



## **SOLUTIONS MANAGEMENT**

### **A Tool for Coordination Initiatives on Violence Against Women**

**June, 2010**

Document also available at [www.endingviolence.org](http://www.endingviolence.org)

- ◆ click on Community Coordination For Women's Safety
- ◆ select "Documents - Coordination Resources"

The ideas that form the foundation of this model have been percolated through 20 years in the anti-violence movement. The Community Coordination for Women's Safety Project has brought together the expertise of many individuals and organizations in creating the Solutions Management tool. These include the London Coordination Committee to End Woman Abuse, the Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children (METRAC), the Duluth Domestic Abuse Intervention Project, the Victoria Violence Against Women in Relationships Coordination Committee, coordination initiatives across British Columbia, Victim Services Division of the BC Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General and the BC Association of Specialized Victim Assistance and Counselling Programs.

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#### **Managing Partner**

The Ending Violence Association of British Columbia (EVA BC)

#### **Funding Partners**

Law Foundation of BC - Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General

**Solutions Management** refers to a model for working at the local level to identify, analyze, and resolve issues<sup>1</sup> that impact the safety of women experiencing violence. The model also provides a way to identify and track issues that require action at a regional, provincial, federal or other level. In British Columbia the model has evolved over the last 15 years through the work of coordination initiatives on violence against women, in conjunction with BC's Victim Services Division, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General.<sup>2</sup>

In 1989, a number of coordination initiatives on violence against women were developed in communities across the province. They included representatives from community and police based victim services, transition houses, women's centres, police, Crown, Corrections, and other relevant players. Victim Services Division provided core funding to 6 coordination initiatives with the intent to improve implementation of the Wife Assault Policy (now the Violence Against Women In Relationships Policy). Victim Services Division, along with the Ministry of Women's Equality, also supported approximately 50 communities across BC with grants for projects such as protocol development. Models for coordination initiated by these communities were varied and included:

- ◆ case tracking,
- ◆ prevention and public awareness, and
- ◆ issues analysis.

The **Solutions Management** model has its origins in the early 1990s **Issues Analysis** work of the Vancouver Coordination Committee. This work involved:

- ◆ developing what the committee called a “Model of Current Practice” (a process that looked at the flow of a case from first response through court disposition),
- ◆ identifying gaps and barriers that impact the safety of women experiencing violence,
- ◆ categorizing gaps and barriers by sector and theme, and
- ◆ developing best practice solutions.

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<sup>1</sup> “Issues” refers to barriers created by policies, procedures or practice of response systems such as community agencies, police, Crown, corrections, MHR, MCFD, Citizenship and Immigration, etc.

<sup>2</sup> Victim Services Division was part of the Ministry of Attorney General until 2002.

This model for inter-disciplinary group analysis served to shift the focus of discussion and critical analysis from the practice of individual responders to institutional actions and processes.<sup>3</sup> This required a committee-building process that involved:

- ◆ exploring assumptions/increasing understanding of violence against women,
- ◆ developing a mission statement,
- ◆ analyzing from within a context of oppression,
- ◆ analyzing through the lens of women’s experience of violence,
- ◆ making roles and responsibilities transparent,
- ◆ making power differences amongst partners transparent,
- ◆ developing group norms,
- ◆ reaching agreement on decision-making process (e.g. consensus),
- ◆ promoting cross-disciplinary training,
- ◆ recommending issue-specific agreements, and
- ◆ monitoring implementation.

The resulting trust among Vancouver Coordination Committee members allowed for a simplified, ongoing practice of issues analysis. The concepts and tools were then shared and adapted by many coordination initiatives across the province.

In 2000, Victim Services Division expanded and adapted the Issues Analysis process, which they named “Solutions Management”, into a detailed guide and tracking tool. The guide and tracking tool provided concrete steps for identifying, analyzing, and resolving issues at the local level. It also provided a way to identify and track issues that required action at a regional, provincial, federal or other level. The guide and tracking tool were piloted by many coordination initiatives. These communities provided practical, hands on feedback regarding what worked and what needed to be modified. This current Solutions Management model is a further adaptation.

There are a number of ways issues can be identified and analyzed by coordination initiatives. Each coordination initiative will choose the method or combination of methods that will work best for them. This package contains an exercise to assist coordination initiatives to identify, analyze and take action on issues, and a chart that could be used as an overhead to facilitate discussion. It also contains a blank log for coordination initiatives to use in their tracking and analysis of issues.

Other Solutions Management information and tools are available from CCWS Project Staff or on our website profile at [www.endingviolence.org](http://www.endingviolence.org) (click on our name and select “Documents - Coordination Resources”). This includes individual copies of the solutions management exercise, chart and blank log contained in this package. It also includes the Victim Services Division document “Solutions Management: Moving Coordination Forward,” also available from Victim Services Division.

