

GUELPH AND WELLINGTON COUNTY, 2024

# Support and Information Guide

*For Survivors of  
Intimate Partner  
Violence*



PRIDE ✶ SERVICE ✶ TRUST

## Disclaimer

---

*For the purpose of this guide, the terms ‘victim’ and ‘survivor’ will be used interchangeably and will refer to anyone who has experienced intimate partner violence. We support a person’s right to choose how they wish to be identified. Within the context of this guide, it is important to recognize that intimate partner violence disproportionately affects women and female-identifying individuals, with the majority of the abuse often perpetrated by men or male-identifying individuals. We acknowledge that abuse can occur in any type of relationship regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation. It is also important to note that this guide is not legal advice and should be used for information purposes only. Every effort has been made to provide precise information; however, your rights and a police officer’s responsibilities depend on each specific situation. If at any time you are unsure of your rights, you can ask the officer in charge of your case as they are required by law to inform you. While we strive to provide and maintain accurate and up to date information, some information and resources in this guide are subject to change. Should you have questions that are not answered within this guide, or you require additional clarification, please contact Victim Services Wellington.*

This project has been made possible by the Ministry of the Solicitor General Victim Support Grant.

# Table of Contents

---

Section 1: What is Intimate Partner Violence? .....4

- Definition
- Types of Abuse and Examples
- Recognizing Signs and Red Flags
- Barriers to Leaving an Abusive Relationship
- Power and Control & Equality Wheels
- Understanding Intimate Partner Violence Across Diverse Communities
  - Newcomer, 2SLGBTQIA+, Indigenous and Child/Youth Communities
- Hierarchy of Needs and Community Agencies
- Your Choices for Assistance and Support
  - Community Support Systems, Police Services and Court Orders

Section 2: Intimate Partner Violence and the Law.....11

- Investigative Process
  - Mandatory Charging Policies
  - Criminal Code Considerations
  - Charges/Dual Charges/After Arrest
  - Medical Care and Evidence Collection
    - Strangulation and Traumatic Brain Injuries
- Court Process (Criminal)
  - Initial Process
  - Court Support
  - Trial/Timelines/Sentencing
  - Victim Impact Statements
- Court Process (Family)
  - Exploring the Family Law Process
  - Court-Facilitated Abuse

Section 3: Financial Assistance.....14

- Social Assistance
- Victim Quick Response Program+
- Civil Law
- Family Law
- Publicly Funded Resources

Section 4: Resources for Support.....15

- Intimate Partner Violence Specific Support Agencies
- Other Support Agencies

# Glossary of Terms

---

**2SLGBTQIA+:** An inclusive term representing individuals with different sexual orientations and gender identities, including Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual and others.

**Autonomy:** Independence or freedom, the right to make one's own decisions.

**Codependency:** when one (or both) people in a relationship become overly dependent on the other, often at the expense of their own well-being.

**Coercion:** using threats, force, or pressure to control someone's actions, thoughts, and behaviours.

**Consent:** Willing agreement to engage in physical or sexual activity, which must be voluntary, informed, ongoing and enthusiastic. Consent can be withdrawn at any time.

**Crown Attorney:** A lawyer that represents the government and community as a whole in criminal cases, responsible for prosecuting individuals accused of a crime(s).

**Cultural Competence/Relevance:** The ability to understand, communicate with, and effectively interact with individuals from various cultural and spiritual identities. Includes being aware and respectful of cultural differences and diversity when providing services or support.

**Gaslighting:** To manipulate someone using psychological methods into questioning their own sanity or interpretation of events.

**Gender Based Violence (GBV):** Violence directed against an individual based on their gender identity, gender expression, or perceived gender.

**Heteronormativity:** Assumes that 'normal' or 'correct' relationships exist only between a man and a woman.

**Isolation:** The state of being separated from others, emotionally and/or physically.

**Marginalized Populations:** Groups of people who experience social, economic, or political exclusion or discrimination, often due to their race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, or other factors.

**Multigenerational/Intergenerational:** Relates to, involves, or affects several generations.

**Narcissism:** Excessive interest in or admiration of oneself and one's physical appearance or abilities.

**Newcomers:** Individuals who have recently immigrated to a new country or community.

**Safety Planning:** Developing a personalized plan to increase safety and reduce risk in situations of violence or abuse.

**Trauma-Informed Care:** An approach to providing services that recognizes the impact of trauma and seeks to minimize re-traumatization while promoting resilience and healing.

**Traumatic Brain Injury:** Injury to the brain caused by external trauma resulting in a temporary or permanent impairment of cognitive, physical and emotional functioning.

# Section 1: What is Intimate Partner Violence?

---

## Definition

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is a form of Gender-Based Violence (GBV), which refers to multiple forms of harm caused by a current or former intimate partner(s). An intimate partner is a person you have, or have had, a close personal relationship with characterized by emotional connection, ongoing physical contact, or sexual behaviours. The harm is often the result of a person attempting to gain power or control over their partner, and it often threatens the safety and security of the partner. It can happen in different forms of relationships including within a marriage, common-law or dating relationship, and at any time during the relationship (or even after it has ended). Typically, incidents of violence don't only happen once – they can happen more often and worsen over time. Abuse can show up in many ways and some types of abuse are easier to notice than others.

## Types of Abuse

These types of abuse can happen in public, private or online spaces and can happen by themselves, continually, or all at once. The following section shows several types of abuse with a few examples (note: examples provided are not exhaustive):

**Physical abuse** – a threat of attack or physical attack made with a body part or object.

- Examples: hitting, kicking, grabbing, pinching, shoving, slapping, hair-pulling, biting, choking/strangling, forcing alcohol and/or substance use, etc.

**Sexual abuse** – any non-consensual sexual activity including sexual coercion.

- Examples: unwanted touching including kissing, hugging, groping, attempted penetration, penetration, threatening repercussions for refusing sexual activity, forcing someone to watch or participate in making pornography, etc.

**Emotional/psychological abuse** – words or actions to control, harm, or frighten a partner or destroy their self-esteem through feelings of shame, anxiety, or hopelessness.

- Examples: threats, insults, constant monitoring, excessive jealousy, manipulation, humiliation, intimidation, dismissiveness, gaslighting, neglect, etc. This often also includes harassment/stalking, which is repeated conduct that creates fear for one's safety (i.e. repeated phone calls/messages, following, watching, tracking, etc.)

**Financial abuse** – control or misuse of a partner's money, resources, or property.

- Examples: withholding money for basic necessities, preventing someone from accessing their bank accounts, controlling spending, forcing someone to turn over paycheques/benefit payments/entitlements, etc.

**Spiritual abuse** – using a partner's spiritual beliefs to manipulate, dominate or control them.

- Examples: punishing or ridiculing for religious beliefs, preventing someone from practicing their religion, forcing them to practice certain beliefs or engage in rituals against their will, preventing them from attending religious institutions, forcing someone to join/stay in a cult, etc.

