

**Provincial Roundtable on
Family Violence and Bullying
Persons with Disabilities**

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Round Table on Family Violence and Bullying People with Disabilities

Executive Summary

We are extremely thankful for the opportunity to submit our perspectives on the vital topic of overcoming family (and other forms of) violence regarding people with disabilities.

People with disabilities are a significant portion of the diverse, and often very marginalized, population within Canada. Reliable statistical surveys have noted one in seven Canadians have some form of a disability.

We respectfully submit people with disabilities in Alberta and in Canada consistently experience major barriers in reporting their abuse; barriers with respect to having effective, immediate, safe and reliable responses from crisis supports and justice systems; and are consistently fragmented or uneducated about their resources, alternatives and rights when faced with abuse, isolation or neglect. The encompassing submission will support the aforementioned contentions.

Please recognize two general sections of recommendations we believe are necessary to best address violence issues of people having disabilities. Firstly, some immediate high-level needs rely heavily upon the establishment of an independent administrative body for effective and safe insurances for reporting abuse, independently investigating abuse and providing essential supports while such activity is taking place for victims with disabilities. Secondly, longer-term needs separated into three sub-categories of: on-going fully accessible service supports; continual audits of essential supports and services; along with constant public and professional education are necessary for any abuse prevention mechanism to function. Providing part or limited activity in the three mentioned areas would not only be ineffectual, but might even exacerbate current abusive situations.

We, therefore, submit the following document with much candor, much concern surrounding all related topics, and drawing upon our extensive and diverse experience within the crime, violence and abuse prevention of persons with disabilities realm.

The Authors

The authors of the following document (listed in alphabetical order) are: Mark Iantkow, founding and continuing member of the Persons With Disabilities Police Advisory Committee retaining seven years of experience in crime and violence prevention; Maggie MacKillop, with Homefront (a dedicated domestic conflict justice and investigative system in Calgary), and retaining significant expertise with investigations/crime prevention of people with disabilities in Boston Massachusetts; and Kelli Moorey, the Crime and Violence Prevention Coordinator with the Independent Living Resource

Centre of Calgary, having extensive experience with research, development and implementation of crime prevention programs of persons with disabilities.

1. Recommendations

The following two sections are respectfully submitted with the premise there will be immediate and direct consequences to all alleged or proven offenders of abuse against people with disabilities. Offenders of abuse must be held directly accountable for their actions, regardless as to whether the abuse is intentional or unintentional and regardless of the victim's living setting. A second – but just as vital - premise is the “High Level/Immediate Priority” recommendations must be implemented having a fully effective and resourced underlying infrastructure such as well-trained staff, adequate equipment, and relevant supports for victims; along with proper/adequate, independent authority for relevant investigation and follow up.

1.1 High Level/Immediate Priority

- **Establishment of a fully independent administrative and investigative body** to ensure public education, abuse prevention, full professional investigation and relevant follow up along with essential supports for victims of violence within the family **or any other** setting.
- **Creation of highly trained investigative teams**, linked not only to the mentioned administrative body but to federal and provincial justice systems; experienced and highly knowledgeable of domestic violence, systemic issues and persons having varied disabilities.
- **Proclamation of comprehensive, consistent, integrated and coordinated supportive legislation** for the establishment and full independent authority of the mentioned administrative/investigative body.
- **Implementation of any required daily emergency supports for victims of violence who have disabilities** - this would include such essentials as home care, attendant care, communication or physical adaptive devices, medical resources and supports etc.
- **All of the aforementioned recommendations must include all disability populations and must reflect fully accessible, complete/equitable consideration of all disability groups** regardless of where the person resides or what provincial government funding (or any other funding or income) supports the individual retains.
- **Creation of a central twenty-four hour resource number linked to the mentioned administrative body** to ensure immediate response to any complaint regarding violence or abuse, with the immediate removal of the alleged perpetrator and recording of evidence for imminent investigation.

