



*A Women's Directorate publication*

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## Acknowledgements

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The Women's Directorate is committed to helping end violence against women. We hope this booklet will help all women who have suffered and live in the shadow of violence.

We sincerely thank all of you who assisted us in ensuring this information is sensitive to the concerns and priorities of Yukon women.

This publication is based on the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women's booklet "*Making Changes: A book for women in abusive relationships*". With their permission, it has been adapted and edited to reflect the current laws and services in the Yukon Territory.



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# *A Declaration of Rights*

I am not the cause of my abuser's violent behaviour.

I have the right to feel safe.

I have the right to not be hit.

I do not like or want to be abused. I do not have to take it.

I have the right to say 'no'.

I have the right to be treated with respect.

I am an important human being.

I am a worthwhile woman.

I have the right to raise my children in safety.

I do have power over my own life.

I can use my power to take good care of myself.

I can decide for myself what is best for me.

I have the right to be believed and valued.

I can make changes in my life if I want to.

I have the right to live in peace.

I am not alone. I can ask others for help.

I have the right to end the violence.



If you are a woman experiencing abuse or you have previously experienced abuse, this book is especially intended to help you.

You can read this book in whichever way you want. You don't have to start at the first page. You don't have to read it in order. You don't have to read it all now. You can read the parts that are most important to you and read the rest later.

You can rip off the front cover or you can tear out pages if you need to. You can also write in it if that is safe for you. Read the book for yourself, when you are ready, and when you are safe.

You may want to leave this book at work or with a friend. You may have friends you wish to share this book with.

If you are a worker who offers support and counselling, or a friend or family member of a woman experiencing abuse you may find this book helpful as well.

If you have questions about the information in this book, here are some numbers you can call:

Kaushee's Place 668-5733;

Victim Link 1-800-563-0808

Victim Services/Family Violence Prevention Unit in

Whitehorse 667-8500 or toll-free 1-800-661-0408, extension 8500;

Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre 667-2693; or

the Women's Directorate 667-3030 or toll-free

1-800-661-0408, extension 3030.

Note: unless otherwise stated, the area code for all phone and fax numbers is 867.



## Introduction

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Women can be abused physically, emotionally, sexually, and financially. Maybe you are being abused by your partner, husband, boyfriend, or some other person in your life. Maybe you think you are being abused, but you are not sure. We hope this book can help you decide what is happening to you and what you might want to do about it. If you are being abused by another woman, you may also be able to use this book. There are differences in the way we think and talk about abuse by women, but some things may be the same.

You are not alone. According to a national survey, at least one out of every four women who has lived with a male partner has been abused in some way. These women are from many different backgrounds. They have different levels of education and income. They are from all age groups, races, and cultures. Some have disabilities. They may have different experiences and their stories may not be quite the same as yours, but there will be similarities.

You do not deserve to be abused for any reason. You have the right not to be hit, hurt, or abused.

The abuse is not your fault. No matter what you do, no one has the right to abuse you in any way, to make you live in fear, or to control your life. Any kind of abuse is wrong, and sexual and physical abuse are illegal in Canada.

Whatever your particular experience or your background, it takes a lot of courage to start looking at these issues. This book may help you decide what choices you can make.

## ■ **What you can do if you know a woman is experiencing abuse**

- Read this book.
- Give her clear messages: violence is never okay; her safety and her children's safety are the most important issues; woman abuse is a crime; she does not cause the abuse; she is not alone; she cannot change her partner's behaviour; abuse is not a loss of control, it is a means of control.
- Help her make an emergency safety plan.
- Encourage and support her to make her own decisions.
- Don't put the abuser down (she may still have an emotional attachment to him).
- Believe her. Don't judge or lecture.
- Find out about the resources in her community (see the Directory at the end of this book).
- Don't ask why she stays.
- Don't buy into common myths about woman abuse.
- Be patient and understanding.
- Let her know there are no simple solutions, but that change is possible.
- Discuss different options and allow her to decide which is best for her.
- Let her know you'll stand by her no matter what she decides.
- Be patient if she is confused or unsure about what to do.
- Respect her decisions.



## Information about abuse

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### ■ What is abuse?

Abuse can happen in different kinds of family or close relationships. This book focuses on abuse of women by their husbands or the men they live with, because this is the kind of abuse women experience most often. However, women in other types of relationships are also abused. Young women often report abuse by men they are dating. Lesbian women may experience abuse in intimate relationships with other women. Disabled and elderly women are frequently abused by family members and caregivers.

People call abuse of women different things:

- wife battering;
- wife assault;
- domestic violence;
- family violence;
- wife abuse/spousal abuse;
- woman abuse;
- physical or mental cruelty;
- violence against women;
- assault; and
- intimate partner violence.

Regardless of what it is called, abuse of women is an abuse of power, and it is wrong. It is not simply about not being able to

handle anger or having problems with addictions. It is about a man's efforts to exert control in a relationship.

Abuse can take many forms. It can be physical, sexual, verbal, financial, social, emotional, or psychological.

## ■ Some forms of abuse are crimes

Acts that are offences under the Criminal Code include:

- physical assault: hitting, punching, choking, etc.;
- sexual assault;
- child abuse;
- threats to harm;
- threats to kill;
- stealing your pay cheque; and
- stalking or criminal harassment (creating fear by repeatedly following, communicating, or attempting to communicate with another person or any member of her family).

## ■ Types of abuse

**Physical:** choking, kicking, punching, slapping, grabbing, poking you; pushing, shoving, spitting at you, pulling your hair; physically restraining you, stopping you from leaving; holding or hugging you when you say “no”; any unwanted physical contact; abusing your children; treating you roughly.

**Sexual:** threatening to harm your reputation; putting you down or comparing you sexually to others; getting back at you for refusing to have sex, sleeping around, or treating you as a sex object; forcing you to look at pornography; hounding you for sex or forcing certain positions; forcing you to have sex (rape).

**Verbal:** verbally threatening you (telling you to stop crying... or else); calling you names (stupid, slut, crazy, bitch ...); yelling, shouting; abusing your children; being sarcastic or critical; always blaming you for things that go wrong; insulting you/ your family; laughing in your face; verbal abuse of your children.

**Financial/economic:** controlling you by not paying the bills; refusing to give you money for groceries, clothing, things you need; spending all the money on things he wants (alcohol, trips, cars, sports); forbidding you to work outside the home; taking your money or your pay cheque; not letting you take part in financial decisions.

**Emotional/psychological:** making you afraid; playing 'mind games'; not telling you what he is doing; lying; ignoring you; being silent; walking away from you in discussion (unless both of you have agreed to taking a 'time-out' period when arguments become heated); refusing to deal with issues; putting you down; finding fault in your behaviour; brainwashing; refusing to do things with you or for you (such as withholding sex); always getting his own way; criticizing how you look or act.

**Social:** putting you down; ignoring you; making a scene in public; embarrassing you in front of your children; not letting you see your friends or being rude to your friends; being nice to others but changing his personality when with you; not taking responsibility for the children; turning your children against you; choosing friends or family over you; comparing you unfavourably with other women; not allowing you to express your emotions (denying your feelings); taking your passport or threatening to have you deported.

**Abuse of women is violence. It is not acceptable.  
Both physical and sexual abuse are criminal offences.**

### **■ Who abuses women?**

Men who abuse women can be of different ages, races, religions, and economic backgrounds. They can have different kinds of jobs and education. They can be a husband or ex-husband; a live-in partner, a lover, a boyfriend, or an ex-boyfriend; a son; a relative, or a caregiver. Abuse can happen in any type of family, intimate, or close relationship.

What abusive men have in common is low self-esteem and the belief that it is all right to hurt and control people, even if they love them. They believe that violence is okay. But it's not. Ever.

### **■ Why does violence against women happen?**

Some people believe that violence against women is a male anger management problem. Although learning to manage anger is one part of the solution, the reality is that violence against women is a learned behavior reinforced by a society that is still largely dominated by men. Violence can be learned and reinforced in the home, in the community with peers, and by viewing media such as television, computers, and video games. Men choose to use violence or threats of violence in order to gain power and control over their partner. Men who use violence often believe it is a way of solving problems and getting what they want. They also use it as a form of entitlement. For example a man may feel that he has the right to do whatever he wants to his partner to control her and believe that violence is a good way to make her meet his needs.