**Coercive control** – patterns of control and abuse that cause ongoing fear, including gaslighting.

- Examples: controlling where someone can go, who they can see, when they can sleep and eat, depriving access to support services, using humiliating or degrading language, intimidation, etc. This can also include controlling someone's reproductive choices, pregnancy outcomes, and/or access to reproductive health services.

**Technology facilitated abuse** – use of technologies to facilitate virtual or in-person harm.

- Examples: controlling who someone engages with online, sending constant or threatening messages or posts, using social media to track activity, hacking or forcing them to provide passwords to online accounts, constant monitoring of technology, tracking location, etc.

## Recognizing Signs and Red Flags

Identifying potential violence or unhealthy behaviours in an intimate relationship can help you determine boundaries and how to prioritize your well-being and safety. Some of these red flags include the types of abuse listed previously, as well as: a lack of trust or constant jealousy, substance abuse, narcissism, anger management issues, codependency, inability to resolve conflict, lack of emotional intelligence, impulse control, isolation, etc. Some questions to consider when identifying red flags:

Does your partner:

- Embarrass or demean you in front of friends or family?
- Make you feel you are unable to freely make decisions?
- Tell you what to wear, who to talk to, where to go?
- Treat you roughly or aggressively?
- Make you feel like there is no way out of the relationship?
- Pressure you sexually for things you aren't ready for?
- Use substances as an excuse for poor behaviour?
- Question your reality and make you feel silly or dumb?
- Punish you by withholding attention or affection?
- Not trust you and act possessive?
- Threaten suicide during arguments or if you attempt to leave?
- Not allow you to leave or move freely?
- Want you to ask permission before making any decisions?
- Blame you for their emotions, actions, behaviours?

Do you:

- Often feel scared of how your partner will react or behave?
- Constantly make excuses to others for their behaviour?
- Try not to do anything that could make them angry?
- Have feelings of anxiety, depression, and/or hopelessness?
- Start to doubt your memory or interpretation of events?
- Feel trapped, scared, or unable to express emotions?

## Barriers to Leaving an Abusive Relationship

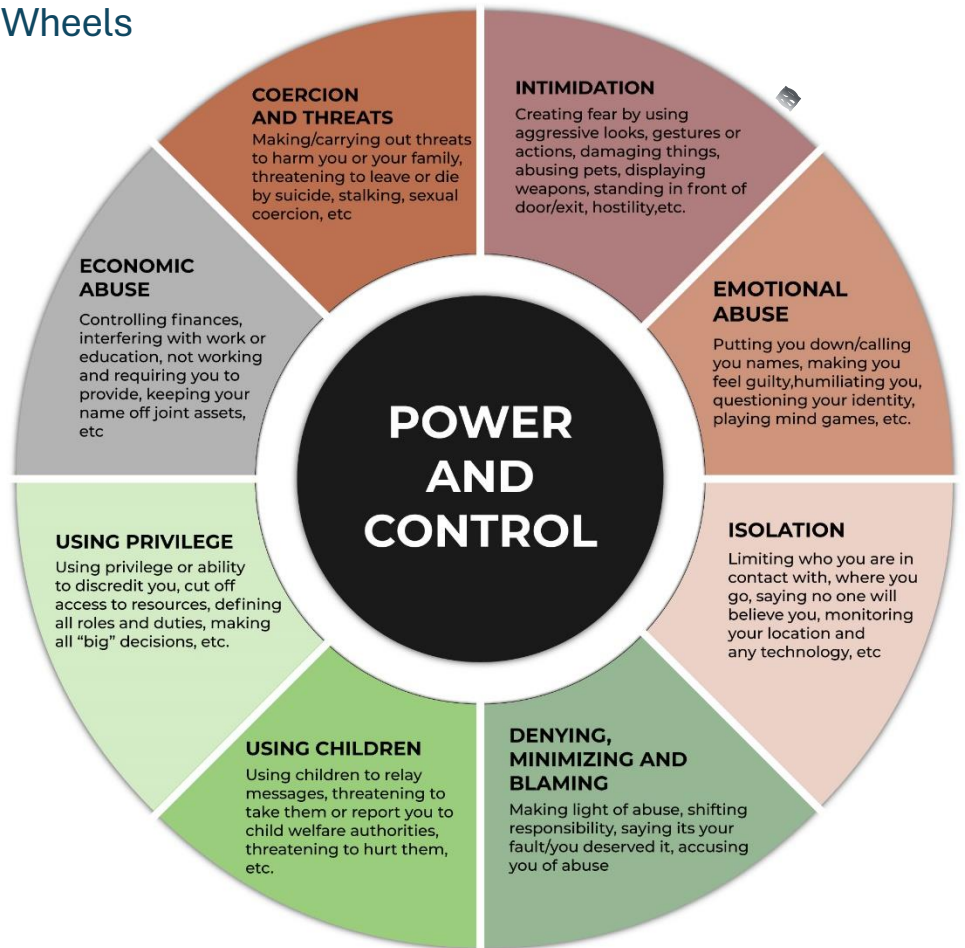
There are many reasons why survivors find it challenging to leave an abusive relationship. These reasons can include (but are not limited to):

- Fear – you are afraid of the consequences if you leave (fear of your partner's actions or concerns over your ability to be independent or alone).
- Normalized abuse – you may not recognize your partner's behaviours are unhealthy or abusive.
- Shame – you may feel you've done something wrong or that you are deserving of the abuse (this is not true).
- Lack of access to resources – you may be financially dependent on your partner or are unable to find alternative options for shelter, income, language support, employment, childcare, etc.
- Disability (visible and invisible) – if you depend on your partner for physical or mental support, you may feel that your well-being is directly tied to the relationship (this is not true).
- Immigration status – you may have fears around deportation, issues with language barriers, confusion around the legal system, difficulty navigating external supports, etc.
- Cultural beliefs – your traditional customs or beliefs may influence your feelings around staying in the relationship, whether they are your personal beliefs or the beliefs of your community or family.
- Children – you may feel guilty or conflicted about disrupting the family unit, or feel unable to ensure the children will be safe and cared for, etc.
- Emotional attachment – you may have feelings of guilt in leaving a relationship you invested time and energy into, and difficulty abandoning the feelings of love, compassion, and hope for improvement in future.

