Taking Action:

A series of 6 handouts for communities in British Columbia addressing sexual exploitation of children and youth.

Provided by the Justice Institute of British Columbia, National Crime Prevention Centre and Victim Services and Community Programs Division, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General.

Setting up a Community Action Network

In BC, most action networks are lead by an independent community group made up of various members of the local community working on the issue of sexual exploitation. A smaller number of groups have been initiated by municipalities and are directly linked to the work of City Council. In some communities these groups either independent or lead by City Council are called Community Action Teams (CATs). This chart is intended to show how this difference in leadership may affect the work of the community networks.

Models for Setting up a Community Action Network

Model One: Lead by City Council	Model Two: Lead by Community groups
• Membership by invitation only, from direction of research done by staff at City council	• Membership by invitation, with representation from various groups, as well as through voluntary interest
• Funding provided by the City for a position to lead the network, such as through a social planning position.	• Lead by volunteers, with a small stipend to pay an administrator to take minutes and coordinate meetings
• Funding sought for projects from external sources such as NCPC, etc.	• Funding sought for projects from external sources such as NCPC, etc.
• Goals and aims of the network fit with the mandate and scope of the City Council	• Goals and aims are dictated by the network itself rather than the City or another governmental body
• Report to the City on a regular basis, with initiatives being lead by the City Council and partially funded by them.	• Report to own group

Taking initiative	As you can see above, communities across BC have used different leadership models in establishing community action groups to address sexual exploitation. Some have been lead by local organizations coming together around the issue, such as front-line youth workers, concerned parents and RCMP. Others have been initiated under the direction of the City Council, at the request of local school officials or other youth-serving agencies. To encourage your local City Council to take initiative providing resources and administrative time to starting a network, begin a letter-writing campaign or encourage local school officials to speak up at a Council meeting about this issue.
Who to invite	It is important to invite a broad range of representatives from local agencies, as well as individuals who may have a personal interest in the issue of sexual exploitation. Continued on page 2.

Who to invite	There are many benefits to being involved in a community action group, as there are networking and information-sharing opportunities that arise on a regular basis. Encourage people to become involved by reminding them of these benefits, as they will probably be there on a voluntary basis donating their time and energy to the group. Some groups to invite include reps from: • School districts • Police • Local municipalities • Government ministries such as: MCFD, status of women, aboriginal services • Local health authority • Non-profits that deal with at-risk youth • Local First Nations bands • Local Friendship Centres • Organizations working with Aboriginal youth • Immigrant and refugee organizations, especially those working with women and children • Groups that provide services to adult sex workers, such as drop-in centres, homeless shelters • Victim Services • Needle exchange • Street clinic • Experiential and non-experiential youth, as appropriate
Outreach to First Nations	Across BC, First Nations communities, families and youth are deeply affected by sexual exploitation. Through intergenerational abuse, histories of residential schools, substance use and other symptoms of colonization, many First Nations leaders may be reluctant to talk about sexual exploitation. However, it is important to be strong in your resolution to include Aboriginal organizations and individuals in your group. Aboriginal youth are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation and First Nations can benefit from tackling this difficult issue within their community. Community networks should make efforts to approach local leaders, bands, and Aboriginal youth-serving agencies to ask for their participation, support and leadership. Move beyond tokenizing the invitation of Native organizations to the table and aim for genuine collaboration. Some ideas for reaching out to First Nations include: • Ask to hold a meeting at the local band office or on the reserve • Ask a chief or other representative to open the meeting with a welcome and acknowledgement of the traditional territories • Keep extending the invitation to participate in group activities, through phone calls and other personal invitations besides email. • When holding workshops, conferences, rallies, and other gatherings, ask the local chiefs what the protocols are for respecting the traditional territories. Ask them to become involved in the events by opening the gatherings in a respectful way. • Ask the local chief, native youth workers or other Aboriginal agencies to let you know when they are hosting youth-focused events and be sure to attend. Show support for their initiatives and learn about how they are tackling this problem.