Rationale

People with disabilities must feel safe and secure in reporting any abuse levied against them; and without immediate/effective action against their perpetrators - concomitant

with immediate/reliable daily-living supports – individuals will not even consider reporting abuse against their persons. Furthermore, perpetrators of abuse must be fully cognizant of their actions’ ramifications and receive direct, immediate consequences to their intentional or unintentional behaviour. The six aforementioned recommendations are essential elements to ensure victims with disabilities will come forward and will further ensure their continued safety, as well as immediate and effective resolution to their abuse issues.

1.2 Secondary Level/Long-Term Priority

Supports and Access to Services Recommendations

- Although we stress “people with disabilities” throughout the encompassing document, we fully recognize vital similar strategies and supports for all vulnerable populations such as seniors, and would fully endorse the same independent administrative body to ensure violence/abuse prevention of all such populations with the qualifier that none of the services or supports for persons with disabilities are superceded by any other population.
- Utilizing the cross-disability resources and model established for evaluating, educating and entrenching disability-related crisis services, police and justice system within Calgary; establish identical resources within all major municipalities within Alberta.
- The creation of a Liaison Officer for Persons with Disabilities within each major metropolitan jurisdiction within Alberta.
- The creation of a cross-disability police and justice advisory committee (with representation of salient disability groups/social service organizations) within all major municipalities in Alberta.
- A similar model, with supportive resources, to be recommended to the RCMP detachments within Alberta.
- All social service or rehabilitation service agencies to amend their abuse protocols in full recognition and support of the mentioned administrative/investigative body.
- Any related policies within any governmental department to be consistent and support the mentioned administrative/investigative body.
- Establish a network and “registry” of all social service or other agencies to support the administrative body with any emergency/daily living supports, providing advice and guidance to investigative teams (e.g. ASL Interpretation or advice/supports with interviewing a person having a cognitive disability etc.).
- Conduct a full public consultation with disability and related groups to explore enactment and enforcement of penalties against people or agencies who know of abuse but do not report; of people or agencies who take retaliatory action against people who report abuse; and against people who falsely report abuse. Such penalties, however, must not exceed the level of penalty exerted against any perpetrator of abuse. The focus, therefore, must lie with the victim’s safety and supports firstly; direct and meaningful consequences against the perpetrators secondly; and penalties against not reporting abuse or retaliation thirdly.

- Conduct a full public consultation with disability and related groups to explore enactment and enforcement of mandatory reporting by professionals such as social workers, doctors, therapists and social service or rehabilitation agencies generally when any form of family – or any other context of - abuse is recognized.
- Full coordination and communications with such vital governmental departments or branches such as The Premier’s Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities; the Office for Disability Issues; Persons with Developmental Disabilities; Handicapped Children’s Services; Alberta Human Resources and Employment; and Alberta Community Development.

Rationale

Simply providing a reporting mechanism, even if the mechanism is supported by immediate responses in removing the perpetrator of abuse from the abuse circumstance, is not sufficient if essential supports for victims are not in place. Often daily-living supports for people with disabilities are strained due to financial reasons, lack of properly trained personnel, or the specific living situations/circumstances of the individual. If any – even limited – supports for an individual with a disability are no longer available due to any intervention or removal of the alleged perpetrator, reliable daily living supports and services must be substituted. Furthermore, fully accessible counseling, crisis services, justice system and any other supports for the victim with a disability to deal in reporting abuse are essential.

Audits Recommendations

- Barrier-free audits, and implementation of any required modifications, for all provincial courts and justice systems offices or related services to ensure full physical and intellectual access (in the latter instance, access to printed materials for people who are blind or people who might have literacy difficulties).
- Annual audits of all long-term care facilities, group homes or any other group living situations to ensure the consistent proper care of residents with disabilities is essential. Furthermore, when an audit occurs, any recommendations from the audit team that might improve the safety of residents would be expected to be responded to in the swiftest manner.
- On-going audits of crisis services, social services, counseling services to ensure full accessibility and essential training of staff in cross-disability abuse-related issues to be continually reinforced.

Rationale

The aforementioned audits are the least our society can do to ensure facilities are properly designed and services or supports are fully accessible. Third party community organizations, along with trained professionals, can organize to conduct such audits with minimal expense to government.

