

PREVENTION OF FAMILY VIOLENCE AND BULLYING COMMUNITY ACTION GUIDE

Set The Stage For Community Action



STEPS FOR COMMUNITY ACTION

Collaborative community processes help to empower community people as they work to achieve the goals of their community-based programs.

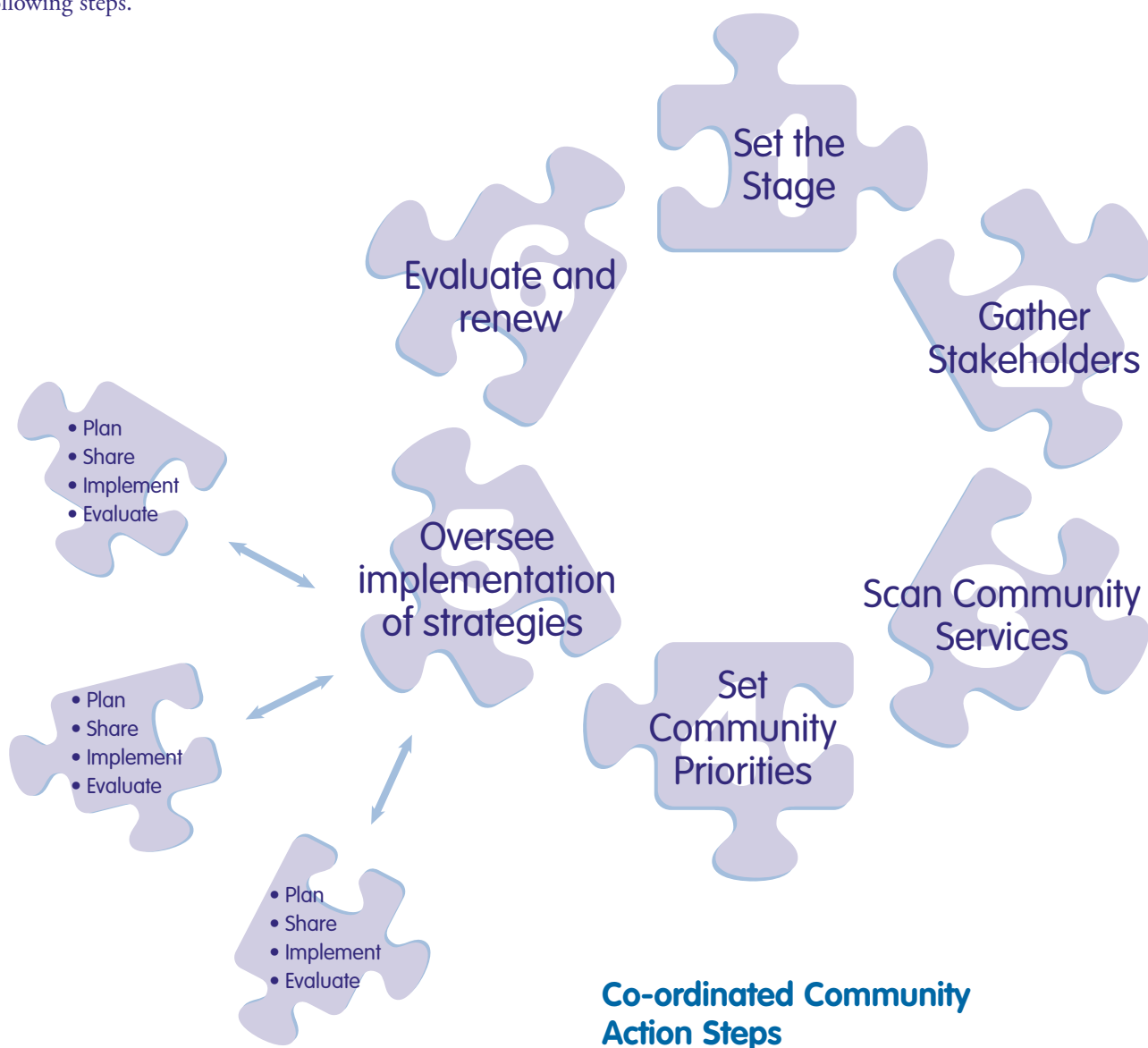
Most community processes to prevent family violence and bullying begin with a few committed people who agree that:

- Family violence and bullying exist in their community;
- Their community will be better without family violence and bullying; and
- They are willing to get involved in making a difference.

