



Woman Abuse Affects Our Children

**Viewer's Guide
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Ontario

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VIEWER'S GUIDE

This Viewer's Guide is designed to be used with the video modules available on the Woman Abuse Affects Our Children website. This resource provides a summary of each of the segments in the module, along with appendices of important information highlighted throughout the videos.

Module One: Setting the Context

To ensure that educators fully understand issues surrounding woman abuse, Module One: Setting the Context focuses on defining woman abuse and the impact abuse of women can have on children's emotional, physical and social development and behaviour.

1. Setting the Context

Paula Bourne, Chair, English-language Expert Panel for Educators, Centre for Women's Studies in Education, OISE, University of Toronto, reviews the government's action plan in addressing the issue of woman abuse and its affect on children. Following the definitions of woman abuse, Paula highlights the three key messages that have guided the development of these video modules:

1. Woman Abuse affects all women regardless of race, class, geography or age.
2. This is a major problem in society that educators can do something about.
3. Students cannot develop to their full academic and social potential in a context of fear.

2. The Impact of Woman Abuse on Children – Survivor Stories

This segment touches on the social, emotional and academic impacts of woman abuse on children, and starts to introduce the teacher as an important figure in the child's life. Through the stories of three survivors of woman abuse, we begin to understand the layers that a child is dealing with in the home, and hear how these survivors felt educators, on a day-to-day basis, could support children exposed to abuse.

3. The Impact of Woman Abuse on Children – Educator Involvement

In this segment, we hear from various teacher federations, principal organizations and other agencies about the ways in which teachers can support children exposed to abuse.

4. Final Summary

This segment is a summary of the information that will be provided in the additional video modules that have been developed for this project.

Module Two: Strategies and Identification

It is important for educators to be able to recognize when children are victims of woman abuse. Module Two presents various scenarios that educators may be faced with along with specific strategies that enable them to respond to the issue of woman abuse in both a sensitive and professional manner.

1. Strategies and Identification – Setting the Context

A brief introductory overview of the impact of woman abuse on children is provided in the first segment of this module.

2. Potential Indicators at Different Ages

Linda Baker, Executive Director of the Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System, introduces this segment by reminding us that children are impacted by woman abuse differently, depending upon their ages.

Following Linda's introduction, the segment is divided into three key areas:

- Key Aspects of Development in Junior and Senior Kindergarten
- Key Aspects of Development in Primary and Junior Divisions
- Key Aspects of Development in Adolescents in Grades Seven and Eight

Teachers present the developmental milestones and behavioural indicators associated to students within each of the three age ranges. For a summary of the developmental milestones and the behavioural indicators for each area, refer to Appendices I.A, I.B and I.C.

3. Strategies

In each of the segments, we receive tips and techniques from a number of experts and educators on how best to deal with each of the following scenarios:

- a. Responding to Troubling Student Behaviour
- b. Potential for Disclosure by a Student
- c. Responding to Disclosure by a Student
- d. Questioning in an Appropriate Way
- e. Ensuring Appropriate Reactions to a Disclosure
- f. Avoiding Promises and Providing Reassurance
- g. Informing Students about the Process
- h. Building Trust for the Future
- i. Supporting Students Living with Abuse
- j. A Conversation with Linda Baker and Phil Officer
- k. The Impact of Educator Support

In "A Conversation with Linda Baker and Phil Officer," there are responses given to the following questions:

- What types of support do children exhibiting troubling behaviour need?
- How can we as educators support troubled students when sensitive topics such as violence prevention and substance abuse come up?
- How can an educator support students who display some behaviours that could indicate woman abuse in the home but have not disclosed the situation yet?
- How can an educator support a student when there has been a disclosure; they know the family lives in a woman's shelter; or the Ontario Student Record contains a court order regarding access and visitation?

Module Three: Multiple Barriers

Woman abuse affects all women, regardless of race, social context, geography, or age. Module Three explores the diverse barriers faced by women suffering abuse and provides educators with guidance on how to listen respectfully and without judgment to these women and their children.

This module captures conversations that touch on various barriers faced by women experiencing violence in the home. The list does not end here.

1. Exploring Multiple Barriers

This segment acts as an introductory overview of the sorts of issues that further complicate a situation for women experiencing abuse in the home. The voices of various speakers help set a foundation for the rest of the module.