Education and Training Recommendations

- Ensure on-going public education programs for family members, caregivers, long term care facility staff, government and police as well as justice officials regarding crime violence and abuse prevention of people with disabilities. Such programs should be a basic requirement of Personal Care Attendant educational programs within the province. Furthermore, no attendant care workers should be allowed to practice without such education and training.
- Develop a “police engagement strategy” and related education program to encourage all police services within Alberta to fully recognize and work with the crime and abuse prevention of people with disabilities.
- Ensure all “anti-bullying programs” within Alberta are fully inclusive of disability bullying issues, with listed potential solutions or resources.
- Arrange an annual provincial conference on abuse and violence prevention of any vulnerable populations including people with disabilities. Such a conference should include workshops and guest speakers – nationally or internationally renowned – with specific expertise in abuse prevention of varied populations.

Rationale

Education and training are key to implementing any of the mentioned recommendations. A lack of adequate training of professionals would result in oversights of disability groups’ issues; incompetence regarding investigations; and conceptualizing inadequate (or even illegal) remedies to abuse issues. Similarly, members of the public and professionals peripheral to such abuse topics must be constantly educated as staff shifts occur and our population ages.

2. Extent of Problem and Related Statistics

2.1 General Description

People with disabilities, here within considered as one of many marginalized but distinct groups in Alberta, are at an exceedingly greater risk of violence and abuse than are persons without disabilities. The degree of risk is largely exacerbated by a multitude of barriers this population confronts sometimes on a daily basis.

Although many barriers predispose persons with disabilities to a greater risk of abuse, one barrier classification that puts this population more in jeopardy is the inaccessibility of services and/or the lack of access to services for people with disabilities who are both victims and perpetrators of domestic violence. Low priority is often given to individuals with disabilities when developing prevention programs and accessible information and resources.

Given the multidimensional needs of this group as a whole, **accessibility** constitutes modifying several **factors** such as, but not limited to:

- Mobility issues such as wheelchair access, providing attendant care if the abuser is removed from the home and offering accessible forms of transportation
 - Sensory issues such as providing ASL interpreters, Braille, allowing guide dogs in public places
 - People with intellectual disabilities require plain language materials and communication support
 - Mental Health Disabilities often require the training of professionals in supportive response, de-escalation, administration of medications
 - In addition, access means the training of staff that assists persons with disabilities. This must not be limited to the teaching of skills but also to addressing attitudes
- Adapted from: (Education Wife Assault, 1997. Directory of services for Abused Women with Disabilities and Deaf Women)

The following is a **list of barriers** that often lead to increased risk of both the perpetration of violence and the vulnerability toward it:

- Myths and stereotypes held by some parts of society regard individuals with disabilities as having a lack of credibility. Therefore reports of abuse are not always taken seriously or the inability of a victim with a disability to verbalize a report could result in the situation being dismissed.
- Negative public attitudes and fear about disability influence how people with disabilities are treated personally, socially and professionally. For example many people with disabilities are isolated/segregated from participating in social activities, meeting people and learning what services are available to them. Without opportunities to talk to other people, a person with a disability might not be aware of the counselling services available or of one's own personal rights.
- Counselling services are usually too expensive and the cheaper ones have long waiting lists. Sometimes even if the service is affordable it may be inaccessible.
- Issues around attendant care, which can further be placed under the list of accessibility issues, and abuse are very complex. For the purposes of this submission, consider briefly the following:
 - fear of losing attendant services, of losing their independence (including financial) or being institutionalized, if the survivor discloses the abuse and the perpetrator is the victim's partner
 - not all services provided to abuse survivors have emergency_attendant care available
- Accessible transportation is seldom available without notice and most services use radio dispatch communication techniques.
- There is often a lack of short-term and long-term affordable, accessible housing available so that victims are able to relocate eventually to safety.

- Agencies are only just beginning to develop effective protocols and procedures to adequately respond to abuse or to identify through screening possible offenders.
- Many people with disabilities have limited financial resources or limited access to such resources. For example, a person might not have access to enough money to leave their abusive partner even if they wanted to.

2.2 Statistics

According to Statistics Canada, “one out of every seven Canadians aged 15 and over has some level of disability – an estimated 3.4 million people, or 12.4 percent of the Canadian population living in households in the ten provinces¹”.