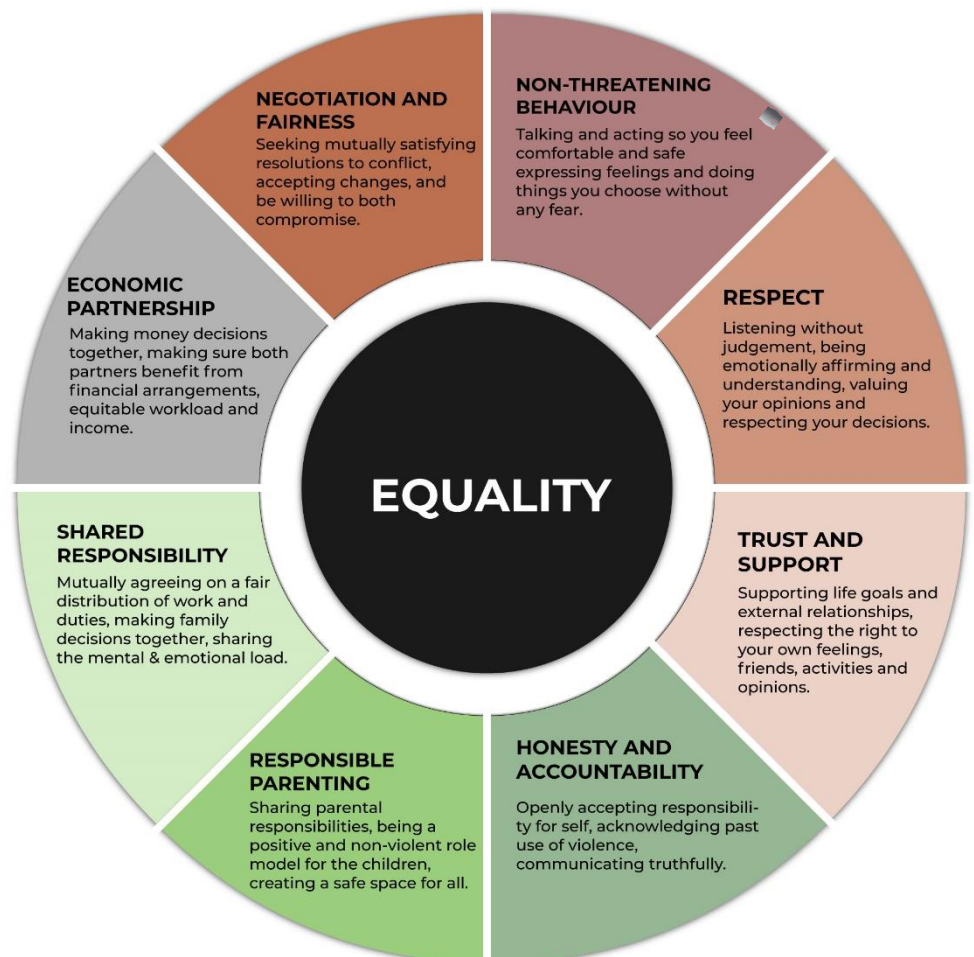


## Power and Control & Equality Wheels

*The Power and Control Wheel* can help you identify abusive behaviours and understand that these forms of abuse do not occur in isolation from each other, but rather simultaneously. The wheel identifies power and control as the goal of each tactic of abuse, which is then reinforced by violent behaviours.



*The Equality Wheel* offers an alternative to power and control dynamics to help you identify what is missing from the relationship. IPV is not just about the presence of violent or controlling behaviours, but also about the absence of dignity that characterizes healthier relationships where power is equal.



# Understanding IPV Across Diverse Communities

When addressing IPV, it is important to recognize that individuals within marginalized populations or equity-deserving groups, can face unique challenges and barriers in accessing support services and resources. While violence affects all people, some populations are more at risk of experiencing violence due to various forms of oppression such as racism, colonialism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia and ableism. These populations include (but are not limited to): women and girls, Indigenous persons, 2SLGBTQIA+ persons, women living in Northern/remote communities, individuals with disabilities, and newcomer populations.

## *Newcomer Communities*

Individuals without citizenship status or other forms of documentation may be at higher risk for abuse due to factors such as social isolation, language barriers, lack of information about the justice system, lack of financial resources, cultural beliefs, or fear of deportation. Abusers may use tactics to enhance their power and control in the following ways:

- They may prevent you from learning English or from communicating and interacting with others, especially those with a shared cultural background.
- They may control or destroy your legal documents such as passports, resident cards, health insurance, driver's licenses, etc.
- They may threaten deportation or withdrawal of petitions for legal status, or they may actively withdraw, delay filing or not file status paperwork for residency if you wish to report the violence or seek support.
- They may control all finances to further isolate you from accessing support services.
- They may threaten to hurt or take away your child(ren), especially if you are unfamiliar with the criminal and family court systems. They may also threaten to harm your family or friends in your country of origin.
- They may interfere with your ability to learn about Canadian laws, legal rights, or available support services.

Things to know before reporting or accessing support services:

- Criminal and family law in Ontario can help protect you from IPV. If you are a permanent resident, you will not lose your status or be deported for reporting or leaving an abusive relationship. If you are not a permanent resident (for example, you are on a work or study permit, visitor, refugee claimant, etc.), you should contact a lawyer or community legal clinic for advice on how seeking help could impact your immigration status. See Legal Aid in "Resources for Support".
- You will not lose rights to your children for reporting or leaving an abusive situation, and there is support available to help you engage with the family law process.
- A spouse or partner does not have the right to have you deported, only federal immigration authorities make this decision.
- If you have permanent resident status, you cannot be forced to leave Canada even if your abusive partner has sponsored your application for permanent residency.

## *2SLGBTQIA+ Communities*

IPV can happen in any relationship, however it is often only discussed within a hetero-normative, binary context. Individuals identifying as female and those within the 2SLGBTQIA+ community are often at a higher risk for violence by their intimate partners. Identifying as 2SLGBTQIA+ can broaden the scope of abusive tactics that abusers may use to obtain power and control; this often includes taking advantage of an individual's gender representation or sexual orientation. Some examples include:

- Closeting - forcing you to hide your trans or sexual orientation from others by pressuring you to remain quiet about your status or identification.
- Outing – disclosing your trans or sexual status to others without your consent or forcing you to disclose before you are ready or able to make this decision.
- Identity abuse – using your gender identity or sexual status to control or shame you, such as using a transgender person's birth/dead name or former pronouns without consent (misgendering).
- Withholding medical treatment – preventing you from seeking or continuing to access gender or sexual affirming medical care.

There are support services available in the community that are affirming, inclusive, and culturally competent such as community health centres and sexual assault/domestic violence care and treatment centres, crisis lines, and advocacy organizations. These agencies have inclusive policies and practices, accessible and affirming services, and trauma-informed care that creates an environment of safety, respect, and empowerment.



## *Indigenous Communities*

Indigenous persons experience significantly higher rates of IPV, assault, homicide, and sexual exploitation due to vulnerabilities such as social and economic factors, multigenerational and intergenerational trauma, marginalization, poverty, insecure housing, barriers to education, employment, health care, and lack of culturally relevant supports.

For Indigenous survivors, accessing support that respects your cultural identity, values and traditions is essential for healing and empowerment. Western models of trauma care may not always align with Indigenous practices and concepts of healing; therefore, it is important that you are provided with opportunities to access culturally relevant, responsible and inclusive support services. Culturally appropriate support acknowledges the strengths and resilience of Indigenous communities and focuses on incorporating healing practices, spirituality, traditional customs, and community connections. This can look like:

- Counseling and therapy services that are delivered by Indigenous practitioners or culturally competent professionals who understand the unique experiences and needs of Indigenous survivors.
- Integrating traditional healing practices such as smudging, sweat lodges, ceremonies, etc. into support services.
- Engaging Indigenous elders, leaders and community members in the development and delivery of interventions.
- Referring to Indigenous-led support services and networks to offer a safe and empowering space for survivors to access information and support.