It is important to make the point that this is not just one man's issue. Our society has encouraged this entitlement in our legal, economic, systems and institutions and in what we consider normal. For example, Canadian laws allowed the abuse of women within marriage. It was legal to rape your wife until 1983. Before then, what happened in the "private" home was not considered a "public" concern. In effect society turned its eyes and ears from several forms of violence against women. While our legal system has changed, there remains a silence on violence against women.

The roles that women play in society continue to be less valued and respected. Women continue to be overrepresented in occupations that are undervalued and underpaid, such as service industry employment, cleaning and child care. Women's work as caretakers, whether it is paid or unpaid, is not adequately valued, nor are men often encouraged to take on caretaker roles. Both women and men are working to change this situation.

Violence against women continues in Canada and the North for many complex reasons. It is important to understand how power imbalances, based on gender, race, economic or immigration status, ability and sexual orientations (among others) contribute to and continue behaviour that furthers violence. Women in the North experience inequality, based on their gender and for other reasons such as race.

Family violence has been identified as one of the most important issues facing Aboriginal people in Canada. There are a lot of reasons for this, including: younger population, racism, discrimination, lower wages, the breakdown of family life

resulting from residential school upbringing, and the impact of colonialism on traditional values and culture. Poverty, alcohol and substance abuse and overcrowded, substandard housing also contribute to violence. Violence against women is underreported so it is hard to get an accurate statistic on its prevalence, however statistics show that the rates of violence experienced by First Nation women are much higher and of greater severity than those experienced by non-First Nation women.

Because of racist attitudes, society may look at First Nation women differently. This adds to the higher rates of violence as it furthers the feeling that an assault against a First Nation woman does not hold the same value as an assault against a non First Nation woman and reinforces the feeling that a meaningful response to violence against First Nation women is not warranted.

Some believe that men's violence is directly caused by their childhood experiences or a past relationship, or by their use of drugs and alcohol. While these issues are factors that may be related, violence is always a choice. A person's history does not excuse their present behavior. Many people, including men and women, have experienced violence in their childhood and choose not to perpetuate it in their adult lives. Violence is a choice.

Healthy relationships are based on equality and trust. Abuse of women is about power and control, the betrayal of trust, and lack of respect. It's about using force or threats to make you afraid. It's about using fear to control you.

No matter why you have experienced violence from a partner it is not your fault. Every person who chooses to use violence against their partner **must take responsibility for their behaviour**. No one has the right to hit or hurt you. No matter what you do, you do not deserve abuse.

## ■ Is there a pattern to abuse?

For many women, abuse and violence start early in the relationship. For others it may start later — quite often during pregnancy. There are also many types of abuse, which may be used in different situations. Whatever the type of abuse or the pattern, violent and abusive actions and behaviour are his way of maintaining power and control over you.

There is no predictable pattern of violence. Sometimes there is a **cycle of violence** that many women recognize. It may look like this...

First, the **tension and anger build up**. Sometimes there's an argument. She may try to keep the peace. But the abusive partner **explodes and becomes violent or makes threats** to get violent. He hits her, threatens her (or something she loves), verbally abuses her, or abuses her in some other way.

Then, there's a **cool-down, make-up, or calm stage**. The abusive partner may say he's sorry or he may deny it ever happened. The abusive partner may promise it will never happen again and may reinforce this by doing something nice (gifts, dinner, flowers).

There is a **time of peace, which is usually temporary**. It may be a control tactic to keep her in the relationship.

Sooner or later, the **tension builds up again**, his need to control increases, and **the abuse starts over**.

You cannot predict what will start or end the cycle, no one thing triggers the violence. **Over time the phases are likely to get shorter, closer together, and his violence will increase in intensity.**

## ■ Are you being abused?

### Does your partner (or other significant person...)

- get jealous when you're around other people?
- make fun of you in front of your friends and family?
- destroy, or threaten to destroy, your possessions?
- praise you one minute and put you down the next?
- call you names or threaten you?
- ignore you or not take you seriously?
- make you choose between your friends/family and him?
- blame you when things go wrong?
- push you around or hit you?
- threaten to take the children?
- say abuse is wrong but hit the walls and yell at you?

### Do you...

- have to ask permission to spend money or go out?
- feel isolated from friends, family, and activities?
- have to 'make things right' just for him?
- have to do what he wants ... or else?
- feel it's your fault when anything goes wrong?

**Myth:** Family members are always kind and loving toward one another.

**Fact:** Family members can also be brutal and threatening.

### **Do you feel...**

- afraid to make decisions for fear of his reaction or anger?
- that you have to check in if you go anywhere?
- that he is trying to run your life?
- afraid to tell him if you have a good time?
- that maybe all the terrible things he says about you are coming true or happening?
- that you have to put your dreams and goals on hold?
- afraid to express your own opinions or say 'no' to something?
- trapped, unable to go out without his permission?
- your joy in your life diminishing?
- afraid to break up with or leave him?

**If you answer “yes” to any of these questions, you may be in an abusive relationship. You are not alone.**

### **■ What does abuse do to women?**

A woman who is abused often lives with constant fear, worry, guilt, and self-blame. She may begin to feel worthless and helpless or ashamed. She may feel like a failure.

The effects of physical abuse can be black eyes, broken bones, bruises, burns, concussions, cuts, scratches — even death. A woman beaten while pregnant can lose the baby.

The effects of emotional or psychological abuse cannot be seen, but can be just as harmful and last much longer than physical injuries.

A woman experiencing abuse of any kind may feel that no one could ever love her. She may feel stupid or ugly and all alone. This is what the abusive partner wants. It makes it easier for him to have control over her.

After a while, she may begin to lose her self-respect. She may begin to use alcohol or drugs to dull the pain.

For some women, the hardest thing is the feeling of loss:

- of self-respect;
- of safety;
- of family and friends;
- of independence;
- of future goals and dreams;
- of laughter and joy;
- of her own identity;
- of respect for him;
- of hope;
- of loving happiness;
- of companionship.

## ■ Children who are exposed to abuse

If you have children, you may have decided to put up with the abuse for their sake. But children who are exposed to abuse may be experiencing abuse themselves.

Children often see and hear more than we think. They have probably seen or heard the violence, and likely it will have affected them.

Children who witness parental violence or are otherwise exposed to it can be as severely affected as children who are direct victims of physical or sexual abuse. They may:

- be scared, confused, and unhappy;
- have physical complaints such as headaches or stomach aches;
- blame themselves;
- have night-time difficulties such as insomnia, nightmares, or bed-wetting;
- behave aggressively, or become withdrawn;
- cling to their mother or try to take care of her;
- feel responsible for the violence;
- seek punishment by lying or stealing (believing punishment means love);
- be abused too.

Children exposed to abuse often learn that it's all right to hurt people they love. They learn that it's normal for someone who loves them to hurt them. But it's not! Children from violent homes may end up believing that:

- it's okay for people (men in particular) to hit, boss, or control their partners;
- it's okay for men to bully and control women;
- this is the way that families behave;
- violence is a way to win arguments and get your own way;
- big people have power they often misuse;
- all men are bullies who push women and children around;
- punishment means love;
- women are weak and can be pushed around;
- men are strong and should be in control;
- women can't take care of themselves or their children;
- you can only express anger through aggression and abuse;
- real men' don't feel or show weakness, fear, sadness, or confusion;
- women are naturally inferior to men; and
- people — particularly women — have to put up with abuse in relationships.

## ■ **Support/counselling for you and your children**

You have been through a lot. You may have made a lot of changes in a short time. You may have a lot more changes to make. All of this can be very stressful for you and your children.

Maybe you feel afraid or confused. Perhaps you feel hurt, guilty, worried, or angry. You may feel grief, loneliness, relief, or carry the feeling that you have let people down. Whatever you are feeling, you might want to talk about it with a professional counsellor. Counsellors are trained to help sort things out. They are there to listen.

**Myth:** Alcohol causes people to abuse.

**Fact:** Alcohol may trigger abusive behaviour in some people, or make it worse. But it doesn't cause the abuse. A person may stop drinking, but still be abusive.

The Victim Services / Family Violence Prevention Unit in Whitehorse (667-3500 or 1-800-661-0408, extension 3500) offer **free, confidential counselling** and support groups with no waiting list.

