

Findings from March 2015 Canvass of CWWA Service Agencies

Addressing the linkages between exposure to
Violence Against Women and experiences with bullying

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Survey conducted and analyzed by

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The BC Society of Transition Houses (BCSTH) and the Ministry of Justice jointly selected the following topic as an important area of mutual interest to explore with Children Who Witness Abuse (CWWA) programs: the relationship between witnessing abuse and bullying/acting out behaviours.

There are well-established connections between children and youth's exposure to Violence Against Women (VAW) and their experiences with bullying. The objective of canvassing service agencies was to better understand how CWWA and Violence is Preventable (VIP) programs are positioned to address these linkages. Conducted in March 2015, an online survey (Appendix A) was distributed to all CWWA service agencies across BC. Information was gathered from programs with the intention of providing feedback to all respondents for the purposes of better understanding the successes and challenges faced by other communities.

Of 86 programs, a total of 28 completed responses were received through fluidsurvey. This was an impressive response rate (33%) considering the immense responsibilities that program staff manage with limited resources.

“JUST A QUICK NOTE TO SAY THAT I AM SO HAPPY THIS RESEARCH IS HAPPENING! I SEE SUCH A STRONG CONNECTION BETWEEN DV AND BULLYING AND REALLY THINK THERE NEEDS TO BE MORE RESEARCH TO ILLUMINATE THE PREVENTATIVE FACTORS.... THANKS FOR THE GREAT WORK.” –CWWA COUNSELLOR

SCOPE & MAGNITUDE OF THE ISSUE

Most survey respondents reported that they frequently see bullying behaviours in their CWWA clients (often = 55.6%; sometimes = 40.7%). As illustrated in Table 1, the most common behaviours, from the perspective of service providers, in order of frequency were found to be (1) verbal bullying, (2) relational bullying, (3) physical bullying, (4) cyberbullying, (5) threats of bullying, and (6) bullying based in ability. For reasons not elucidated by this initial canvass, other manifestations,

**“A YOUNG BOY THAT WITNESSED HIS FATHER ABUSING HIS MOTHER AND EXPERIENCED SPIRITUAL ABUSE HIMSELF BY HIS FATHER ADMITTED TO CYBER BULLYING OTHERS BECAUSE IT MADE HIM FEEL BETTER TO NOT BE THE ONE HURTING.”
–CWWA COUNSELLOR**

“IN...THIS CASE A 5 YEAR OLD BOY (WHOSE FATHER WAS ABUSIVE, AND FREQUENTLY HURT THEIR MOTHER) WAS A HAZARD TO HIS YOUNGER BROTHER AS HE HIT, KICKED AND HURT HIM FREQUENTLY. THE BOY ADMITTED TO ME THAT HE DID IT TO TOUGHEN HIS LITTLE BROTHER UP, BECAUSE THE WORLD IS NOT A SAFE PLACE FOR A WEAK, LITTLE, SOFT BOY WHO IS 4 YEARS OLD.” –CWWA COUNSELLOR

such as bullying based on cultural differences, bullying of a sexualized nature, and bullying based on gender identity and/or sexual orientation, were not indicated as high frequency issues. This finding does not suggest that these issues are not seriously problematic nor perhaps indeed pervasive in the lives of CWWA clients.

Table 1. Survey responses to Q5: What do these behaviours look like?

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Don't Know
Physical bullying (hitting, slapping, grabbing, pushing, biting, kicking, etc)	0.0%	33.3%	55.6%	11.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Relational bullying (excluding, rumour spreading, etc)	0.0%	40.7%	48.1%	7.4%	0.0%	3.7%
Verbal bullying (name calling, swearing, yelling, insulting, etc)	0.0%	55.6%	40.7%	3.7%	0.0%	0.0%
Cyberbullying (bullying that occurs electronically)	0.0%	29.6%	44.4%	14.8%	3.7%	7.4%
Threats of bullying	0.0%	22.2%	40.7%	7.4%	7.4%	22.2%
Bullying of a sexualized nature	0.0%	7.4%	25.9%	37.0%	7.4%	22.2%
Bullying based on cultural differences (eg. race, ethnicity, Aboriginality, language, religion)	0.0%	11.1%	33.3%	22.2%	7.4%	25.9%
Bullying based on gender identity and/or sexual orientation	0.0%	14.8%	25.9%	25.9%	11.1%	22.2%
Bullying based on ability	0.0%	22.2%	33.3%	18.5%	7.4%	18.5%

