GWAC Protocol

A COLLABORATIVE COMMUNITY RESPONSE TO GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN GUELPH-WELLINGTON

GUELPH-WELLINGTON Action COMMITTEE on Gender-Based Violence

A heartfelt thank you to Kirsten Mercer, lawyer and strategic advisor, for her invaluable guidance, expertise, and generosity throughout the update and revision of our Community Protocol. This could not have happened without her thoughtful leadership and support. Thank you for helping us strengthen this important work for our community.

Land acknowledgment and responsibility

A territorial acknowledgement starts with the land. It is about acknowledging the land we reside on, and honouring the relationship between the land and the people living and thriving here long before settlers arrived. This land acknowledgement offers an opportunity to pay respect to ancestral and traditional territories, be mindful of our collective role as people who take care of land, and build awareness of present-day Indigenous Peoples and culture in our community. We are reminded that Guelph is situated on treaty land that is steeped in rich indigenous history and home to many First Nations, Inuit and Métis people today. We have a responsibility for the stewardship of the land on which we live and work. We acknowledge the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, of the Anishinaabe Peoples.

The offering of this land acknowledgment and responsibility statement is GWAC's commitment to honouring the relationship between Indigenous Peoples and the land, and our active commitment to decolonization in our service delivery and community capacity building. We commit to making this land acknowledgement and responsibility meaningful in our lives and our relationships with each other. We ground our work in social justice principles of collaboration, inclusion, and community-based care: these are foundational elements necessary to creating long-standing and effective change for a more equitable society for Indigenous Peoples.

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A Collaborative Community Response to Gender-Based Violence in Guelph-Wellington

A. About our Collaborative Community Response

1. Introduction

We are a partnership of community agencies and service providers dedicated to increasing the safety and well-being of all victims of gender-based violence.

2. Core Values

The shared work of the GWAC is built on a common foundation of core values that guide our collaborations. These values include:

A SHARED UNDERSTANDING, COMMITMENT AND COLLABORATION

We work together to reduce barriers to service, to identify gaps in service and to acquire the necessary resources to meet the needs of those who have been affected by gender-based violence.

NO "WRONG DOOR"

There is no "wrong door" for anyone seeking support related to gender-based violence in the Guelph-Wellington community. The community collaboratively responds to survivors of violence, and helps them find the supports they need.

PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION

We include education and programs to increase public awareness of gender-based violence in our community work. We implement early intervention strategies that prevent harm or reduce the threat of harm.

CHOICES AND OPTIONS

All survivors of violence are informed of their options and will make their own choices whenever possible. We respect, support and encourage survivors in their right to make informed decisions.

SAFETY

Safety is the first priority in our provision of services to those subjected to violence. All survivors have the right to live free from harm or threat of harm. Everyone deserves to trust that those working in justice, health and other sectors will respond if their safety is threatened.

ACCOUNTABILITY

All people should receive the services they need in a timely, coordinated, and responsive manner. Where abuse occurs, those who cause harm will be held accountable for their actions wherever possible through our legal and community systems.

EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

People of all races, cultures, economic status, abilities, genders, sexual orientation, ages and identities will be treated with equity and understanding. We acknowledge that systems of oppression affect a person's ability to access services, and that people from marginalized communities face additional barriers. Barriers are things that get in the way of a person's ability to get help. Barriers can be physical, implicit, financial, emotional, social or any combination of the above. We achieve equity by providing services and interventions that proactively remove or reduce access barriers wherever possible. We improve supports by taking leadership to ongoing learning about systemic and historical inequalities, existing inequities, and practices for inclusion.

ACCESSIBILITY

We work towards the elimination of barriers in accessing services, including barriers connected to language, ability to pay, age, geographic location and additional accessibility challenges.

3. Gender-Based Violence

Our shared work relates to community responses to gender-based violence, including intimate partner violence, sexual assault and human trafficking. These forms of violence include a wide array of conduct and can be understood as:

Intimate partner violence is defined as the intentional use of tactics to give a person power and control over their partner through the inducement of fear and/or dependency. The tactics used include physical/sexual assault, threats, isolation, economic deprivation, coercive control, and assumption of entitlement or privilege, entrapment, and attacks on the victim's personality and mind, all of which led to powerlessness, alienation, and loss of dignity.

Sexual assault is defined as any unwanted act of a sexual nature imposed by one person upon another (e.g. kissing, fondling, oral or anal sex, intercourse, or other forms of penetration). Sexual assault, no matter who is the causer of harm or the victim, is a criminal act. Sexual violence includes non-physical acts of sexual violation, such as sexual harassment and sexual grooming.

Human trafficking is defined as exploitation occurring through forced labour, forced sexual service or more than one of these. Human trafficking for sexual exploitation involves the use of force, coercion, deception, fraud and/or threats to exploit another for money or other valuables. While it can affect anyone, sexual exploitation through human trafficking is a crime that disproportionately affects women and girls.

Member agencies are all engaged in work to support survivors of gender-based violence and (in many cases) to prevent it.

4. GWAC Statement on Anti-Racism, Access & Equity

The Guelph-Wellington Action Committee on Gender-Based Violence (GWAC) is committed to rupturing anti-Indigenous, anti-Black racism, and all forms of systemic racism and oppression. This statement is a living document that affirms, recognizes, and acknowledges that the intergenerational legacy of colonialism on Indigenous Peoples and slavery on Black peoples in Canada and globally continues to have impacts. Colonialism has culturally, economically, socially, and politically disenfranchised and marginalized Indigenous, Black, and racialized women and gender-diverse people, whose lives continue to be impacted by all forms of violence. We acknowledge racism and continued racialization impacts responses to gender-based violence: this is evidenced, for example, by the ongoing struggle for justice for missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people (MMIWG2S+), and to social service responses for Black and Trans women who have experienced sexual violence. This statement is a reflective acknowledgement and commitment to recognizing that intersectional identities (race, class, gender, sexuality, disability, and language, for example) impact the way in which Indigenous, Black, and racialized women and gender-diverse people access and receive gender-based violence services. We are committed to divesting from all iterations of white supremacy, and we acknowledge that forms of systemic racism and oppression continue to create barriers to services in our communities.

Our journey:

We commit to engaging in recognizing, challenging and rupturing systemic racism and oppression alongside our member agencies. We welcome cross-sectoral collaboration with other agencies that provide services to women and gender-diverse people.

- We **ACKNOWLEDGE** that Canada is a country founded on white supremacy, and that racism exists and continues to harm Indigenous, Black, and racialized communities.
- We **ACKNOWLEDGE** that the legacy of colonialism and slavery have long-lasting detrimental impacts on Indigenous, Black, and racialized communities.
- We **AFFIRM** and **VALIDATE** Indigenous, Black, and racialized members of our communities who have unique experiences of racism and oppression, and who continue to experience intersectional oppression and systemic racism in different ways when accessing services and in their daily lives.
- We **COMMIT** to **AMPLIFYING** the work, voices, and perspectives of Indigenous, Black, and racialized women and gender-diverse people, and to developing policies and practices that foster a culture of anti-racism in our committee.
- We **COMMIT** to the ongoing participation in workshops, facilitations and sharing of resources that support our members in their journeys towards eradicating racism and oppression in their agencies.
- We **COMMIT** to mindfully and **ACTIVELY** promoting and celebrating the work of Indigenous, Black, and racialized members of our respective agencies.

- We will **NOT** rely on the intellectual and emotional labour of Indigenous, Black and racialized people to do this work.
- We **COMMIT** to ongoing **EVALUATION** of our policies and practices to be accountable for our hiring practices, service provisions, and client-care.

Our work in eradicating anti-Indigenous, anti-Black racism and all forms of systemic racism and structural oppression will not happen overnight. We are committed to this journey of equity, recognizing that this work is a marathon, rather than a sprint. We recognize that we will make mistakes along the way, and we are accountable for our actions and words. We acknowledge the ways in which we have been complicit in forms of oppression, and we choose to be accountable to Indigenous, Black, and racialized women and gender-diverse people. We choose to take an active role in the fight against systemic racism and oppression. We make this commitment and ask others to take this journey with us.

B. The Protocol

1. Background

The Guelph-Wellington Community Response Protocol for Gender-Based Violence establishes a collaborative approach across agencies, organizations and sectors for supporting survivors of gender-based violence. It outlines best practices for organizations and individuals who may directly or indirectly come to work with people victimized by gender-based violence.