2. The Impact of Systemic Barriers

This segment looks more deeply at some of the systemic barriers that women face. It begins with the following text on screen:

A language barrier is more than just not understanding a language. Women often lose their confidence to negotiate with systems. This lack of confidence puts them in a vulnerable position of being easily taken advantage of. Various speakers share how alienation and discrimination along with lack of resources and other barriers increase a women's vulnerability and make it more difficult for her to improve her circumstances. Highlighted in this segment are the vulnerabilities faced by native women, women with disabilities, women living in rural areas, and immigrant women.

The segment ends with the following text on screen:

Women without status face the same form of gender-based violence as all other women, but are at higher risk because of the vulnerable position they live in.

The B.C. Institute Against Family Violence reported that immigrant women sponsored by their husbands are particularly vulnerable to abuse or intimidation for fear of having that sponsorship withdrawn.

3. Safety Planning and Awareness

In this segment, speakers share the misconceptions about women's safety after leaving the home and provide awareness about safety planning issues.

The segment begins with the following text on screen:

Women living with domestic violence are more likely to be murdered by their spouse when leaving the abusive situation or while planning to leave.

The module highlights the role of community members in enabling a woman to feel safe and the need for there to be an understanding of the circumstances which she may be facing. As Angie Rupra says in one of her lines on camera, "Expanding our notion of safety will help us in understanding why many women do not leave abusive relationships."

The segment closes with the following text on screen:

36% of spousal violence victims and less than 10% of sexual abuse victims report to the police.

4. Educator Involvement

In this segment, we hear from various educators about how their being able to listen without being judgmental allows the mother and child to recognize that the school is a safe haven.

Emily Noble from the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario reminds us that although educators may be apprehensive about reporting suspicions of abuse, it is incumbent on them to do so in order that Children's Aid can do the work that they need to do.

Don Rait from the Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario ends the segment with an important message about how educators experience a number of variables in relation to the children they are teaching. He emphasizes that the school must be a place where each of these children feels nurtured.

The final text on screen identifies the following ways in which you can help:

- Respect a woman's choices
- Know the resources in your community
- Make appropriate referrals
- Respect her privacy

...as long as no child is at risk.

5. Moving Forward

Marsha Sfeir, Executive Director of Springtide Resources, speaks of the need to develop a collective sense of responsibility among all community members to sustain the emotional well-being of women and children. She ends the segment by emphasizing how the cumulative effect of small, positive actions is the true reward of all of this intensive work.

Module Four: Duty to Report

Often the most difficult issue surrounding woman abuse is how to respond when there are reasonable grounds to suspect that abuse is occurring in the home. Module Four discloses the fears that many educators have regarding their obligations to report cases of abuse and discusses what steps educators should take to report children who are in need of protection.

1. Setting the Context

Paula Bourne, Chair, English-language Expert Panel for Educators, briefly introduces the module by acknowledging that educators do have fears around the duty to report.

2. The Requirements of the Law

In this segment, Lisa Tomlinson, Intake Supervisor, Children's Aid Society, provides educators with valuable information about the role of the Children's Aid Society and the legal responsibility of educators in reporting cases of abuse.

Topics that are covered in this segment include:

The mandate of the Children's Aid Society

“To protect and ensure the safety of children and this includes children being at risk of physical harm, sexual harm, emotional harm or neglect.”

How educators can determine when a child is in need of protection

According to Lisa, the Child Family and Services Act defines the work of child protection agencies. Lisa identifies anxiety, withdrawal, depression and self-destruction as signs that a child may be exposed to abuse; she also warns, however, that detection is difficult, as children who excel in school may also be victims of exposure to woman abuse.

Next steps for an educator who has observed behavioural indicators

Lisa indicates that an educator must determine whether they have reasonable grounds to report.

Lisa defines reasonable grounds, as anything that an average person, given his or her training, background and experience exercising normal and honest judgment would suspect to be physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, neglect and/or risk of harm.

Legal obligation of an educator who has established suspicion based on reasonable grounds

- All educators are required to call a Child Protection Agency, as per the Child and Family Services Act.
- The call must be made by the educator and cannot be delegated to anyone else.
- Child Protection Agency must be informed of any new information that the educator learns.
- The educator must also be aware of the policies within their own school/board when reporting abuse to a Child Protection Agency.

Person Responsible for legal determination of when a child is need of protection

A skilled worker in Child Protection Agency is responsible.

Knowing how far educators should probe when indicators are present

Any observation of the child needs to happen within the realm of the classroom.

What happens when a student discloses

The educator should find an appropriate way to end the conversation with the child and call a Child Protection Agency.

Appropriate ways to end discussions with a student who has disclosed

Acknowledge the concerns that you have about the student’s safety, and inform the student that you will need to share the information he/she has given you with someone else.