- **“CHILDREN MAY SEE THE NEED TO BE TOUGH THEMSELVES IN ORDER TO BE ABLE TO TAKE ON THEIR MOTHER'S ABUSERS EVEN AT THE AGE OF 3 OR 4 AND FEEL LOW SELF ESTEEM DUE TO THEIR HELPLESSNESS.” –CWWA COUNSELLOR**
- **“A GRADE 6 GIRL WHO BRINGS VULNERABLE GIRLS TO TEARS WITH HER PUT DOWNS. THE GIRL HAS WITNESSED ABUSE BY DAD OF HIS GIRLFRIEND, HAS A NON-CUSTODIAL MOTHER WITH ADDICTION ISSUES WHO LIVES OUT OF PROVINCE, AND LIVES WITH HER CUSTODIAL GRANDMOTHER. SHE ALSO TREATS HER GRANDMOTHER BADLY BY BEING RUDE AND DISRESPECTFUL IN PUBLIC....” –CWWA COUNSELLOR**
- **“I WORK WITH A YOUNG BOY WHO SEES HIS DAD VERBALLY PUT DOWN HIS MOM AND IS LEARNING FROM DAD THAT THIS IS HOW MEN TREAT WOMEN. THIS YOUNG BOY IS ONLY 6 AND HE IS VERY DISRESPECTFUL TO HIS MOM, HE DOESN'T LISTEN TO HER, ONLY LISTENS TO DAD. TREATS HER HOW HE SEES HIS DAD TREAT HER AND SAYS THINGS THAT HE HAS HEARD.” –CWWA COUNSELLOR**
- **“ONE OF OUR CURRENT GROUP PARTICIPANTS, 10 YR OLD GIRL, IS BULLIED BY HER OLDER STEP BROTHER DURING THE OCCASIONAL WEEKENDS THAT SHE SPENDS WITH HER BIRTH PARENTS[. S]HE TALKS ABOUT HOW THIS LEAVES HER FEELING ANGRY AND UPSET WHEN SHE RETURNS TO GRANDMAS WHERE SHE LIVES**

FULL TIME. HER YOUNGER COUSIN, 6YR BOY, ALSO IN A CURRENT CWWA [PROGRAM] WITH US[,] TALKS IN HIS SESSIONS ABOUT HOW HE IN TURN IS BULLIED BY HIS 10 YR OLD COUSIN AT GRANDMAS HOUSE, WHERE HE ALSO RESIDES.” –CWWA COUNSELLOR

- “CLIENT USED INTERNET TO GAIN CONTROL OVER ANOTHER YOUTH. SHE POSED AS ANOTHER PERSON, AND TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THE POWER IMBALANCE TO GAIN INFORMATION.” –CWWA COUNSELLOR
- “I STARTED SEEING A...10 YEAR OLD GIRL WHO TOLD A STORY ABOUT HOW HER FRIENDS TALKED ABOUT HER BEHIND HER BACK AND EXCLUDED HER IN CERTAIN ACTIVITIES. THEN I STARTED SEEING ANOTHER YOUNG GIRL WHO TALKED ABOUT A FRIEND THAT WAS REALLY "WEIRD" AND SHE WASN'T SURE HOW TO PLAY WITH HER. IT TURNED OUT THAT THESE TWO GIRLS WERE FROM THE SAME CIRCLE OF FRIENDS AND WERE ACTUALLY TALKING ABOUT ONE ANOTHER. BOTH GIRLS WITNESSED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AT HOME AND HAD NO IDEA THAT THE OTHER ONE EXPERIENCED THE SAME THING[;] IF THEY HAD KNOWN THAT ABOUT ONE ANOTHER MAYBE THEY COULD HAVE BEEN REALLY CLOSE FRIENDS BUT INSTEAD I SAW BOTH SIDES OF THE BULLYING SPECTRUM FROM VICTIM AND PERPETRATOR.” –CWWA COUNSELLOR
- “CHILD WHO WAS SUSPENDED FROM SCHOOL DUE TO BULLYING BEHAVIOUR WAS A VICTIM OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, BY WITNESSING HIS FATHER BEING PHYSICAL WITH THE MOTHER AND ALSO EXPERIENCING VIOLENCE HIMSELF. THERE WERE OTHER MOTHER'S BOYFRIENDS WHO MODELED THIS BEHAVIOUR.” –CWWA COUNSELLOR

Survey responses suggest that children and youth attending CWWA programs are victims of bullying on a frequent basis (often = 59.3%; sometimes = 40.7%). Many clients are also seen to be playing the role of perpetrator (often = 37%; sometimes = 48.1%). To add to the complexity of the issue, one respondent added that he/she sometimes learns of an abused parent bullied by a child or a child bullied by an abuser. It is also interesting to note that young people are regularly finding themselves in the role of bystander (often = 44.4%; sometimes = 40.7%).