## *Children and Youth*

Children who are exposed to IPV are significantly impacted, whether they experience the violence themselves or if they are exposed to it. Exposure to violence in the home is associated with increased risk of psychological, social, emotional and behavioural problems and symptoms in children. In addition to direct consequences of children's exposure to IPV, there is evidence that children are more likely to experience violent intimate relationships as adults (either as victims or perpetrators) and to become part of an intergenerational cycle of violence.

Below are some questions to consider when determining if your child(ren) are impacted by IPV in the home:

- Have your children witnessed incidents of violence in the home?
- Have they expressed fear, anxiety or distress when the violence occurs?
- Are your children showing signs of physical injury or health problems?
- Have you noticed changes in their behaviour, such as withdrawal, aggression, mood swings, difficulty sleeping/nightmares?
- Has their academic performance or attendance at school been affected?
- Are they experiencing difficulties with peers or with social interactions?
- Have you noticed changes in your relationship with them such as increased conflict or distance?
- Have they expressed concerns about their own safety or the safety of other family members?

Helping children to recover after exposure to IPV can look different in each family. Some examples include:

- Helping them feel safe physically and emotionally which includes working towards developing a safe and stable environment with consistency and routine.
- Talking to them about their fears and let them know the IPV is not their fault or your fault, allow them to express themselves in a supportive and non-judgemental environment.
- Talk to them about boundaries and discuss personal space, consent, and respecting others' feelings and boundaries. Validate that everyone has the right to set boundaries in relationships and honouring them is a sign of kindness and respect.
- Help them find a support system through their school, a therapist, another trusted adult, etc. who can offer encouragement, validation and guidance.
- Get them professional help such as counseling or therapy services to develop strategies for healing.

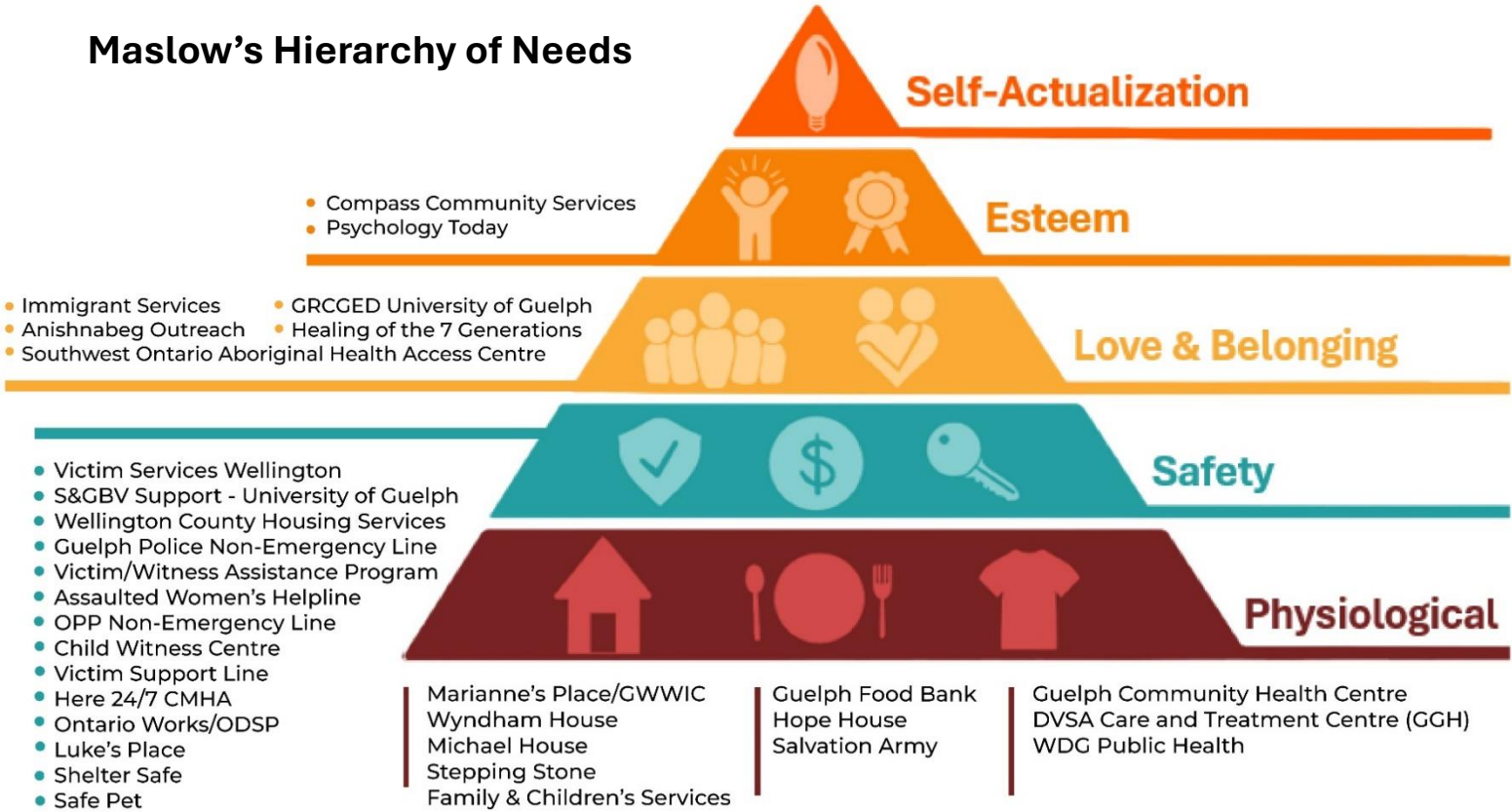
It is important to note that IPV can escalate when there is a pregnancy involved for several reasons. Since the abuse is centered around power and control, it is common for an abusive partner to become resentful and jealous that the attention is shifting from them to the pregnancy. There may be stress at the thought of financially raising a child, the increased responsibility of parenting a child, feelings around the survivors' body changing with pregnancy, etc. Additionally, it is important to note that experiencing abuse is a risk factor for postpartum mental health struggles. One's body is readjusting physically after pregnancy which requires a period

of healing; however, this can increase vulnerability to abuse due to physical pain, lack of sleep, inability to physically create space from the abuser, increased dependence on others, etc.

There are laws and child protection systems that work with families to mitigate risk by providing necessary services to ensure child safety. Misconceptions about child welfare agencies often arise because people don't fully understand their role, they may have had past negative experiences with these agencies, and some individuals might feel ashamed or judged for seeking help from child welfare services thinking it reflects poorly on their parenting. However, it is crucial to realize that child welfare agencies exist to ensure children's safety and to assist families in need. Despite their supportive role, these agencies do have legal authority to make decisions concerning children's safety and well-being. While their primary goal is to offer help and support, they also bear the responsibility of safeguarding children from harm, especially in cases of IPV.