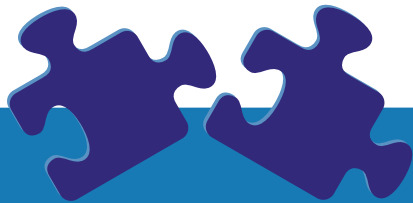
Stories heard during the Alberta Roundtable on Family Violence and Bullying, and other discussions and research, show that successful community processes include the following steps.

Each step in the community action planning process creates a new reality in the community, which in turn allows a group to set the stage for the next steps in preventing family violence and bullying.

Modules 2-6 in this Community Action Guide provide suggestions for how to carry out each step. Modules are available at www.child.gov.ab.ca or by calling the Office for the Prevention of Family Violence and Bullying at (780) 422-8519 (toll-free 310-0000). It is hoped you find them helpful as your community plans and carries out strategies to create a community where children, youth and families are free from family violence and bullying.



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CONTENTS

Key definitions	2
About this module.....	2
The Alberta context.....	3
Thousands set priorities for action.....	3
Finding solutions together: Key areas for action	4
Set the stage for community action:	
What communities can do	5
Communities are where differences are made	5
What it takes to prevent family violence and bullying in the community	6
Moving to co-ordinated community strategies	6
A tool to look at community involvement	6
The ladder of citizen involvement.....	8

This is the first of six modules in the Prevention of Family Violence and Bullying Community Action Guide series:

- Module 1: Set the stage for community action**
- Module 2: Gather stakeholders
- Module 3: Scan community services
- Module 4: Set community priorities
- Module 5: Oversee implementation of strategies
- Module 6: Evaluate and renew

These modules and other resources about family violence and bullying are available from:

The Office for the Prevention of Family Violence and Bullying

Website: www.child.gov.ab.ca

Phone: (780) 422-8519

(Alberta residents call toll free 310-0000)

Fax: (780) 427-2039

Mail: 6th Floor, 9940-106 Street
Edmonton AB T5K 2N2



KEY DEFINITIONS

Family violence

Family violence is the abuse of power within relationships of family, trust or dependency that endangers the survival, security or well-being of another person. It can include many forms of abuse including spouse abuse, senior abuse and neglect, child abuse and neglect, child sexual abuse, parent abuse, and witnessing abuse of others in the family. Family violence may include some or all of the following behaviours: physical abuse, psychological abuse, criminal harassment/stalking, verbal abuse, sexual abuse, financial abuse, and spiritual abuse.

Bullying

Bullying is a conscious, willful, deliberate and repeated hostile activity marked by an imbalance of power, intent to harm, and/or a threat of aggression. When bullying escalates unabated, it may lead to a feeling of terror on the part of the individual being bullied. Bullying may include, but is not limited to: physical intimidation or assault; extortion; oral or written threats; teasing; putdowns; name calling; threatening looks, gestures or actions; cruel rumours; false accusations; and social isolation.

ABOUT THIS MODULE

Communities are where differences are made. People working together can accomplish miracles.

During the Alberta Roundtable on Family Violence and Bullying, Albertans helped to set priorities for action to create an Alberta where children and families are free from violence and bullying. Two consistent themes of the roundtable discussions were:

- We have to **work together**; and
- We have to build on the work that has already happened.

This is the first of six modules in the **Prevention of Family Violence and Bullying Community Action Guide** to assist communities to work together and build on what has already been done in their community. This module provides concepts that form a foundation for taking the next community action steps. The other five modules suggest specific processes to help with other steps in co-ordinated community action.

Like individuals, communities are affected by the larger environment in which they live. The following information about Alberta's priorities for action may be helpful to your community as it sets the stage and takes action so that children, youth and families are free from family violence and bullying.

THE ALBERTA CONTEXT

Thousands set priorities for action

Family violence and bullying have no place in Alberta society. It's time for action.

That was the key message coming from a comprehensive province-wide roundtable process on family violence and bullying. The process involved a broad cross-section of Albertans including victims of family violence and bullying, experts, community organizations, Aboriginal peoples and interested Albertans.

