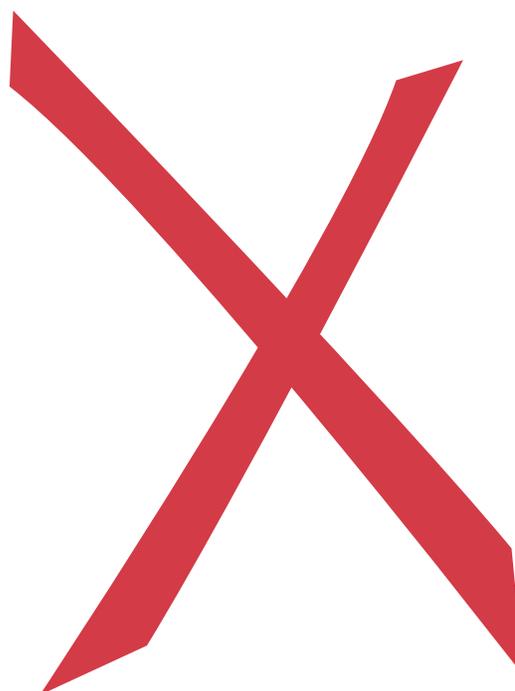


DO'S AND DON'TS FOR RESETTLEMENT ASSISTANCE SERVICE PROVIDERS

Canada has accepted 40,000 refugees since November of 2015. Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) centres have been established to aid with the successful integration of refugees. It is important to note that an individual or family who are refugees have a variety of different (and sometimes complex) experiences distinct from someone who is an immigrant. For example, an immigrant has left their home country to settle in another. A refugee, by contrast, is someone who has most likely left their home country due to fear, necessity, or in many cases due to violence and strife in their home country. RAP centres have been challenged with many facets that need to be addressed as they offer support to these families, one of which is the issue of intimate partner violence (IPV). Cultural influences, the effects of trauma and stress on refugees, language barriers, isolation, and other issues can complicate the experiences and circumstances of women and their families as they are resettling in a new country.

These organizations require increased awareness and capabilities to best serve refugee women in situations of IPV. IPV is in most cultures seen to be a private family matter. This document has been developed to support RAP centres to recognize, respond, and refer in situations where IPV has been suspected, witnessed or disclosed. It is meant to offer a reference list for what service providers can do and avoid doing to ensure that the refugee women receive the attention, support, and resources needed to manage the impact of IPV.



RECOGNIZE

DOS

What TO DO when exploring and identifying if a refugee woman might be experiencing intimate partner violence:

DO be aware of your own cultural (and other) biases. Cultural competence is key.

DO be aware of her native language, her level of English, and resources needed in this regard.

DO use simple, easy to understand language to facilitate communication wherever necessary.

DO talk with her when her partner is not present, preferably when she is alone.

DO understand that she may not admit to or talk about the violence that she is experiencing.

DO validate her feelings and experiences.

DO create a space that fosters respect, confidentiality, and self-determination.

DO assess and inquire about potential children at risk.

DO observe warning signs that might be present in individual, couple, or family interactions. See: rapworkers.com for resources, tools, and training.

DO express concern for her welfare if this is relevant.

DO familiarize yourself with signs of high risk.

DO encourage communication about her background, experiences, plans and support she needs.



DO regularly refer to information related to identifying intimate partner violence and maintain skills with respect to this issue. See: rapworkers.com for resources, tools, and training.

DO understand the impact of war on families including, in some cases, that violence has been normalized abused.

DO be cognizant of culture-specific abusive behaviours such as spreading rumors to dishonour the woman or threatening to destroy her passport.

DON'TS

What NOT TO DO when exploring and identifying if a refugee woman might be experiencing intimate partner violence:

DO NOT assign your biases to her or your own cultural bias regarding intimate partner violence. Cultural competence is key.

DO NOT ignore concerns or issues related to intimate partner violence.

DO NOT draw conclusions about what is going on.