Some other agencies also offer free counselling, or have a sliding fee scale. It may take a while to get in to see someone. While you are waiting to see someone at an agency, you can get further support at a transition home.

**The staff at transition homes are particularly used to dealing with women and children who have been in abusive situations.** Staff there may be able to help you find a suitable counsellor. If you are not happy with the first counsellor you go to, try someone else.

Here is a list of other (Whitehorse) agencies you can try for counselling and/or information:

Many Rivers Counselling and Support Services..... 667-2970

This agency has a community outreach program for counselling (collect calls are accepted by all offices)

Dawson City office

(also serves Mayo and Pelly Crossing) ..... 993-6455

Haines Junction office (also serves Beaver Creek,

Burwash Landing, Destruction Bay) ..... 634-2111

Watson Lake office..... 536-2330

Child Abuse Treatment Services in Whitehorse..... 667-8227

This agency is especially geared toward helping children deal with trauma and/or abuse

Family and Children's Services in Whitehorse ..... 667-3002

YTG Employee Assistance Program..... 668-3277

(for YTG employees)

Mental Health Services..... 667-8346

Alcohol and Drug Services ..... 667-5777

Skookum Jim Friendship Centre ..... 633-7680

Victim Services, Kwanlin Dun Justice Program..... 667-8500

Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre ..... 667-2693

Other agencies that can provide support are:

Les EssentiELLES in Whitehorse..... 668-2636

(for Francophone women); and

The Women's Directorate in Whitehorse..... 667-3030

or toll free 1-800-661-0408, extension 3030

(for referrals or library resources).

In most Yukon communities you can call the Health and Social Services office, or the local Community Health Centre for support. There are also many private counselling agencies, although the fees are usually higher.

You may be feeling that you aren't strong enough to handle things yourself. Remember, you don't have to prove anything. You have survived things that many other people might not have. And you've taken some really hard steps to make things better.

**It takes courage to see when it's time to reach out to get help. You do deserve to be happy and you need to take care of yourself. You need to be able to count on yourself for the next while.**

Children may need to know it's still okay to love or miss their father. But they also need to understand that his abusive behaviour is not acceptable. They need to know that you are all right even if you cry and get upset. Children need to know the truth about what is happening.

Your children may need to blame someone. They may see you as the one to blame, because you are the one who left. Perhaps they often saw your abuser blame you for things, so they do the same. But remember, your children may show their anger and fear to you because they trust you.

If your children blame you, that may be really hard for you. But try to be patient with them. Try to help them see why you are doing what you are doing. It may help to let them know you are afraid, too.

Remember, **getting counselling for your children does not mean you have failed in any way.** Your children have been through a lot. It's only normal that they might need some help.

If you want to access specialized counselling and programs for your children, call Child Abuse Treatment Services in Whitehorse (667-8227 or 1-800-661-0408 ext. 8227).

### ■ **If you own a house**

Maybe you own a house, alone or with your partner. Or maybe he owns the house. If you are not married, whoever owns the house has full legal rights to it, but common-law partners may also have some rights. If you are married, you and your husband do have equal legal rights to the house.

In any case, **you should get legal advice immediately to protect your rights.**

### ■ **So why do women stay?**

Abuse can damage a woman and her children, both physically and emotionally. Beliefs and stereotypes in society also put down women who are with an abusive partner. For example, it can make her feel victimized all over again if people keep asking her why she stays. It can make her feel more ashamed or helpless.

**Women stay for a variety of reasons.** There are many barriers to leaving. These can be emotional, because of cultural or religious beliefs, or for financial or other practical reasons. Women from different cultural groups, immigrants, new

Canadians, lesbian or disabled women, often face additional challenges. Language barriers, racism, discrimination, fear of deportation, isolation, or disbelief are just a few of the many barriers to reporting and dealing with abuse.

Some professional women may stay with an abusive partner because they are too ashamed to leave or because they fear losing their social standing.

You may be unfamiliar with the laws of the Yukon. Perhaps your faith or religious advisor tells you to stay with an abusive partner. You may have had bad experiences with the law, the medical profession, the court system, or government agencies. Some laws have changed, and you have the right to be protected.

Whatever your background, if you are being abused, it is wrong and is a crime. You have the right to stop that crime. If you are a friend or counsellor to someone who is being abused, it helps to show some understanding of what the barriers are. But also offer practical help, advice, and encouragement when she is ready to do something about the situation.

## ■ Barriers to leaving

**Financial:** debts that already exist; debts that will be incurred as a result of leaving; no income, or income that is lower than partner's; having to leave the family home; lack of job skills; belief that partner will not pay maintenance or support; insufficient social assistance; shame at using social assistance.

**Social:** lack of support or isolation from family and friends; inadequate support from police, legal system, etc.; lack of affordable child care and housing; lack of information about legal rights; isolation from community.

**Cultural/Religious:** victim-blaming, denying, or minimizing the abuse; pressures on women to feel responsible for relationships; religious beliefs about women's roles, marriage; belief that a loving woman can change her partner; belief that a woman needs a man in order to be whole; social disapproval of separation and divorce; belief that the children need a father.

**Emotional:** feeling of not being able to cope alone; fear of threats by partner; fear that he will get back at you; fear of going to court or calling the police; feeling responsible for failing and for breaking up the family; fear of loneliness, of being unlovable; loving your partner and hoping that he will change; fear of being deported; believing partner when he blames you for his abuse; blame or fear of rejection by family or friends; fear of losing partner by leaving temporarily; fear of his threats to keep the children; fear of his threats to commit suicide or kill you and the children.



## What can you do about it?

This book is not about telling you what to do. It's about giving you information to make whatever choice is best for you. The information in this section should help you to protect yourself and decide what to do next. But you may have some important choices to make. **You are the only one who can decide what is best for you.**

### ■ Making choices

**You may feel scared or helpless.** Most women do if they are being abused. But if you want things to get better, somehow you need to make changes, even though you are afraid. It may be very hard. But try to remember, you are not alone. You can get help along the way.

Many women who have been faced with these choices have decided that they didn't deserve to be abused, so they left for a while or for good. This can be a difficult decision, but everyone deserves to be safe and to be treated with respect.

Whatever choice you make, there are people, organizations, and agencies that can make sure you get some support and help.

## ■ Talking about it

A lot of women find it really helps to talk to someone about what is happening. You may find it helps to talk with someone you can trust — a friend or relative, a spiritual leader or elder, a doctor, or a counsellor.

Lots of women don't know anybody they can talk to. But you could talk to someone at the transition home nearest to where you live. **You don't have to be staying there in order to get help and support.**

You could also look in the phone directory, or the directory at the back of this book, to find someone to help you. A good resource is the Victim Services/Family Violence Prevention Unit (in Whitehorse) at 667-3500, or toll free 1-800-661-0408 ext. 3500. After business hours, you can call the transition home closest to you.

All Yukon transition homes accept collect calls and are accessible 24 hours a day.

Kaushee's Place (Whitehorse) .....	668-5733
Dawson City Women's Shelter .....	993-5086
Help and Hope for Families (Watson Lake).....	536-2711
Majedi Safe Home (Ross River) .....	969-2722 or 969-2017

You might feel ashamed to ask for help for something that seems so private. Maybe you can remember that all of us need help sometimes. It's okay to ask for help, even though it might be hard or embarrassing. It takes a lot of courage to reach out for help.

**Myth:** A man's home is his castle, and he is the boss.

**Fact:** We often receive this message from society. In reality, it is not healthy for one partner to have all, or even most, of the power in a relationship.

Most women have done a lot to try to make things work, to reduce the violence, to protect the children. But you also need to see when you have done everything you can. Think of all the things you have already done! **Try to remember how strong you can be.**

### ■ What if you stay?

You may decide to stay with your partner, at least for now. Perhaps you feel there is still a chance to keep things together. You may feel that your relationship is really important and you've put a lot into it. Many women do. But you should know that while things may get better for a while, unless he gets help **the abuse tends to get worse later in most cases.**

If you decide to stay, you may want to document the abuse. Having a record of his abuses (type, date of the abuse, location where the abuse took place, names of witnesses to the abuse, etc.) may be useful to you later. It is very **important**, however, that you only document the abuse when it is safe to do so and that you keep the record somewhere he won't find it.