Involvement of youth	It is important to discuss the involvement of youth within your group, determining the ethical boundaries for involving experiential youth as well as other youth in the community. Your group may choose to ask youth to participate in your event planning or general meetings, or you may choose to hold specific youth-focused events or projects. Regardless, it is important to outline your rationale for these guidelines in your mandate.
Establish a mandate	Establishing a mandate for your group will help to determine the long-term and short-term goals and objectives, and the focus and limitations of your activities. Establishing a mandate may be a long process due to differences of opinion, experience or belief systems between your members, and this is a good opportunity to seek a common ground upon which you will all work.
Assessing knowledge base	It is a good idea to keep a list of your members, their organizational affiliations and the particular skills and knowledge that they have. For example, identifying those with proposal writing skills, knowledge of legal procedures, budget management, youth services and media contacts will all be important during your project planning phase. The skills and knowledge may also help to determine the scope or focus of your projects.
Delegation of duties	Establish sub-committees based on interest or areas of expertise. Such committees include: • Fundraising • Legal issues • Events coordination • Media representation and outreach • Integrated services and housing • School outreach and liaison
Funding	It is important that a sub-committee be established or that one person volunteer to take a leadership role in writing funding applications. These can be very labor-intensive and need strong writing skills and experience with proposal writing. The group should support this person in writing the applications by offering to edit, give feedback, or write letters of support from their agencies to support the initiatives. **Core funding:** Most community action groups run without any core funding. Most of the labor is done voluntarily with some small grants being acquired to cover a stipend for the administrator of the group. Groups with funding from City Councils often have a part-time funded position for a person to take leadership role in heading the group. **Project Funding:** See *Applying for Funding* for more information on applying for project grants.
Develop a Community Plan	See *Creating a Community Plan for Action* for guidance on developing a community plan to give a solid framework for your group. It is important that everyone be involved in this process and that there is enough interest and energy to sustain the agreed-upon goals. For the first year or more, set small, realistic goals that your group can meet given the amount of energy and time that you have. Allow yourself to succeed at the goals you set rather than trying to solve sexual exploitation altogether.

Reassess on yearly basis	As your network grows in numbers and experience, you will need to reassess the goals and community plan on a regular basis. Allow for the community plan to be a "work in progress" that is revised regularly. As the levels of awareness are improved in your community, the goals can move along the continuum from basic education to prevention and beyond.
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Potential Challenges Facing Community Action Networks

Some community networks in BC have been running for over 8 years, while others are just getting started. Even with individual commitment to this very important issue, groups do face challenges in keeping their momentum and dealing with busy schedules.

Maintaining interest	You may find that the level of interest will rise and fall throughout the year, and that some months (such as December) are just too busy to hold a meeting. Large initiatives tend to take a lot of energy from the group members and interest may fall off in the months following. Take this into consideration when planning the groups events and allow for people to take a break when necessary. Allow for people to miss a meeting when necessary but also ask them to let the administrator know when they need to take a leave from the group. Many people will be volunteering their time and it is better to avoid complete burn-out before it happens.
Funding	Funding is always a challenge for community action groups. Most funding is given on a project basis, ranging from one- to three-year commitments. One of the important skills to look for in your network members is fundraising and events organizing. Fundraising from businesses and the local community will be an essential way of maintaining your group in order to supplement the funding available through grants and other project money.
Consistency of representatives	Members of the RCMP and other representatives may change quite frequently depending on staff turnover or new appointments. This can create challenges in maintaining a good connection to the RCMP and other organizations because the individual interest and commitment will vary.
Media interest	The media tends to grasp on to sensational stories that have a “face” to put to the issue of sexual exploitation. Media coverage of sexual exploitation tends to focus on individual experiences of a youth, providing intimate and inappropriate details to the public. In general, members of the media are less interested in covering issues of sexual exploitation when there is no sensationalist aspect to write about. Pay attention to your local papers and try to keep an eye out for a journalist that covers similar stories ethically and respectfully. These are people who may wish to be invited to be a part of your network or who you should call when you are putting out a media release.
Public awareness	Partly due to the lack of media coverage of issues of sexual exploitation on an ongoing basis, it can be difficult to maintain a good level of public awareness and concern for the issue. Many networks have focused their efforts at raising the level of knowledge amongst the public in order to gain community support and have success in future events. Poster campaigns, public speaking engagements, workshops, and participation in community forums on youth health, substance use, homelessness and related issues can help to get the issue of sexual exploitation in to the minds of community members.

Creating a Community Plan for Action

Whether you are just establishing a community action network or already have a strong group working to address sexual exploitation in your area, it is important to reassess your Community Plan for Action on a regular basis. On a yearly or bi-yearly basis, use these steps to guide you through the process of setting realistic goals for the year ahead.

Delegate	There are many steps involved in creating a community plan and implementing it. Within your community action group, have members volunteer for various aspects of the plan. This will include doing research, donating office space and photocopying, hosting events, being a media contact, etc. Talk about what resources you are each able to provide and set your community action plan with a realistic view of your capacity.
Research	It is important to do research in to what has been done in your community in the past, as well as what the priorities are for front-line workers, youth and other concerned members of the community. Some communities have found funding for a needs assessment or other community report to be completed as a first step in establishing goals for future action. This is a helpful place to start in creating a realistic plan for your community.
Establish continuum for action	Look at the community along a continuum from basic education and awareness to prevention to intervention and action. Start at the beginning and asses where the community is at in terms of basic awareness on issues of sexual exploitation. It is best to set the groundwork for your future goals by creating a common level of awareness among your community members, before moving your group in to action. When prioritizing your goals, look at where your energies would best be spent in the community. For example, one year you may wish to focus on awareness-raising initiatives, while the next year you may move to creating prevention strategies or holding training seminars that are aimed at making interventions with youth already being exploited.
Set Goals	**Timeframe:** Create a set of realistic goals within allotted time periods. What is realistic for your group to do within a one year time period? Within two years, within five years or ten years? Set these goals and be prepared to take action on the short-term goals first. **Resources:** For each goal, write a list of resources that will be required. Include hours of labour or number of people required, location, supplies, food (for conferences, workshops or other gatherings), a computer, **Funding:** For each goal, what resources can be donated and which ones will require funding? Who will be responsible for applying for funding and what are the possible sources for these funds? **Evaluation:** For each goal, determine the ways that success will be measured. How will you know when your goal has been reached? How will the success of your activities be evaluated?