## Hierarchy of Needs

This diagram is based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (5 levels of needs) with the understanding that meeting the lower-level needs can make it easier to meet the higher-level needs. For the purposes of IPV support, we are using this diagram to simplify the support process and how each need can be met within our community (each agency listed can help meet multiple needs). Each level has a corresponding agency in our community, and contact information can be found under "Resources for Support" near the end of this guide. Keep in mind that this is only template, and you have your own unique concerns and are the expert of your own life. Only you can determine what support and services are meaningful and prioritized for you and your child(ren).



### Physiological Needs

These needs include safe shelter, restful sleep, clean air, nutritious food, water, personal clothing and hygiene items, and choices surrounding all forms of health care.

Shelters in our area (such as Marianne's Place) often assist with a majority of these needs throughout your stay, and there are other community partners who can assist with accessing basic needs on a longer-term, sustainable basis. If you are in need of shelter but there is no current space at your local shelter, we recommend that you continue to call each day to see if space becomes available. You can also access shelters out of area, which can help mitigate safety risk by creating distance between you and the abuser. If you have commitments such as work, school, etc., the shelters can work with each other to potentially transfer you to a local shelter. If you are looking to relocate to another community, the shelter staff can help you find housing in that area. See Guelph-Wellington Women in Crisis or Shelter Safe under "Resource for Support".

## Safety Needs

These needs include physical, financial, and property safety and security.

Support agencies in our community (such as Victim Services) can assist with comprehensive safety planning to help prevent future harm in all aspects of safety. This can include internet and technology safety, safety in the community, home safety, safety for children and teens, etc.

## Social Needs/Love and Belonging

These needs include positive human interaction such as friendships, family bonds, and physical and emotional intimacy. Healing may include developing a support system and network of care through social services agencies, support workers, friends and family, peers with lived experience, clubs or groups, spiritual and religious communities, etc.

Support agencies in our community can assist with referrals to longer-term support systems and networks of care.

## Esteem Needs

Esteem needs can include feeling worthy of respect, feeling appreciated, believing yourself to be confident and capable, and having a sense of empowerment. You often must prioritize physiological and safety needs for a period of time before you are able to focus on emotional well-being. Once these physiological and safety needs are met, it is often easier to focus on emotional safety and overall psychological well-being.

Support agencies in our community can provide therapy and/or counseling that can begin to address trauma and assist you on your healing journey through clinical, cultural, spiritual or other methods.

## Self-Actualization Needs

Focusing on personal growth and development is important after leaving an abusive relationship. This looks different for everyone, and fulfilling other needs can provide more time to focus on your long-term goals and autonomy.

Support agencies in our community can provide therapy and/or counseling, help achieve independent goals by accessing education, employment, places of worship, cultural connections, etc. and work with you on reaching your full potential.

## Your Choices for Assistance and Support

It is important to know that you are not alone, and you have autonomy in making decisions about your future - there are options available to you when you decide to seek support. You have several options if you are seeking support to leave/after leaving an abusive relationship, such as accessing confidential community support systems and medical care, reporting to police services, and applying for protective court orders.

### *Community Support Systems*

There are community support agencies in Guelph and Wellington County that help survivors of abuse in many ways, including:

- Safe and secure shelter options, including transitional housing support for longer-term needs.
- Access to basic needs in an emergency and ongoing basis.
- Safety assessments, planning, and tools.
- Counseling/therapy.
- Help with medical care, childcare, language supports, pet care, financial support, etc.
- Help with reporting and navigating the criminal and family court systems.
- Help with culturally competent supports, language needs, cultural connections, etc.

### *Police Services*

You may choose to report to the police and provide information and evidence about the abuse. This process is further explained under “Intimate Partner Violence and the Law.” While it may feel overwhelming, community agencies can support you throughout the reporting process.

### *Court Orders*

You may choose to apply for a peace bond or restraining order, which are legal tools used to protect individuals from harm or harassment by another person.

- A peace bond is a criminal court order that requires a person to keep the peace and be of good behaviour, as well as to follow any other conditions that the judge or justice of the peace orders (for example, how they can safely communicate with you, not to possess weapons, to stay a certain distance away from you, how to have access to your child(ren), etc.)
- A restraining order is a family court order and focuses on restricting someone's actions, such as staying away from a person's home, place of work, restrictions on contact, and any other conditions to ensure the safety of the person seeking protection.

It is important to note that in Ontario, you can only apply for a restraining order if you were married to the person causing harm, lived with them for a period of time, or share children. Anyone can apply for a peace bond regardless of relationship status. You do not need a lawyer to apply for either order, however it may be helpful to consult with one to assist you in navigating the process as well as obtain advice on what information should be included in your application. There are free legal clinics and publicly funded legal services that you can access if needed, see Legal Aid Ontario under "Resources for Support".

## Section 2: Intimate Partner Violence and the Law

### *Investigative Process*

If you choose to report the abuse to the police, they will initiate an investigation which includes discussing the abuse, obtaining a statement, gathering evidence, interviewing all involved parties, and providing information on outcomes of their investigation. Please note that the occurrence must be reported to the police service in the area that the abuse happened (or in part where the abuse occurred). Potential outcomes can include criminal charges, cautions for criminal charges, advice and keeping the peace, and referrals to Victim Services or other community agencies. There is no statute of limitations on IPV – you can report to the police at any time, and if police have sufficient evidence and grounds, historical IPV charges can be laid.

### *Mandatory Charging Policy*

In Ontario, there is a policy that requires police officers to lay charges in cases where there is direct evidence that IPV has occurred regardless of the victim's wishes or cooperation. One of the primary reasons for mandatory charging is to ensure victims are protected from further harm by removing their responsibility to press charges against their abuser and placing the onus on police services to intervene. When determining if mandatory charges will be laid, the police are focused on the current incident, allegations of violence, and ensuring the safety of all involved. They are *not* to consider: marital status/cohabitation, previous police involvements, victim's unwillingness to attend court, likelihood of conviction, verbal promises that the abuse will stop in future, denial that violence occurred, officer concern regarding retaliation from the accused towards the victim, or socioeconomic factors such as race, ethnicity, disability, occupation, gender, etc.

### *Criminal Code Considerations*

The Criminal Code of Canada recognizes some forms of abuse (as discussed in the first section of this guide) as against the law, however others are not yet recognized. Some charges that are recognized include: assault (aggravated, with a weapon, and causing bodily harm), sexual assault, uttering threats, criminal harassment, forcible confinement, mischief, extortion, defamatory libel, distribution of intimate images without consent, breach of court orders, attempted homicide, and homicide.

### *Charges/Dual Charges/After Arrest*

When police are investigating, they separate the involved parties to gather information on what has occurred and to obtain the most accurate description and series of events. They often separate the involved individuals to ensure there is no intimidation or coercion from the abuser when discussing the history and current incidents.

