



REFERRAL POLICY FOR VICTIMS OF POWER-BASED CRIMES:

Family Violence, Sexual
Assault, and Criminal
Harassment

ISSUED BY:

**MINISTRY OF PUBLIC SAFETY
AND SOLICITOR GENERAL,
POLICING AND COMMUNITY
SAFETY BRANCH**

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The purpose of this bulletin is to remind police and Victim Service Programs of legislation, policy and contractual requirements regarding referrals for victims of family and sexual violence cases (power-based crimes).

This policy directive is for the attention of:

- Deputy Commissioner, Pacific Region RCMP "E" Division for distribution to all Detachment Commanders RCMP and RCMP Officers
- Chief Constable of each Independent Municipal Police Department for distribution to all Municipal Officers
- First Nations Self Administered Police Services for distribution to all First Nations Officers
- Victim Service Program Contractors and Program Managers, Police-based and Community-based Victim Service Programs
- BC Association of Specialized Victim Assistance and Counselling Programs
- Police Victim Services of BC
- Assistant Deputy Attorney General, Criminal Justice Branch
- Victim Services and Crime Prevention Division

DEFINITIONS & REFERRAL DIRECTIVES

DEFINITIONS

- Victims of **“Power-based Crimes”** refer to all victims of violence in relationships (adult, youth, or child), victims of sexual assault, victims of criminal harassment, victims of child abuse/assault (both physical and sexual), adult survivors of childhood abuse (both physical and sexual), and child witnesses of family violence.
- **“Police-based Victim Service Programs”** are contracted services funded by the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General. These programs are located within RCMP Detachments or Municipal Police Departments and work closely with police to provide support services to victims of all types of crime. Some programs may also provide on-scene crisis response services in conjunction with the police.
- **“Community-based Victim Service Programs”** are contracted services funded by the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General. These programs are located in community agencies and are mandated to support all victims of power-based crimes. In some communities there are specific programs for women, children, youth, male survivors of sexual abuse, Aboriginal peoples or ethno-specific communities.

REFERRAL DIRECTIVES

1. Community-based Victim Service Programs are the contracted primary service providers for victims/survivors of power-based crimes. Police and police-based Victim Service Programs should refer all victims and survivors of power-based crimes to community-based Victim Service Programs in an appropriate and timely manner.
2. In cases where the police-based Victim Service Program is the first point of contact with the victim (e.g. at the crime scene), the police-based program will refer the victims/survivors to the community-based Victim Service Program as soon as practicable.
3. If there is no community-based Victim Service Program serving the community, police will refer victims/survivors to the police-based Victim Service Program.
4. Where there is no police-based or community-based Victim Service Program, victims/survivors should be referred to **VictimLINK** at **1-800-563-0808** or other local services.
5. Detachment Commanders must meet with the local agencies contracted by the Ministry to deliver police-based and community-based victim services to discuss policy obligations, ensure that referral protocols are in place, and ensure that roles and responsibilities are clearly understood.

LEGISLATION & POLICY

WHY EFFECTIVE REFERRALS ARE IMPORTANT

- Victims/survivors and family members should be referred as soon as possible to the appropriate Victim Service Program. Early intervention by victim services enhances the victim's safety and increases the likelihood of the victim/survivor's cooperation with the criminal justice system.
- Victim service workers play a significant role in helping victims/survivors identify risks, develop and implement a personal safety plan for themselves and their children, provide information about the criminal justice system, court orientation and accompaniment, and crime victim assistance.
- As a direct result of having been assaulted, victims/survivors often require timely access to a range of social services. These may include: access to emotional support; emergency accommodation; medical care; forensic evidence collection; income assistance; child protection services; 24 hour crisis support; counselling; childcare; and civil court remedies.
- Victims/survivor's safety is central to the work of police and victim service workers. Consistent good practice depends on the maintenance of effective policies, protocols and procedures for both systems, both individually and together.
- A coordinated multi-disciplinary response empowers victims/survivors of power-based crimes and is most effective in keeping them safe.

VICTIMS OF CRIME LEGISLATION

BC's *Victims of Crime Act* (VOCA) provides victims of crime with rights to information. Sections 5 and 6 of VOCA require that police and other justice system personnel provide victims with information about Victim Service Programs and the case.

Referral to the appropriate Victim Service Program is essential for full compliance with the Act and to ensure that victims/survivors are provided with information and support throughout the justice system.

POLICY

Referral of victims/survivors to Victim Service Programs (including referral of victims/survivors of power-based crime to community-based Victim Service Programs) is contained in provincial and police force policy including:

- Ministry of Attorney General *Violence Against Women In Relationships Policy* (VAWIR)
www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/victim_services/publications
- RCMP "E" Division Policy:
 - "E" Division Operational Manual 2.4 Violence In Relationships (VIR) Violence Against Women In Relationships (VAWIR)
 - "E" Division Operational Manual 1.1.F. Victim Service Programs
- Municipal police department policy and procedure

V. CONTRACT REQUIREMENTS – VICTIM SERVICE PROGRAMS

Victim Service Programs are established and funded by the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General. The Ministry contracts with local, regional and Aboriginal governments, health authorities, and non-profit organizations to provide victim services through police-based and community-based programs.

All Victim Service Programs are required to adhere to the following contractual obligations with respect to referrals.

EXCERPTS FROM THE VICTIM SERVICE PROGRAM CONTRACT

IN COMMUNITIES WITH BOTH COMMUNITY-BASED AND POLICE-BASED VICTIM SERVICE PROGRAM, THE MINISTRY REQUIRES:

APPENDIX A: REQUIRED SERVICES

Referral between Victim Service Programs:

- i. Police-based victim service workers will refer victims identified as victims of violence in relationships (adult, youth, or child), victims of sexual assault, victims of criminal harassment, victims of child abuse/assault (both physical and sexual), adult survivors of childhood abuse (both physical and sexual), and child witnesses of family or sexual violence to the appropriate community-based Victim Service Program.
- ii. Community-based victim service workers will refer victims that are identified other than victims of violence in relationships (adult, youth, or child), victims of sexual assault, victims of criminal harassment, victims of child abuse/assault (both physical and sexual), adult survivors of childhood abuse (both physical and sexual), and child witnesses of family or sexual violence to the police-based Victim Service Program.
- iii. In exceptional cases, where a victim service worker determines that the procedure outlined in (i) or (ii) above is not appropriate, the rationale must be documented in the file.
- iv. In situations where the involvement of both police-based and community-based Victim Service Programs is identified, the programs should coordinate an approach to service delivery and jointly develop victim-centered support plans.

COORDINATION & PROTOCOL

In communities with both police-based and community-based Victim Service Programs; programs shall develop and adhere to a local victim service protocol which must contain the following provisions:

- a. Regular meetings with other local Victim Service Program(s);
- b. Consistent referral procedures; and
- c. Detailed procedures for handling disputes and grievances.

In addition, organizations contracted to deliver victim services are required to ensure that a local victim service referral protocol is developed and provided to the Ministry each year.

For further information or enquiries please contact:

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