## ■ Setting limits and protecting yourself

If you do decide to stay, you may need to set some limits. You can decide what has to change and what behaviour is acceptable if you are going to stay. And you can decide how long you will give the abusive partner to make these changes. If changes don't happen in the time you set, you may ask the person to leave, or, depending on the situation, you may decide to leave. If you do decide to stay with your partner, your safety and the safety of your children come first. **Protect yourself. You should have a personal safety plan.**

***Important: Keep in mind that when you attempt to set limits and make safe choices for yourself, there is a possibility that your partner will respond negatively. He could react with more violent behaviour. Be prepared for this, and have a safety plan in place.***

## ■ Know what to do in an emergency

If you do have to act quickly, you should be prepared. Here are some things to think about:

- Where can you go in an emergency? You will need to have somewhere safe.
- How will you get there? Is there someone who can come and get you? Can you take a car, taxi, or bus?
- Is there someone you can call to tell what is happening and where you are going?
- Is there someone you can leave your pets with?
- If you need to go to a transition house, do you know how to get there? Do you know the phone number?

## ■ Make a safety plan

- Make photocopies of all your identification and important documents and keep them in a safe place where you can find them quickly. This is extremely important, and will save you a lot of time and inconvenience later.
- Establish an escape route. (Know where you can go to be safe, if only to make a phone call.)
- If you've been abused before, make sure the police are fully aware of the situation.
- Speak with your friends and people you can trust, let them know what's going on so they can be watching out for you.
- Make safe arrangements for the care of your pets - transition homes do not normally allow you to bring pets there.
- Call a transition home and talk to the staff. You may want to work out a code word so they know who you are if you have to call them in a crisis.
- Hide some money away if possible (you may need emergency taxi fare, although some transition homes, i.e. Kaushee's Place, will pay the fare for you).
- Talk to the children. They need to know which neighbour to run to in an emergency.

### **Pack an emergency bag in case you need to leave quickly.**

You can't take everything! Just take what you'll need for a few days. You can leave the bag with a friend if you have to. **If you don't feel safe doing that, you can make a list of things to take and make sure you know where to find them in an emergency:**

- identification, important papers (birth certificates, marriage certificates);
- documents, if any, relating to the custody of your children;
- health cards for you and the children;
- First Nation status card;
- immigration/ citizenship papers, passports;
- money, bank books, credit cards;
- clothes for you and the children for a few days;
- any medicine you or your children may need;
- house keys, car keys;
- the children's favourite toys and books;
- copies of your lease, mortgage, or other deeds;
- your address/ phone book;
- car registration, driver's licence, car insurance; and
- your favourite possessions/books (things that give you comfort — don't forget your treasured family photos: these can never be replaced if they are stolen from you or ruined by an angry partner).

It's probably a good idea to get legal and other advice now, even before there is an emergency.

## ■ How to get help in an emergency

You may get help by screaming. It may be safer for you to run outside where other people can see and hear you. Try to get to a phone. **If you are in Whitehorse, call 911.** All 911 calls are recorded and kept as evidence. **If you live in a Yukon community other than Whitehorse, call your local RCMP detachment.** If there is no answer there, your call will automatically be dispatched to 911 in Whitehorse.

**When you dial the 911 number it takes about four seconds to connect. In an emergency that may seem like a long time.** Stay on the line — do not hang up and dial again. You may not have long to talk, so try to be clear.

Tell them:

- your name;
- the location you are at;
- that you are being attacked;
- that you are afraid you are going to be hurt or you are afraid for your life; and
- where your attacker is and whether he has a weapon or access to weapons.

It is illegal for anyone to assault you, and the RCMP have to come. **If you are afraid of being killed, tell them.** It should make them come faster. But remember, you don't have to be afraid for your life to seek assistance or support.

If you or your abuser are new Canadians, your call to the police may not mean the abuser will be deported and it may not affect his immigrant status. But your abuser may use this as a threat to keep you from calling.

## ■ What happens when you call the RCMP?

When the police come, they will do what they can to stop any abusive behaviour that is occurring, and ensure your immediate safety. Then they will question you, and the abusive partner. They should not talk to the two of you at the same time or in the same room.

Tell the police what happened. Give them details. Show them any injuries or damage to you, your children, your belongings, or your home. Tell them about anyone who might have heard or seen anything. They may interview neighbours or friends or medical staff.

The police may arrive with a camera and take pictures of you and of the scene. Or they may ask you to go to the police station to have photographs taken. These pictures may be used as evidence and help prove the case.

## ■ What happens if the police lay charges?

If the RCMP believe that there is any evidence that either spouse has been physically assaulted by the other, they must lay criminal charges. They will arrest and remove the abuser. If this does not happen, ask why. Their main concern should be for your safety and the safety of your children.

***Note: It's not up to you to decide whether or not to charge the abusive partner, and the RCMP will not remove charge(s) at your request. They have a 'zero tolerance' policy toward assaults of this nature.***

If the police lay charges, they may need your cooperation in collecting evidence that will help your case:

- Notify police as to the location of any torn or bloody clothing and any weapons that he may have used to harm or threaten you.
- If you are hurt, go to the hospital, to a doctor, or to your community nursing station. Tell them you have been physically assaulted.

**Myth:** People who abuse are mentally ill.

**Fact:** Abusive partners learn to use violence in certain situations. Most abusers are not violent in all relationships.

- Make sure they make a record of your injuries. (You will be required to sign a release so that the medical report can be used as evidence in court.)
- Try to get a friend to take photos of your injuries, or broken furniture, or any other damage. Remember to have your friend sign and date the photos as this may be important evidence in a trial.
- Save any threatening telephone answering machine messages, letters, etc. Keep a record for yourself. Record times and dates as well as what the abusive partner did to you.

***Important: Be careful about where you store the information. Put your records in a safe place where they cannot be found and/or destroyed!***

The RCMP will require an audio or a videotaped statement from you. **The testimony of the victim is the most important evidence in any court case.**

This statement will probably be taken under warning. The purpose of the warning is twofold. First, if at a later date you have returned to the relationship, and decide to recant your statement at the trial, the statement may be presented as evidence.

The second purpose of the warning is to ensure that you understand that you can be charged with mischief if you lie on statements.

When police take an abusive partner into custody, it is usually overnight, and sometimes only for a few hours. **Let the RCMP know if you want a “no contact order” put in place upon his release.**

If the RCMP lays a charge against the abusive partner, they can take their case to the Domestic Violence Treatment Option court, or DVTO. Under this new court option, those who accept responsibility for their actions will be assessed through the Spousal Assault Program. If the SAP finds that the abusive partner is a likely candidate, the sentence hearing will be postponed for several months during their completion of the Spousal Assault Program and any other treatment programs assigned by the court.

To date, the DVTO is available in Watson Lake and Whitehorse. Women who have experienced violence get help with safety planning, referrals for counseling for themselves and their children, updates on the offender’s progress and help with varying release conditions and preparation of victim impact statements for the court.

For more information, you can contact the Victim Services/Family Violence Prevention Unit at 667-3500 or 1-800-661-0408, ext. 3500.

If the Whitehorse RCMP charges the abusive partner, they can refer you to their **Victim Assistance Volunteer Program** (this program provides support for victims 24 hours a day). They may also refer you to Kaushee's Place, whether you decide to leave at this point or not. The Victim Assistance volunteers and/or the transition home staff can give you more information about community resources. They can also offer emotional support.

### ■ **What if you're still afraid of him?**

If the RCMP don't take the abusive partner into custody, and you are afraid to be alone with that person, tell them.

Tell the police if you think they will hurt you again when they leave. If you decide not to leave, get the police officer's names, in case you need to contact them later.

If you want to leave, ask the police to wait while you get your things. Get them to take you to a safe place like a transition home. **If you have children who are in danger, you have a right to take them with you.** The police will not help you remove the children later without a court order which specifically directs the RCMP to assist you.

If you have to leave in an emergency and you decide not to go back for a while, **the RCMP can go with you later to get your most important personal necessities only.** They will protect you, and in doing so, may be too busy to help you carry your belongings. You may want to prepare for this by bringing a friend along to help you.

## ■ What happens when they're charged?

If the abusive partner is charged with a criminal offence like assault or uttering threats, they may have to sign an undertaking before being released. An undertaking is an official document whereby an accused person is required to appear in court, as well as abiding by certain conditions. Some of the conditions may be:

- that they are not to have any direct or indirect contact, or communication with you;
- that they are to stay away from your home or work address; or
- that they are to abstain from alcohol.

