

CAIP Innovative Attitude Change Project Proposal - Advancing Access and Inclusion

Project Title: Advancing Access and Inclusion for Victims of Domestic Violence
Submitted by: Spinal Cord Injury Saskatchewan
Sector Targeted for Attitude Change: <input type="checkbox"/> Employers, <input type="checkbox"/> Youth (preschool – Grade 12), <input type="checkbox"/> Community (geographic community or community of interest) Community of Interest
Specific Audience To Be Reached: Domestic violence front line workers, shelter staff, community service agencies, and justice department staff within Provincial, Territorial and Federal Government departments.
Specific Attitude To Be Established: <p>The health of women living with disabilities, like other women, is affected by experiences of violence and abuse. But unlike non-disabled women, for whom there has been significant improvement in general public awareness of issues of violence and access to services, women living with a disability remain invisible and marginalized and their abuse experience is often minimized with few accessible avenues of services in which women's voice are heard and action can take place.</p> <p>By bringing together stakeholders from community agencies working in domestic violence, rehabilitation works, disability agencies, and individuals with lived experience to discuss openly disability specific realities including barriers to leaving a domestic violence situation an opportunity for fostering a greater understanding among those currently working in domestic violence can occur. Bringing awareness to the challenges faced once an individual with a disability decides to leave, including access to transportation, accessible shelters and disability sensitive community services can help to facilitate changes to environments and programs to break down barriers.</p> <p>Violence among women living with disabilities has been reported in Canadian population-based studies. Cohen, Forte, Du Mont, Hyman, and Romans (2005) examined intimate partner violence (IPV) among Canadian women who had activity limitations using the 1999 Canadian General Social Survey. They found that IPV was reported more often among women with activity limitations than among those with no activity limitations. This was evident in experienced emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse. One way to initiate reducing domestic violence is to start educating as many people as possible about the violence, its impact and how to intervene safely. However, in doing so, we must assess the shelters and other services provided to ensure they are disability friendly, including built environment, language sensitivity, and staff who are knowledgeable and trained in disability sensitive issues such as bowel and bladder care.</p>
Geographic Reach: Coast to Coast
Project Description Summary: <p>This project will work to develop informational pamphlets for community distribution to increase the knowledge among the disability community of viable options in domestic violent situations and assist in knowledge dissemination and awareness of disability friendly services. A second informational pamphlet will be developed explaining signs of abuse and vulnerabilities for individuals with disabilities for distribution among community agencies, professionals, rehabilitation workers, and other disability service providers may assist in identifying people at risk who can then be given information about the services available and how to utilize those services.</p> <p>This project will address the needs by bringing them to the forefront and by working to reduce barriers to accessing service by increasing awareness. One of the first steps to action is to familiarize individuals and the community with the possible signs and indicators of domestic violence. These signs can vary and do not</p>

always come with physical symptoms because domestic violence is not just limited to physical attacks such as beatings. It includes many forms of abusive behavior enacted to control the victim in a myriad of ways including emotional abuse, verbal abuse and economic abuse. Domestic violence also affects every level and demographic in society, so there is no typical victim despite the stereotypes. Someone who may not appear to be a victim of domestic violence may well be suffering in silence and it is important to recognize the signs if this is the case.

Training initiatives for violence against women and disability organizations alike is vital so that women with disabilities contacting these organizations will receive the services they require. The training itself should emphasize disability-specific issues of greater access related to respectful communication, physical access, and community partnerships with disability organizations. It is vital that access to disability-relevant, culturally and linguistically-relevant information related to abuse prevention be made

Project Outcomes:

Increasing awareness and developing information about violence against women for disability organizations and professionals alike is vital so that women with disabilities contacting these organizations will receive the services they require. The information should emphasize disability-specific issues of greater access related to respectful communication, physical access, and community partnerships with disability organizations. It is vital that access to disability-relevant, culturally and linguistically-relevant information related to abuse prevention be made. This project has the potential to increase community knowledge and awareness, initiate new partnerships among disability agencies and other community services and professionals, remove barriers to services and programs for individuals with disabilities all of which support sustainable community development from a social health perspective.

Outcomes:

- Increased understanding of domestic violence in the disability community
- Increased awareness of what domestic violence looks like for an individual living with a disability
- Increased capacity for service providers to provide meaningful services to an individual living with a disability and experiencing domestic violence
- Increased access to services
- Increased accessibility within the built environment of community shelters and service agencies
- Increased capacity for governmental and non-governmental organizations to identify victim needs and gaps in services and develop and deliver programs, services and assistance to victims.

Project Lead and Partners:

Spinal Cord Injury Saskatchewan and CAIP Project Council Members