We asked service providers, “What does bullying mean to you within the context of CWWA and VIP programming?”

- “IT IS CONTROL ISSUE. IF A CHILD IS IN A VIOLENT HOME, THEN THEY HAVE NO CONTROL, THE ONE PLACE THEY MIGHT FEEL LIKE THEY GAIN SOME KIND OF CONTROL COULD BE ON THE PLAYGROUND AT SCHOOL OR WITH THEIR SIBLINGS.”
- “BULLYING IS A SYMPTOM....”
- “I SEE THAT SOME CLIENTS BULLY AS A COPING STRATEGY WITH WHAT HAS HAPPENED IN THEIR LIFE. I SEE THAT SOME CLIENTS ARE BULLIED BECAUSE OF THINGS THAT HAVE HAPPENED IN THEIR LIFE AND THEY DON'T KNOW HOW TO STAND UP OR COPE WITH IT SO THEY THEN DO NOTHING IN RETURN. I SEE THAT

SOME KIDS HAVE LOW SELF-ESTEEM SO THEY ALLOW FOR PEOPLE TO PUSH THEM AROUND BECAUSE THEN AT LEAST THEY ARE BEING LOOKED AT AND AREN'T INVISIBLE."

- "IN THE CASE OF MANY CLIENTS, THERE IS A CLEAR CORRELATION BETWEEN THE AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR OF THE CHILD (CLIENT) AND THAT OF A CAREGIVER, WHICH I EXAMINE WITH THE CLIENT."
- "IT'S A NEW NAME FOR BEHAVIOURS THE PROGRAM HAS LONG SOUGHT TO ERADICATE."
- "TO ME BULLYING MEANS THAT KIDS ARE LEARNING THEIR BEHAVIOURS AT HOME. THEY LEARN THAT SCREAMING, PUT DOWNS, NAME CALLING IS A WAY OF GETTING THEIR WAY."
- "...BULLYING IS LINKED TO OUR WORK BECAUSE IT OFTEN INVOLVES A POWER/CONTROL DYNAMIC SIMILAR TO ABUSE, AND IS OFTEN VIOLENT IN NATURE (PHYSICALLY, EMOTIONALLY, SOCIALLY, ETC). I BELIEVE IT CAN REINFORCE CERTAIN BEHAVIORS OR DYNAMICS IF NOT ADDRESSED WELL, THAT MAY HAVE LONG-TERM CONSEQUENCES INCLUDING ADULT RELATIONS."
- "SOME OF MY CLIENTS ARE VICTIMS AND DO NOT KNOW HOW TO STAND UP FOR THEMSELVES. THEY DO NOT KNOW HOW TO SAFELY BE ASSERTIVE."
- "IT IS A BROAD TERM THAT ENCOMPASSES MANY DIFFERENT FORMS AND THE RESULT OF MANY FACTORS INCLUDING WITNESSING ABUSE, NEGLECT, BEING ABUSED, AND OFTEN NOT KNOWING HOW TO RELATE TO OTHERS IN POSITIVE AND HEALTHY WAYS. IT INTERSECTS WITH [ATTACHMENT] RELATIONSHIPS AND OFTEN NOT HAVING NEEDS/WANTS MET IN WAYS THAT PROVIDE SAFETY, CARING, AND NURTURE. THE DEFINITION IS FLUID AND EVOLVES BASED ON INFORMATION AND EXPERIENCES REPORTED."

BCSTH has heard from the sector that bullying was not always being addressed by schools and communities using an intersectional feminist lens, despite the benefits of including a broader analysis to contextualize these behaviours. Survey respondents indicated that adults in their local community rarely (42.3%) or only sometimes (42.3%) consider children's family context or home environment when responding to bullying behaviours.