Collaboration is at the heart of this Community Protocol and it is the commitment that we are making to each other, and to the community we serve. Gender-based violence is complex, and no single sector can meet all of the complex and diverse needs of survivors. Communication is common. Coordination is better. But **TRUE COLLABORATION**, the kind that transforms systems and improves outcomes, is rare, demanding, and essential. Collaboration calls us to share responsibility, align our efforts, and work together toward a common purpose: better outcomes and safer pathways for survivors.

This protocol challenges us to learn from the lessons of inquests, inquiries, commissions and our own tradition of working together to make a commitment to true collaboration. We will move beyond working in parallel and instead work in partnership.

By communicating openly, coordinating intentionally, and collaborating meaningfully, we create the conditions where real change and real safety can happen, ensuring that every survivor receives a seamless, consistent, and trauma-informed response, no matter where they first turn for help.

This commitment to collaboration is especially critical for the sectors who serve on the front lines every day: violence-against-women services, child welfare, victim services, police, hospital and allied partners. When these core sectors work closely and purposefully together with clarity about the roles of each agency, we close the gaps, we reduce harm and we strengthen the community's ability to respond.

This protocol is a collective promise to communicate courageously, coordinate intentionally, and collaborate fully so that survivors of gender-based violence receive our very best every time, from every door.

This Protocol was developed by the Guelph-Wellington Action Committee on Gender-Based Violence (GWAC). The Committee represents a variety of sectors that come into contact with survivors of violence. These include: education, health, community counselling services, crisis services, gender-based violence services, child protection services, and services connected to legal systems, such as court and police services. The Protocol itself is intended to serve as a best practice guide for all organizations in the City of Guelph and Wellington County, and as a resource for the entire community, while also guiding the collaborative work of the GWAC.

2. HOW WE WORK: A Consistent, Caring and Effective First Response

We know that by taking steps to provide a safer situation for those who come forward to seek help from individuals and organizations in our community, we can improve the outcomes and increase the chance of a successful intervention and helps a survivor of violence find support. It can also help to prevent further violence.

Some of the best practices that should be included when a survivor is making an initial disclosure include:

- Meet with survivor in a place that is private and safe.
- Listen to their story in a respectful and non-judgmental manner.
- Describe services and other types of assistance (i.e. counselling, legal, health or police services) that the survivor might find helpful.
- Where relevant, identify any potential implications (i.e. limits to confidentiality) if the person accepts services.
- Provide information about other community services.
- Provide the opportunity to ask questions.

A consistent, caring and effective first response consists of three primary components:

1. Explaining Confidentiality and Informed Consent

Having a sense of trust in the confidentiality of their information is vital to the safety of survivors and to their sense of control over their personal information. The limits of confidentiality – that is, what can be held in confidence and what cannot – must be explained as well to safeguard the trust between a survivor and someone seeking to provide support them.

While service providers can ensure confidentiality in many instances, the limits to confidentiality include:

- A worker's requirement to notify F&CS of children at risk of experiencing harm, as outlined by the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act.*
- Where there is a significant probability of risk to themself or others.
- Information a client provides is kept in a file within that agency may be shared with other workers in the agency in some circumstances.
- In the health care system, some patient information may be shared with their family doctor, and may be available to laboratory services and other members of their

healthcare team.

- In general, information gathered is protected under relevant privacy legislation and will only be disclosed with the client's consent.
- If the client's file is subpoenaed in a legal proceeding, the agency must produce the file as required by law.
- When an individual is charged, police information is shared with the Crown Attorney, defence lawyer and court, and that disclosure (including information about the victim) is not dependent upon consent or subpoena.

Information sharing can also improve the delivery of services and supports to survivors and the collaboration among agencies. However, consent is usually required to share information with other service providers. Seeking this informed consent empowers survivors to understand processes, and enables community partners to collaborate.

The process of seeking informed consent should be clear and respectful. The service provider should allow enough time to complete forms with the client. The principles of informed consent require that the consent form identifies:

- ✓ What specific information is to be disclosed.
- ✓ To whom the information will be disclosed.
- ✓ For what purposes the information is to be disclosed.
- ✓ Any special instructions the woman wishes to be included.
- ✓ A time limit.
- ✓ The right to have independent legal counsel.
- ✓ An authorizing signature.

For more information about sharing information in situations of intimate partner violence, refer to the resource developed by the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario: https://www.ipc.on.ca/sites/default/files/documents/2024-05-29--sharing-information-in-situations-involving-intimate-partner-violence-guidance-for-professionals.pdf

2. Safety Planning and Risk Assessment

When there is a disclosure of gender-based violence, the safety of the survivor and/or their children is of primary importance. The goal of safety planning and the use of risk assessment tools is to empower survivors while increasing safety.

Effective safety planning should be specific to each situation and should take into account all areas of the survivor's life, including their home, their work, the children's school, the community and the individual's emotional safety, and whether the survivor has decided to

stay with or leave the partner. It is also important to consider the unique needs and barriers that certain groups face, such as the elderly, newcomers, those with disabilities and rural survivors of violence and their children.

Service providers should ask their client if they have previously completed a risk assessment and if so, check if the assessment needs to be updated to reflect changing circumstances. It is important to review and/or revise a safety plan regularly; abusive situations and risk factors can change quickly, and it is easy to forget elements of a safety plan when under stress. In addition, while safety strategies such as court orders can be helpful, they are not easily accessible to all and, when in place, do not guarantee safety.

3. Making Appropriate Follow-up Referrals

A critical aspect of these initial gender-based violence disclosures is the opportunity to offer information about appropriate follow-up referrals to local services.
These referrals may include describing that agency's services as well as other types of assistance (i.e. counselling, legal, health or police services) that the survivor might find helpful or may include providing information about other community services. Where possible, help to connect the survivor to a worker at the referred agency right away and take leadership in problem-solving potential barriers (i.e. transportation, financial costs) to accessing services.
Information about referrals should be framed as options for the survivor to consider. It is important to support the survivor's self-determination and ability to choose the next steps.
For more information about responding to initial disclosures, please see the Checklists provided in this Guide.

3. HOW WE WORK: Warm Transfers

Service providers in Guelph-Wellington represent a wide variety of sectors that may come into contact with survivors of violence, including: education, health, community counselling services, crisis services, gender-based violence services, child protection services, and legal system services.

Survivors of gender-based violence may access one service or multiple services. Frequently, the organization that a survivor reaches out to first may provide *some but not all* of the support that is needed. In many cases, a survivor may be supported by a variety of community organizations in the community to assist them with everything from safe housing, crisis counselling, legal advice or support in navigating immigration processes.

When an agency wants to connect a survivor with other agencies or service providers, a warm transfer is strongly encouraged. This means that, wherever possible, the individual making the referral takes proactive steps to ensure that the survivor is well supported and

feels safely able to access the services of the partner agency, rather than merely providing the survivor with the agency's contact information.

> To make warm transfers, service providers need to be able to be *aware of existing services* in the region that can help survivors of gender-based violence; and *able to successfully bridge* survivors to these services and supports.

How to Make a *Warm Transfer*:

- Tell the survivor that you know of another organization that may be able to help them address the problem they are facing: *"I know of an organization here in Guelph that may be able to help you with_____(name the problem or concern: i.e. housing, your children's safety, your family law rights) better than I can. Can I tell you a bit more about them?"*
- Talk through any fears about the agency you are referring to (or their service model) that the survivor may have.
- Support the person to understand the process (for example, intake, common wait times for services/first-time appointment) and what to expect.
- Dispel any misconceptions about the agency. This might include misconceptions about their service model, about information the survivor will be required to provide, or other concerns.
- Commit to bridge the survivor to the referred agency personally. This might mean attending an appointment along with them the first time they go; or being with them while you/they make the initial phone call.
- Help the survivor understand what relationship you may have with the referred agency: for example: what is their role in the community? Are they a member of GWAC or other committees you are on? Can you refer to workers/officer by name?
- Make clear that you have a relationship with/knowledge about the agency. If you do not, it might be helpful to contact the agency and talk to a frontline worker to gain some information first.
- When facilitating a warm transfer, remember that confidentiality is vital to a survivor's sense of control. Consent to share information with another service provider (or follow up on a survivor's experience with another agency) can enhance service provision. However, the process of informed consent must be clear and respectful. Always allow enough time to complete consent forms with a client, and to make sure they understand what the consent includes. Informed consent requires that the consent form identifies:
    - ✓ What specific information is to be disclosed.
    - ✓ To whom the information will be disclosed.
    - ✓ For what purposes the information is to be disclosed.

