be improved? What needs to be changed, or stay the same?
- Share the evaluation results with others; this could include the public, other stakeholders, the board, program participants, and funders.
- Use the results in public relations about your Program, including brochures, your website, and public speeches.
- Use the results in making presentations to existing and potential funders and policy-makers at varying levels of government.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ON PROGRAM EVALUATION

Administration for Children and Families: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation. (n.d.) The Program Manager's Guide to Evaluation. Retrieved from https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/program_managers_guide_to_eval2010.pdf

McNamara, C. (n.d.) Basic guide to outcomes-based evaluation for non-profit organizations with very limited resources. Retrieved from <http://managementhelp.org/evaluation/outcomes-evaluation-guide.htm>

National Resource Centre. (2010). Strengthening Non-profits: A Capacity Builder's Resource Library. Measuring Outcomes. Retrieved from <http://strengtheningnonprofits.org/resources/guidebooks/MeasuringOutcomes.pdf>



SAMPLE EVALUATION TOOLS



The following section provides some sample evaluation tools.

SAMPLE EVALUATION TOOLS

PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence PEACE Program Evaluation for Parents/Guardians of Program Participants

Date: _____

Age of Program Participant: _____ Gender of Program Participant: _____

Please take a moment to tell us your perception of your child's experience participating in the PEACE Program.
All answers are confidential.

Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements:

The PEACE Program...	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
helped my child gain an understanding of what abuse is and what its effects are.						
helped my child gain stronger ability to talk about feelings and concerns.						
helped my child gain stronger communication and conflict resolution skills.						
helped my child increase the ability to manager his/her behaviours.						
helped my child increase confidence.						
helped my child develop knowledge about safety.						



In your opinion, what was the most helpful part of the PEACE Program for your child?

In your opinion, what could the PEACE Program improve on?

Thank you for taking the time to tell us about your experience in the PEACE Program 😊

**PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence (PEACE)
Parent Support Evaluation**

Date: _____

Please take a moment to tell us about the parenting support you received as part of the PEACE Program.
All answers are confidential.

Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements:

Through support from the PEACE Program...	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
I have learned to talk about violence and abuse with my child/ren.						
I have learned about the impacts of violence and abuse on my child/ren.						
I have become better able to have empathy in response to my child/ren's behavior.						
I have gained the ability to identify my own strengths.						
I have gained the ability to identify my child/ren's strengths.						
I have strengthened my ability to develop safety practices with my child/ren.						



In your opinion, what was the most helpful part of the PEACE Program?

In your opinion, what could the PEACE Program improve on?

Thank you for taking the time to tell us about your experience in the PEACE Program 😊

**PEACE Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence
PEACE Program Evaluation**

Date: _____ Age: _____

We value your opinion of the PEACE Program. All your answers are confidential. Please take a few minutes to tell us how you felt about the Program and how we can make it better.

I attended A) One to One Counselling B) Group

Please circle your answer to the following statements:

	Yes	Sort of	Not Really
I learned what abuse is			
I learned what I can do to be safer			
I learned how to talk about my feelings			
I learned more about myself			
I enjoyed my experiences during the PEACE Program			



What was the most helpful part of the PEACE Program?

How could the PEACE Program be better?

Thank you! 😊

STUDENT FEEDBACK SURVEY: VIOLENCE IS PREVENTABLE (VIP) PROGRAM

To be completed by students in Grade 5 and up after the presentation or group.

We want to hear what you thought of the Program! This will help us see what students like, what you learned and how we can make VIP even better! Your thoughts are *very important* to us. Do not write your name on this survey—all your answers are anonymous (no one will be able to match your answers to you).

1. What is your gender? _____
2. How old are you? _____
3. Please circle the number that best describes how much you agree with each sentence below.

	Disagree	Sort-of disagree	Neutral/ don't know	Sort-of agree	Agree
I learned what the signs of violence and abuse are.	1	2	3	4	5
The presentation talked about safety and what that means/what it looks like to be safe.	1	2	3	4	5
I learned where I can get help if I am experiencing abuse in my life.	1	2	3	4	5
The things I learned today are important for me to know.	1	2	3	4	5
All students should get a chance to have a VIP presentation in their class.	1	2	3	4	5

ADULT FEEDBACK SURVEY: VIOLENCE IS PREVENTABLE (VIP) PROGRAM

To be completed after the presentation.

We want to hear what you thought of the presentation! Your thoughts and opinions are very important to us. Your answers are confidential and will be reported anonymously. Thank you for your time.

Date: _____ School District: _____ Gender: _____

1. Your role (circle): Educator Caregiver Other (describe): _____

2. Please circle the number that best describes how much you agree with each sentence below.

	Disagree	Sort of disagree	Neutral/ Don't know	Sort-of agree	Agree
This presentation increased my awareness regarding the effects of gender-based violence on children and youth.	1	2	3	4	5
This presentation increased my knowledge about how to help children and youth with experiences of gender-based violence.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel the VIP Program is an important part of our school (system).	1	2	3	4	5
I think that our school's partnership with VIP makes our school more able to meet the needs of students.	1	2	3	4	5
I am interested in learning more about the impacts of gender-based violence and the ways that educators and community members can play a role in supporting students with experiences of violence.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel today's presentation will make it more likely that children and youth who require or would like PEACE support will reach out (for help).	1	2	3	4	5



3. What is something that you heard in today's presentation that made an impact?

4. What is one thing that would make today's presentation better?

Thank you for giving us your feedback! ☺

REFERENCES

¹ Suderman, M., & Jaffe, P. (1999). A handbook for health and social service providers and educators on children exposed to woman abuse/family violence. Ottawa: The National Clearinghouse on Family Violence. Retrieved from <http://dsp-psd.pwgsc.gc.ca/Collection/H72-21-163-1998E.pdf>

² Criminal Justice Branch, Ministry of Justice. (2015). Crown Counsel Policy Manual. Retrieved from <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/law-crime-and-justice/criminal-justice/prosecution-service/crown-counsel-policy-manual/chi-1-children-vulnerable-youth-crimes-against.pdf>

³ Anderson, L. (2015). Accreditation: Is it right for your organization? Retrieved from https://charityvillage.com/Content.aspx?topic=Accreditation_Is_it_right_for_your_organization#.WNUsXRgZNE4

⁴ Hendel, R. as cited in Anderson, L. (2015). Accreditation: Is it right for your organization? Retrieved from https://charityvillage.com/Content.aspx?topic=Accreditation_Is_it_right_for_your_organization#.WNUsXRgZNE4

⁵ Adapted from Anderson, L. (2015). Accreditation: Is it right for your organization? Retrieved from https://charityvillage.com/Content.aspx?topic=Accreditation_Is_it_right_for_your_organization#.WNUsXRgZNE4

⁶ Ellis, D., & Barbeau, E. (2008). BC Association of Family Resource Programs provincial standards of practice. Vancouver: BC Association of Family Resource Programs.