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<sup>3</sup> This is based on Institutional Ethnography theory and the work of Dr. Dorothy Smith and Dr. Ellen Pence.

## MOVING ISSUES FORWARD

***Community Coordination for Women's Safety would like to know what issues your coordination initiative is working on. Please forward a copy of your Solutions Management Tracking Log or other coordination initiative records to Gisela Ruebsaat, Issues Analyst for CCWS***

- ◆ Ph: (250) 592-3073
- ◆ [gisela2@horizon.bc.ca](mailto:gisela2@horizon.bc.ca)

Our goals in tracking these issues are to:

- ◆ Develop a process and tools for local coordination initiatives to address issues directly with relevant government ministries or other responsible bodies,
- ◆ Develop and distribute in-depth analysis of some of the issues identified as priorities,
- ◆ Encourage action on the priority issues at the appropriate levels (this may mean assisting your coordination initiative to identify the appropriate person or body to contact), and
- ◆ Connect communities with other provincial organizations, community development projects or individual communities working on similar issues.

Information on the issues we track will also be shared with members of the Community Coordination for Women's Safety Working Group. This includes: The Ending Violence Association of BC (EVA BC), RCMP E Division, The BC Chiefs of Police, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General (MPSSG); Community Corrections Division, MPSSG, Ministry of Attorney General, Criminal Justice Branch, Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport, Ministry of Children and Family Development, Legal Services Society, The Ending Relationship Abuse Society of BC, Members representing First Nations women, Members representing Immigrant and Non-status women from MOSAIC and The Vancouver and Lower Mainland Family Support Services, Member representing women with disabilities from Pacific DisAbled Women's Network; The Justice Institute of BC and members of the criminal and civil bar.

## SOLUTIONS MANAGEMENT EXERCISE

### Overview of Exercise:

This exercise will assist coordination initiatives to create a plan of action to address issues identified by using the Solutions Management Model. At each stage in the process, your initiative is asked to discuss the suggested questions, allowing each member to offer the perspective and insight of their discipline. At the Visioning for Change stage in the process, you will have each member of your group offer a suggestion for a “best practice” solution. The object of the exercise is to come to consensus on a vision for a “best practice” based on the full discussion in which each participant’s experience is heard and incorporated into the solution, and then to go on and develop a plan of action to reach that goal.

### WHAT IS AN « ISSUE » ?

An “issue” is a point of concern that is in contradiction to a defined best practice guideline or policy. Issues identified in coordination initiatives should be those that are “systemic” in that they affect many women and are not just “case specific”.

When we work in collaboration to identify current issues impacting safety for victims of sexual assault and violence in relationships it is important for us to be aware of the benchmarks which define best practice.

For instance, some of the benchmarks we are most familiar with include:

1. The RCMP “E” Division Violence in Relationships policy including:
  - a. Primary Aggressor
  - b. Victim referral
2. MCFD mandatory reporting of children at risk of violence
  - a. Best Practices Approaches~ Child Protection and Violence Against Women
3. The BC Provincial VAWIR Policy (Violence Against Women in Relationships)

Some other benchmarks, not always thought of, but just as important in terms of our accountability to women’s safety, include:

1. Local protocols and agreements
2. Ground rules, group norms
3. A collaborative understanding of “safety”

One of the most important benchmarks created by coordination initiatives will be a collective understanding of the meaning of “women’s safety”. This understanding will come from the cross-sector dialogue of the group’s analysis of issues. We must bring these issues to the table in order to begin to understand what we mean by “safety” in the varying contexts of women’s experiences.

Issues are the fertilizer for the work of coordination. Without transparency about practices that have the potential to endanger a woman and her children, the seeds of our work won't grow; our efforts to create change and enhance safety will die on the vine. "Issues", while appearing to be the bad smelly stuff, are actually the nutrients we need to do our work of increasing safety for victims.

When identifying issues in your community response, remember the benchmarks that are guiding your practice, make them transparent in your group. The issues that arise from your understanding of these best practices will enrich the group's understanding of safety and encourage and foster a learning environment that will benefit everyone in the group and improve the quality of your product: safety for women.

#### STEP 1 : IDENTIFY AND PRIORITIZE ISSUES

1. Distribute post-it notes and 6 data dots to each person. Ask each person to:

- identify one issue\* that they experience in their work that could be addressed through coordination and
- write down their issue on a post-it note.