DO NOT discount the various forms that violence might take. While physical violence could be life-threatening, other forms might impact refugee women and the family unit considerably.



DO NOT assume that it can't be that bad or she would tell someone and/or leave. Refugee women stay in a violent relationship for many reasons.

DO NOT make broad generalizations in situations. Her situation is unique.

DO NOT assume what she wants to do in any situation.

DO NOT use jargon or abbreviations or complicated language.

DO NOT ignore warning signs presented by children. They are often "hidden victims" or "silent witnesses" of intimate partner violence.

DO NOT judge her or her situation.

DO NOT act in the role of an expert in this area; be a supporter and facilitator for her well-being.

DO NOT feel as though you need to have all of the answers. Consult with colleagues and supervisors if you are unsure about what you are noticing.

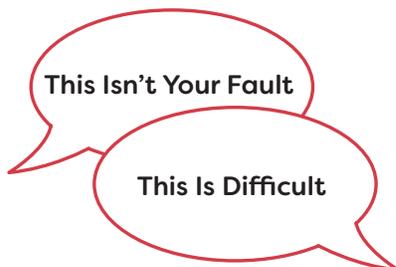
DO NOT minimize the signs of IPV even though she might rationalize or normalize the violence.

RESPOND

DOS

What TO DO in response to a refugee woman who is experiencing intimate partner violence:

- DO** build rapport with the woman and, if relevant, place value on her willingness to accept support.
- DO** assess for her immediate safety needs.
- DO** inform her of her rights in Canada
- DO** inform her that woman abuse is not tolerated in Canada and that many forms (ex. threats, physical assaults, sexual offences) are subject to charges under the Criminal Code of Canada.
- DO** be aware of your own biases regarding what has been witnessed and/or disclosed.
- DO** express that “this isn’t your fault”.
- DO** use active listening to facilitate trust and communication.



- DO** believe her.
- DO** use non-judgmental language.
- DO** ask open ended questions.
- DO** acknowledge that “this is difficult”.
- DO** observe hesitation and signs that might serve as non-verbal cues conveying essential information about her experience.
- DO** recognize and support her strengths.
- DO** respect her choices.
- DO** respond in a way that is consistent with the pace needed by the individual. Respecting this process is not condoning the violence. As a RAP worker it is important to understand that it can take time for a refugee woman to come to reflect on her situation and determine the course of action that she deems to be appropriate for her.

DON'TS

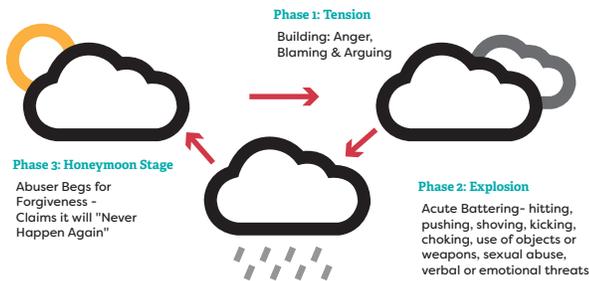
What NOT TO DO in response to a refugee woman who is experiencing intimate partner violence:

- DO NOT** inform the abuser that she is talking with you.
- DO NOT** ask why. This too often communicates blame for the violence.
- DO NOT** make decisions for her.
- DO NOT** begin by asking questions that may be too invasive. Use open ended questions and practice compassion as well as gentle exploration techniques.
- DO NOT** give advice.
- DO NOT** tell her what to do, including when to leave or to not leave.
- DO NOT** assume she has family or community support. Privacy may be important to her to prevent stigmatism and discrimination among her community.
- DO NOT** assume that she would prefer to seek support from within her cultural community.
- DO NOT** give out information about her without her consent (unless deemed necessary).
- DO NOT** assume she knows what options and resources are available.
- DO NOT** meet with her partner alone and in private should ANY safety concerns exist. Consult with your supervisor about the best ways to manage a response with him.
- DO NOT** give her partner any information about her whereabouts should she separate from him.
- DO NOT** accept his blaming her or other rationalizations for his behavior. The goal is to minimize escalation of his behaviour while maintaining your awareness that those who use violence need to be held accountable.
- DO NOT** confuse an apology or what appears to be remorse with changed behaviour. To do so could jeopardize her safety and indirectly support the behaviour to continue. Real changes often require intervention which addresses his personal frame of reference related to issues of power, gender roles, and cultural belief systems.