- "I WORK WITH A YOUNG WOMAN WHOSE PARENTS HAVE SEPARATED. THERE IS STILL A LOT OF FIGHTING.... THE PARENTS['] RELATIONSHIP WAS AND IS VIOLENT, BOTH VERBALLY AND PHYSICALLY. THIS YOUNG WOMAN IS DEPRESSED...AND IS SUICIDAL. [...] SHE HAS BEEN RELENTLESSLY BULLIED AT SCHOOL AROUND THOSE THINGS, MOST OFTEN IN THE FORM OF RUMORS AND EXCLUSION. MOST RECENTLY THERE WAS A SITUATION WITH HER EX BOYFRIEND.... HE WENT TO SCHOOL AND TOLD FRIENDS THAT SHE IS "CRAZY" THAT "SHE SHOULD JUST KILL HERSELF" AND THAT HE "WOULDN'T CARE IF SHE WAS DEAD." THIS GOT BACK TO THE YOUNG WOMAN AND SHE CONFRONTED HIM IN A CLASSROOM. DURING THE COURSE OF THEIR ARGUMENT SHE ENDED UP PUNCHING HIM IN THE JAW. HE LEFT THE CLASS SWEARING LOUDLY AND PUNCHED A LOCKER SEVERAL TIMES, DAMAGING THE LOCKER. MY CLIENT WAS SUSPENDED FOR A WEEK.

THE YOUNG MAN WAS "TOLD TO STAY AWAY FROM HER BECAUSE SHE CAN'T CONTROL HERSELF" (THIS WAS A DIRECT QUOTE TO ME BY THE EDUCATOR HANDLING THE SITUATION). –CWWA COUNSELLOR

- “WE HAD A CHILD (11 F) WHO ATTENDED A PRIVATE SCHOOL... WHEN HER PARENTS SEPARATED DUE TO DAD'S ABUSE OF MOM, DAD AND HIS PARENTS WHO WERE SUPPORTERS AND CONTRIBUTORS TO THE SCHOOL, BEGAN SPREADING RUMOURS THAT MOM WAS EMOTIONALLY UNSTABLE. THIS IS WHEN THE BULLYING STARTED. THIS GIRL BEGAN EXPERIENCING ALIENATION BY THE GIRLS, NAME CALLING, "YOU'RE CRAZY LIKE YOUR MOM," "NO ONE LIKES YOU, DO US A FAVOUR AND DIE," "YOU'RE A WASTE OF SPACE".... THE SITUATION SOON BECAME TARGETED, SHE HAD THINGS THROWN AT HER IN CLASS, IN THE HALLS AND ON THE PLAYGROUND. SOME OF HER SCHOOL WORK WAS DESTROYED. SHE FOUND VAGUELY THREATENING NOTES IN HER DESK. SHE WAS JABBED WITH A PAIR OF SCISSORS IN CLASS TO WHICH THE TEACHER SAID HE "DIDN'T SEE IT SO IT DIDN'T HAPPEN." ANY OF HER ATTEMPTS TO TALK TO TEACHERS OR HER MOTHER'S ATTEMPTS TO DISCUSS IT WITH THE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION WERE MET WITH "I'M SURE IT ISN'T THAT BAD," "PERHAPS SHE IS UPSET BECAUSE YOU LEFT HER FATHER AND ACCUSED HIM OF ABUSE," VICTIM BLAMING! AARG! AFTER THE FIRST FEW REPORTED INSTANCES THE BULLYING ONLY GOT WORSE FOR HER. TO THE POINT HER MOM WOULD PARK IN THE PARKING LOT AT LUNCH TIME SO HER DAUGHTER COULD COME AND SIT IN THE CAR AND HAVE LUNCH WITH MOM. THE SCHOOL DENIED THERE WAS BULLYING HAPPENING AND EXPLAINED TO MOM THEY HAD A VERY STRICT NO BULLYING POLICY AND BULLIES ARE DEALT WITH. THE FOLLOWING YEAR THIS GIRL HAD GIVEN UP AND ALIGNED HERSELF WITH HER FATHER AND GRANDPARENTS[;] SHE BEGAN AGREEING AND TELLING OTHER CHILDREN THAT HER MOM WAS CRAZY AND HER EXPERIENCES LESSENERD.” –CWWA COUNSELLOR

COMMUNITY-BASED APPROACHES

While four survey respondents indicated that they have not yet worked to position their programs to address the linkages between witnessing abuse and experiences with bullying, many service agencies are utilizing psychoeducation and advocacy methods in CWWA and VIP programs around the province. The issue is generally being explored through four avenues:

1. Individual counselling sessions;
2. Group sessions, most commonly in school settings;
3. School presentations to students, parents/caregivers, and teachers; and
4. Dialogue with and support to parents, school staff, and other community members.