- ✓ Any special instructions the survivor wishes to be included.
- ✓ A time limit.
- ✓ An authorizing signature.
- ✓ An understanding of how they can change their mind.

- If you have the client's consent, tell the worker receiving the client/intake, or making the first-time appointment, that you will be following up to see how things went.
- Check in with the survivor about any access barriers (i.e. transportation, financial, language interpretation, other) ahead of their meeting with the referred agency. Wherever possible, help to reduce or remove these barriers.
- Follow up with the survivor after they attend the first appointment or make the first contact with the referred agency – how did it go?
- Offer debrief support to the survivor afterward. This is especially important when transferring the survivor to services at institutions or systems that they have fears about: for example, Family & Children's Services, legal supports, medical centre, Ontario Works, or police reporting.
- Offer follow-up advocacy if the survivor was disappointed, confused or has questions about their experience with the referred organization.

In addition: a few cautions about *warm transfer practices…*

- **Do not** give a survivor the worker's direct cellphone number or email, unless specifically instructed to do so by the worker. The staff person may not regularly check their email or voicemail (or have limited availability to do so), and this can cause delays in connecting the survivor to the organization.
- **Avoid choosing one ambassador, safe staff or "hero"** at a referring agency. It may seem like a good idea at the time but as staff members move on, switch positions in the agency, or go on vacation, choosing one "trusted" staff person can inadvertently lead to increased wait times, burnout or lack of succession planning.

4. HOW WE WORK: Collaboration for Community Safety

Our work is at its best when member agencies work across sectors in a collaborative manner, to keep our communities safer. As we continue to develop structures and methods to support and reinforce a collaborative approach, some practices are already well-developed. These institutions are the backbone of our integrated action on gender-based violence response and prevention in the Guelph-Wellington community.

High Risk Review Team

Intimate partner violence high-risk teams ("Teams") are comprised of a group of professionals committed to the management of high-risk cases. The goal of an intimate partner violence high- risk team is to have mechanisms in place to ensure that cases deemed

high risk are managed effectively and proactively, where possible. The Team is comprised of the Domestic Violence Assistant Crown Attorney, Victim/Witness Assistance Program Manager, Police, Probation and Parole Officer, the PAR Program Agency, and a Family and Children's Services Manager. In appropriate circumstances, non-criminal system agencies are also involved in the management of these cases.

In cases of gender-based violence that are engaged with the criminal legal system, the Team manages high-risk cases and meets monthly to review risk as it relates to accused person(s) who may cause serious harm or death to a survivor or survivors. The Team will:

- Facilitate a timely, coordinated, and effective criminal law response to high-risk intimate partner violence cases.
- Take a flexible, collaborative approach to enhancing public safety and the safety of survivors of intimate partner violence and their children through active case management, offender management, appropriate information sharing and the coordination of services for survivors.
- Develop a plan of action and actions for which each participating agency is responsible, with follow-up noted.

Community agencies participating in the Guelph-Wellington Action Committee may make a referral for review and consideration by the Team. Contact the Team for more information.

Community Partner Consultations

Service providers may want to meet formally to collaboratively deliver effective follow-up and support to survivors by calling a Community Partner Consultation (CPC). A CPC may be called at any time by community partners and are particularly useful when a high-risk case emerges that has no criminal system involvement.

CPCs may be initiated by any community partner or service provider to review cases and share information in ongoing high-risk situations, to advocate for a client and assist them in taking control of their life whenever possible, and to support their efforts to protect themselves and their children. Consultations may also be used to identify and advocate for strategies that hold the offender accountable and to review and evaluate the intervention and outcomes. It is a particularly useful tool for complex cases.

The survivor should always be asked for consent to hold a community partner consultation. If they do not consent, a consultation may take place without sharing identifying information. The survivor will be invited to attend the consultation with a support person if they choose. If they decline, they can be invited to present their comments in writing.

The agency initiating the CPC will gather and complete all signed consent forms and will chair the CPC meeting, which will include recording and distributing any action plan to the survivor, if they choose, and to all members present at the CPC.

Guelph Wellington Anti-Human Trafficking Table (GWAHTT)

The Guelph-Wellington Anti-Human Trafficking Table (GWAHTT) is a collaborative network of service providers, community organizations, and law enforcement partners committed to preventing and responding to human trafficking and sexual exploitation in Guelph and Wellington County.

The GWAHTT works to identify and respond to children and youth (up to age 25 years) at risk of, currently engaged in, or with lived experience of human trafficking. The goal of the GWAHTT is to ensure a coordinated, barrier-free response that promotes safety, well-being and improved outcomes. The Table also seeks to increase awareness of the available resources to ensure timely referrals and support.

The GWAHTT understands Human Trafficking as including (but not limited to) sex trafficking, drug trafficking, child exploitation, labour trafficking and fraud.

GWAC Education Sub-Committee

The Education Sub-Committee brings together partners from across the community to lead coordinated awareness efforts on gender-based violence. Each year, the Committee dedicates resources from our shared workplan to strengthen public education on gender-based violence. By combining diverse expertise and perspectives, we create unified, impactful campaigns that reflect the complexity of these issues and promote a consistent, community-wide message. This collaborative approach ensures our awareness work is stronger, more strategic, and better aligned to support safety and prevention.

To collaborate with the Education Sub-Committee, contact the Action Committee Coordinator at actioncommitteecoordinator@gmail.com.

5. HOW WE WORK: Core GBV Services in our Community

Survivors of GBV regularly interact with service providers across many sectors in our community. This section of the Protocol highlights the unique roles of each sector and some of the agencies and organizations within them. While an organization's mandate may include activities beyond the delivery of GBV services, these descriptions highlight the organization's services that relate to supporting survivors of gender-based violence.

LEGAL AND CRIMINAL SECTOR

Sector:	**Agency**:	**Role:**
LEGAL	Guelph Police Service	Adequate and effective policing must include: crime prevention, law enforcement, assistance to victims of crime, maintenance of public order, and emergency response.

Services & Commitments:

The Guelph Police Service investigates *Criminal Code* offences and other Acts. For example, police investigate assault, sexual assault, threatening death or bodily harm, forcible

confinement, criminal harassment, abduction, murder, breaches of court orders, and property-related offences.
A police investigation may involve interviewing witnesses/offenders, seizing physical evidence, collecting documentary evidence (e.g., court orders, medical records), taking photographs, and obtaining electronic information (e.g., text messages). If charges are laid, the accused person is entitled to see all the evidence gathered by police, with a few exceptions (e.g., the identity of a confidential informant).

- If a criminal offence is reported to police, the police are required to investigate.
- Where the Complainant and Subject are or were involved in an Intimate Partner Relationship and the investigation leads police to believe there are reasonable and probable grounds that an offence has been committed under the *Criminal Code* or another Act, police are mandated to lay the appropriate charges.
- Police investigate current or past/historical assaults and sexual assaults.
- Where an arrest is made, police will determine—based on legislation—whether the offender is released or held in custody pending a bail hearing. In both circumstances, upon release, conditions will be placed on the accused with the safety of the victim being a priority.
- Police provide information for all survivors about reporting to police and the supports available if/when they choose to do so.

Agency Notifications: Police will notify Family and Children's Services if children under 16 were present during the incident, or if either person involved has care of or access to children under 16.

NOTE: Once a charge has been laid by police, the Crown Attorney becomes responsible for decisions regarding the prosecution of the case. Police cannot withdraw charges. The Victim/Witness Assistance Program will support the victim/survivor throughout the court process. If children witnessed the incident, they may be required to testify; the Child Witness Centre will provide support and assistance.

Where a victim becomes aware of a breach of release conditions, police should be notified so the breach can be investigated.

Sector:	**Agency**:	**Role:**
LEGAL	OPP – Wellington Detachment	Investigate calls for service and enforce laws in the Province of Ontario.