- People with disabilities are 1.5 times more susceptible to crime, violence and abuse than their able-bodied counterparts (Sobsey, 1994, Wilson & Brewer, 1992, Masuda and Ridington, 1992).
- For children with disabilities the rate is even greater at 1.67 times at risk in all categories of abuse and neglect (Crosse, Kaye & Ramnotsky, 1993).
- The risk of being sexually abused in institutions is 2-4 times as high as the risk for being sexually abused in the community (Sobsey & Mansell, 1992)
- (Sobsey, 1994) found that almost half of the perpetrators made contact with the abuse survivor through services related to the survivor’s disability.
- The risk for a single incident of abuse is 1.5% as great for persons with disabilities. When people with disabilities are victimized more than once, the risk for re-abuse increases. Sobsey (1994) suggests that when more severe types of abuse and multiple abuses are considered, the risk goes up to at least 2 times.

2.3 Accountability/Responsibility

Any form of abuse (see Abuse Taxonomy) is *always* the responsibility of the perpetrator who initiated the act, despite the type of abuse. Assumptions such as individuals with disabilities are never perpetrators need to be contested. If evidence suggests that an individual with a disability perpetuated the violence then this individual needs to be rightfully dealt with as a criminal in both legal and service related realms.

It can be argued that coping with the results of abuse is naturally the responsibility of the victim in terms of being proactive toward using both human services and legal services. However, if these services were not truly accessible to victims with disabilities then it would seem that such services must also assume some accountability in this situation for the sake of both victims and perpetrators of domestic and other forms of abuse and violence.

Solutions for both reducing and responding to the elevated risks of persons with disabilities to abuse:

- Provide **education and information** regarding family violence to people with disabilities themselves, to the public, and to professionals.
- Professionals need to learn specific **communication strategies** and how to use alternate formats effectively to understand what persons with disabilities require.
- **Make services truly accessible** to the needs of persons with a variety of disabilities and advertise such services to this population so they will know what is accessible to them, what is not, and what agencies are committed to making services accessible.
- **Make sure people with disabilities are aided with their daily needs** so that people can disclose abuse. Otherwise dealing with abuse slips down the hierarchy of needs, below having enough to eat, for example.
- Have disability issues directly included in **government family violence initiatives/policies**.
- An “**emergency assistance fund**” could be set up for all shelters/crisis services to utilize for individuals access needs of persons with disabilities.
- **Provide outreach services** so that persons with disabilities are not required to leave their home to simply access necessary supports.
- **Establish protocols** in disability service providing agencies so that abuse can be identified and positively responded to.
- Start and support a process of **community consultation and coordination** around violence issues and people with disabilities. This could be initiated through community forums, committees, educational presentations and so on.
- **Include people with disabilities** themselves in strategies of ending family violence.

3. Accomplishments and Best Practices

3.1 History

We fully respect the work a number of organizations or coalitions have devoted to crime, violence and abuse prevention of people with disabilities throughout the 1990s and early within this century. Canadian organizations such as the Alberta Committee of Citizens with Disabilities (ACCD); the Council of Canadians with Disabilities (CCD); the Disabled Women’s Network (DAWN); the Roeher Institute; The Canadian Association of Independent Living Centres (CAILC) – just as a few examples – have heavily contributed to the research into crime, violence and abuse prevention from a cross-disability perspective. A number of tools, programs and models have been developed from such research, along with very relevant programs and research from other countries.

Since 1996 Calgary has produced some unique approaches and tools in crime and violence prevention of people with disabilities. Not only are many of the tools unique to Calgary, but are unique – and have been distributed to – a number of communities across Canada. **We wish to stress there is no other Alberta or Canadian municipality**

retaining the multitude of the listed tools, in consort with a permanent Liaison Officer for Persons with Disabilities and a corresponding cross-disability Persons with Disabilities Police Advisory Committee.