RESPOND

DOS

DO remember that a cycle of violence might occur and that past incidents do not necessarily indicate that the matter has improved. The cycle can continue over and over again giving hope to the refugee woman that things have changed.



DO inform her that it is possible for her basic needs to be addressed should she leave a partner who is/has been abusive towards her.

DO dispel myths if she has been threatened that she will be deported if she does not remain with her partner or that she will no longer receive funds except through him.

DO be aware that violence may be an accepted “norm” in her culture. Cultural and/or patriarchal norms could make it difficult to discuss or recognize abuse.

DO provide support and inquire about any informal supports she may have.

DO document any details: who, what, where, how that could be required as evidence for legal proceedings (as directed by the mandate of your organization and governing bodies).

DO develop, adhere, and evaluate organizational protocols for responding to intimate partner violence.

DO listen to and validate her experiences, which includes how she perceives IPV in her life. Provide her with information about the possible contrasts between her perception of IPV and legal implications related to IPV in Canada.

DON'TS

DO NOT assume that she wants to leave her partner. Due to the uncertainty of being in a new country coupled with the possibility of losses experienced throughout the resettlement journey, she may find a sense of security within her relationship and seek to protect herself (and children) from the risk of future difficulties, hardship, or losses.



DO NOT overlook other important items that will require a response. This includes the partner. As an organization, it is essential that a plan for responding to the person who has used abuse is established and executed.

DO NOT assume sole responsibility for these situations. Collaboration is key. Be sure to adopt best practices in all interactions and recognize that compassionate and responsive service standards might be all that you can contribute to any circumstance.

REFER

DOS

What TO DO when referring and/or engaging additional resources (and systems) for a refugee woman who is experiencing intimate partner violence:

- DO** have an interpreter available when necessary to assist with information sharing.
- DO** give written information in her native language.
- DO** help her to make a safety plan or elicit the assistance of a women's/intimate partner violence organization.
- DO** help her to learn about resources available to her.
- DO** help her to learn about her refugee status and ability to stay in the country.
- DO** help to find support groups or peer-based services in her community if any are available (if she is receptive).
- DO** help her to access financial and other resources that might be beneficial.
- DO** accept that she might not agree to access other services that have been discussed with her.
- DO** educate her on resources such as language, employment, driver's education and other resources that will assist her to become more self-sufficient.
- DO** request written consents (disclosure of information) to speak/refer to external organizations.
- DO** call ahead to any resources that she is being referred to ensure services are still available.
- DO** make a referral to an organization or specific person when she indicates that she wants assistance.
- DO** explain to her what will happen at any organizations you refer her to.
- DO** follow up with her, if possible.
- DO** support her in making her own decisions.

DON'TS

What NOT TO DO when referring and/or engaging additional resources (and systems) for a refugee woman who is experiencing intimate partner violence:

- DO NOT** be vague about existing resources. Explain how she can access the services and what you know about what might be involved.
- DO NOT** make decisions for her.
- DO NOT** make referrals without her permission.
- DO NOT** assume she wants to pursue legal action or other actions.
- DO NOT** forget about her family needs, such as children to care for, financial needs, isolation, and community support.
- DO NOT** criticize her for her choices.
- DO NOT** judge her cultural values.
- DO NOT** assume she wants to leave her partner.
- DO NOT** encourage or refer the woman and her partner to couples' counseling without consultation from a violence against women organization.
- DO NOT** give her written/print referral or resource information that might jeopardize her safety.



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