Services & Commitments:
The Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) take a trauma-informed, victim-centred approach to intimate partner violence (IPV) and sexual assault investigations that focuses on understanding and responding to the impact of trauma. It means treating victims with dignity and respect,

communicating clearly, and reducing harm at every step of the process. When frontline OPP members attend a call for service that involves reports of IPV or sexual assault, their first priority is to ensure the safety of all people present and ensure the scene is secure. Then, a full and thorough investigation into the incident begins. During the investigation, the OPP member will offer information regarding the availability of support services in that community and offer to make a referral on behalf of the victim(s).

The OPP Victim Response Support Unit (VRSU) provides consultation and guidance on abuse-related investigations. To enhance frontline response to these incidents, the VRSU created a specialized program for the Detachment Abuse Issues Investigator (DAII) that includes deployed officers located in 70 detachments throughout the province. These specialized investigators provide additional expertise and guidance on abuse-related investigations and ensure victims receive the highest level of support. DAIIs are responsible for reviewing incidents involving abuse and monitoring compliance with legislative and policy requirements for their assigned area. DAIIs work closely with local community and justice partners to share information and ensure investigations are handled with excellence and consistency and actively participate in local meetings and committees with both internal and external stakeholders.

The OPP takes pride in ensuring victims of sexual assault and intimate partner violence, receive consistent, compassionate support, and that investigations are handled with excellence and consistency across the province. This approach helps build trust and ensures victims feel heard, supported and safe throughout their interactions with police.

Sector:	**Agency**:	**Role**:
LEGAL	CROWN ATTORNEY	The Crown Attorney prosecutes criminal charges. Crown counsel has a duty to ensure that the criminal legal system operates fairly to all: the accused, victims of crime, and the public. Crown counsel is required to act independently.

Services & Commitments:

Crown counsel is required to act independently. In a prosecution, the Crown often speaks to, consults with or requests information from the victim, but the Crown is not their lawyer.

Once charges are laid, the Crown Attorney will:

- Screen all files according to *Crown Policy Guidelines* provided by the Attorney General;
- Ensure that referrals have been made to VWAP, where appropriate.
- Conduct resolution discussions with defence counsel, that may involve discussing a guilty plea or an estimate for trial time, including considering input from victims either directly or through VWAP, Child Witness Centre or the police.
- Conduct trials.

- Ensure that victim impact information is provided to the court on sentencing, if available.
- Seek the appropriate conditions to protect the victim, witnesses and the public, (in consultation with VWAP) should the accused be released on judicial interim release (bail) or placed on probation.
- Meet with the victim before trial.
- Request pre-sentence reports or psychiatric assessment, where appropriate.

NOTE: Where personal medical/therapy records are sought by an accused at trial, victims can be provided with a free lawyer through the Ministry of the Attorney General, who will represent their interest. Information about this program is available through VWAP.
Survivors of gender-based violence may have access to independent legal advice through the Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic (up to 8 hours).

Sector:	**Agency**:	**Role**:
LEGAL	Victim Witness Assistance Program (VWAP)	Victim/Witness Assistance Program (VWAP) role is to provide information, assistance and support to victims of crime throughout the criminal court process. Victim/Witness Assistance Program helps the victim to increase their understanding of, and participation in, the criminal court process.

Services & Commitments:
If charges are laid, VWAP will:

- Establish contact with victim/survivor.
- Provide information and explanations about the criminal law process, including support with information about their case.
- Provides copies of public court documents (e.g., bail conditions, probation orders).
- Make referrals to community support services, where appropriate.
- Advocate for victim/survivor with the Crown Attorney or police about the case, including concerns regarding charges, resolution, and the needs of the victim/survivor.
- Seek input from victim/survivor when needed (bail conditions, resolution and sentencing), documents input and provides to the Crown Attorney for their consideration.
- Inform the victim about the outcomes of court appearances upon request.
- Provide information and support to prepare the victim/survivor to testify in court, including arranging the preparation meeting with the Crown (if required).
- Ensure victim/survivors are aware of their right to provide a Victim Impact Statement.
- Assist with preparation of a Victim Impact Statement.

NOTE: VWAP staff do not discuss evidence with victim/witnesses.

Sector:	**Agency**:	**Role**:
LEGAL	Child Witness Program	The Child Witness Program works with children and youth under the age of 18 who are victims or witnesses of a criminal offence.

Services & Commitments:

- Provide accurate information, support and assistance through each stage of the court process.
- Work with parents and other caregivers so they can support their child effectively throughout the process.
- Provide detailed court preparation on all aspects of a criminal trial and the child's/youth's role as a witness; addressing fears/concerns/anxieties; assessing the need for testimonial aids (e.g., screen, CCTV, support person, support dog) and advocating for these aids.
- Schedule and attending pre-trial meetings for the child/youth with the Crown Attorney.
- Accompany and supporting children during their testimony in the courtroom, CCTV room or remote testimony suite.
- Assist with preparation of a Victim Impact Statement.
- Provide post-court support, including explaining the verdict and sentence and providing information about government services (e.g., Victim Support Line, Correctional Service of Canada, Victim Quick Response Program +).
- Provide information about counselling services in the community and assist with referrals and warm transfers to these services.
- Advocate for and promote best practice procedures for child/youth victims and witnesses.

Sector:	**Agency**:	**Role**:
LEGAL	PROBATION & PAROLE	Probation and Parole Services is responsible for the supervision of adults on probation or conditional sentence orders issued by any criminal court, and adults on parole as determined by the Ontario Parole Board.

Services & Commitments:

- Supervise accused or parolees in the community, including adherence with conditions of release.
- Ensure vital, two-way information sharing to and from survivors, criminal complainants and those who may be at risk of harm.
- Information that can be provided to the victim about an adult offender includes:
    - If the offender is on probation/parole or has a conditional sentence.

- The release date, if the offender is in custody.
- The general geographic area of release from custody.
- The parole eligibility date.
- Conditions of the probation, parole or conditional sentence order.
- Additional condition(s) which specifically name the victim e.g., conditions not to contact or associate with the victim.

NOTE: Probation and Parole Officers (PPOs) must have a planned strategy for interaction not only with offenders but also with victims, police, courts, and programs for offenders.

HEALTH SERVICES SECTOR

Sector:	**Agency**:	**Role**:
HEALTH	Guelph-Wellington Care & Treatment Centre for Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence (SADVCTC)	The Guelph-Wellington Care and Treatment Centre for Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence (SADVCTC) is the regional centre for Guelph and Wellington County. The Centre provides medical, emotional and forensic care to all persons across the age span, including all sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions, who have experienced sexual violence or intimate partner violence or sexual exploitation through human trafficking.

Services & Commitments:
Individuals who have experienced gender-based violence can attend the Emergency Department of any of the area hospitals (Guelph General Hospital, Louise Marshall Hospital, Palmerston and District Hospital and Groves Memorial Community Hospital) and request the SADVCTC. The SADVCTC is located at Guelph General Hospital. Louise Marshall Hospital, Palmerston and District Hospital and Groves Memorial Community Hospital will make a referral to the SADVCTC.

- A trauma-informed Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner will meet with the person privately to provide crisis counselling and discuss options for care.
- The person will receive emotional support and information about the effects of trauma.
- The following care options will be offered:
    - A physical examination and assessment.
    - Treatment and documentation of injuries.
    - Sexually transmitted infection testing/treatment.
    - Pregnancy testing and emergency contraception.
    - A Sexual Assault Evidence Kit, which can be securely held for up to 12 months.

- Follow-up medical appointments and short-term trauma therapy.
- Emotional support for friends or family members.
- Warm referrals to appropriate community resources with consent.

In cases involving a child, a trauma-informed Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner with specialized pediatric training will meet with the child and their care providers.

NOTE: Physical injuries do not need to be present to access the SADVCTC. Services are voluntary and patient-centered.
All services are free and confidential.

Sector:	**Agency**:	**Role**:
HEALTH	The Homewood Centre	Homewood Health Centre's Community Addiction Services (CADS) offers outpatient counselling to anyone in Guelph and Wellington County who is seeking support with their substance use, overuse of technology, gaming, online shopping and/or gambling issues.

Services & Commitments:

- CADS is a confidential program that is tailored to meet client needs and includes group and individual therapy.
- Services are provided in-person, virtually and by telephone.