Make Recommendations	Some goals or points of action may lay outside the scope of your group. It is important to recognize those things that are the responsibility of various levels of government or other local agencies, which can be turned in to recommendations that are presented to these partners. Changes in legislation, changes in child protection measures and other identified goals should be put forward to the appropriate agencies.
Develop Partnerships	Create space for all aspects of the community in your plan for action. Develop opportunities for local businesses to become involved, for youth, schools, and concerned parents. Look at all potential partners and create a way for them to participate in implementing your community plan.
Media Interest	The media is an important tool to use when doing outreach or spreading information and knowledge about your community plan. Writing a media release to announce a recent initiative or upcoming event can be key to it success. Some networks have found great success in having a member of the local media (such as newspaper reporters) directly involved in their group. The local media can be used to write stories in local, regional or national newspapers about your initiatives and increase interest around the issue of sexual exploitation. (see *Creating a Press Release*)
Revise	It is important for the community plan to be seen as a work in progress. Create yearly opportunities for community members to come together to look at what has been accomplished in the past year, review emerging issues, and set new goals for the year ahead.
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Applying for Funding

This worksheet includes tips for networks applying for funding to support their community initiatives in addressing sexual exploitation of children and youth.

- Before filling out the funding application, look over what is required by the funders and plan in advance. You will need to ask for letters of support from organizations in the community that support the project, and have a clear vision of what your project will entail. This will prepare you for creating a budget and project plan with outlined goals and objectives. Applying for funding often takes a lot of work before you receive any money, but it will make your application much stronger if the project is well thought out.
- Contact the person listed on the grant application before getting too far in to the application process. This will tell you if it is the appropriate avenue for your project and if funds are still available, as well as tips for gearing your project to the grant requirements.
- Look at the information supplied by the funding agency either online or attached to the funding application. Often funding organizations will include a list of things that should be included in your application or things to keep in mind when filling out your forms. These are your keys to success, as they are generally the guidelines upon which your application will be judged. If you have any questions that are not answered in their information, don't be afraid to phone or email the organization in order to have your question clarified before the deadline.
- Keep in mind that funders have different program interests, priorities, criteria, and deadlines. In writing a proposal, it is important to identify how your project goals and objectives meet the funder's priorities, criteria and budget parameters.
- Remember that your application will go through a competitive process and will be measured against proposals for other interesting projects. Ask yourself what makes your project unique, what makes it innovative and how does it support the work of the funding organization.
- Be sure the application is easily readable. If you have handwritten the application, use a dark blue or black pen and print or write clearly. Typed applications are preferred.
- Be as clear and to-the-point in outlining the purpose and goals of your project and be sure to provide the information requested in the funding application. Any background information that does not fit in to the application form should be added as an appendix rather than stated fully in the main application.
- Have two people check your application to ensure that all sections have been completed and edited for spelling mistakes and other errors. Also double check that the application has been signed by an official that has been authorized to do so on behalf of your organization.
- Check over the list of required documents and ensure they are attached, including letters showing commitment and support from your community partners. If the letters are being sent directly to the funders, include this information in your cover letter.
- Make sure the budget is detailed, complete and accurate. All sources of funding and in-kind contributions (donations of time, equipment, room rentals, etc.) must be included in the budget. Be realistic when writing your budget and be sure to think of all costs that the project will require.
- Make sure your application is submitted on time. If necessary, courier the application to the funder the day before the deadline to ensure it arrives on time.

Innovative Practices and Guiding Principles: Project Checklist

This checklist is designed to provide a set of guiding principles for your project design and development. Ask yourself how your project is responding to the following questions and use the principles to set project goals. This list has been adapted from the Justice Institute of BC publication Commercial Sexual Exploitation: Innovative Ideas for Working with Children and Youth, and the CRIAW publication Participatory Research and Action: A Guide to Becoming a Researcher for Social Change.