3.2 Tools, Programs and Models

Tools and Resources

Following is a listing of Calgary-based/cross-disability crime and violence prevention tools and resources:

- Orientation to Disability for Crisis Service Providers manual – a manual conceived and compiled with the salient crisis service organizations in mind; providing in-depth orientation to cross-disability access to services, abuse prevention and disability supports topics.
- Train the Trainer on Abuse Prevention manual – a manual devised to orient and educate people (and future volunteer trainers) with disabilities, themselves, on their individual rights/responsibilities, and resources to prevent their own future victimization.
- 24 Hour Help for Everyone crisis numbers sheets (in six alternate formats such as Braille, large print and audio cassette) – a listing of the vital twenty-four hour help crises numbers in Calgary to allow people with disabilities to access vital crisis services directly.
- Permanent Calgary Police Service Liaison Officer for Persons with Disabilities (Cultural Resources Unit, Calgary Police Service) – A permanent Liaison Officer to educate police about crime and violence prevention of such a potentially vulnerable population; educate the community and people with disabilities on police practices associated with people with disabilities; and to address – on a daily basis – issues that arise in the community on any related violence or crime prevention issues.
- Persons with Disabilities Police Advisory Committee – a standing committee with representation from the salient disability populations in Calgary, with the mandate to act as a resource for the mentioned Liaison Officer, to produce tools and resources on crime and violence prevention, and to liaise with the police and general community on related issues.
- “For Safety’s Sake” and “Safety on the Streets” videos – two separate orientation/training videos on crime and violence prevention in the home, and on the street regarding persons with varied disabilities.
- Calgary Police Service Your Guide to Safety and Security Crime Prevention Guide for Persons with Disabilities Brochure – a brochure outlining salient crime and violence topics for a number of disability groups (conceived and created in full consultation with a number of consumers having varied disabilities).
- Access Contingency Fund – a fund to ensure all crisis services have financial resources for full access to any victim with any form of disability (this was established as a financial resource for any such agency as many agencies do not retain annual budgets for such supports as accessible transportation, emergency

- attendant care, adaptive equipment rental on an emergency basis, or forms of communication for people who are blind or deafblind).
- Personal Security Adaptations for Persons with Disabilities booklet – a booklet outlining specific physical adaptive devices in crime and violence prevention of people with disabilities.

Programs/Models

- **Crime, Violence and Abuse Prevention Program at the Independent Living Resource Centre of Calgary**

This long-term contract project, beginning in 1999, is the first of its kind in both Alberta and Canada in terms of its multidimensional efficacy. During the first three years the project was aimed at:

1. researching the accessibility of local crisis services and providing education (verbal training, training manual and additional information) to such services regarding the needs of people with disabilities in responding to the issue of violence in their lives.
2. creating a second manual/resource designed to provide training-the-trainer workshops to persons with disabilities themselves who can continue to train others. This strengthens the community with offering a greater understanding of how to cope, how to network with each other and in some cases to become involved themselves in educating various community services about the issues they face.
3. supporting both the consumer (person with a disability) in walking through the process of disclosure, support and finding services in the community for assistance. The coordinator also supported the agencies in suggesting and teaching about tools that would make the services more accessible to individuals with disabilities. Lastly to act as a liaison between the consumer and the service to encourage positive results for both parties in this process.
4. During the fourth and current year this program is networking with disability serving agencies to increase their understanding of violence and crime related issues, to know what services are available in the community, to create effective guidelines or protocols for staff to make proactive assessments, decisions, support and referrals to consumers.

- **Ideal Characteristics of an Independent Administrative Body on Crime, Abuse and Violence Prevention of Persons with Disabilities**

The primary characteristics of a best practices model, as a result of such extensive research and related work, have been determined to be:

- Establishing a totally independent administrative “commission” to oversee all complaints, investigations and follow up of violence against people with disabilities;
- Providing essential daily-living supports to prevent systemic abuse within any group or institutional settings; and correspondingly providing effective emergency

- supports – upon short notice – to ensure victims with disabilities safety while lodging a complaint;
- Taking a true cross-disability perspective with such aforementioned supports and with any programs, investigations or follow up related to addressing abuse;
 - Creating a network of governmental department and community organizations to ensure fully accessible vital supports for victims of abuse;
 - Ensuring full training of all justice system officials; police and crisis services staff regarding crime, violence and abuse prevention of people with disabilities;
 - Ensuring fully independent/third party investigative teams are fully trained in cross-disability issues, along with both individual and systemic/institutional investigative skills;
 - Integrating appropriate protective legislation with both the federal and provincial justice systems.