If there is evidence that violence or abuse took place, the police are mandated to charge the primary aggressor (the person mainly responsible for the violence). However, dual charging in IPV cases refers to a situation where both involved parties are charged criminally. Though uncommon, this can occur when there is evidence that both parties have engaged in behaviour that constitutes a criminal offense or if it is not clear who the primary aggressor was. It is important to note that you have the right to use reasonable force to defend yourself from immediate threats or acts of violence, however the force must not exceed what is necessary to protect yourself from harm.

If the police have reasonable and probable grounds to believe an offence has been committed, they will lay charges. Otherwise, they will attempt to keep the peace, mediate the situation, and offer advice and referrals. The below steps are often experienced if charges are laid in your case:

- The abuser will be arrested and charged on scene or once located by police. The abuser will be told the police are laying charges and not the victim, and they will have the opportunity to speak with a lawyer.
- The abuser will either be kept in custody or released with conditions; you will be notified of the conditions, which often include limitations on contact, limitations on attending your address, place of work, place of education, or places you frequent, among other relevant conditions.
- The accused party will be provided with a first court date, and the victim will have access to court support (for more information on the court process and court support, see “Court Process (Criminal).”
- In cases where children were present or are shared between you and the accused, the police will make a mandatory referral to Family and Children’s Services to ensure the children’s safety and well-being.
- If the abuser fails to comply with any of the terms of their release order, they can be charged criminally and re-arrested.

### *Medical Care and Evidence Collection*

The Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Care and Treatment Centre at the Guelph General Hospital is a team of specially trained individuals that include nurses, social workers, administrative persons and trauma therapists. You may access the centre both immediately after an instance of violence through the emergency department, or at a later time for follow up care. The centre will not report to police without your prior consent; however, if they obtain information about harm or neglect involving children, they have a duty to report to Family and Children’s Services.

If you require support immediately after an assault, the intake is through the emergency department; you can disclose that you have been injured as a result of IPV, and you will have the option to have a sexual assault/domestic violence nurse paged to meet you within the hour. If you need to be seen by a physician due to serious injuries, the nurse will arrive after medical care has been provided. If you do not need to be seen by a physician, the nurse will take you upstairs to a more comfortable and private, medical setting.

If you are accessing supports for follow up care from the centre, you can call and make an appointment with the administrative assistant who will assess your needs and book you in with the appropriate person such as a nurse or counselor. If you have sought support through another agency (for example Victim Services), that agency can make a referral on your behalf.

The Sexual Assault Evidence Kit (SAEK) can also be used to collect evidence for IPV cases. It is never required to have evidence collected; however it is always recommended to obtain medical care if you have any injuries. There are 11 possible steps for the SAEK, all of which may be implemented depending on what happened during the assault; the nurse will explain each step and together you will decide if you would like to proceed. These steps can potentially collect physical evidence, and this may aid in identifying and/or confirming that physical contact occurred. The details of the assault that you choose to disclose will also be documented on the forms.

These steps can include:

- |                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| • Clothing collection        | • Body hair combing  |
| • Oral/fingernail/skin swabs | • Internal/external genital swabs (if sexual violence was disclosed) |
| • Blood and urine samples    | • Photographs and documentation of injuries                          |

If a SAEK is completed, it can be transferred directly to the police after collection at their request and only with your consent. However, if you are undecided about reporting the violence to police, the kit may be stored at the Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Care and Treatment Centre for a period of up to one year (it can be stored longer at your request). If you decide to provide the kit to police for investigation, it may be sent to the Centre for Forensic Sciences in Toronto for analysis.



## Strangulation/Traumatic Brain Injuries

Obtaining medical care after strangulation or choking has occurred in cases of IPV is crucial due to the serious and potentially life-threatening nature of these injuries. Strangulation can cause significant harm, even if the visible signs or injury are not immediately apparent. Strangulation involves the obstruction of blood flow and oxygen to the brain which can lead to immediate and long-term health consequences. Even if you appear to recover quickly after an episode of strangulation, there may be internal injuries or damage that require medical assessment and treatment.

Symptoms of strangulation include, but are not limited to:

- Difficulty breathing or swallowing, drooling.
- Sore throat (including swelling of throat, neck, or tongue).
- Hoarseness or changes in voice.
- Headaches (new or worsening), dizziness.
- Loss of consciousness.
- Neck pain, tenderness.
- Vision changes, blurred or double vision.
- Memory loss, confusion.
- Petechiae (tiny red spots) on the face, neck, or eyes.
- Bruising on the neck and/or behind the ears.
- Nausea and/or vomiting.
- Fatigue, weakness.

Potential long-lasting injuries include:

- Traumatic brain injury where a lack of oxygen can cause brain damage leading to cognitive deficits, memory problems, changes in mood or behaviour, etc.
- Changes in voice/damage to vocal cords, and/or chronic pain where neck injuries can lead to long-term pain and discomfort affecting quality of life and ability to perform daily activities.

Survivors of strangulation are at heightened risk for future escalating violence and homicide as the person causing harm has demonstrated a willingness to use extreme force, putting the survivor's life at risk. Multiple instances of strangulation increases the likelihood of severe injury or death as each episode further damages the survivor's neck structures, compromises their ability to breathe and exacerbates trauma to the brain and other organs that can lead to chronic health problems and cognitive deficits.

## Court Process (Criminal)

### Initial Process

Once charges have been laid, the accused will be required to attend court for several appearances. During this time, the accused will receive disclosure (the contents of the police investigation), may retain a lawyer or utilize duty counsel, and will decide how to proceed moving forward (plead guilty or not guilty, set a trial date, schedule a preliminary hearing, etc.). If the accused intends to plead not guilty, a date will be set for a trial, and a Crown Attorney will be assigned to the case. If a trial date is set, you may be required to testify in the trial. If the accused pleads guilty, a date for sentencing will be set; in this case, you will not be required to testify as there is no trial. You will have an opportunity to complete a Victim Impact Statement (see "Victim Impact Statements"). While the Crown Attorney considers your input in the case, *they are not your lawyer*; they are responsible for representing the community as a whole. As such, the information you share with them is not confidential. You do not require a lawyer; you are the victim in this case and the Crown Attorney is responsible for the conduct of the prosecution.

There is often confusion regarding dropping/withdrawing charges, recanting statements, or removing the release conditions. Once the police have laid charges, the Crown Attorney is responsible for how they proceed within the criminal justice system – the police do not have the authority to drop or withdraw charges. Recanting does not mean that you are taking back your statement, instead, it means that you did not tell the truth to police at the time of your statement. This can result in potential criminal charges against you for interfering with an investigation or for misusing police resources. Applying for a variance is the process in which accused parties can apply to vary the conditions of their release order. You (as the victim) cannot apply for a variance; however, you can provide input to the Crown Attorney so they are aware of your standpoint and wishes.

### *Court Support*

Your case will be referred to the Victim/Witness Assistance Program (VWAP) and/or the Child Witness Program (CWP). These programs will assign you a worker to guide you through the court process.