***Note: Failure on the abusive partner's part to abide by any conditions set out in the undertaking results in a criminal offence. Report any violations to the RCMP.***

If there is no Victim Services agency in your community, ask the police to notify you when he will be released. Ask if he has been required to sign an undertaking setting conditions on his release.

If the RCMP or the court don't give you a copy of the undertaking, insist on getting one. Contact the police who made the arrest, or Victim Services/Family Violence Prevention Unit.

**When criminal charges are laid, you will probably be required to go to Court later to testify, if he pleads not guilty. It would help to call Victim Services/Family Violence Prevention Unit 667-8500 in Whitehorse (toll free 1-800-661-0408, extension 8500) for advice about this. You may be able to ask for someone to attend court with you for support.**

Following guilty pleas or trials where the partner is convicted, you can submit a **Victim Impact Statement** to let the judge know the effects the abuse has had on you and your family. You can also comment as to the conditions which would best benefit you (i.e. probation with a “no contact order” for the abuser).

Note: **If your first language is not English**, the RCMP will make every effort to find an interpreter to assist you in making a statement, and giving other information. **(You will definitely be provided with an interpreter if you need to go to court).**

**If you are a Francophone woman**, you can call French Language Services Directorate in Whitehorse (667-8260 or 1-800-661-0408, ext. 8260) to get more information about translation services.

## ■ **Deciding to leave**

Most women have had to leave an abusive situation in an emergency more than once. It's important to remember that **you can also decide to leave even if it's not an emergency situation.** You can choose to leave for a while, or for good.

This can be a very hard decision to make. Some women find that going away for a while works for them. It may show the abusive person that they are serious about the need for change. Other women find that despite promises to change, the abuse continues and the only way to stop it is to leave the relationship for good.

It might help to talk to someone you can trust or a person at the local transition house. They can give you support. You can talk to them on the phone. You don't have to give your name. You don't have to stay there to get their help.

**You can also talk to counsellors at the Victim Services/Family Violence Prevention Unit in Whitehorse 667-3500 or toll free 1-800-661-0408 ext. 3500. This agency has staff trained to counsel women who have been (or are being) abused, as well as men who abuse. Whatever you choose to do, believe in yourself.**

### **■ Where can you go to be safe?**

You need to go somewhere safe. Would he look for you? Where might he look for you? Think about locations where you, and perhaps your children, could go where your safety is ensured. It may be possible for you to go to the home of a friend or relative. However, when your safety is at risk, the best option may be to go to a transition home.

## ■ Transition homes: how they can help you

Transition homes are emergency shelters for women — whether or not they have children — which provide services in a supportive environment. There are shelters in some Yukon communities and transportation can usually be arranged to get a woman to the nearest shelter when one does not exist in her community.

All shelters in the Yukon take children. Yukon transition homes, except the Dawson City Women’s Shelter, are accessible to wheelchairs.

Transition homes do not normally allow pets.

***Remember: You do not have to be physically abused to come to a transition home. There are many forms of abuse from which women suffer.***

There are shelters in Whitehorse, Watson Lake, Dawson City and Ross River. Although in the Yukon the addresses of the shelters are not a secret, there are security measures in place at each home so women can be safe there. You can come to the transition home on your own, with a support person, or the police may bring you to the home if they are involved.

The Yukon transition homes are accessible 24 hours a day by phone and if you tell the operator that you are a woman in need, your collect call will be accepted:

Kaushee’s Place (Whitehorse) .....	668-5733
Dawson City Women’s Shelter .....	993-5086
Help and Hope for Families (Watson Lake).....	536-2711
Majedi Safe Home (Ross River) .....	969-2722 or 969-2017

**At the transition home you will be safe.** There will be someone there to listen to you. The shelter provides a setting where a woman can begin to make decisions for herself and regain control of her life.

**Everything will be private.** They will not talk about your situation with anyone else unless you want them to.

***Note: Certain professionals who suspect that a child is being abused and/or neglected MUST report it to Family and Children's Services. This includes transition home staff, social workers, medical professionals, counsellors, teachers, child care workers, and RCMP.***

There will probably be other women and children at the shelter. It can help just to talk with someone who has had similar experiences and has had to face the same problems as you.

**The length of time you may stay at transition homes in Yukon communities varies.** At the Dawson City Women's Shelter, the maximum stay is two weeks. At the Watson Lake Shelter and Kaushee's Place, women and children may stay for up to one month. In Ross River the length of stay at the Majedi Safe Home is determined on a case by case basis.

**Keep in mind that all Yukon transition homes do try to be flexible with their guidelines for the length of time you may stay. Each woman's situation may be different, and exceptions can sometimes be made.**

**Myth:** Women provoke abuse, so they deserve it.

**Fact:** This is a dangerous belief that actually excuses abusive partners from taking responsibility for what they do to others.

The shelter will provide food, information, referrals, support and encouragement. You will be expected to help with the cooking and housework and to abide by house rules. In addition, women are expected to be responsible for the care of their own children.

If you are unsure of where to live after you leave an abusive situation, Kaushee's Place in Whitehorse offers longer-term housing options for women who require support and safety services. These apartments can be rented, and the rent is based on a woman's income.

Transition homes have outreach programs and workers who can continue to assist you once you have left the home. If you decide not to go to a transition home to stay, they can still help you with information, referrals, support and encouragement. Kaushee's Place and some other Yukon transition homes also offer a support group for women.





## Once you've left, then what?

Once you are safe, you can take some time to decide what to do next. You need the time and the space to make decisions that are best for you and your children.

At a transition home, staff can help you with this. If you don't go to a transition home, you can still call there for support. You can call their 24-hour crisis lines (call collect if you need to) or arrange a visit with them.

**You can also call Victim Services/Family Violence Prevention Unit in Whitehorse** at 667-8500 during office hours and arrange for a worker to meet with you somewhere safe.

**For First Nations support and information in Whitehorse,** call the Kwanlin Dun Community Justice Program at 633-7850 or the Kwanlin Dun Community Wellness Program at 668-7289.

**Watson Lake** has its own Community Victim Service Worker: 536-2541 as well as Dawson City: 993-5831. If you live in another community, contact services in Whitehorse. Workers travel to outlying areas if necessary.

***One of the first things you may need to do is to find out about your legal rights, how to get child support and child custody, and what to do if you don't have any money. The next section provides some information about these issues.***

## ■ Legal matters

### ***Getting information***

You can get some information from transition homes about RCMP procedures, the law, how the justice system works, and some legal matters. The staff at the transition home can also help you get legal advice. You can ask them about this even if you have not stayed there.

If you want to find out more about the law, lawyers, and legal matters, call:

- The Law Line (668-5297 in Whitehorse or toll-free 1-867-668-5297); and/or
- The Family Law Information Centre (456-6721 in Whitehorse or toll-free 1-800-661-0408 ext. 6721): and/or
- The Lawyer Referral Service (668-4231) allows you to meet with a lawyer for half an hour for a small fee. Both services are located in Whitehorse.

**Don't sign any papers that might affect your legal rights until you talk with a lawyer.** If you don't have a lawyer, you can look in the Yellow Pages under Lawyers, or call the Lawyer Referral Service in Whitehorse (668-4231). They charge a fee under \$50.

If you can't afford a lawyer, call Legal Aid in Whitehorse (667-5210). They may provide free legal services if you can't pay and if you qualify. The first appointment establishes your financial eligibility. The "real" appointment will be a week later.

## ■ What about custody of your children?

***If you have children and you want custody, you should apply for a custody order. Contact a lawyer or legal aid right away.***

You can get information on how to apply for a custody order from the Law Line (668-5297 or 1-800-668-5297). Transition home outreach workers can also provide information and will help you with the process whether you are a resident at a transition home or not. The Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre (667-2693) or the Women's Directorate (667-3030 or 1-800-661-0408 ext. 3030), both in Whitehorse, may also be able to refer you to the appropriate services.

**If you are afraid your partner may try to take the children to another country**, you can ask the passport office to put the children's names on a security list so that you will be called if their father tries to get a passport for them. Call the Passport Office in Ottawa toll-free at 1-800-567-6868.

