

# Exploring Strategies to Support Mainstream and Anabaptist Rural Women Experiencing Domestic Violence: A Research Process from Literature to Implementation

Hannah Skinner, MSW, RSW

## Identified Problem

Following the completion of a needs assessment that indicated an increased need and lack of accessibility of domestic violence services in North Perth, Optimism Place Women's Shelter and Support Services implemented an outreach office in Listowel. Although this office allows outreach workers to support women and children, numerous challenges exist that prevent women from seeking these supports:

- Isolation
- Lack of predictable, consistent resources
- Lack of privacy and anonymity
- Lack of transportation
- Lack of childcare
- Lack of affordable housing solutions
- Distance from services
- Farm life (i.e. financial dependence, increased stress)
- Increased weapon presence
- Traditional gender roles
- Slow police response
- Anabaptist traditions and community dynamics

The Rural Realities Grant has allowed for the research and community development required to find innovative ways to better support rural woman and children within their home community.

Ontario

## Research Process

1. Research innovative rural service models and best practices
  - Academic, peer-reviewed, published literature
  - Models implemented in comparable communities
2. Consultation and determination of service delivery models applicable to North Perth
  - North Perth service providers
  - North Perth service users

3. Implementation and monitoring

4. Formal evaluation

#### Models Published in Literature

Model	Description
Network-Oriented Approach	Focus on assisting isolated survivors engage in informal support networks; Engaging with family, friends, neighbours, co-workers, church members, etc. to assist her in developing a network for crisis and support.
Safe Houses	Local families open up their homes to house survivors; Often used as emergency accommodation until woman can be transported to a shelter.
DOVE Intervention	Domestic violence support workers attend the home during pregnancy and postpartum nurse visits; Goal is to re-sensitize survivor to abuse being experienced while acknowledging her commitment to her children.
Local Library Collaboration	Provide local librarians with domestic violence training, develop a specialized book section, promote computers as a safe way to find resources without being tracked, etc.
Videoconferencing Technology	Use Polycom technology to connect service providers to rural, isolated survivors through safe computers installed in rural crisis centres
MOSAIC Program	Encourage screening in primary healthcare settings to identify women at risk; If meet criteria, engage in 12 months of weekly home visits from trained, supervised local mothers in a peer-support role.

Although the challenges experienced by individuals impacted by domestic violence in rural areas are well illustrated in published literature, models, strategies, and solutions to overcome these rural barriers have been given relatively little attention. Research focused on traditional Anabaptist groups is very limited, and often absent, due to the nature of their core traditions and beliefs.

### Implemented Models in Comparable Communities

Organization	Description
Guelph-Wellington Women in Crisis	Predictable, consistent rural outreach offices staffed by full-time rural support workers.
Public Health Wellington Dufferin Guelph	The Newcomers Group, originally an ESL group for Low German Speaking Mennonite individuals, with service provider guest presentations.
Family & Children's Services St. Thomas and Elgin	Formal abuse response protocol developed in collaboration with local Anabaptist church elders.
YWCA Peterborough Haliburton	Local rural safe space housing for women and children requiring shelter.
Healthy Families, Healthy Futures CAHR Community Action for Healthy Relationships	The Creating Change Treatment Program and the Working Together Program targeting male offenders and domestic violence in the workplace in rural Alberta.
Gillian's Place	iCarol, a text-support program for shelters.
NOV HOUSE INC.	Improving Shelter Services, a program designed to remove reasons women return to their partner.
Sagesse	Rural organizations are trained in the Peer Support Program to facilitate support groups in their local communities.

## Service Provider Consultation & Collaboration

Perth District Health Unit

Countryside Midwifery Services

Huron-Perth Children's Aid Society

North Perth and Area Ministerial Association

North Perth Public Library

O.P.P. North Perth Family Health Team – Helping you to health yourself

Perth Care for Kids – Lead agency for Perth-Middlesex Early Years Program

CASE – Community-based Alternative Secondary Education The Centre for Employment & Learning

Ontario – Ministry of Community Safety & Correctional Services Probation & Parole

Listowel Wingham Hospitals Alliance –Enriching Life's Journey Together Choices for Change

Huron-Perth – strengthening individuals & families since 1977

## Collaborative Implementation

When rural women are not talking to formal domestic violence services, they are talking to someone. This is often a trusted member of the community such as teachers, pastors, nurses, librarians, co-workers, hairstylists, etc. How can we reach that trusted community member, collaborate in our service delivery, and ensure women are receiving a supportive, safe, informed response? In collaboration with both formal and informal North Perth service providers, various strategies have been implemented.

IMAGE – Business card: North Perth Resources Centre for Women – Optimism Place

IMAGE – Brochure: Domestic Violence: It Can Happen in Every Congregation

How do spiritual care providers begin to offer reassurance and hope?

- By being good listeners
- By being sensitive and patient
- By validating that everyone deserves to be safe
- By letting those at risk know help is available
- By being aware of and referring to appropriate resources

IMAGE – Logo: Make It Our Business –We all have a role to play in addressing Workplace Domestic Violence

IMAGE – Logo: Cut it Out –Salons Against Domestic Abuse –Neighbours Friends &

## Families

### Service User Consultation & Preliminary Outcomes

Qualitative research methods were utilized for participant recruitment and data collection. Through **purposive sampling** techniques, a **homogenous sample** was gathered. All participants are women that have experienced abuse within the North Perth area. **Key informant interviews** were selected as the method of data collection due to the sensitive topic being discussed and narrow **sampling frame**, leading to a lack of anonymity. **Semi-structured interviews** occurred in a one-on-one, confidential, safe environment that was selected by the participant.

### To recruit key informants:

- Past and present clients of Optimism Place
- Contact with collaborative service providers
- Approximately 90 posters displayed in and around North Perth
- Social media page developed and shared by local service providers

### Themes:

- All women had exited the relationship
- Few services were accessed prior to leaving the relationship
- Professional women had experienced additional barriers when accessing services
- Mixed outcomes regarding the benefits and challenges of experiencing abuse in a rural community

### IMAGE - Time of Service Access Pie Chart

- Before Separation 18%
- During Separation 10%
- After Separation 72%

### Effective Models of Service Delivery for North Perth Bar Graph

Model	Total Value of Rankings
Local Groups & Workshops	29
Local Safe-Space Housing	41
Full-time Outreach Worker	43
24 Hour Texting Support	28
Videoconferencing Technology	27
Hub Model	44
Network-Oriented Approach	39

*“[Being in an urban city] is absolutely different because you have that anonymity ... [in a rural community] there’s still that stigma, everyone knows everything”*

*“I felt like everybody in [the organization] knew my situation, was always thinking about me ... everybody was really invested because it is small, I wasn’t a number, I was a person ... does that happen in urban settings where you have bigger organizations?”*

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