The role of your VWAP worker will be:

- Inform you of the status of your criminal case.
- Help you understand what to expect.
- Provide you with copies of important documents.
- Assist in trial/preliminary hearing preparation if you are required to testify.
- Coordinate with and provide victim input to the Crown Attorney.
- Assist in completing a Victim Impact Statement.
- Advocate and coordinate supports and provide community referrals.
- Offer emotional support.

If you are a youth, or if a youth was involved in the violence, the police will refer you to the Child Witness Centre. Children and youth will receive an individualized assessment by their Child Witness Program caseworker who has knowledge related to child development, children's mental health, and the judicial process. The worker will ensure that each youth and their caregiver(s) will receive services to meet their needs.

### *Trial/Timelines/Sentencing*

The length of the court case will vary depending on a number of factors. If the accused intends to plead guilty, the process will finish more quickly. Typically, court matters will be completed in 2.5-3 years maximum. If the court finds the accused guilty, sentencing will be scheduled. There are different types of sentencing that vary depending on the severity of the crime(s). Your VWAP/CWP worker will be able to provide you with additional information around sentencing and what to expect after trial.

### *Victim Impact Statements*

A Victim Impact Statement is used in sentencing to explain your safety and security concerns as well as the emotional, physical and financial impact that the crime has had on your life. It provides you with a voice in the court process to explain how the crime has affected you and the impact that it has had on various aspects of your life. The statement is voluntary, and you have an opportunity to either read the statement aloud in court, or to have written copies provided to the Crown Attorney, the prosecution and the judge. Your VWAP/CWP worker can assist you in completing this statement, as well as advise you of the best time to submit it within the court proceedings.

## **Court Process (Family)**

Accessing a lawyer to determine custody and exploring the family court process can be a complex and lengthy process, however there are supports to help you navigate these systems such as family court support programs, legal clinics, and publicly funded legal consultations. If you cannot afford a lawyer, you can apply for Legal Aid Ontario which can assist with payment for a lawyer if you meet specific financial criteria. It is recommended that you access a lawyer at an early stage in your healing journey to determine custody arrangements and seek legal advice regarding any family or civil issues. A lawyer can provide information about your legal rights and help you develop a plan for addressing custody and access issues. You may need to explore the family court process if informal negotiations or mediation are not successful in resolving custody disputes or if there are significant concerns about the safety of your child(ren).

### *Court-Facilitated Abuse*

Court-facilitated abuse in the context of IPV refers to situations where the legal system, particularly the family court system, sustains and facilitates abuse against survivors and their child(ren). This can occur when abusive partners exploit legal processes and loopholes to harass, intimidate, or manipulate survivors. If you feel you are experiencing this type of abuse, notify the Judge, Justice of the Peace, court staff, or community agency that is supporting you. Some examples of this abuse can include:

- Dragging out the proceedings to wear you down emotionally or deplete your financial resources.
- Withholding financial support, threatening to drain assets, or refusing to provide financial disclosure/support.
- Acting as their own lawyer, repeatedly changing lawyers, or hiring aggressive lawyers to intimidate you.
- Making false allegations of abuse or parental alienation against you to discredit you.
- Violating court orders repeatedly to undermine your sense of safety and security and erode your trust in the legal system to protect you.

## Section 3: Financial Assistance

---

### *Social Assistance*

You may be eligible for income support programs such as Ontario Works (OW) or the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) that provide financial assistance to individuals in need based on their income and circumstances. In certain situations, you could be eligible for emergency financial assistance.

### *Victim Quick Response Program+ (VQRP+)*

The Victim Quick Response Program+ (VQRP+) provides short-term financial support toward essential expenses for victims, their immediate family members and witnesses in the immediate aftermath of a violent crime to help reduce the impact of the crime, enhance safety, and meet immediate practical needs. The VQRP+ program is administered and accessed through Victim Services Wellington and the eligibility criteria and available supports can be discussed by connecting with the office staff (See “Resources for Support” for contact information). Eligible supports may include, but are not limited to: cell phones, home safety measures, emergency accommodation, counseling, crime scene clean up, transportation, basic necessities etc.

### *Civil Law*

You can seek compensation from your abuser for damages suffered as a result of the abuse, which may include compensation for medical expenses, therapy costs, lost wages, property/asset damages, pain and suffering, etc. In a civil lawsuit, both parties have the right to legal representation, or they can represent themselves.

### *Family Law*

In family law, seeking financial compensation from the person causing harm often involves requesting child or spousal support through the court system. In both cases, the court’s primary concern is the best interest of the child(ren) and/or the financial needs of the survivor.

### *Publicly Funded Resources*

There are a number of publicly funded support agencies in the community that can help provide services to meet your basic needs. These programs can often provide help with:

- Counseling/therapy and mental health services.
- Food insecurity.
- Housing insecurity/rent and utilities.
- Culturally and spiritually relevant services.
- Clothing, hygiene items, household items, etc.
- Legal support.

## Section 4: Resources for Support

---

### IPV Specific Support Agencies:

#### Victim Services Wellington

- Access to VQRP+ for emergency needs. See “Financial Assistance – VQRP+” for more information.
- Safety planning and service coordination, short-term case management.
- Connections and referrals to community supports.
- Assistance and support around police involvement, as well as access to services without police involvement.



Tel: (519) 824-1212 ext. 7304 (Guelph) (519) 546-5691 (Wellington County)

Email: [victim@vswguelph.on.ca](mailto:victim@vswguelph.on.ca)

Web: [www.vswguelph.on.ca](http://www.vswguelph.on.ca)

## Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault Care and Treatment Centre (Guelph General Hospital)

- Services available 24/7 through the emergency department.
- Free medical and emotional care that is private, confidential and non-judgemental.
- Trauma informed, victim centered.
- Administration of a Sexual Assault Evidence Kit.
- Short term crisis trauma counseling and therapy, including referrals to community supports.



115 Delhi St, Guelph, ON.

Tel: (519) 837-6440 ext. 42728 (business hours) ext. 42210 (after hours)

## Guelph-Wellington Women in Crisis (GWWIC)

- Individual and group counseling for women 16+ who have/are currently experiencing any form of IPV.
- Also offers support to families, partners and friends of survivors.
- Services are free, interpreters are available.
- Support in accessing Marianne's Place shelter.
- 24/7 Crisis Line.
- Rural Women's Support Program for women in Wellington County (locations in Fergus, Palmerston, and Mount Forest).
- Referrals to other community supports.
- Programs: Family Court Support, Transitional Housing Support, Anti-Human Trafficking Support.



38 Elizabeth St, Guelph, ON.

Tel: (519) 836-1110 (business hours)

Tel: (519) 836-5710 (24/7 crisis line and shelter)

Email: [adminrec@gwwomenincrisis.org](mailto:adminrec@gwwomenincrisis.org)

Web: [www.gwwomenincrisis.org](http://www.gwwomenincrisis.org)

## Compass Community Services

- Individual and group counseling.
- Publicly funded programs (Violence Against Women, Child Witness Program).
- Access to programs for all genders and sexes.
- Locations in Guelph and Wellington County (Guelph, Fergus, Mount Forest).