You must provide ID for yourself, birth certificates for your children, court documents (such as custody orders, restraining orders, etc.), and a letter detailing why you want their names on the security list. The passport office will provide you with security for 90 days. After that you must reapply.

You can write to them at:

The Passport Office,  
Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade,  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0G3.

If your children have another nationality, contact the country's embassy or consulate to ask them to refuse to issue passports for your children. (Consulate and embassy phone numbers can be found in the government blue pages in the phone book.)

## ■ **If the abuse continues after you leave**

Once you leave, his abusive behaviour **may continue for a while or even get worse**. He may try to control you financially, through the children, through the courts, through physical abuse, or by threatening and harassing you.

If this happens, he may be breaking the conditions of his no contact order, or he could be charged with criminal harassment. Make a written record of all contacts he makes and of what he does or says. Keep any written or recorded messages he leaves for you. Keep the police, his probation officer (if he has one), and your lawyer informed about what is happening.

He may try to make you feel guilty or sorry for him. He may be very loving and generous, showering you with gifts and attention. He may try to scare you into returning. He may try to wear you down until you give up and return to him. **One way to handle this is to have as little contact with him as possible.**

Transition home staff, the police, his probation officer (if he has been put on probation), Victim Services, your lawyer, a counsellor, or a supportive friend can support and help you get through this period. Don't be afraid to ask for help. You don't deserve to be harassed. You deserve a better life. **If you are still afraid of him or he is threatening you, you can apply for a peace bond.**

**Myth:** Women can leave an abusive situation if they want to.

**Fact:** There are many reasons women don't leave: financial or emotional dependency, low self-esteem, fear, cultural or religious beliefs, or a personal belief that a partnership is forever.

## ■ How the law can help you

### **What is the Family Violence Prevention Act?**

The *Family Violence Prevention Act* is legislation that supports the victim by offering three protective court orders that provide several ways in which victims can seek help.

### ***What if the person being abusive is not a member of my family?***

The *Family Violence Prevention Act* is designed to address violent relationships between family members and intimate companions, whether you still live together or not.

### ***Who are the designates that I can contact?***

Designates are RCMP and Victim Services workers who can help you apply for an Emergency Intervention Order.

Some protective orders are:

Emergency Intervention Order. To contact a designate in your community, please contact your local RCMP or Victim Services / Family Violence Prevention Unit. If you have any questions about the Family Violence Prevention Act and its orders, please call the Victim Services / Family Violence Prevention Unit at 667-8500 or toll free at 1-800-661-0408 ext. 8500 (all calls are confidential).

Some protective orders are:

**1. An Emergency Intervention Order:  
(Immediate help – Averages 45 days)**

- is issued over the telephone by certain Justices of the Peace (JP's);
- can allow you and your children to stay in your own home, if it is safe to do so;
- can have the abusive person removed from your home by a police officer (designate); and
- will prevent the abusive person from contacting you, your family or any other persons listed in the court order.

In addition to the same type of conditions available in an Emergency Intervention Order, you can apply for a Victim's Assistance Order.

**2. A Victim's Assistance Order:  
(Longer-term help – Averages 90 days)**

- can give you temporary possession of personal property;
- can prevent the abusive person from taking or damaging your property;

- can require the abusive person to pay you or your children for any loss of income, medical expenses, moving and legal expenses;
- can require the abusive person to agree to the condition in the court order; and
- can only be issued by a Territorial Court Judge and you may have to attend court.

VAO kits are available by calling the RCMP or Victim Services.

If a person has been denied access to you and fears that you may be in danger they can apply to the court for a Warrant of Entry.

### ***3. Warrant of Entry (Help from others)***

- is issued by a JP or Territorial Court Judge; and
- can authorize a police officer to enter your residence, assist or remove you, and search the home for signs of violence to use as evidence.

### ***4. Peace Bonds***

A Peace Bond is an order made by a Judge or Justice of the Peace that tells a person to be of good behaviour and to keep the peace. The order may include conditions the person must follow for a set time to a maximum of 12 months.

The most common condition of a Peace Bond is that the person not have any direct or indirect contact with you. Direct contact means calling you, coming to your house, going to your place of work, stopping you on the street, etc. Indirect contact means getting messages to you through another person or leaving notes for you.

**You can also ask the Court to place other conditions on the person** if you believe they will protect you. Examples of other conditions you might consider are:

- no access to your residence; or
- no access to children except through a third person, e.g. a social worker.

The Court can also order a person to pay money into the court. If the person follows the conditions, the money will be returned when the Peace Bond expires.

All Judges of the Territorial Court have the authority to grant Peace Bonds. Some Justices of the Peace also have this authority. Ask the RCMP who is dealing with your situation to find out if the Justice of the Peace in your community can issue Peace Bonds. If he or she can't issue one, you will have to wait until circuit court, or come to Whitehorse to apply for a Peace Bond.

***Note: While a Peace Bond itself is not a criminal charge, it is a criminal offence to break any conditions of a Peace Bond.***

To get a Peace Bond, first go to the nearest RCMP and explain why you want one. The officer will help you start the process, which will require you, as well as your abuser to appear in court at a set time. **Victim Services/Family Violence Prevention Unit in Whitehorse can help you with this process (667-8500, or toll free 1-800-661-0408, extension 8500).**

In court, you will need details of when he hit or threatened you.

You will have to convince the Judge or Justice of the Peace that you have good reason to be afraid.

After the Judge or Justice of the Peace has heard both sides, he or she will decide whether or not to order a Peace Bond, and if so, what conditions are necessary to protect you.

***Note: A Peace Bond cannot be extended once it expires. However, you can apply for a new Peace Bond if you feel you still need protection.***

## ■ What if the abuser breaks the Peace Bond?

**Always carry a copy of the Peace Bond.** If he breaks the peace bond, phone the RCMP and tell them what's happening. The person can be charged with breaking a Peace Bond. This is a criminal offence. A person guilty of breaking a peace bond may be fined up to \$2000, sent to jail for up to two years, or both.

If you choose not to report the abuser's breach of the Peace Bond, keep a written record of the incident anyway, in case you need it for future use.

**An alternative to a Peace Bond is a Supreme Court Order. If you are involved in a fight over custody of your children or payment of support, and your spouse is annoying or harassing you or the children, you can apply for a Supreme Court Order.**

Contact the Legal Aid Office in Whitehorse (667-5210), or a lawyer for more information about **Supreme Court Orders**.

Continue keeping a record of his abusive behaviour and save things like answering machine messages from him.

Whenever you get any Peace Bond, make copies and keep these at home, in your glove box, your purse or in a safe place. **Inform others (neighbours, friends, landlord, children's schools, daycares) about the Peace Bond.**

## ■ Getting professional legal advice

You may need professional legal advice if you decide not to go back to your partner right away. Lawyers can give you professional legal advice if you want to get a peace bond, custody of the children, or a divorce. Many women are scared or nervous about going to a lawyer, but you can't put it off. It is helpful to take someone with you to take notes.

Things the lawyer will need:

- your social insurance number and date of birth;
- marriage certificate;
- the lease, deed, or mortgage to your house;
- your partner's most recent pay stubs or income tax return;
- your income tax return;
- bank books;
- immigration papers/passport;
- your record of his abusive actions towards you; and
- any court orders and notice of court applications.

Lawyers usually charge an hourly fee, but some will do a free initial consultation. Depending on the circumstances, you may be asked to pay a deposit (called a retainer). **Bring a list of questions and as much information with you as you can.**

You may want to ask about going to court, about trials, about separation and divorce, about who has the right to the house and belongings. You should also discuss the possibility of claiming spousal and/or child support (maintenance), and whether or not you should ask for a restraining order.

Issues to discuss with the lawyer:

- legal fees;
- the possibility of obtaining a peace bond or a Supreme Court Civil restraining order (a restraining order prevents the abuser from harassing you, and the RCMP can arrest him if the order is registered with them);
- custody and access to the children;
- spousal/child support (maintenance);
- questions the judge is likely to ask in court;
- the implications of your leaving the territory/country, with or without the children;
- property rights;
- credit cards/joint bank accounts;
- what to expect in court.

## ■ Know your rights

- You **may** be entitled to half of the money in your joint bank account.
- Your personal belongings are yours, and so are the belongings of your children if they are with you.