*\* Some examples of issues: gaps in services, duplication of services, incomplete or inaccurate implementation of policy best practices*

2. Ask each person to read what their issue is (no discussion)

3. As the issues are read, collect the post-it notes and transcribe to flipchart. If there are overlaps/repetitions, include all related post-it notes on that flipchart paper. Cluster the issues where they are similar

4. Call all of the participants up to the front and ask them to vote for their three top priorities using the data dots: Three data dots for their top priority, two data dots for their second priority and one data dot for their third priority.

5. Count the results and circle the five top items. All of the issues will be addressed by the committee, these are the priorities.

6. Divide the group into three small sub-groups

7. Give each group one issue of the top five and proceed with the next steps

At each stage in the following process, discuss the suggested questions allowing each member to offer the perspective and insight of their discipline.

## Step 2: Analyze the issue

With regard to your issue consider the following questions in your discussions:

- What are the practical problems that impede victim safety/offender accountability?
- Does the issue have to do with lack of policy, policy implementation, administrative process, flow of information, form, etc.?
- Does the issue have to do with the level of understanding about the dynamics of sexual assault and violence in relationships?
- Is the issue related to referral processes?
- Who needs to be involved in addressing this issue?
- Does the problem represent a need for action/response at a Provincial or Ministry level?

## Step 3: Vision for change

What is the best possible solution? At the Visioning for Change stage in the process have each member of your group offer a suggestion for a “best practice” solution.

In this exercise “best practice” is synonymous with the solution that creates the most safety for an assaulted woman. The discussion focus may be on offender accountability, but the analysis and outcome must always be from the point of view of victim safety. Notice in your discussions how our definitions of “safety” vary.

The object of the exercise is to come to consensus on a vision for a “best practice” based on the full discussion in which each participant’s experience is heard and incorporated into the solution, and then to go on and develop a plan of action to reach that goal.

## Step 4: Develop a plan

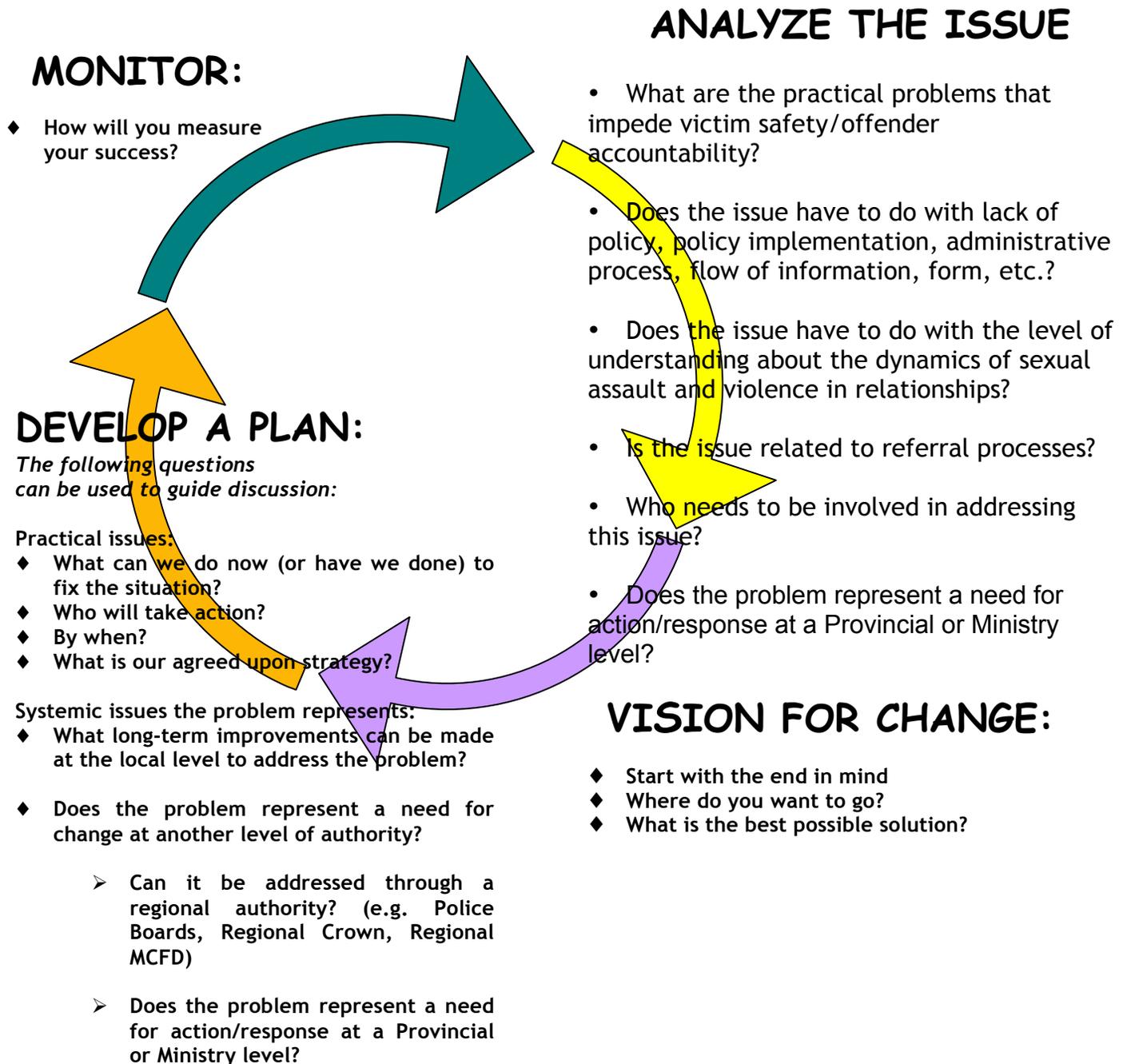
*The following questions can be used to guide discussion:*