20 Shelldale Cres, Guelph, ON.

Tel: (519) 824-2431

Web: [www.compasscs.org](http://www.compasscs.org)

## Victim/Witness Assistance Program

- Provides support throughout the duration of the court process.
- See "Court Process (Criminal) – Court Support" for additional information.

Tel: (519) 837-6366



## Child Witness Centre

- Provides support throughout the duration of the court process for children and youth.
- See “Court Process (Criminal) – Court Support” for additional information.

Tel: (519) 744-0904

Web: [www.childwitness.com](http://www.childwitness.com)



## Sexual and Gender Based Violence Support Coordinator

- Provides support with coordinating academic accommodations.
- Referrals to physical and mental health services, as well as both on and off-campus supports/agencies.
- Coordination of care including discussing reporting options (disclosure or report not required to access services).
- Safety planning and case management.
- Additional supports identified by survivors can also be provided such as on-campus food bank, coordination with off-campus living advisor, etc.



50 Stone Rd. East, Guelph, ON.

Tel: (519) 824-4120 ext. 52131

Email: [svinfo@uoguelph.ca](mailto:svinfo@uoguelph.ca)

Web: [www.wellness.uoguelph.ca/sexual-gender-based-violence-support-education](http://www.wellness.uoguelph.ca/sexual-gender-based-violence-support-education)

## Shelter Safe

- Includes a map and list of all shelters within Canada including type of shelter, their crisis and shelter lines, websites, and other contact information.
- Can search by address or radius with filters such as pets, accessibility, children's programming, sexual orientations and gender identities, etc.



Web: [www.sheltersafe.ca](http://www.sheltersafe.ca)

## Other Support Agencies

### Anishnabeg Outreach

Trinity United Church

400 Stevenson St N, Guelph, ON.

Tel: (519) 208-5333 Web: [www.aocan.org](http://www.aocan.org)

### Assaulted Women's Helpline

Tel: (416) 863-0511

Web: [www.awhl.org](http://www.awhl.org)

### Canadian Mental Health Association Waterloo-Wellington

80 Waterloo Ave, Guelph, ON.

Tel: 1 (844) 264-2993

HERE 24/7 Crisis Line: 1 (844) 437-3247

Web: [www.cmhaww.ca](http://www.cmhaww.ca)

### Family and Children's Services Guelph-Wellington

275 Eramosa Rd, Guelph, ON.

Tel: (519) 824-2410

Web: [www.fcsgw.org](http://www.fcsgw.org)

### Guelph Police Service

15 Wyndham St S, Guelph, ON.

Tel: (519) 824-1212 (non-emergency line)

Web: [www.guelphpolice.ca](http://www.guelphpolice.ca)

### Guelph Community Health Centre

176 Wyndham St N, 20 Shelldale Cres. Guelph, ON.

Tel: (519) 821-6638

Web: [www.guelphchc.ca](http://www.guelphchc.ca)



## Guelph Resource Centre for Gender Empowerment and Diversity

University Centre Room 107, 50 Stone Rd. E, Guelph, ON.  
Tel: (519) 284-4120 ext. 58559  
Web: [www.grcged.com](http://www.grcged.com)

## Healing of the 7 Generations

300 Frederick St, Kitchener, ON.  
Tel: (519) 570-9118  
Web: [www.healingofthesevengenerations.ca](http://www.healingofthesevengenerations.ca)

## Immigrant Services

102-104 Dawson Rd, Guelph, ON.  
Tel: (519) 836-2222  
Web: [www.ig-gw.ca](http://www.ig-gw.ca)

## Luke's Place

Tel: (905) 728-0978  
Web: [www.lukesplace.ca](http://www.lukesplace.ca)

## Ontario Works

129 Wyndham St N, Guelph, ON.  
Tel: (519) 837-2670  
Web: [www.wellington.ca/en/social-services/ss-ontarioworks](http://www.wellington.ca/en/social-services/ss-ontarioworks)

## Salvation Army Family Services

Tel: (519) 836-9824  
Web: [www.guelphsa.ca/familyservices](http://www.guelphsa.ca/familyservices)  
Email: [guelphsa.familyservices@salvationarmy.ca](mailto:guelphsa.familyservices@salvationarmy.ca)

## Southwest Ontario Aboriginal Health Access Centre

Tel: (226) 476-3672  
Web: [www.soahac.on.ca](http://www.soahac.on.ca)

## Stepping Stone

23 Gordon St, Guelph, ON  
Tel: (519) 837-0080 Web: [www.stepsingstonegw.com](http://www.stepsingstonegw.com)

## Wellington County Housing Services

138 Wyndham St N, Guelph, ON.  
Tel: (519) 824-7822  
Web: [www.wellington.ca/en/social-services/ss-housing-services](http://www.wellington.ca/en/social-services/ss-housing-services)

## Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health

160 Chancellors Way, Guelph, ON.  
Tel: 1 (800) 265-7293  
Web: [www.wdgpulichealth.ca](http://www.wdgpulichealth.ca)

## Guelph Food Bank

100 Crimea St, Guelph, ON.  
Tel: (519) 767-1380  
Web: [www.guelphfoodbank.ca](http://www.guelphfoodbank.ca)

## Hope House

10 Cork St E, Guelph, ON.  
Tel: (519) 265-4299  
Web: [www.hopehouseguelph.ca](http://www.hopehouseguelph.ca)

## Legal Aid Ontario

Tel: (416) 979-1446  
Web: [www.legalaid.on.ca](http://www.legalaid.on.ca)  
Legal Clinic Guelph-Wellington (519) 821-2100  
[www.gwlegalclinic.ca](http://www.gwlegalclinic.ca)

## Michael House

Tel: (519) 766-7675  
Web: [www.michaelhouse.ca](http://www.michaelhouse.ca)

## Ontario Provincial Police

Tel: 1 (888) 310-1122 (non-emergency line)

## Psychology Today

Web: [www.psychologytoday.com](http://www.psychologytoday.com)

## Safe Pet Ontario

Web: [www.safepet.ca](http://www.safepet.ca)

## Trans Lifeline

Tel: 1 (877) 330-6366  
Web: [www.translifeline.org](http://www.translifeline.org)

## Victim Support Line

Tel: 1 (888) 579-2888  
(Only when criminal charges are laid)

## Wyndham House

Tel: (519) 822-4400  
Web: [www.wyndhamhouse.org](http://www.wyndhamhouse.org)

## **Victim Services Wellington**

---

Tel: (519) 824-1212 ext 7304  
Email: [victim@vswguelph.on.ca](mailto:victim@vswguelph.on.ca)  
Web: [www.vswguelph.on.ca](http://www.vswguelph.on.ca)

## **Guelph Police Service**

---

Tel: (519) 824-1212  
Web: [www.guelphpolice.ca](http://www.guelphpolice.ca)

15 Wyndham Street South  
Guelph, Ontario N1H 4C6