NOTE: Programs are also available for family and friends who may be concerned with their loved one's use of substances, gambling, gaming and/or overuse of technology.

Sector:	**Agency**:	**Role**:
HEALTH	Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health	Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health (WDGPH) is committed to protecting and promoting the health of individuals, families, and communities. WDGPH provides health information and services that support healthy behaviours and safe environments.

Services & Commitments

WDGPH continues to collaborate with community partners to ensure seamless transitions through various programs for individuals:

- free STI testing and treatment.
- anonymous HIV testing.
- immunizations for Hepatitis B, Hepatitis A, Human Papillomavirus (HPV), and Mpox.

COMMUNITY SERVICES SECTOR

Sector: COMMUNITY SERVICES	**Agency**: Guelph-Wellington Women in Crisis (G-W WIC)	**Role**: Guelph-Wellington Women in Crisis (G-W WIC) is a diverse, inclusive, feminist, community-based organization providing safety, advocacy, prevention, education and support for women and gender-diverse people impacted by violence.

Services & Commitments:

Guelph-Wellington Women In Crisis offers: support and information through the 24-hour crisis line, risk assessment, safety planning, emergency shelter access, individual counselling, group counselling and/or support groups, accompaniments to police, court, hospital and other appointments when available, assistance with victim impact statements, sexual harassment support and information, advocacy, support and referrals to other community supports, information on legal and medical options, support and information for family and friends of survivors, and GBV public education and training.

- Marianne's Place is a fully accessible 28-bed emergency shelter that offers temporary safe shelter for women, gender-diverse people and their children who are experiencing violence or abuse, including: physical, sexual, emotional, verbal and/or financial abuse, stalking, and/or human trafficking.
- The Rural Women's Support Program provides counselling and support services for women and gender-diverse people and their children living in rural Wellington County who have experienced Intimate Partner Violence, historical or current sexual assault, childhood sexual abuse, incest, harassment, stalking and/or human trafficking.
- The 24-hour Crisis Line provides information, support, safety planning and referrals for individuals impacted by gender-based violence. The Crisis Line also provides access to Marianne's Place shelter for those leaving Intimate Partner Violence or Human Trafficking.
- Transitional & Housing Support Program offers a range of services to women and gender-diverse people in the community who are impacted by gender-based violence and/or IPV presently or in the past.
- The Family Court Support Program assists women and gender-diverse people and their children navigate through the family court process.
- The Sexual Assault Centre offers long-term individual and group therapeutic trauma counselling to women and gender-diverse people who have been impacted by sexual assault, childhood sexual abuse, and/or incest or sexual harassment recently or in the past.
- The Anti-Human Trafficking Program offers individual supportive counselling to those who have experienced, at risk of experiencing or are currently experiencing Human Trafficking.

Sector: COMMUNITY SERVICES	**Agency**: Compass Community Services	**Role**: Compass supports individuals and families who have experienced family or sexual violence through psychotherapy and support services through telephone support, and psychotherapy offered in person, over the phone, and by video. (formerly Family Counselling & Support Services for Guelph-Wellington)

Services & Commitments:
Compass provides Individual and group psychotherapy services at no cost for adults and youth impacted by family or sexual violence.

Compass' services include psychotherapy services to people of all genders who have behaved in an abusive or violent manner, including: psychotherapy on relationship issues, parenting, family, anger management, trauma, mental health, and financial literacy.

- The VAW (Violence Against Women) program offers individual and group support for women who have been subjected to intimate partner violence.
- Partner Assault Response (PAR) is an intimate partner violence (IPV) initiative that delivers a specialized psycho-educational program to adults who have been mandated by the court to attend the PAR program in response to a criminal charge involving IPV or who are on probation or parole and have been abusive or controlling towards a partner. This program provides individuals with an opportunity to examine their beliefs and attitudes towards IPV and to learn healthy ways to resolve conflict and develop a healthy relationship.
- Child Witness program offers individual, family and group counselling for mothers wh o have been subjected to intimate partner violence and their children who have witnessed/experienced the abuse.
- Breaking Free: Better Choices + Better Relationships is a program for youth who have been subjected to or have witnessed violence. Breaking Free assists teens learn to break the cycle of abuse and violence so that they learn to make healthier choices for themselves.

Sector: COMMUNITY SERVICES	**Agency**: John Howard Society of Waterloo-Wellington	**Role**: John Howard Society of Waterloo-Wellington offers a number of prevention, intervention, educational and service programs to both adults and youth who are at risk of or are involved with the criminal system.

Services & Commitments:
John Howard Society of Waterloo-Wellington (JHSWW) takes a holistic and broad approach to crime prevention that assumes a myriad of factors contribute to crime, including social and

community factors. John Howard Society staff use trauma-informed, client-centered and strengths-based approaches addressing the root causes of crime premised on the belief that diverse prevention services help build healthy neighborhoods, communities and citizens.

- Mindful Masculinity is a program for boys and young men ages 12 to 17 to take ownership of their identities, explore their masculinity and their role as an ally in their communities. Participants gain a deeper understanding of the origins of gender-based violence and develop skills that reduce risk factors for GBV and are effective in developing violence-free healthy relationships.
- Respectful Relationships provides age-appropriate prevention programming to classes from Grades 5 through to 12. This inclusive program is delivered to instill healthy gender roles in relationships and equality. In the program de-humanizing societal norms are deconstructed. Understanding of abusive and misinformed language is increased. Empathy and support strategies are enhanced for helping peers who experience gender-based bullying and/or harassment. The program is initially delivered in four classroom-based sessions (usually one period a week for four consecutive weeks) and followed up with one classroom-based session near the end of the school year, all with the teacher present.
- Partner Assault Response Program (PAR) is a specialized educational/counselling program for individuals who have been physically violent, emotionally abusive and/or controlling towards their intimate partner. Participants learn to recognize and change abusive behaviours while developing the skills for mutually supportive healthy relationships.
- Guelph Bail Verification and Supervision Program staff provide the courts verified, neutral and factual information about an accused person such as address and place of employment while assisting individuals in addressing various issues including mental health, addictions, housing, employment and interpersonal supports while awaiting trial/resolution. Advocacy, support and collaboration with other community agencies on behalf of clients is consistently part of the bail process, as well as monitoring release conditions to help ensure individuals are following court directed Release Orders. Referrals are made directly from crown, duty counsel or defense counsel.

NOTE: Youth gender-based violence programming is provided without charge.
PAR programming is provided where court-mandated and is available as a fee-for-service program.

Sector: COMMUNITY SERVICES	**Agency**: Victim Services Wellington	**Role**: Victim Services Wellington provides on-site emotional and practical support to victims of crime and tragic circumstance throughout Guelph and Wellington County.

Services & Commitments:

- Provide support to victims on-scene 24-7 through emergency services. Self referrals and community partners can also refer during business hours.
- Deliver emotional and practical assistance.
- Needs assessments, risk assessments and safety planning in crisis situations to provide

support.

- Make referrals to appropriate agencies.
- Victim Quick Response Program (VQRP) can provide assistance to victims of gender-based violence. Assistance can include financial support for immediate needs in the aftermath of harm (e.g., counselling, crime scene cleanup and home safety needs, transportation, emergency expenses). *Eligibility criteria must be met.*
- Mobile Emergency Response System (MERS) is a personal tracking device that can be offered to high-risk victims of violence while at home or in the community 24 hours 7 days a week. The device has a panic button, which when activated, sends an SOS signal to an alarm company which then alerts the police to the client's location. Safety planning is done on an on-going basis with clients.

NOTE: Victim Services is available 24/7 to provide emergency services.

Sector: COMMUNITY SERVICES	**Agency**: Elora House	**Role**: Elora House provides residential care and support for adult survivors of human trafficking.

Services & Commitments:

Elora House is a long-term, residential safe home located in a confidential setting, providing secure accommodations, supportive programming, and restorative care in a welcoming and peaceful environment. Elora House supports up to five women at a time, ages 18 years and older, who are survivors of human trafficking.

Elora House's work is grounded in core values that guide everything we do: collaboration, balance, strong communication, gratitude, and empowering residents to develop a healthy sense of self, autonomy, and confidence.

