

Tri County Women's Health Coalition

A Comprehensive Sexual Violence Prevention Strategic Plan

Vision

Gender equity and non-violence are integral to our communities, cultures, and organisations in South West Nova Scotia. Relationships are respectful and non-discriminatory.

Women are empowered to live a whole and fulfilling life, safe and free from violence. Women have a right to pleasurable ethical sexual intimacy.

Mission Statement

Work with our communities to show how sexual violence is normalized; coordinate and mobilize our communities to undertake best practice actions known to eliminate or reduce the incidence of sexual violence.

Goals¹

- A significant reduction in violence against women and girls
- Social norms do not support violence and oppression (see definition of oppression, below)
- Gender-equitable, safe and inclusive communities and organisations
- Equal and respectful relationships between women and men

Guiding Principles²

This feminist framework is guided by the following values and guiding principles:

- We recognize that the oppression of women exists at three main levels, and sexual violence prevention must work to effect change at all of these levels:
 1. Broad social and cultural
 2. Structural and systemic
 3. Interpersonal, direct face-to-face
- Violence against women and girls is perpetuated by, and reinforces, unequal power relations between women and men, gender stereotyping, sex discrimination, and structural inequalities such as occupational segregation, pay inequity, and primary responsibility for child care and care giving. We will not effectively prevent the violence unless gender and other structural inequalities are systematically addressed.
- Violence against women and girls is an abuse of power and a violation of human rights. It affects women and girls throughout their lives, irrespective of cultural, religious or socioeconomic background. All women have the right to safe and respectful relationships and to live free from violence.
- We believe that society empowers men over women such that it creates a gender inequity.
- Violence against women and girls, including sexual violence, cannot be eliminated by tackling sexism alone.³ We must work to end all forms of oppression such as class, age, Aboriginality, sexuality, ethnicity and disability that intersect to shape the forms of violence against women as

well as women's and girls' experiences of violence. Thus women's and men's diverse backgrounds, contexts and life experiences must be recognised and addressed in prevention strategies.

- All prevention strategies, programs and initiatives must ensure that accessible and appropriate systems of support are available to respond to existing violence.
- In the historical colonial context of Canada, work to prevent violence against Indigenous women cannot be separated from efforts to address racism, colonization and intergenerational trauma. Integrated and culturally competent strategies that incorporate Indigenous history, values and experience must be included in the development and implementation of actions/initiatives.
- The whole community is responsible for condemning and eliminating violence against women and developing a culture of respect and equity. Engaging communities is essential in creating effective solutions to prevent and reduce violence.
- Non-violent men have a positive role to play in helping prevent violence against women, and in shaping respectful, gender-equitable attitudes and behaviours among peers, colleagues, children and friends.
- Men who are violent against women must be held accountable for their behaviour and are expected to change.
- The expertise of the anti-violence against women sector, including the feminist movement, is invaluable to all efforts, and the engagement of new partners is critical to our success.
- Research evidence and practice must inform the development of approaches and delivery of strategies to prevent violence against women.
- We believe we need to strive for a coordinated and sustained approach to sexual violence prevention

Strategic Priorities

The following six Strategic Priorities are based on the Tri County Women's Health Coalition Sexual Violence Prevention Strategy:

1. Advocate for practices and policies that will reduce sexual harms and violence
2. Advocate that the government implement a sexual violence strategy public education campaign and training for service providers
3. Advocacy support for municipal alcohol policies
4. Challenge social norms promoting sexual violence
5. Advocate for, promote, and work with service providers for them to offer a greater number of healthy sexual relationship programs in schools and communities
6. Work with interested youth to implement a peer mentorship program based on best practice in sexual violence prevention

Figure 1: Strategic Priorities



Definitions

Feminism by Susan Sherwin - “the name given to various theories that help reveal the multiple, gender specific patterns of harm that constitute women’s oppression. It is also the term used to characterize the complex, diverse political movements to eliminate all such forms of oppression.”

Oppression by Iris Young - the systemic constraints on certain groups of people that cause suffering, disadvantage and injustice. Oppression exists in the normal processes of everyday life as a consequence of conscious and unconscious assumptions and reactions of well-meaning people – in ordinary interactions, media and cultural stereotypes, and structural features of bureaucratic hierarchies and market mechanisms. A great example of structural oppression the attitudes and policies of the federal government regarding Indigenous peoples in this land we call Canada – the residential schools, the relocations, policies where Aboriginal women lost their status if they married a white person, as did their children, yet non-Native women marrying an Indigenous person (and any children the couple had) gained Indigenous status. Oppression refers to structural phenomena that immobilize or diminish a group.

¹ Adapted from “A Right to Respect: Victoria’s Plan to Prevent Violence against Women 2010-2020”. Retrieved from <http://www.deadlyrav.com.au/assets/Uploads/ARighttoRespectVictoriasPlantoPreventViolenceAgainstWomenPDF.pdf>

² Adapted from “A Right to Respect: Victoria’s Plan to Prevent Violence against Women 2010-2020”. Retrieved from <http://www.deadlyrav.com.au/assets/Uploads/ARighttoRespectVictoriasPlantoPreventViolenceAgainstWomenPDF.pdf>

³ hooks, b. (1989). Talking back: Thinking feminist, thinking black. Boston: MA: South End Press.