Here are some of the strategies that CWWA Counsellors and VIP Facilitators are using:

- Discuss power and control in adult abusive relationships, which often leads to children making the links to power and control tactics that bullies use in child and youth relationships;
- Enhance clients' skills and knowledge to manage emotions, reduce helplessness, increase self-esteem, explore alternative coping strategies, and relate to others without resorting to violence;

“CHILDREN AND YOUTH UNDERSTAND WHAT WE ARE SAYING AND WANT TO LIVE ABUSE FREE LIVES. ONCE THEY UNDERSTAND THEIR TRIGGERS WE CAN TEACH THEM HOW TO DEAL WITH THEM EFFECTIVELY.”

- Educate schools about students who are impacted by and responding to experiences of VAW;
- Focus on labeling the behaviours rather than labeling the person a bully by addressing language;
- Help children to understand how bullying may have been modeled by a caregiver;

“WE HAD A MALE CLIENT (14) WHO WOULD TALK ABOUT HOW MUCH HE HATED HIS DAD'S BEHAVIOUR OF INTIMIDATING AND NAME CALLING HIS MOM. MOM HAD ADVISED US THAT HE WAS BULLYING AT SCHOOL AND HIS SIBLINGS. [...] WHEN WE ASKED IF HE'D EVER DONE THOSE THINGS HE SAID NO, [BUT] HE ADMITTED TO TRYING TO CONTROL HIS SIBLINGS AND MAYBE HE MIGHT HAVE BEHAVED THAT WAY, BUT DIDN'T KNOW WHAT ELSE TO DO. WE DISCUSSED THAT HIS "ROLE MODEL" (DAD) BEHAVED THIS WAS AND HE NEEDED TO LEARN ANOTHER WAY.”

- Build empathy among young people for both victims and perpetrators of bullying, by increasing understanding of multiple perspectives in the context of witnessing VAW;
- Empower children to break the generational cycle of abuse;
- Participate actively in school-based case management and educational planning, bringing a CWWA lens to bullying and other behavioural issues;

“ONE OF MY CLIENTS HAVE RECENTLY BECOME A BULLY AS HER HOME SITUATION CHANGES ALL THE TIME. SHE HAS WITNESSED A LOT OF VERBAL ABUSE AT HOME AND SHE IS VERBALLY ABUSING HER CLASSMATES. SHE IS WORKING ON HER ANGER MANAGEMENT SKILLS. I AM HELPING HER TEACHER AND HER MOTHER UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT THAT VIOLENCE AT HOME HAVE ON KIDS.”

- Explain to children that witnessing abuse can send children a message that it is ok to be abusive;
- Talk about risk and protective factors for the multiple roles that children can play in bullying;
- Supply materials to school counsellors;
- Link the cycle of violence in VAW with the cycle of violence in bullying;

- Debrief and problem solve real-life and hypothetical bullying situations with children;

“THE VALIDATION OF THE VICTIM OF BULLYING AND TALKING ABOUT WAYS TO PROTECT THEMSELVES GOES A LONG WAY TO BRING HEALING INTO THEIR LIVES.”

- Get trained to facilitate RespectED Violence & Abuse Prevention programs;
- Cover the topic in a child-friendly, age-appropriate manner with each child attending a program;
- Examine the impacts of witnessing VAW, which can indirectly lead the conversation to bullying;
- Reinforce the importance of assertiveness on the playground;
- Frame bullying behaviours as a way that children and youth are trying to express themselves;

“I HAVE A PARTICULAR CLIENT WHO HAS BECOME VERY AGGRESSIVE, VERBALLY AND SOMETIMES PHYSICALLY. SHE HAS [ENDURED] A LOT OF CHANGES IN A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME. SHE HAS BEEN WORKING ON ANGER MANAGEMENT AND WE [DISCUSSED] BULLYING. SHE IS A VERY SMART LITTLE PERSON THAT NEEDS A LOT OF SUPPORT AND UNDERSTANDING. SHE FEELS BAD WHEN SHE BULLIES HER CLASSMATES AND SHE [IS] WORKING ON MAKING BETTER CHOICES EVERYDAY.”