Therapeutic Support: Clinical care is a foundational component of residential programming at Elora House. Residents receive stabilization and healing through regular Trauma Therapy, Art Therapy, and an Equine Assisted Learning Program. Each resident works collaboratively with a Clinical Trauma Therapist to develop an Individualized Clinical Treatment Plan, ensuring care is trauma-informed, personalized, and responsive to each woman's needs and goals.

Programming: Elora House follows a three-stage residential program designed to support long-term healing and sustainable independence.

Stage One – Rest: The first stage focuses on rest and stabilization. Recognizing common experiences such as displacement and sleep or food deprivation, residents prioritize health and wellness through routine, consistency, and balance with supports for daily routines as well as healing and restoration.

Stage Two – Rebuild: Building on Stage One, Stage Two focuses on developing life skills, healthy routines, and preparing for life beyond human trafficking. We support residents with housing searches, accompaniment to court, police, or hospital appointments, and assistance with continuing education and résumé development. Residents also have opportunities to volunteer,

explore employment options, and gain work experience, and are supported in continuing on education pathways.
Stage Three – Restart: Stage Three supports the transition to independent living, including case management, mentorship, support with appointments, limited financial assistance, and continued access to therapy coverage for a defined period, helping ensure stability and long-term success.

Sector: COMMUNITY SERVICES	**Agency**: Stepping Stones	**Role**: Stepping Stones provides housing support services to adults and families in Guelph and Wellington County.

Services & Commitments:
Stepping Stone supports adults, seniors and families that are homeless or at risk of homelessness in Wellington-Guelph to move towards housing stability, increased health/wellbeing and being part of a community in which they belong. Stepping Stone has provided services to the homeless since 1985, and their work has become increasingly important over the years. This is due to the growing numbers of community members that are experiencing homelessness along with the complexity of health and social wellbeing struggles that individuals are facing in their housing stability journey. Presently, Stepping Stone provides 4 core services:

1. Shelter Services to those already experiencing homelessness**.** Across 4 sites, they provide shelter services to adults (aged 25+) and seniors along with families, including overnight emergency shelter, 24/7 Housing Focused Supportive shelter (accommodates couples and pets), and a family shelter program.
2. Day Space Programming: drop-in day space open Monday-to-Friday, 8 am - 2 pm and Saturdays, 8 am - 8 pm offering meals, showers, and a space for community and belonging to those experiencing homelessness, but also for those in the community who are socially isolated or precariously housed.
3. Transitional and Permanent Supportive Housing Programs. Stepping Stone operates two supportive housing facilities for individuals who have historically experienced chronic homelessness. They offer 24/7 support provided by Stepping Stone staff, supplemented by health and support service partners including CMHA, Stonehenge, Homewood, SOAHAC, DSO, GCHC, and Paramedical services.
4. Housing-Focused Community Team (Prevention & Diversion Program, Housing-Focused Outreach Program & Housing Stability Program). These programs reduce new inflows into homelessness, increase outflows from homelessness, reduce chronic homelessness, and reduce returns to homelessness for people both in Guelph and in Wellington County.

Sector: COMMUNITY SERVICES	**Agency**: Crime Stoppers Guelph Wellington	**Role**: CSGW offers an anonymous and confidential method of reporting crime.

Services & Commitments:

Crime Stoppers Guelph-Wellington (CSGW) offers an anonymous and confidential method of reporting crime. It is not the police. This allows members of the public to report crime without having to speak directly to police or having to testify in court.

Tipsters cannot be victims of the crime they are reporting. However, victims of gender-based violence may have information about criminal activity and feel uncomfortable reporting this information through conventional channels. The anonymity and confidentiality of Crime Stoppers is an ideal option for them.

CSGW is active in community safety and crime prevention. Along with the ability to forward Tips to investigative agencies, CSGW offers free presentations on a number of topics, including:

- Crime Stoppers 101 – this presentation covers the Crime Stoppers origin story. It details the process of providing a Tip and explains the role Crime Stoppers has in the community. It also dispels many misconceptions including the fact that Crime Stoppers is NOT the police. Crime Stoppers 101 is customized for a youth audience as well as seniors.
- Cyber Safety & Human Trafficking Awareness – This program provides awareness education to combat the lack of understanding of this issue, providing helpful information about what to look out for to prevent youth from being victimized, and to empower the community to report crime anonymously and confidentially. This presentation is delivered in an age-appropriate manner, depending on the audience demographic.
- 5 Tips, 5 Ideas, 5 Signs – 5/5/5 came as a response to parents/guardians who either didn't understand the connection between Human Trafficking and Cyber Safety or didn't think their child was being engaged online. "5 Tips on How to Talk to Kids about Cyber Safety & Human Trafficking", "5 Ideas on How to Keep your Child Cyber Safe and Human Trafficking Aware" "5 Signs your Child is being Groomed" are simple, direct tools for parents/guardians.
- Fraud Talk – This presentation is geared to all audiences as fraud impacts everyone. The purpose of Fraud Talk is to start a conversation about the types of fraud in our community, how to stop a fraud from happening to you, how to support victims of fraud and to remove the stigma so victims will come forward and get the support they need.
- No Room For Hate - This program tackles the increase in Hate Incidents and Hate Crimes in society today. Messaging will be age appropriate and designed to break down the complexities of Hate Crime as well as the criminal definition of Hate Crime.

CHILD PROTECTION SECTOR

Sector: CHILD PROTECTION	**Agency**: Family & Children's Services of Guelph and Wellington County (F&CS)	**Role**: F&CS is the mandated Children's Aid Society to protect children and youth from abuse and neglect in our community.

Services & Commitments:

Child protection investigations are initiated within 12 hours or 7 days of a report (depending on the severity of the reported concerns) and include: private interviews with the children, interviews with each parent, assessment of the home and as required, information from other community service providers who may be involved with the children and family. Private interviews with the children usually take place in the home with parental permission, however when deemed necessary for child safety and the integrity of information these interviews may take place without parental permission and outside of the family home. If we receive a report and, based on the severity of the information or the level of harm (or risk of harm) to the child, the situation may warrant police involvement and potentially a joint police investigation.
Where a child has experienced or witnessed gender-based violence or is at risk of being trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation, F&CS has a responsibility to investigate, and will assess the harm, safety and overall impact to the child (age 0-17).
Safety planning occurs with the family to address any immediate safety concerns for the children and to develop ongoing plans that reduce the potential for future abuse or harm. If a safety plan can be established with the parent(s)/caregiver(s)within the course of the investigation, the file will close.
In families where there continue to be safety concerns placing children at risk, the file will transfer to ongoing services. The family will be supported by an assigned child protection worker to address the ongoing worries. Ongoing services include safety planning with identified support networks to ensure there are family, friends and professionals aware of the worries and supporting the family and children. Additional parenting supports are offered through F&CS such as Caring Dads and Circle of Security groups and work with Clinical Support workers. Where appropriate F&CS will make referrals to community partners for support. Where possible, F&CS uses Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR) processes, such as child protection mediation or family group conferencing, as supportive approaches to collaboratively address child safety concerns and support timely and sustainable permanency planning. Workers attend the home monthly (or more frequently based on risk) for in home private visits with the children and caregiver. Should it be determined that a child is not safe to remain in the care of the parent, we will work with the parent and their network to safety plan for their child/ren to be placed with an alternative caregiver within their network (kinship services) or foster care.

NOTE: F&CS cannot make changes to parenting agreements or parenting time without the consent of both parties or a court order. In addition, any matter brought forward to court by F&CS proceeds in CYFSA Court rather than Family Court.

MUNICIPAL SECTOR

Sector:	**Agency**:	**Role**:
MUNICIPALITY	City of Guelph	Community Safety Planning and emergency service provision

Community Plan: Starting in 2018, the City brought together over 14,000 community members to develop A United Vision: Guelph's Community Plan (Community Plan). The Community Plan identifies seven theme areas intended to be aspirational north star priorities for local organizations serving the community. The Community Plan was last updated in 2024 and includes addressing the impact and underlying causes related to gender-based violence.
Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan: The City of Guelph plays a convening role in preparing and monitoring a Community Safety and Well-being Plan (CSWB Plan) for Guelph. The CSWB Plan is developed in collaboration with multi-sector partners and interested community members to establish a shared agenda on the risks affecting community safety and well-being. This collective approach supports coordinated community action across Guelph. In 2026, the City of Guelph will submit an updated CWSB Plan to City Council and the Province and expects to include gender-based violence and exploitation as a priority risk area.
Community Investment: Through the City's Community Investment program, the City provides a variety of funding and grant opportunities to local organizations and groups working on a range of intersecting areas.
Emergency services: The City provides fire services in Guelph and paramedic services in Guelph and Wellington.

