

## **Developing the capacity of Niagara Region Public Health Nurses to understand and effectively identify abuse of women along with the promotion of healthy relationships**

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Woman abuse is an insidious, prevalent and pervasive global health problem impacting on the growth and development of children, on the social determinants of health of families, on the development of chronic diseases and incidences of injuries and death. Woman abuse is a form of emotional, economic, environmental, sexual, spiritual and physical violence experienced in intimate, kinship or dependent relationships that is characterized by power and control tactics and greatly affects maternal and infant mental health. In 2008, the Niagara region spent \$71 million on medical, legal and lost productivity costs and an estimated \$5.2 million on Social Services costs related to domestic violence (Statistics Canada, 2005; Ministry of Community and Social Services, 2006).

Niagara Region is a Registered Nurses of Ontario (RNAO) Best Practice Spotlight Organization and has demonstrated the implementation of evidence based best practices while maintaining organizational excellence. Niagara Region Family Health Division has supported this RNAO leadership fellowship on woman abuse as it aligns with the Ontario Public Health Standards, enhances this fellow's knowledge capacity and it will improve operational processes and systems that impact on our population's health.

This Advanced Clinical Practice Fellowship (ACPF) Part One's primary objective was to develop the capacity of Niagara Region Public Health Nurses, Family Home Visitors, Health Promoters and Developmental Therapists in the Healthy Babies/Healthy Children Child Health (HBHC/CH) teams to understand and effectively identify abuse of women. This objective is complementary to Niagara Region Public Health's Strategic Direction: Be accountable to Niagara residents; enable community health by promoting/or providing pathways to programs and services; people first and strengthening public health practice through collaboration and partnerships (Niagara Region Public Health, 2012).

The implementation of woman abuse education, practice guidelines and resources will coincide with the Niagara Region Public Health's Strategic Plan: Community mental health; conditions that support healthy lifestyles; access to health information. This fellow completed a thorough literature and best practices review and the following ACPF learning objectives:

- a. Increase knowledge of best practices in woman abuse education for public health nurses
- b. Increase knowledge of policy, procedure and guideline formation
- c. Increase and enhance the facilitation skills required for planning educational programming
- d. Increase knowledge and application of adult learning best practices

The Niagara Region Family Health's Woman Abuse Identification and Response Practice Guideline is primarily based on the Registered Nurses of Ontario (RNAO) Nursing Best Practice Guideline, Woman Abuse: Screening, Identification and Initial response (2005) as well as the RNAO Woman Abuse Guidelines Supplement (2012) and incorporated excellent applicable best practices from Toronto Public Health, Middlesex-London Health Unit and the Thunder Bay District Health Unit. The

Centre for Research & Education on Violence against Women and Children (CREVAWC) in the Faculty of Education at the University of Western Ontario also provided a plethora of practical, innovative and relevant resources, networks and information.

Woman Abuse Education Day in December 2013 will improve staff's awareness of domestic violence core competencies as well as strengthen Public Health practice through collaboration during the community partners' panel discussion. The Niagara Region Domestic Violence Report Card researcher will enlighten staff about the local picture of domestic violence as it impacts families in the Niagara Region. Thorough initial and ongoing training in woman abuse as well as institutional support, guidelines and resources will ensure Niagara Region Public Health's commitment to health protection, disease prevention, health promotion and injury prevention.