- Outline how bullies can be invisible to adults if popular or responsible and challenge adults’ assessments of children’s social situations;

“AN EXAMPLE IS GRADE TEN BOYS NEEDING TO STEAL PARENTS MONEY OR CIGARETTES FOR FEAR OF BEING CALLED NAMES, TREATED BADLY OR BEATEN UP BY GRADE 12 BOYS.”

- Discuss healthy relationships and communication; and
- Make the comparison that what children call bullying is similar to what adults call abuse.

As programs have been positioning themselves to address the linkages between witnessing abuse and experiences with bullying, the following strengths and challenges of this perspective have arisen:

STRENGTHS

- Lends well to psychoeducational methods;
- Opens up an important conversation that would otherwise remain unaddressed;
- Teaches children and youth that it is not appropriate to use violence to handle situations;
- Underscores the severity of bullying issues;

- Leads to increased understanding, awareness, and compassion for children and youth impacted by VAW and bullying;
 - Helps adults recognize the relationship between children’s experiences and their behaviour;
 - Can result in disclosures and subsequent access to support services;
 - Normalizes feelings and experiences of both perpetrators and victims of bullying;
 - Allows young people to identify patterns of abuse and different types of violence;
 - Enhances interaction and discussion about these topics in classrooms;
 - Provides an opportunity for young people to explore root causes of bullying behaviours;
 - Bridges CWWA service agencies with schools and communities; and
 - Encourages adults in children’s lives to prevent and intervene more effectively.
- **“IT ENCOURAGES CHILDREN TO CRITICALLY EXAMINE THEIR OWN EXPERIENCES AND TO ENGAGE IN DISCUSSION ABOUT HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS AND THEY GAIN SKILLS TO COPE WITH THEIR CIRCUMSTANCES. CHILDREN SEEM TO DEVELOP GREATER EMPATHY FOR THEMSELVES AND THOSE WHO ENGAGE IN [BULLYING] TYPE ACTIONS.” –CWWA COUNSELLOR**
 - **“...THE SCHOOLS WILLINGNESS TO WORK WITH THE FAMILY CAN HELP BUILD THE CONFIDENCE OF THE PARENT IN THEIR ABILITY TO ADVOCATE FOR THE NEEDS OF THEMSELVES AND THEIR KIDS.” –CWWA COUNSELLOR**
 - **“I FIND THAT CHILDREN OFTEN HAVE A BETTER IDEA/UNDERSTANDING OF WHY PEOPLE BULLY...AND ARE MORE WILLING TO LOOK AT WAYS TO HELP END BULLYING BUT IN A WAY THAT DOESN'T SHAME THE BULLY.” –CWWA COUNSELLOR**
 - **“[IN CWWA GROUPS,] CHILDREN AND YOUTH ARE DISCOVERING THEY ARE NOT ALONE IN THEIR EXPERIENCES OF BEING BULLIED AND SOME FIND ALLIES.” –CWWA COUNSELLOR**

CHALLENGES

- Challenges biases and perspectives, which can be uncomfortable;
- Highlights the lack of information and awareness about the issue;
- Asks people to find compassion for those who bully;
- Is not always safe to address power discrepancies in a child’s life;
- Uses resources, which are limited (such as time in a session to cover topic, getting in to a school, extending a case when bullying surfaces, needing a group co-facilitator, managing waitlists);
- Elicits disclosures, which can pose a challenge for the person receiving the disclosure;

“THERE IS LITTLE TIME OR FUNDS AVAILABLE IN MY PROGRAM TO DO THIS ISSUE ANY SORT OF MEANINGFUL JUSTICE IN OUR COMMUNITY.” –CWWA COUNSELLOR