Sector:	**Agency**:	**Role**:
MUNICIPALITY	County of Wellington	In addition to providing Ontario Works and various municipal services, the County is responsible for the administration and funding of over 3000 subsidized social housing units.

Services & Commitments:
Ontario Works: The Ontario Works Program provides financial support payments to those residing in Ontario. Financial assistance payments provide money for food and shelter for those in financial need who meet eligibility criteria. Recipients of Ontario Works financial assistance work with a case workers to determine appropriate community referrals as well as life stabilization and or employment participation goals.
Housing: The County of Wellington Housing Services owns and operates 1189 units of rent-geared-to-income (RGI) and 131 units of affordable housing in Guelph and throughout Wellington County.

- The Centralized Waiting List, which coordinates applications for subsidized housing, includes units owned by the County as well as those run by Non-Profit and Co-operative groups. Rent-geared-to-income and affordable housing is available for eligible individuals, couples, families and persons with disabilities and seniors.
- Special Priority Status may be given to social housing applicants whose personal safety (or that of a family member) is at risk because of abuse by an individual with whom they live or have lived within the past three months, or for applicants who are being trafficked or have exited trafficking within a period of three months or less.

NOTE: The waiting time for housing will vary depending on housing location chosen and the number of bedrooms needed.

EDUCATION SECTOR

Sector:	**Agency**:	**Role:**
EDUCATION	University of Guelph	Prevention and intervention programs to support student survivors of sexual and gender-based violence at the University of Guelph

Services & Commitments:
This program leads prevention and intervention programs to support survivors of sexual and gender-based violence at the University of Guelph, and to enhance the conditions and likelihood of personal and academic success. This includes ensuring appropriate coordination of care and individual support for students and communicating with appropriate partners, both on and off campus.
The office provides the following services:

- Coordinating accommodations, system navigations, safety planning, and referrals.
- Providing preventative education and training to the University of Guelph campus community which includes students, staff and faculty.

Services are trauma-informed, anti-oppressive, survivor-centric, and rooted in harm-reduction philosophies.
SGBV Support Coordinators: The Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Support Coordinators work with survivors in coordinating support and resources following experiences of sexual and gender-based violence. They also provide consultation services to faculty and staff responding to disclosures of sexual violence.
Note: Anyone can refer a friend or themselves to a Coordinator. You do not need to disclose or make a report to access support. Students are also welcome to bring a support person with them to the planning or support meeting.

Sector:	**Agency**:	**Role**:
EDUCATION	Upper Grand District School Board Wellington Catholic District School Board	To provide elementary and secondary school services to students in the community and to support families and caregivers.

Services & Commitments:

- Provide a safe, trusted environment where children and youth may disclose experiences of gender-based violence, recognizing schools as a key entry point to community supports.
- Ensure school staff are trained to recognize indicators of luring, grooming, sexual exploitation and sex trafficking, and to respond to disclosures in a consistent, caring, trauma-informed manner.
- Provide developmentally appropriate student education, including:
    - Anti–sex trafficking education for students in Grades 7 and 10, delivered in collaboration with Guelph-Wellington Women in Crisis (G-WWIC).
    - Evidence-based gender-based violence prevention programming, including training for Physical Education teachers delivered in partnership with G-WWIC.
- Provide equitable access to regulated school-based mental health services for elementary and secondary students, including:
    - Direct mental health support for students impacted by gender-based violence, sexual violence, or exposure to intimate partner violence.
    - Consultation, care coordination, and warm referrals to community partners (e.g., GWWIC, SADVCTC, Victim Services, F&CS, Police), with informed consent, to support timely and seamless access to specialized services.
- Fulfill legal duties to report suspected child abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, or exposure to intimate partner violence under the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act*, recognizing the heightened responsibility of professionals working closely with children and youth.
- Commit to identity-affirming practice, recognizing that intersecting identities (race, gender identity, disability, immigration status, socio-economic status) may increase vulnerability and create barriers to accessing support.

NOTE: Schools play a critical role in early identification, safety planning, and connection to community partners for ongoing support. School staff are often first recipients of disclosures related to gender-based violence, grooming, or trafficking.

6. HOW WE WORK: First Contact Checklists

IPV First Contact Checklist (January 2024)

Regardless of where or to whom a person discloses gender-based violence, it is important that they get a consistent and caring response. All service providers will follow the procedures outlined below in response to a disclosure of domestic violence/intimate partner violence. **Intimate partner violence** (IPV) is defined as: Any use of physical or sexual force, actual or threatened, in an intimate relationship, including emotional/psychological abuse or harassing behaviour. An intimate partner is a person with whom someone has or had a close personal relationship.

A consistent, caring and effective first response consists of:

- Explaining your agency/organization's limits of confidentiality.
- Establishing Safety.
- Providing support and options.
- Making the appropriate referrals to chosen options.

☐ **Explaining confidentiality**: I explained any limits to confidentiality; what could be held in confidence and what could not be held in confidence. E.g., "Our agency's limits of confidentiality are…"

☐ **Establishing safety**: I asked, "Are you in danger? Do you need help?"

☐ **Discuss options**: the following options were discussed, if required:

- Guelph-Wellington Women in Crisis: 519-836-5710 or 1-800-265-7233 (24-hour telephone and TTY support and referral line);
- Guelph General Hospital Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Care & Treatment Centre: 519-837-6440 x 42210 (24-hour service);
- Victim Services Wellington (Crisis Support Available 24/7 through Emergency Services): (519) 824-1212 x 7304;
- Guelph Police Service: 519-824-1212 or 911 (24-hour service) or
- Ontario Provincial Police (OPP): 1-888-310-1122 or 911 (24-hour service);

☐ **Providing support and appropriate referrals** to chosen options:

- I told the client, "I believe you, and I am glad you told me";
- I told the client that they have options, and there are people that can help;
- I support the client in contacting Guelph-Wellington Women in Crisis, if they choose.

☐ If children are involved, I contact Family and Children's Services as per my Duty to Report: 1-800-265-8300 x 0 or (519) 824-2410 x 0 (24 hr. service).

Things to consider when supporting survivors:

Intentionally bridging a survivor to the services they need, when they need it, can make a big difference. Survivors of violence do not always follow-up or make the call once they leave an appointment. In a crisis, survivors often feel overburdened with information and choices. They may not share concerns or ask for support. Here are some examples of how to bridge a client to another service (Warm Transfer), if possible:

- Tell the client you know of another organization that will be able to help them address the problem they are facing: "*I know of an organization here in Guelph that can help you*

with (name the problem or concern: i.e., housing, your children's safety, you family law rights) better than I can. Can I tell you a bit more about them?".

- Talk through any fears or hesitations the client may have about the agency you are referring to.
- Bridge the client to the referred agency personally. This might mean being present while they/you make the initial phone call, or attending the first appointment with them, if possible.
- Check in with the client about any access barriers (i.e., transportation, financial, language interpretation) ahead of their meeting with the referred agency. Help to reduce or remove these, wherever possible.

Sexual Violence First Contact Response Checklist (January 2024)

(includes Sex Trafficking)

Sexual violence is a broad term that describes behaviours and actions that are sexual in nature and are unwanted, coerced, and committed without consent. It can encompass a variety of acts and experiences and may also be known as sexual assault, rape, sexual abuse, exploitation, incest, date rape, and human trafficking. Sexual violence can also include sexual harassment and catcalling, indecent exposure, stalking, showing or distributing demeaning sexual imagery, and online harassment.

Sex trafficking is a form of sexual exploitation that can include recruiting, harbouring, transporting, obtaining or providing a person for the purpose of sex. It refers to the forced, coercive, fraudulent or deceptive exchange of sex for something of value (for example, money, food, drugs, alcohol, transportation, shelter).

Regardless of where or to whom a person discloses sexual violence, it is important that they get a consistent and caring response. All service providers will follow the procedures outlined below in response to a disclosure of sexual violence.