- Practical issues: what can we do now (or have we done) to fix the situation, who will take action, by when, what is the agreed upon strategy?
- Systemic issues the problem represents: what long-term improvements can be made at the local level to address the problem?
- Does the problem represent a need for change at another level of authority? Can it be addressed through a regional authority? e.g. Police Boards, Regional Crown, Regional MCF.
- Does the problem represent a need for action/response at a Provincial or Ministry level?

## Step 5: Monitor

- How will we measure our success?
- How will we know when we had improved
  - It will be useful to determine at the outset what you will look for to determine your successes. You will want to evaluate your progress, and possibly make adjustments along the way. Don't be discouraged if you must revisit your original problem several times before achieving the level of success you had envisioned. A process of monitoring and evaluation is crucial to a substantial change process and may require ongoing work to overcome challenges and obstacles.

# SOLUTIONS MANAGEMENT - CYCLE



**Solutions Management Tracking Log - Section 1**  
**FOR COORDINATION INITIATIVES ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

Date	Issue Identified	Agency/ Ministry Involved	Recommended Action	Member Responsible for Action	By Date	Date/Action Taken/ Resolution
Jan 15, 2002	Specialized Victim Assistance Program (SVAP) Worker accompanied a resident to a meeting with the Employment and Assistance Worker and was told there was a 3-week waiting period for assistance. <i>NOTE: This sample issue is provided as an example of how to fill out the log.</i>	Ministry of Human Resources (MHR), SVAP	Connect with MHR Supervisor, inquire about policy and possible exceptions for women experiencing violence, invite MHR to participate in coordination initiative.	SVAP Worker	Jan 22, 2002	Jan 21, 2002 Connected with MHR supervisor, who is unaware of any exceptions. Committed to attend next meeting and bring the current MHR Policy. <b>REQUIRES ACTION BEYOND THE LOCAL LEVEL</b> Contacted BCASVACP and BC/Yukon Society of Transition Houses to inform them of systemic program. Filled out log and sent to CCWS.

SAMPLE

*If the issue is resolved locally, fill out this Section only. Use Section 2 if the issue is unresolved and/or requires follow-up beyond the local level.*

**Solutions Management Tracking Log - Section 2**  
**FOR COORDINATION INITIATIVES ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

Issue for Action Beyond the Local Level	Date/Current Status	Actions and Person or Body Responsible/By Date	Contact with Relevant Provincial Organization or other body (if any)	Outcomes
MHR Policy regarding 3-week wait for Employment and Assistance creates impediment to women's safety, as women may not leave abusive relationships without financial support.	Feb 19, 2002/ MHR supervisor attended meeting, brought the current MHR Policy, and participated in a discussion regarding the increased risk to women's safety created by the waiting period. <b>REQUIRES ACTION BEYOND THE LOCAL LEVEL</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ MHR supervisor to follow up with MHR Policy Branch.</li> <li>◆ SVAP worker to follow up with BC Association of Specialized Victim Assistance and Counselling Programs (BCASVACP).</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;">/By March 5, 2002</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ MHR Policy Branch</li> <li>◆ BCASVACP</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ MHR Policy Branch advised that the 3 week waiting period is waived for women in Transition Houses and Safe Homes and an emergency assessment is called for the women not in residential setting, sent copy of Practice Advisory that was sent to all MHR staff across the province.</li> <li>◆ BCASVACP advised that they are working with the BCYSTH to ensure that all front line anti-violence workers and all MHR staff are aware of this new practice advisory. Regional teleconference calls are in the process of being set up.</li> </ul>
<b>SAMPLE</b>				