Process involved in making a report to a Children’s Aid Society

- Write down who you’ve spoken to, the date and time of your call, and the context of your discussion.
- Text on screen states that “As of April 1, 2006, all Children’s Aid Societies screen for domestic violence regardless of the reason for referral. This procedure is the result of identifying domestic violence as a factor in many reported cases.”An educator can request a return phone call to receive an update on the status of the case.

3. Preparing to Make the Report

Principal Marlyne King provides a brief summary of communication items that are necessary when preparing to make a report.

4. Information Needed for the Report

For a copy of the suggested items listed in this segment, refer to *Appendix II*.

5. Additional Responsibilities of the Principal

Principal Marlyne King discusses the Principal's role in establishing all school safety planning and the communication items that need to be shared with staff in order to make planning successful.

6. Teacher Concerns about the Duty to Report – The Interpretation of Reasonable Grounds

A teacher outlines her concern about a student who is showing signs that could be interpreted as indicators of woman abuse. Lisa Tomlinson, an Intake Supervisor with the Children's Aid Society, provides her input on how best to approach such a scenario.

7. Concerns about Doing Harm

A teacher describes her concern with reporting abuse in the home when her report might result in further harm to the child. Another teacher describes the concern with reporting on a family in a small rural community where everyone knows each other. Lisa Tomlinson, an Intake Supervisor with the Children's Aid Society, provides her input on how best to approach such scenarios.

8. Concerns about Respecting Cultural Differences

A teacher describes her confusion around her role when faced with a student who seems to be confronting gender stereotypes in the home. Lisa Tomlinson, an Intake Supervisor with the Children's Aid Society, provides her input on how best to approach such a scenario.

9. Concerns about Respecting Confidentiality

Principal Carmel Preyra outlines the responsibilities of the educator as set out under the Child Family and Services Act and the Ethical Standards for the teaching profession as per the Ontario College of Teachers.

According to the website for the Ontario College of Teachers:

"Members of the Ontario College of Teachers in their positions of trust and influence...respect confidential information about students unless disclosure is required by law or personal safety is at risk."

10. Concerns about Personal Liability

Lisa Tomlinson, an Intake Supervisor with the Children's Aid Society, reminds us that children's safety is dependent on intervention when intervention is needed.

Principal Carmel Preyra provides details on the legal responsibility of an educator to report suspicion of harm and the supports that are available to teachers during this process.

11. Concerns about Different Procedures

Lisa Tomlinson, an Intake Supervisor with the Children's Aid Society, reminds educators of their legal responsibility, under the Child and Family Services Act, to report suspicion of harm and suggests that educators be knowledgeable about the specific procedures for reporting within their own school boards.

12. The Role of Educators

Paula Bourne, Chair, English-language Expert Panel for Educators, urges educators to be aware of the indicators of abuse and to make a report if there is any suspicion of harm.

13. Final Reflection

Lisa Tomlinson, an Intake Supervisor with the Children's Aid Society, makes a closing statement about the bridge between educators and the Child Protection Agencies in ensuring the safety of all children.

Module Five: Support and Referrals

Responding to violence against women is not the duty of one person, but is the shared responsibility of all. Module Five assists educators in identifying and establishing strong relationships with community-based organizations that provide support and referral services for families who are exposed to abuse.

1. Setting the Context

Paula Bourne, Chair, English-language Expert Panel for Educators, opens the module with commentary about the shared responsibility across the whole community to end the silence about this issue.

Marsha Sfeir, Executive Director, Springtide Resources, introduces the statistic: "3 to 5 children in every Canadian school classroom have witnessed their mother being assaulted."

2. Involvement within Schools – What are our responsibilities?

A teacher shares a few key ways in which educators can play an integral role in providing supports that are within their roll:

- Observe the student through daily classroom activities, noting changes in behaviour or achievement.
- Keep in touch with a mother who has disclosed abuse to provide updates on the student's achievement.
- Avoid arousing suspicions of the abuser.

3. Informing the Student about Safety

A teacher describes ways to assist a student in developing a safety plan by teaching him/her how to access help, if needed.

- Emergency 911
- Kids Help Phone – national, bilingual, toll-free hotline which is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Calls do not appear on home telephone bill.

4. Principals of Ontario Schools – Code of Conduct

Principal Patrika Daws introduces the Ontario Code of Conduct which states:

"Responsible citizenship involves appropriate participation in the civic life of the school community. Active and engaged citizens are aware of their rights, but more importantly they accept responsibility for protecting their rights and rights of others."

5. Coping Strategies and Support

A teacher discusses the significance of providing routine and structure for a student who may be missing them in his/her home life.