## ■ What about protecting your money?

Maybe you are expecting a cheque in the mail from your employer, from Employment Insurance, Child Tax Credit, or Social Assistance. You can call those offices and ask them not to mail your cheque to your home address. Call as soon as you can.

**You can get all your mail sent to a new address.** The post office will re-address your mail for up to six months. It takes 5 to 10 days for the post office to start sending your mail to a new address. There is a fee for this service.

If you have your own money **you may want to open your own bank account** and arrange for your cheques to be deposited directly into your personal (not a joint) bank account. Then he cannot touch it.

## ■ Social assistance/welfare

What if you don't have any money, or you don't have enough?

**If you leave your home, and don't have enough money, you may be able to get Social Assistance.** You may be embarrassed to apply for social assistance. But that's what these agencies are for. They are meant to help people through difficult times. You can think of it as just a temporary situation, as a way to protect yourself from an abusive partner. You can also think of it as a way to take more control over your life.

To apply for social assistance, you can phone, write, or visit your local Health and Social Services office and ask for an application form. In Whitehorse the office is located at 3168 Third Avenue, on the corner of Third Avenue and Black Street (call 667-5674).

**Myth:** Only certain types of women get abused, i.e. poor women, or racialized women.

**Fact:** Abuse has no boundaries based on income, race or culture.

When you apply for financial assistance you will be expected to:

- Explain why you are applying.
- Give your name and address (you cannot apply as a single parent/ single person if you and your partner are still living at the same address).
- Provide identification for yourself and your children (such as birth certificate, Yukon health card, social insurance card, passport, First Nations status card, etc.).
- Provide information about any income or other money you receive (such as pay cheque stubs, bank statements).
- Show what your shelter expenses are, such as lease, mortgage, power, fuel, bills. **(Note: If the mortgage is in both names, your partner may be required to pay for half.)**

Usually, you are told right away if you qualify for social assistance, and how much you will qualify for. If you qualify, it can take up to seven days to receive a cheque. Apply as soon as you can. **You may be able to get some financial help right away** for emergencies like housing or food.

If you are eligible for social assistance, you and your worker will do a monthly budget based on current social assistance rates for food, shelter, clothing, and some miscellaneous items. Any money you get each month from other sources will be deducted from this budget. What remains called your “budget deficit”) is the amount of money you will receive from social assistance. Rates vary, but in general it’s not a lot of money.

***Note: Social Assistance Policy requires that you contact the Maintenance Enforcement Program and register as soon as possible. Call 667-5437.***

If you are receiving social assistance, your social worker will have you complete an information sheet regarding your partner which will be sent to the Legal Services Branch of the Department of Justice.

Applying for assistance can be a frustrating process, but help is available in finding your way through the system. It is also important to know that **you can appeal any social assistance decision**. Information is available from your local Social Assistance office.

## ■ Financial assistance for Yukon First Nations

If you are a member of a Yukon First Nation, you must go to their office in your community to apply for social assistance. If you are living in Whitehorse, but do not belong to a First Nation in that area, contact the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, Room 415C in the Elijah Smith Building. You can call 667-3888.

## ■ Maintenance and child support

If you have your children with you, you are entitled to receive child support/maintenance from their father. Transition home staff can provide you with information and may be able to help you do this.

## ■ How to get a Court Order

In situations where abuse has been involved, you should first contact Legal Aid in Whitehorse (667-5210) to **see if you are eligible for legal aid assistance** in making an application for maintenance. In the event that you are not eligible, you should then contact a lawyer or call the Law Line (668-5297) to get the information you will need to make the application to the Court on your own. There are certain formats, documents, etc., that have to be used according to the Rules of Court.

If you are eligible, the Court will work out the amount of support to be paid.

## ■ Maintenance Enforcement Program

You must have a Court Order or legal agreement in order to register with the Maintenance Enforcement Program (MEP). A Maintenance Order which is granted by the Court is not automatically registered with the MEP. You must complete a registration form. These forms are available from the MEP office, most legal service offices, territorial agents, social assistance offices, transition homes, etc. Once you have completed the registration form, call the MEP office in Whitehorse (667-5437) to arrange an appointment with an MEP

Officer to go over your registration form, to swear an Affidavit of Arrears (if required) and to answer any questions that you may have. The Officer will explain to you how the program works. At this time you should inform the Officer of the abuse history of the children's father.

The role of the Maintenance Enforcement Program is to collect any maintenance owing, either ongoing or past due. The MEP will do everything legally possible to collect the maintenance that is ordered by the Court, **but it cannot guarantee collection of any money, nor can it guarantee when the payments will be made.**

***If the abuser threatens you or tells you to withdraw from the program, let Maintenance Enforcement know.***

## ■ Child Support Guidelines

The Child Support Guidelines are a set of rules and tables for calculating the amount of support that a paying parent should contribute toward his or her children. The table amounts are based on the paying parent's level of income, the number of children, and where the paying parent lives.

In some unusual circumstances, the table amounts may not apply. In all situations, however, the Guidelines are designed to protect the best interests of children, and to ensure that child support is fair, predictable and consistent. The purpose of the Guidelines is to reduce conflict between parents about child support.

**For more information, contact the Child Support Guidelines**

**Office:**

Child Support Guidelines

Court Services J-3M

P.O. Box 2703

Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2C6

Phone: (867) 667-3066. Toll-free from within the Yukon,

(800) 661-0408, extension 3066

**■ Finding a place to live**

Where can you go after the transition house, the motel, or your friend's house? You may be able to get low-cost housing. For help with finding rental housing, call:

Whitehorse Housing ..... 667-5712

Grey Mountain Housing (for First Nations) ..... 633-4880

Yukon Housing has offices in the following communities:

Carcross..... 821-4281

Carmacks..... 863-6411

Dawson City ..... 993-5478

Faro ..... 994-3113

Haines Junction ..... 634-2202

Mayo..... 996-2358

Pelly Crossing (Mayo)..... 996-2358

Ross River..... 969-2347

Teslin..... 390-2024

Watson Lake..... 536-7304

If you need help with purchasing or upgrading your present home, call Yukon Housing in Whitehorse (667-5759).

**Kaushee's Place in Whitehorse has what is called “second-stage housing”,** which is safe and affordable housing for abused women and their children. Usually you can stay for up to six months.

## ■ Information about renting

If you need to find a place to rent, the newspaper is a good place to start looking. Check the classified ads. That may help you get ideas of what to look for and how much rent may cost. According to the law you cannot be refused an apartment or a house because you have children. You can be refused if you have pets.

When you find an apartment or a house to rent, you may need to pay for the first and last month's rent. Social assistance will grant the first month's and at least part of the last month's rent, depending on the amount.

***Note: In the Yukon, it is illegal under the Landlords and Tenants Act for landlords to charge a “damage deposit” fee.***

You may also have to sign a lease. A lease is a form which confirms that you are renting the place. It says how long you are renting for, and how much you pay each month. Make sure you understand your lease before you sign it. Make sure you get a copy.

## ■ What are your housing requirements?

When you call about an ad for housing, ask about the safety of the building; the cost, whether heat and light are included, the deposit required; the amount of space, and the location and distance to schools.

Ask yourself these questions before you begin hunting for a place to live:

### **Safety**

- What do you need to be safe from your abusive partner?
- Do you need to be on the third floor or higher?
- Do you need a secure building with a locked entrance and intercom?

### **Cost**

- How much can you pay for rent?
- How much can you pay for heat and lights?
- Social assistance and family benefits only provide a certain amount for living expenses. Find out how much that is.

### **Space**

- How many bedrooms do you need?
- How much space do you need?

### **Location**

- How close do you need to be to work?
- Do you need to be close to schools?

## ■ Other options

- Do you want to live alone, or share an apartment?
- If you have children, would you like to share accommodation with another mother?

## ■ Before you consider going back

At some point if you have left, you may think about resuming living with your partner. If so, you may want to talk it over with someone first, such as a trusted friend, family member or counsellor.

Many women who have experienced violence benefit from getting some help to change any unhealthy behaviours and/or attitudes that may be a barrier to their well-being. It is important that this help or support acknowledges a woman's resistance to abuse to validate her dignity and strength.

The Women's Program at the Victim Services/Family Violence Prevention Unit can provide you with information to help you. Self-help resources are also available at many public service agencies in Whitehorse including Yukon Family Services Association, the Women's Directorate, Alcohol and Drug Services, Kaushee's Place, and the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre.