- Requires consistency across environments and re-teaching to reinforce messaging; and
- Deals with sensitive topics and potentially private information that need appropriate handling.
- **“HAVING SCHOOLS' POLICIES AND PROTOCOLS AROUND BULLYING NOT BEING FOLLOWED. HAVING CHILDREN/YOUTH NOT BELIEVED AT SCHOOL, OR THE SCHOOL BLAMING THE CHILD/YOUTH FOR ENGAGING OR EXAGGERATING.” –CWWA COUNSELLOR**
- **“PART OF THE CHALLENGE IS TO EDUCATE AND TEASE OUT WHAT IS BULLYING AND WHAT ISN'T.” –CWWA COUNSELLOR**
- **“...THE DELICATE NATURE IN WHICH IT NEEDS TO BE PRESENTED...” –CWWA COUNSELLOR**
- **“ANOTHER CHALLENGE IS GETTING PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY TEACHERS, TO ENGAGE IN DIFFERENT WAYS OF DEALING WITH BULLIES.” –CWWA COUNSELLOR**
- **“IN GROUP THE CHALLENGE SEEMS TO BE MAKING THE SPACE SAFE FOR THOSE WHO ARE BULLIED AS WELL AS THOSE WHO ARE THE BULLY.” –CWWA COUNSELLOR**
- **“IT IS HARD FOR PEOPLE TO SWITCH THEIR PERSPECTIVE ON BULLIES...” –CWWA COUNSELLOR**
- **“...THERE ARE STILL SOME WHO FEEL THAT VIOLENCE IN THE HOME IS A "HOME ISSUE" AND THEY ARE NOT SURE HOW TO ADDRESS IT AND AVOID TALKING ABOUT IT IN THE FIRST PLACE.” –CWWA COUNSELLOR**

SUCCESS STORIES

I had a young girl who was being bullied by a boy at school. When we learned about bullying and how to be assertive, and to tell an adult what is happening to you, she came to an appointment beaming one day. She said he had approached her and her friend trying to get them to do something, and she told him that they wouldn't and he should leave them alone or she would be telling the principal. She reported that he never bothered them again. She was very proud of this!

It was like a light when on," a parent commented to me after her son had heard one of my therapeutic stories about a bully whose father bullied the boy. The child did not initially make the connection between his bullying behaviour and that of his father until he started to see me and hear the stories which, depending on the issues presented, can become the foundation of the work that I do with the child. In this case the boy was a victim of physical abuse, and realised after hearing some of these stories that like the bully in the stories he was parroting his abusive father's behaviour, right down to using the [same] verbal threats. "I can break the (generational abuse) cycle," he would tell me proudly. And he did.

I had a 12 year old boy who was being bullied for years by a select few students. He reported the bullying to his parents, who then contacted the school principal and school counsellor. The school staff committed to addressing the bullying with the bullies, but unfortunately the bullying didn't stop for my client. He became jaded by the entire process and lost faith in the school staff, and thus, [stopped] reporting the continued bullying. He became unhappier and even had suicidal ideations. Upon starting counselling with me, I convinced him to give the school staff another shot at addressing the issue with his bullies. I offered to advocate on his behalf to the school counsellor, which he agreed to. I brought up the issue with the school counsellor, who was unaware the issue was continuing. Since the counsellor hadn't heard back from the victim in several months, he assumed the bullying had subsided. The school counsellor committed himself to address this with the bullies again, and work on mediating a resolution between the bully and victim.

Fast forward two weeks, challenge day fortunately happen to fall on one of those days too, which helped the victim directly address his bully. The bully had also been spoken to by the school counsellor, who helped him understand the impact that his bullying was having on the victim. When I saw my client last, he said the bullying had completely stopped. The main perpetrator of the bullying even stopped his own friends from bullying the victim, and they in fact even started collaborating with the victim in sports activities they are all part of.

The success here in stopping bullying was only possible by having continued action by those supporting the victim. With...multiple efforts to address the bullying with a serious and sustained effort, this case of bullying was stopped from going any further. The last I spoke to the victim, he hadn't thought about suicide since, he reported increased happiness in his life, more energy in school and at home, and generally more motivation in his day-to-day life.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Survey respondents expressed an interest in learning from other programs' strategies for addressing the linkages between exposure to VAW and experiences with bullying. Service agencies indicated that the following additional resources would be helpful to them in addressing bullying behaviours:

- Increased funding and hours for CWWA programs;
- Sustainable funding for VIP programs;
- More training and networking opportunities;
- Flexible, developmentally-appropriate, engaging, easy-to-follow curriculum for public education;
- Updated program resources, such as videos, books, and games on the topic that can assist Counsellors with the following:
 - Encouraging problem solving through scenarios,
 - Teaching bystanders,
 - Nurturing empathy,
 - Applying Gordon Neufeld's ideas to help children work through their past experiences and current behaviours,
 - Running parenting groups and workshops,
 - Educating parents/caregivers, teachers, and school counsellors, and
 - Understanding cyberbullying.
- Funding to increase families' access to respite programs;
- More research on the issue;
- More support for Youth Outreach Workers as part of a team to assist a child and family;
- Increased staffing in schools to implement strategies; and
- Improved collaboration with schools.