A consistent, caring and effective first response consists of:

- Listening
- Believing
- Validating
- Connection (with supports);

Providing support and options, and making the right referrals:

- ☐ I told the client that they have options, and there are people that can help.
- ☐ I checked in with the client about their physical or medical needs.
- ☐ I checked in with the client to see if they want support.
- ☐ With the client's permission, I discussed contacting an emergency service or making a referral for them (warm transfer). The following options were discussed:

- Guelph General Hospital Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Care & Treatment Centre (SADVCTC): for 24hr Service call 519-837-6440 x 42210 (Emergency Department); Between 8:00a.m. and 5:00p.m., Mon to Friday call 519-837-6440 x 42728. This is direct extension.

Note to worker: *If you speak directly to someone in the SADVCTC, the client may be able to go straight to the clinic. At all other times, you need to speak with ER (x 2210), and the sexual assault nurse examiner will arrive within one hour once the client is in hospital*.

- Guelph-Wellington Women in Crisis: 519-836-5710 or 1-800-265-7233 (24-hour telephone and TTY support and referral line).

Between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., Mon to Friday call 519-836 1110 x 222

- Guelph Police Service: 519-824-1212 or 911 (24-hour service) or Ontario Provincial Police (OPP): 1-888-310-1122 or 911 (24-hour service).
- Family & Children's Services of Guelph & Wellington County (F&CS): For 24hr service, call (519) 824-2410 x 0 or 1-800-265-8300 x 0.

Note to worker: *There is a duty to report to F&CS when the person is a child under 18 years of age, and discloses having been harmed by a person in a position of trust and authority, or by a family member.*

7. Tools & Resources

DVDRC Common Risk Factors for IPV Lethality

The Ontario Domestic Violence Death Review Committee has released an updated list of risk factors for lethality based on more than two decades of studying IPV fatality cases. The list was included in the 2022-2023 Annual Report of the DVDRC.
It is important to review and be familiar with these research-backed risk factors, because they are not all easily understood or well-known.
Domestic Violence Death Review Committee, 2022 - 2023 Annual Report (November 2025), p. 101-107. Read the report: 2022-2023-DVDRC-Annual-Report-final-English-1.pdf

Risk Assessment Tools

Risk assessment tools assess for a variety of types of risks, including: lethality, future assault, survivor-victim safety, and more. GWAC members have committed to be co-trained to use the B-SAFER tool, but member agencies are also using other recognized risk management tools, including:

- *B-SAFER.* Brief Spousal Assault Form for the Evaluation of Risk (B-SAFER) assesses risk of future assault, lethality and safety risks for victims. The B-SAFER is designed for police use (but others can use it). It is a shorter version of the SARA tool, and is structured so that the service provider interviews the service-user by asking a series of questions. It includes assessment of abuser's history of violent actions, ideation/intent, attitudes and personal psycho-social history. B-SAFER also includes a Recommended Risk Management Strategies section regarding monitoring/surveillance, control/supervision, assessment/treatment and victim safety planning in addition to a conclusory opinions section regarding case

prioritization, life-threatening violence, imminent violence and likely victims. B-SAFER is being used in some Canadian provinces by police services. The partner of the abusive person (that is, the victim- survivor) responds to the questions. See: https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/fl- lf/famil/rr05_fv1-rr05_vf1/index.html

- *Danger Assessment, Jacquelyn C. Campbell*. The Danger Assessment assesses the level of danger an abused woman has of being killed by her intimate partner (lethality). The tool was originally developed by Jacquelyn Campbell with consultation and content validity support from intimate partner violence survivors, shelter workers, law enforcement officials, and other clinical experts on battering. There are two parts to the tool: a calendar and a 20-item scoring instrument. It is briefer than many other tools, and when applied consistently is reputable and accurate in predicting lethality. The partner of the abusive person (that is, the victim-survivor) responds to the questions. See: https://www.dangerassessment.org/about.aspx to learn about this tool and its intended use.

- *ODARA.* The Ontario Domestic Assault Risk Assessment (ODARA) assesses risk of future assault. ODARA was originally developed for front-line police officers but is available for use by victim services, health care workers, probation and correctional services personnel, in addition to intimate partner violence shelter and case workers. This tool assesses risk of future partner assault in addition to the frequency and severity of these assaults. Although it was not designed to predict risk of lethality, the authors have found a correlation between higher ODARA scores and more severe assaults in the future. The partner of the abusive person (that is, the victim-survivor) responds to the questions. For additional information and for a full scoring and interpretation booklet, please refer to the following website: http://odara.waypointcentre.ca/

Know Your Obligations

Child Abuse and Neglect

Everyone in Ontario, including members of the public and professionals who work closely with children, is required by law to report suspected child abuse or neglect. ***You must report child abuse and neglect*** (https://www.fcsgw.org/protecting-children-3/)

If you have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection, you must immediately report the suspicion and the evidence on which it is based directly to a children's aid society, (https://www.oacas.org/childrens-aid-child-protection/locate-a-childrens-aid-society/). If you think the matter is urgent and you cannot reach the children's aid society, call your local police.

We all share a responsibility to protect children from harm. This includes situations where children may be at risk, suffer abuse and/or neglect in their own homes. The *Child, Youth and*

*Family Services Act, 2017 (*CYFSA) provides protection for these children. (Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017, S.O. 2017, c. 14, Sched. 1 | ontario.ca)
The *Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect: It's Your Duty* brochure (https://files.ontario.ca/pdf-3/mccss-report-child-abuse-and-neglect-en-2022-03-31.pdf) explains the duty to report and provides answers to common questions about your duty to report. It does not provide legal advice.
Contact a lawyer or a children's aid society if you have questions about a specific situation.
To report concerns in Guelph and Wellington County: 1-800-265-8300 or 519-824-2410.

Workplace Violence

Violence, harassment and bullying in a variety of forms can have a negative impact on organizational culture and an organization's reputation. It can result in:

- More absenteeism and sick leave
- Higher employee turnover
- Higher Employee Assistance Program (EAP) costs
- Increased short term/long term disability and drug plan costs
- More workplace accidents
- Stress-related lawsuits

Since 2010, the *Occupational Health & Safety Act* (OHSA) includes specific requirements regarding preventing and addressing incidents of violence and harassment in the workplace. This includes better supporting employees who are experiencing intimate partner violence, and this violence comes to affect their workplace. To comply with the law, an employer with more than five employees must:

- Be familiar with the requirements of the legislation.
- Prepare policies with respect to workplace violence and workplace harassment, including addressing the needs of employees who may be affected by IPV.
- Develop and maintain programs to implement the policies.
- Provide training to workers on workplace violence and harassment.
- Post information on definitions of workplace violence and harassment,including intimate partner violence, in the workplace's common areas.
- Familiarize workers with the organization's policies on how to prevent and/or resolve incidences of violence.
- Offer EAP programs and other appropriate crisis and counseling referrals for employees subject to workplace violence or harassment.

More information about these obligations can be found at:
https://www.ontario.ca/page/preventing-workplace-violence-and-workplace-harassment

C. Guelph-Wellington Action Committee Member Agencies

Canadian Arab Women's Association
Canadian Mental Health Association Waterloo Wellington
Child Witness Centre
City of Guelph
Compass Community Services
County of Wellington – Housing Services
County of Wellington – Ontario Works
Crime Stoppers Guelph-Wellington
Crown Attorney's Office
Elora House
Family & Children's Services of Guelph and Wellington County
Guelph Community Health Center
Guelph Neighbourhood Support Coalition
Guelph Police Service
Guelph-Wellington Care & Treatment Centre for Sexual Assault & Domestic Violence
Guelph-Wellington Women in Crisis
Healing of the Seven Generations
Homewood Community Addiction Services
Immigrant Services Guelph-Wellington
John Howard Society of Waterloo-Wellington
Legal Clinic of Guelph and Wellington County
Michael House Pregnancy and Parenting Support Services
Ontario Provincial Police
Probation and Parole
Royal City Mission
Southwest Ontario Aboriginal Health Access Centre (SOAHAC)
Stepping Stone
University of Guelph, Sexual Violence/Student Support
Upper Grand District School Board (UGDSB)
Victim Services Wellington
Victim/Witness Assistance Program
Wellington Catholic District School Board (WCDSB)
Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health
Wyndham House