After much consideration, Calgary has determined the Massachusetts model of the “Disabled Persons Protection Commission” meets all of the above criteria (see below).

- **Disabled Persons Protection Commission**

We believe the following best practices model could be enormously beneficial to the Alberta government. Our findings focus on an investigation body in Massachusetts called **the Disabled Persons Protection Commission (DPPC)** - an independent state agency established by legislation in 1987. The mission of the DPPC is “*to protect adults with disabilities from abusive acts and omissions of their caregivers through investigation, oversight, public awareness, and prevention.*” The protection is provided whether an individual is in a private, family or state care setting.

“Historically, crimes committed against persons with disabilities have not been recognized or reported to the appropriate authorities. Given the complex nature of these cases, prosecution rates have been extremely low. Reasons for underreporting and inadequate investigations have included lack of awareness, lack of effective coordination between law enforcement and human service agencies and reluctance by police, prosecutors and judges to rely on the testimony of a person with a disability. When crimes were committed against persons with disabilities, the abuse was often not recognized as a crime by human service professionals and therefore not reported. When crimes were reported to the authorities, they were often reported days or even weeks after the incident occurred. As a result, crime scenes and physical evidence were destroyed. Also, testimonies were damaged by repeatedly interviewing the victim and perpetrator. Thus, these problems contributed to underreporting and low arrest and prosecution rates for persons who committed crimes against persons with disabilities.”(Narrative from Executive Director Nancy A. Alterio of the DPPC, October 22, 2003.)

“Through the DPPC’s criminal and civil investigation units, allegations of abuse and crimes involving vulnerable individuals with disabilities are investigated. Individuals with disabilities at risk and abusive situations are remedied through the implementation of comprehensive services to ensure victims are protected from further abuse. If the

matter involves criminal conduct as identified through the DPPC's **State Police Detective Unit (SPDU)**, the matter is referred for criminal investigation and the appropriate District Attorney for possible prosecution of the alleged abuser. Consequently, the DPPC is equipped to respond to both the criminal aspects as well as the human service aspect that contribute to abusive situations. Criminal and civil investigations and the provisions of the protective services involving individuals with disabilities are complex, time consuming, challenging and require a level of expertise not otherwise available solely in either the public safety or human services sectors." (Narrative from Executive Director Nancy A. Alterio of the DPPC, October 22, 2003)

We believe strongly that a similar response to violence and abuse of persons with disabilities (and including such potentially vulnerable populations such as seniors) should be established in Alberta. We remain dedicated to ensuring that persons with disabilities are safe from crimes of violence and abuse.

Appendix

Definitions

Persons with Disabilities

There is no simple way of defining the term “disability” as the word has many connotations, dependent upon a multitude of factors including cultural settings. Regardless, we are adopting the World Health Organization definition within this document and are, furthermore, listing the various types of disabilities as identified within the Health and Activity Limitation and Participation Activity Limitation Surveys of 1986, 1991, and 2001.

- **ICIDH**

World Health Organization, “International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps”:

Impairment: “any loss or abnormality of a psychological or anatomical structure or function”. Impairments are disturbances at the level of the organ.

Disability: “any restriction or inability (resulting from an impairment) to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being”. This describes a functional limitation or activity restriction caused by an impairment. Disabilities are descriptions of disturbances in function at the level of the person.

Handicap: “any disadvantage for a given individual, resulting from an impairment or a disability, that limits or prevents the fulfillment of a role that is normal for that individual”. The classification of handicap deals with the relationship that evolves between society, culture and people who have impairments or disabilities as reflected in people’s life roles.

(Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers for Social Services, 1998, Appendix A).

- **HALS and PALS Taxonomy of Disabilities**

Seven disability types listed by HALS:

:

- Hearing disabilities;
- Seeing disabilities;
- Speaking disabilities;
- Agility disabilities;
- Mobility disabilities;
- Mental/learning disabilities (this includes mental illness);
- Physical disabilities not elsewhere classified.

(Fawcett, G. 1996, p. 8).