The importance of prevention and early intervention efforts cannot be overstated. CWWA and VIP programs are uniquely situated to stop the cycles of violence. Survey respondents were emphatic about the opportunities to effect positive change in the lives of children and youth. They stressed the need for utilizing a gendered analysis to approach bullying issues and for promoting awareness about the impacts of exposure to Violence Against Women.

“WE CAN HAVE AN IMPACT ON FUTURE ABUSE RATES THROUGH PREVENTION. WHEN A CHILD LEARNS TO COMMUNICATE ASSERTIVELY THEY NO LONGER FEEL THE NEED TO USE PHYSICAL FORCE OR HURTFUL WORDS. WHEN A CHILD LEARNS WHAT IS HEALTHY AND UNHEALTHY IN THEIR RELATIONSHIPS THEY WILL BE ABLE TO LEAVE THEM BEFORE THEY FEEL TRAPPED AND IF THEY DO END UP IN AN ABUSIVE SITUATION THEY WILL KNOW HOW TO GET HELP.” –CWWA COUNSELLOR

“BULLYING IS AS MUCH A PIECE OF THE WORK WE DO IN CWWA AND VIP AS TEACHING THE TOPIC OF ABUSE IS. SAME [BEHAVIOURS], DYNAMICS, CYCLE, GOALS. ADDRESSING BULLYING WITH YOUNG CHILDREN SHOULD BE A VITAL PIECE OF THE WORK CWWA AND SCHOOLS DO TOGETHER.” –CWWA COUNSELLOR

March 2015 Canvass of CWWA Service Agencies

The linkages between exposure to intimate partner violence and experiences with bullying

Survey Overview

The BC Society of Transition Houses and the Ministry of Justice have jointly selected the following topic as an important area of mutual interest to explore with CWWA service agencies: the relationship between witnessing abuse and bullying/acting out behaviours. There are well-established connections between children and youth's exposure to intimate partner violence and their experiences with bullying. With this in mind, we wish to better understand how CWWA and VIP programs are positioned to address these linkages. We have heard from the sector that bullying is not always being addressed by schools and communities using an intersectional feminist lens, despite the benefits of including a broader analysis to contextualize these behaviours. We are collecting information from you with the intention of providing feedback to all respondents for the purposes of better understanding the successes and challenges faced by other communities. Please complete this survey by Friday March 27th.

Have you worked to position your programs to address the linkages between witnessing abuse and experiences with bullying?

If so, how?

What have the strengths been with this perspective?

What have the challenges been with this perspective?

How frequently do you see bullying behaviours in the clients you work with in your CWWA programs?

- Always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never
- Don't Know

Appendix A: Survey Template

What do these behaviours look like?

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Don't Know
Physical bullying (hitting, slapping, grabbing, pushing, biting, kicking, etc)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Relational bullying (excluding, rumour spreading, etc)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Verbal bullying (name calling, swearing, yelling, insulting, etc)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cyberbullying (bullying that occurs electronically)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Threats of bullying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bullying of a sexualized nature	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bullying based on cultural differences (eg. race, ethnicity, Aboriginality, language, religion)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bullying based on gender identity and/or sexual orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bullying based on ability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If you selected other, please specify...						<input type="text"/>

How would you best describe the role(s) clients play in bullying behaviours?

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Don't Know
Victim	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Perpetrator	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bystander	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If you selected other, please specify...						<input type="text"/>

What does bullying mean to you within the context of CWWA and VIP programming?

Appendix A: Survey Template

When adults in your local community respond to bullying behaviours, how often do they consider children's family context/home environment?

- Always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never
- Don't Know

Please share an anecdote from your work about a young person who has experienced bullying as a victim and/or perpetrator.

What resources would be helpful to you in addressing bullying behaviours?

What else would you like to share with us that can be included in our report to other CWWA programs and the Ministry of Justice?

Thank you for taking the time to share your insight and expertise! Your survey will be complete once you click on the 'submit' button below. We will report back to you in April with the feedback gathered from this survey. If you have any questions or concerns in the meantime, please contact Andrea Thompson by email (andrea@bcsth.ca) or phone (604-669-6943, ext 229).