If you do not live in Whitehorse, the service agencies in your community may have resource libraries where you can borrow books.

Before you decide whether or not to return, take a moment to ask yourself what you need from a healthy relationship. If he's been getting some help to change his behaviour, don't return until you see changes have occurred.

**Myth:** Abuse happens because women make their partners jealous.

**Fact:** Love is about trust and respect. Abusive partners often get jealous for no reason. People can choose non-abusive ways to react.

## ■ Can programs for abusive men help?

Sometimes the court will require an abusive man to enter a program to help him change his behaviour. In the Yukon there is a Batterer's Program at the Victim Services/Family Violence Prevention Unit (Whitehorse).

**Some men benefit from these programs; some do not.** If counselling helps, it is only because he wants to change. First he has to admit he has a problem. Then he has to want to work on changing his behaviour. How he changes, and how much he changes, may depend on his reasons for getting help.

With counselling he may stop being abusive. Or he may just change the way he is abusive. Some men stop the physical violence, but get more emotionally or verbally abusive. Some men don't change at all. There is no guarantee or quick fix. **It is important that his counselling focuses on his abusive behaviour and on him taking responsibility to change.**

He may quit the program or stop the counselling if you move back with him, or if it's no longer required by the court. He may tell you what he thinks you want to hear. You are the best judge of what is right for you. You should not feel pressured to give him any guarantees. Only you can decide if the abuse has stopped.

## ■ Is mediation a good idea?

There is a strong movement across Canada to keep family matters outside of court. It is extremely important to stress that mediation is based on equality. When there is abuse in the relationship, there is unlikely to be equality. Mediation may work for some couples; however, it is not the answer for everyone.

- Where there has been violence during your relationship, mediation may not work. If fear of violence prevents you from discussing your needs openly and honestly, mediation will not be helpful to you.
- Where a power imbalance between a couple cannot be properly managed by an experienced mediator, the courts may be a better choice for providing protection for a person who has been a victim of violence. The issue of violence itself cannot be mediated.
- Mediation is not worthwhile if your partner is unwilling to take responsibility for their abusive behaviour and actions.
- Mediation is not effective if the woman who experienced the violence is blamed for the abusive behaviour or actions.

**Myth:** If an abusive partner takes an anger management course, the abuse will end.

**Fact:** Abuse is about power and control issues. These are specific to family violence programs and are not addressed at anger management courses.

***If you do decide to choose mediation, make sure in advance that the mediator has a good understanding of issues related to women who are abused, and about power and control. When choosing a mediator, look for someone whose skills and training work well for your situation. Ask for references and speak to others who have used that individual's or organization's services.***





## Summary

Whatever you decide to do, please remember this...

- No one has the right to hit you.
- No one has the right to hurt you in any way, or to make you live in fear.
- You do not deserve to be abused.
- You have a right to feel safe in a relationship.
- You have a right to be treated with respect.

Whatever you decide to do, **your own safety and your children's safety should come first.** Remember, you are not alone. There are people who care. There are people who can help. There are places you can go. There are ways to get money and jobs. Remember, you can make changes and there are people who are willing to help. Only you have the power to decide. But we hope that the information in this book may help you along the way.

### ■ Statistics on spousal abuse

In the 2004 General Social Survey, 7% of Canadian women had experienced spousal assault over a five-year period.

Acts of spousal violence against women are more likely to have severe consequences than those against men. Women are:

- More than twice as likely than male victims to be physically injured by partners;

- six times more likely to receive medical attention;
- five times more likely to be hospitalized as a result of the violence;
- three times more likely than male victims to be obliged to take time off paid or unpaid work to deal with the consequences of the violence; and
- twice as likely to report chronic, ongoing assaults (10 or more).
- Women were more than three times as likely as men to say they feared for their lives from a violent spouse.
- One in five homicides in Canada involve the killing of an intimate partner.
- In 2004,  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the incidents of criminal harassment were directed at women.
- Young women under 25 report the highest rates of both criminal harassment and sexual assault, and these rates decline with age.
- 86% of victims of sexual offences reported to the police in 2004 were women.
- In 2004, rates of spousal assault were twice as high for women with a household income of less than \$60,000 compared with those with higher incomes.
- Rates of sexual offences recorded by the police in 2004 were 2 to 3 times higher in Yukon than in any of the provinces.

## Reported in Measuring Violence Against Women: Statistical Trends 2006

A report published by Statistics Canada and commissioned by the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women, 2006

While statistics are useful, it is important to understand what they mean and what they don't mean.

Statistics can't tell us how it feels to experience violence, or what it feels like to feel fear, either from a partner you know well, or from a stranger on a darkened street.

When it comes to violence against women, statistics can't even tell us what the real numbers are. The vast majority of incidents of violence against women are never reported. In fact, many statistics on violent crimes come from police databases, and most victims of violence don't report the violence to the police. This is especially true for sexual and intimate partner violence.

## ■ Directory of Yukon agencies and services

RCMP : Whitehorse ..... 667-5555  
or..... 911  
Dial the prefix in your community followed by 5555.

### ***Transition homes***

Kaushee's Place (Transition Home) Whitehorse ..... 668-5733  
Dawson City Women's Shelter ..... 993-5086  
Help and Hope for Families  
(Watson Lake Transition Home)..... 536-7233  
Majedi Safe Home (Ross River) ..... 969-2722 or 969-2017

### ***Victims' services***

Victim Services/Family Violence  
Prevention Unit (Whitehorse) ..... 667-3500  
or toll free..... 1-800-661-0408 ext. 3500  
Kwanlin Dun Victim Services Coordinator..... 667-8500  
Dawson City Victim Services Coordinator ..... 993-5831  
Watson Lake Victim Services Coordinator ..... 536-2541  
Victim Link..... 1-800-563-0808

## ■ Legal information/support

Yukon Human Rights Commission..... 667-6226  
The Law Line (Whitehorse)..... 668-5297  
Outside Whitehorse call toll-free ..... 1-867-668-5297  
The Lawyer Referral Service (Whitehorse) ..... 668-4231  
Legal Aid (Whitehorse) ..... 667-5210  
Family Law Information Centre..... 456-6721  
Kwanlin Dun Justice Program (Whitehorse)..... 667-8500

First Nations Court Workers .....	667-3781
(Whitehorse, Carcross, Teslin, Haines Junction, Burwash, Beaver Creek)	
Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation .....	993-5385
(Dawson City or Old Crow)	
Liard First Nation, Watson Lake.....	536-2131
Ross River Dena Council (Ross River) .....	969-2222
Northern Tutchone Council.....	996-2820
(Carmacks, Mayo, Pelly Crossing)	

### ***Counselling/support services (Whitehorse)***

Alcohol and Drug Services .....	667-5777
Association Franco-Yukonnaise.....	668-2663
Child Abuse Treatment Services.....	667-8227
Family and Children's Services .....	667-3002
Victim Services/Family Violence Prevention Unit.....	667-3500
or toll free.....	1-800-661-0408 ext. 3500
Les EssentiELLEs .....	668-2636
Mental Health Services.....	667-8346
Skookum Jim Friendship Centre .....	633-7680
YTG Employee Assistance Program.....	668-3277
Many Rivers Counselling and Support Services.....	667-2970

### ***Housing***

Association Franco-Yukonnaise.....	668-2663
Whitehorse Housing .....	667-5712
Grey Mountain Housing (First Nations) .....	633-4880
Yukon Housing (Whitehorse) .....	667-5759
or toll free.....	1-800-661-0408 ext. 5759
Carcross.....	821-4281

Carmacks .....	863-6411
Dawson City .....	993-5478
Faro .....	994-3113
Haines Junction .....	634-2202
Mayo and Pelly Crossing .....	996-2358
Ross River .....	969-2347
Teslin .....	390-2024
Watson Lake .....	536-7304

***Miscellaneous services (Whitehorse)***

ShelterNet .....	shelternet.ca
Social Assistance .....	667-5674
Dept. of Indian and Northern Affairs .....	667-3888
Maintenance Enforcement Program .....	667-5437
Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre (Women's Advocate) .....	667-2693
Women's Directorate .....	667-3030
or toll free .....	1-800-661-0408 ext. 3030
Passport Office (Ottawa) .....	1-800-567-6868