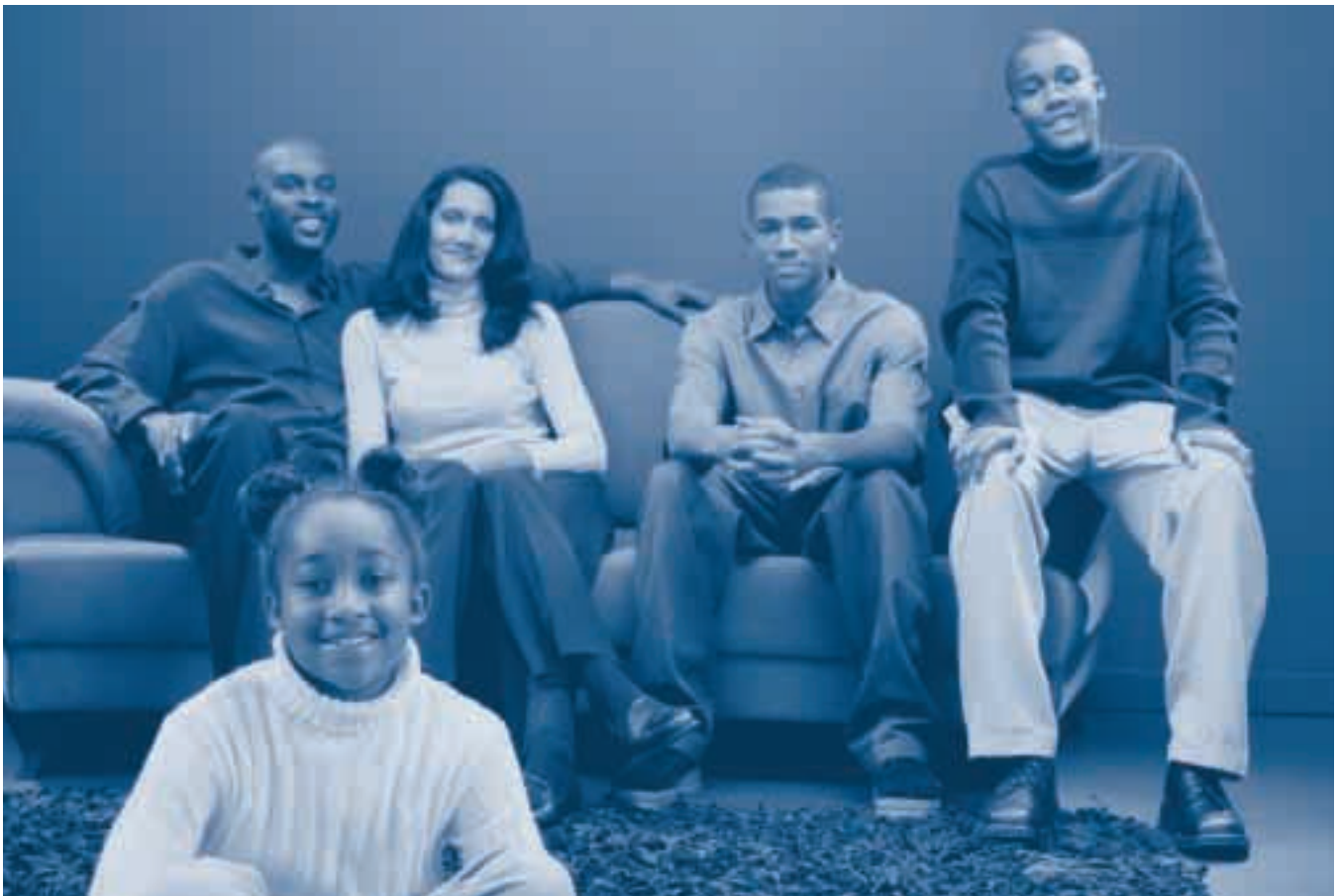
The provincial government reviewed the wealth of ideas and advice received. In October 2004, the provincial government released *Finding Solutions Together*, which sets out key areas for action.

Finding Solutions Together reinforces a clear message that solutions for preventing family violence and bullying must be developed together – by individuals committing to positive change, by involving all members of a family in the healing process, by community people working together, and by government supporting communities to reach their goals.

More than 3,000 people identified these critical starting points that we need to understand as we work together to create an Alberta free from violence and bullying:

Family violence and bullying are everyone's business;

- Family violence and bullying are clearly linked, although the strategies for addressing them may be different;
- A lot of important work is already underway, and the focus of next steps is to build on that foundation;
- It will take time to achieve the goals;
- Family violence and bullying affect people of all ages, all incomes and all cultures. We need to tailor our actions to be effective for the broad range of people affected;
- No single entity – whether that's a family, a community, or the provincial government – can solve this problem alone. Solutions must be found together;
- More work will be done in the coming years to assess progress, set priorities and expand actions.