6. Program Accommodations and Differentiated Instruction

A guidance counsellor acknowledges the importance of working creatively with students to provide them with program accommodations that are specific to their situation.

7. Healthy Relationships and Gender Roles

An expressive art therapist discusses how models of gender inequity in the home can impact a child's understanding of healthy relationships and ways in which gender equality can be encouraged in the classroom.

8. Challenging Media Portrayals

An expressive art therapist highlights the need for educators to dispel stereotypes and myths portrayed in the media.

9. Teaching Anti-violence

An expressive art therapist highlights the need for anti-bullying programs in schools and the positive influence they can have on children exposed to violence in the home.

10. Involvement as a Concerned Community Member – Providing Information in Safe Ways

Linda Baker, Executive Director, Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System, discusses safe ways to send information about community supports home without arousing the suspicion of an abusive individual.

11. Informing the Abused Woman about Safety

Alison Cunningham, Director of Research, Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System, offers ways for educators to provide support to a mother or care-giver who has disclosed abuse:

- Provide a safe climate.
- Listen with respect.
- Provide support for children in the classroom.
- Assure confidentiality.
- Avoid pressure.
- Suggest a safety plan.

12. Providing Support for the Next Step

Linda Baker, Executive Director, Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System reminds the educator that the key is to give information, not advice, so that the woman can take action when she is ready to do so.

13. Knowing Essential Community Resources

In this segment, the services of two community resources – Assaulted Women's Helpline and Springtide Resources – are described.

For information about these and other community resources, see *Appendix III*.

14. Information about Women's Shelters

The Sheltersnet website connects abused women to safe places in their community. For information about this website, see *Appendix III*.

15. Provincial Resources

The Ontario Women's Directorate provides a variety of resources on violence against women. For information about this website, see *Appendix III*.

16. Reflections on Educators' Community Connections

Principal Patrika Daws highlights various functions that a school can play in providing community supports to woman in abusive situations.

17. Lancaster Hub – A Success Story

A Community Outreach Worker introduces the Lancaster Hub as a preventative program that draws on the strength of the community to prepare children for their entry into school. The program helps to build relationships between the school and community and offers a safe place for women experiencing abuse to access resources.

18. Further Involvement in the Issue

Principal Patrika Daws comments on how educators can be involved with the issue of woman abuse and ending the violence against women.

19. Feeling Confident about Helping

Paula Bourne, Chair, English-language Expert Panel for Educators, closes with a reminder of the supports outlined throughout this module and the various ways in which educators can offer assistance to a woman experiencing abuse.

APPENDIX I.A (Module Two: Strategies and Identification)

Key Aspects of Development in Junior and Senior Kindergarten

DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONE	INDICATOR
<p>Teacher #1: The child in kindergarten learns how to express aggression and anger as well as other emotions in appropriate ways.</p>	<p>Teacher #2: A child of the same age who is witnessing violence in the home may be learning unhealthy ways of expressing anger and aggression, and may be confused by the conflicting messages between home and school.</p>
<p>Teacher #1: The developmental milestone for kindergarten age is for the child to think in egocentric ways.</p>	<p>Teacher #2: So children who are thinking egocentrically will then likely attribute violence witnessed in the home to something they have done.</p>
<p>Teacher #1: A kindergarten child forms ideas about gender roles based on social messages.</p>	<p>Teacher #2: The same child, if living with woman abuse, learns gender roles associated with violence, victimization and patriarchal ideology from what they see in the home.</p>
<p>Teacher #1: The average kindergarten child demonstrates increased physical independence.</p>	<p>Teacher #2: Instability in the home may inhibit the child's independence, and therefore the educator may see regressive behavioural indicators.</p>

APPENDIX I.B (Module Two: Strategies and Identification)

Key Aspects of Development in Primary and Junior Divisions

DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONE	INDICATOR
<p>Teacher #1: The developmental milestone in primary and junior grades is an increasing emotional awareness of themselves and other people.</p>	<p>Teacher #2: Children between six and eleven years exhibit more awareness of the ramifications of violence in the home. They may demonstrate concerns about the mother's safety or about the father being charged.</p>
<p>Teacher #1: Primary and junior students have more complex understandings about what is right and wrong and increase their emphasis on concepts of fairness and intent.</p>	<p>Teacher #2: Children living with violence may be more susceptible to adopting rationalizations heard in the home or elsewhere to justify the violence. They may say, for example, that alcohol causes violence or that the victim deserved the abuse.</p>
<p>Teacher #1: The primary and junior student demonstrates that his/her self-concept is primarily based on academic and social success at school success.</p>	<p>Teacher #2: Where there is abuse in the home, a child's ability to learn may be decreased. Their concept of themselves may be impacted because they may disregard positive statements, be distracted or evoke negative feedback.</p>
<p>Teacher #1: Students in the same age group exhibit increased identification with other people of the same sex.</p>	<p>Teacher #2: A child aged six to eleven years may learn specific gender roles from witnessing woman abuse in the home; for example, that males are abusers and females are victims.</p>