Beyond the aforementioned disability classifications, “health-related disabilities”, “invisible disabilities” and “dual or multiple disabilities” groupings are frequently identified separately.

Cross Disability

The term “cross disability” refers to an all-inclusive perspective of individuals within the following ten categories ...

- Hearing disabilities;
- Seeing disabilities;
- Speaking disabilities;
- Agility disabilities;
- Mobility disabilities;
- Mental/learning disabilities (this includes mental illness);
- Physical disabilities not elsewhere classified;
- Health-related disabilities (or health conditions);
- Invisible disabilities; and
- Dual or multiple impairments and related disabilities.

... and relates to people experiencing any restriction or inability (resulting from an impairment) to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being.

Accessibility, Barrier-Free Access and Universal Design

- **Accessibility**

“Accessibility” is often used in a context and disability specific situation where an individual with a certain impairment and related disability seeks to fully access a specific physical environment, piece of information or a service - available to the general public – through their own preferred or capable means.

- **Barrier-Free Access**

“Barrier-free” access is a specifically-defined term used within the National Building Code and all complementary provincial building codes. Within the Alberta Building Code “barrier-free” access is defined as “ ... a building and its facilities [that] can be approached, entered and used by persons with physical, mental or sensory disabilities.” (Safety Codes Council, 1997, p. vi).

- **Universal Design**

“Universal design” is a phrase underlying an international movement toward designing all future facilities for all populations (beyond simply considering specific diverse

populations such as seniors and people with disabilities). Safety Codes Council (1997) describes universal design as follows:

Barrier-free requirements are often dealt with retrogressively in the design process. Universal design takes a holistic approach to the design of buildings by focusing on a hypothetical client with many needs right up front, rather than on specific barrier-free requirements in a retroactive effort during the design process. (p. v).

Domestic Violence

The Calgary Domestic Violence Committee Protocol Project uses the terms domestic violence, domestic abuse and family violence interchangeably. The CDVC defines domestic violence as:

... the attempt, act or intent of someone within a relationship, where the relationship is characterized by intimacy, dependency or trust, to intimidate either by threat or by the use of physical force on another person or property. The purpose of the abuse is to control and/or exploit through neglect, intimidation, inducement of fear or by inflicting pain. Abusive behaviour can take many forms including: verbal, physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, spiritual, economic and the violation of rights. All forms of abusive behaviour are ways in which one human being is trying to have control and/or exploit or have power over another. (Calgary Domestic Violence Committee, 1998).

This definition of domestic violence has been widely accepted in the community of Calgary and recognizes a life span perspective of domestic violence. Domestic violence includes the abuse of the youngest to the most senior members of our society, in relationships including: dating, cohabiting, marital, parent-child, grandparent-grandchild along with caregivers and person requiring care.

Family

Many descriptions of what constitutes a “family” exist and – for the purposes of this document – we wish to acknowledge the broadest possible description of a family. Such a social unit might include members (in any age group) of a nuclear or extended family; currently separated members of a family; common-law partners; anyone in a current intimate relationship with another person including boy friend and girl friend; same-sex partners; and even paid or unpaid caregivers (the latter being considered as surrogate “family” members). (Nixon, K. 2000).

Abuse Taxonomy (some unique to the “disability context”)

Although the following types of predominant abuse against people with disabilities are not listed in any order of prevalence or issue-specific priority, the first three specified forms of abuse (neglect, isolation and intimidation) are not often conceptualized by the

general public. Yet these three specific forms are quite endemic within the population of people in care.

All of the listed types of abuse and neglect should be considered from **both systemic and individual perspectives**. Ramifications of abuse or violence can be just as devastating on an individual, group or systemic bases. Similarly, the context of the abuse is not the primary issue, but rather the fact abuse or violence has to be addressed within any setting.

- Neglect (improperly under or over administering drugs; withdrawal of essential supports, daily needs or adaptive equipment; physical neglect; emotional neglect);
- Isolation;
- Intimidation;
- Physical abuse;
- Sexual abuse;
- Material (such as financial or economic) abuse;
- Emotional and psychological abuse;
- Ritual abuse;
- Forced confinement.

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