



Safety Circles: A Collaborative Safety Planning Process for Women in Crisis

In 2006, a woman, anticipating with tremendous fear the release of her former abusive partner from a federal correctional facility, was in need of a higher level of planning for her safety and the safety of her children than was generally carried out in PEI.

A trained mediator and facilitator connected to the Justice Options for Women Steering Committee and the Adventure Group volunteered to work with the woman and Transition House Association to develop a process that would bring together a circle of service providers and other supporters to collaborate on a safety plan.

The group, which included police, Victim Services, Transition House Association, school Guidance Counselors, Community Mental Health and other supporters of the woman, including her employer, family and neighbors met regularly for 8 months to develop and monitor a plan.

Circle Outcomes

This first circle was highly successful, resulting in:

- * providing the woman with a sense of community that many victims of family violence lack;
- * a safety plan far more comprehensive than would likely have been put in place otherwise;
- * relationships of trust between the woman and the police that has eased her concern about calling when she is in need or has concerns;
- * tracking and accountability for follow through of the plan;
- * increased support for the woman from family who were better educated about family violence through the circle; and
- * a feeling of empowerment for the woman, who, as the center of the circle, was involved in every step of the process, including its development.

Project Sponsor, **The Adventure Group**, has received financial support from the **Women's Program, Status of Women Canada**, for this initiative. To advise the activities of the project, The Adventure Group is working together with **Justice Options for Women Who Are Victims of Violence Steering Committee**, a partnership of community and government, including survivors of woman abuse, **Transition House Association, Family Violence Prevention of Eastern PEI, Evangeline Community Consultative Group, Women's Peer Support Program**, and **Victim Services**. For more information, contact project co-ordinator Kirstin Lund at (902) 569-1894.

Formalizing the Safety Circle Process

The woman for whom the first circle was developed was involved in every step of the process, including its development, which has empowered her to help other women. One year later, she is involved with others from her circle, in beginning the work of more formally developing this interest-based safety circle process, with hopes that it will be useful to other women in crisis.

In the past year, 1986 women used family violence support services across PEI. While not all of these women will need to be involved in a formal process of safety planning, there will be many who will find that option necessary and helpful at various stages of a family violence crisis. Developing and delivering a formal process, and educating service providers about its use, will make it possible for women to access a more comprehensive level of safety planning than currently exists.

Project Goal and Objectives

The goal of the project is to increase safety and support for victims of family violence. It's Objectives are:

- 1 To engage survivors of violence and their family, friend and workplace supports; community advocates and community and government service providers in the development and evaluation of a formal process of collaborative safety planning;
- 2 To educate women and service providers about collaborative safety planning options; and
- 3 To effectively facilitate collaborative safety planning for women in crisis.

Activities

The first phase of this project will run from April 2007 to November 2008. There are 2 components to this phase of the project: *Process Development and Delivery* and *Information Sharing*. Activities for these components include:

- Develop a **Formal Guide** to facilitating collaborative safety planning;
- Use facilitation guide to **offer collaborative safety planning processes** for women in Queens County during the life of this project, while at the same time developing options for broader service delivery in future;
- **Evaluate and modify Process**; and
- Develop a **Communications Strategy** to inform women in crisis about the options available for collaborative safety planning, including an **Information Sharing Workshop** for survivors of violence, victim advocates and service providers in the criminal and social justice systems and a **Website**.