APPENDIX I.C (Module Two: Strategies and Identification)

Key Aspects of Development in Adolescents in Grades Seven and Eight

DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONE	INDICATOR
<p>Teacher #1: Adolescents in grade seven and eight have an increased sense of selves and autonomy from the family.</p>	<p>Teacher #2: The student in grade seven or eight who has witnessed abuse in the home may demonstrate poor development of family skills such as respectful communication and negotiation. The transition to adolescence may be more difficult for the youth and for the family.</p>
<p>Teacher #1: Senior students experience the physical changes brought on by puberty.</p>	<p>Teacher #2: With these changes, the adolescent may try to physically stop the violence and may use intimidation or aggression to impose his or her will.</p>
<p>Teacher #1: Adolescents may demonstrate the power of increased peer group influence and desire for acceptance.</p>	<p>Teacher #2: Since the desire for acceptance is so important at this age, the student may be embarrassed by violence at home and may try to escape the situation by spending increased time away. The adolescent may use maladaptive coping behaviours to avoid the violence such as substance abuse.</p>
<p>Teacher #1: The senior student learns about sexuality, intimacy and relationship skills; issues that are raised by an interest in dating.</p>	<p>Teacher #2: Having witnessed violence in the home, the student may have difficulty establishing healthy relationships. The student may be at greater risk of acting out gender roles stereotypes which may include violence involving the opposite sex.</p>
<p>Teacher #1: Senior students exhibit an increased influence of media.</p>	<p>Teacher #2: The student who is exposed to woman abuse in the home may be more influenced by negative media messages about violent behaviour and gender role stereotypes.</p>

APPENDIX II (Module Four: Duty to Report)

Information Needed for the Report

- The name of the school, child and parents.
- The parents' address and phone numbers.
- The child's date of birth.
- The names and ages of siblings.
- The date and time of concern.
- The specific nature of concern and description of the allegation or incident.
- The type of child abuse suspected by the educator.
- A statement made by the child to the educator.
- Any other related information, including the name and position of the reporting person.

APPENDIX III (Module Five: Supports and Referral)

Assaulted Women's Helpline

Helpline offers crisis counselling and referrals for women needing a shelter, legal advice or other supports in multiple languages.

The helpline number is an essential piece of information to provide to any woman who is exposed to abuse. This telephone and TTY crisis line is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to help women in Ontario find local services. The hotline also takes calls from service providers and from friends and family members of abused women. In the Greater Toronto Area, the hotline number is (416) 863-0511; in the rest of Ontario, women can call tollfree: 1-866-863-0511. The TTY number is 1-866-863-7868. A Language Line service is also available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to enable women whose first language is not English to call and state the language in which they require service.

Further information is available at www.awhl.org.

Kids Help Phone

The Kids Help Phone number is 1-800-668-6868 and is a national toll-free, 24/7 bilingual help line. Children and teenagers can ask questions and speak anonymously with a counsellor about personal problems. Some children believe that use of a toll-free number such as Kids Help Phone will appear on the family telephone bill; it is important for educators to assure children that this is not the case.

Further information is available at www.kidshelpphone.ca.

Ontario Women's Directorate (OWD)

The OWD provides focus for government action on issues of concern to women – in particular, social, economic and justice-related issues. The OWD has two key areas of activity: preventing violence against women and promoting women's economic independence. The website contains a "Guide to Government Services for Women" as well as a variety of other useful resources on the topic of violence against women.

Further information is available at <http://www.citizenship.gov.on.ca>.

Shelternet

Shelternet is a website that connects abused women with shelters. Shelternet also provides a template for a safety plan for abused women and includes materials for children.

Further information is available at www.shelternet.ca.

Springtide Resources

Springtide Resources is a registered, non-profit charity dedicated to raising awareness of violence against women. The organization provides training and resources to decrease the incidence of physical, psychological, emotional, and sexual violence against women and the effect that woman abuse has on children. Individuals who cannot afford to pay for print resources will receive them from Springtide Resources for free.

Further information is available at www.springtideresources.com.