Principle	Question	Project Response
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child	How are the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child reflected in our research practices and goals?	
National Coalition of Experiential Women	How are the principles of the National Coalition of Experiential Women reflected in our research practices and goals?	
Participation of Experiential Youth and Adults	Are experiential youth and adults given leadership roles in our project?	
	How are experiential youth and adults supported in taking leadership positions in our project?	
	Does our project have an advisory committee of experiential youth and adults?	
	To what extent are experiential youth and adults involved in decision making about the research they are participating in?	
	To what extent are experiential youth and adults empowered to make decisions about their own lives?	

Principle	Question	Project Response
Collective Responsibility	Are experiential youth and adults considered key stakeholders during evaluation of the project?	
	Has our project created working partnerships with other members of the community who are addressing sexual exploitation and sex work?	
	Do we attempt to educate the broader community about issues impacting on the levels of violence in the lives of sexually exploited youth and adult sex workers?	
	Do we work with partners from other sectors in our work on violence?	
	Is our project informed about larger systems of power in society, such as law, education and colonization?	
Equity of access to services	Do experiential youth and adults feel they can approach our project without being judged?	
	Do youth have voluntary participation in our research project?	
	How is a youth perspective incorporated in to our strategies for accessibility for youth?	
	Do our research practices create barriers to accessing our project?	
	How do we let experiential youth and adults know about our research project? Are there any gaps in our outreach?	

Principle	Question	Project Response
Equity of access to services	Are we aware of all the Aboriginal communities in our area? How are we engaging with them in an accessible manner?	
	How does our project make experiential youth and adults feel welcome?	
Culturally specific programming	How do we ensure that our project is free from judgment toward experiential youth and adults?	
	How do we train our researchers to ensure sensitivity to the diverse needs of participants? Are we aware of the cultural protocols? Are we prepared to discuss issues that may be taboo within certain cultural contexts?	
	How do we address homophobia, racism, ageism, and other forms of discrimination in our research project?	
	Do we offer culturally-specific opportunities for participants? Do we offer gender-specific opportunities for participants?	
	Do we conduct our research project in a manner that addresses the specific cultural needs of youth from diverse communities?	
Relational perspective	Is there room in our project for workers to get to know the participants and to maintain contact with them?	
	Does the project work to foster naturally evolving relationships?	

Principle	Question	Project Response
Relational perspective	Does our project honour the relationships that participants already have within their peer groups, families, and communities?	
Respecting First Nations Communities	Have First Nations communities been given an opportunity to collaborate on the research in their community?	
	Have First Nations communities been engaged adequately in outreach for participation in the research project?	
Self-Reflective Practice	Does the project allow for continued reflection, evaluation and critique of ourselves?	

Creating a Press Release

This worksheet includes the standard format for writing a press release with tips for encouraging the media to pay attention to issues or events related to sexual exploitation of children and youth.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact

- List the name, address and phone number of sending organization and person available for interviews or more information

Catchy Title

- Write a headline that draws attention to the issue or event without being sensationalist.

Information about photo or interview opportunity, time and location

- If you are releasing a new publication, launching an art exhibit or hosting a community event, list the time and location where the spokesperson will be available for interviews. If your event features a well-known local or international "expert", author or other figure, provide an opportunity for the media to speak to this person.

- It is not appropriate to offer photo or interview sessions with experiential youth or others who may be vulnerable to further exploitation through interacting with the media. However, the media always search for opportunities to gather "first hand" stories and put a face to the issue. Providing opportunities to talk to service providers, project coordinators or others will help gain their interest.

Location (city) – Release date

Body of the Press Release

- Write to a journalist audience. A journalist is not seeking to be convinced of the importance of sexual exploitation, but is looking to find "news-worthy" items (sad but true in most cases).

- Keep the target audience of the publication or media outlet in mind. Answer the question: Why would the audience of this publication care about this issue? Speak to the local audience and relevant recent events in the community.

- Write in language that a general audience will understand.

- Do a bit of homework about media in your area. If you have seen articles in your local paper that address sexual exploitation, youth violence, human rights or other related issues in an ethical way, write down the name of the journalist and send the press release directly to them. Also have a look at the media in your area and target those publications that you would want to write about your event or story. Is your event more appropriate for the smaller community paper or for a larger regional paper? Or perhaps for the radio?

- Keep your press release short and to the point. Are you writing to promote an event? A recently released publication or video project? A local youth event? It is important to provide a bit of information to give a context for your work on sexual exploitation, but to also stay focused on the event at hand.

- Include a few statistics about sexual exploitation or facts about recent events in your community. Has there been a recent escalation in street violence or other concerns? If so, tie your event in with these local issues, as the journalist may see this as a potential angle for their own articles.

- If your event includes a local or international author, expert, or other public figure, you may want to highlight their involvement in your project. This will catch the attention of the media and provide a "voice" for the issue without further targeting victims of exploitation.

For more information contact: same information as at the top of the press release, including just the name and phone number