Finding solutions together: Key areas for action

The long-term vision is to create an Alberta where children and families are free from family violence and bullying. To work as partners toward this vision, participants at the Alberta Roundtable on Family Violence and Bullying identified five key areas for action for individuals, families, communities and governments. The key areas for long-term action – social change; provincial leadership; collaborative, co-ordinated community response; services and supports; accountability - are outlined in a report on the roundtable entitled *Finding Solutions Together*.

Social change

- Change public awareness, knowledge and attitudes
- Invest in our society
- Focus on prevention and education
- Place a higher priority on early intervention
- Expand mentoring and community leadership
- Address stereotypes and racism involving Aboriginal people and communities.

Provincial leadership

- Establish enabling legislation
- Maintain a long-term sustainable commitment
- Enhance the cross-ministry approach
- Establish a single, cross-sector agency to take the lead
- Respect and address Aboriginal jurisdictional issues through co-operation among Aboriginal, federal and provincial governments.

A collaborative, co-ordinated community response

- Establish a collaborative, co-ordinated community model
- Provide support for collaboration
- Establish long-term sustainable community solutions
- Expand the use of multi-disciplinary teams
- Expand education and training for those who work with Aboriginal communities
- Provide cross-sector training
- Ensure that essential information can be shared
- Build Aboriginal community resources and capacity.

Services and supports

- Ensure equitable access to services and supports
- Establish a single point of access to services and supports
- Enable safe reporting
- Ensure advocates are available for victims
- Expand the availability of emergency/safe housing
- Provide transitional support(s)
- Provide treatment and counselling
- Ensure adequate protection services
- Address concerns with custody and access disputes
- Ensure that services and supports respond to those affected by family violence and bullying
- Ensure an effective justice response
- Use a holistic approach that reflects Aboriginal culture and tradition
- Improve access to and availability of services in Aboriginal communities.

Accountability

- Support evidence-based practices and expand community-based research and evaluation, including expanded research in Aboriginal communities
- Establish and track measurable outcomes
- Ensure transparency and clear reporting of outcomes achieved by all partners including community agencies, organizations and provincial ministries
- Reinforce consequences for actions and individual accountability.





SET THE STAGE FOR COMMUNITY ACTION: WHAT COMMUNITIES CAN DO

Communities are where differences are made

In many ways, the most important actions take place at the community level close to where people live. Families and community members play a crucial role in preventing family violence and bullying, for many reasons:¹

- Studies show that abused people turn first to those closest to them — extended family, friends and neighbours — before they reach out to an organization or professional service provider. They seek out government institutions such as police, courts and child protection services last;

- Families who experience violence are often disconnected from traditional service providers and are isolated from services offered outside their immediate neighbourhood;
- Community members often know which families need help and which services can make a difference;
- Community members know the cultural values, traditions and practices that foster violence and bullying — as well as those that can be used to intervene and stop it;
- Community members include men, women and youth who understand the connection between violence and bullying in the home, on the playground and in the street, and see violence and bullying as a barrier to strong and vibrant communities;
- Many community residents and leaders have the willingness and capacity to develop the skills needed to conduct family violence and bullying prevention and intervention activities.

Strategies for addressing family violence and bullying must reflect the unique needs and strengths of each community.

Strategies must include people affected by family violence and bullying, and those closest to them.

¹This material was adapted from the publication entitled Preventing Family Violence: Community Engagement Makes the Difference, produced by the Family Violence Prevention Fund, San Francisco CA, 2002.

What it takes to prevent family violence and bullying in the community²

Community-based programs look at family violence and bullying in the context of the conditions present in the community. That means finding and building on community assets, using culturally appropriate messages and services, and cultivating and supporting local leaders who can help to sustain change.

The five main goals of community-based programs are intertwined. Most community-based groups work on several of these goals simultaneously.

1. Raising awareness of the problem of family violence, and establishing norms that make violence and bullying unacceptable.
2. Connecting community residents to services.
3. Changing social and community conditions that contribute to violence.
4. Building networks of leaders within a community.
5. Making services and institutions accountable to community needs.

These five goals are remarkably similar to the five Key Areas for Action that emerged from the Alberta Roundtable on Family Violence and Bullying, and are described in *Finding Solutions Together*.

MOVING TO CO-ORDINATED COMMUNITY STRATEGIES

A strong message from the Alberta Roundtable on Family Violence and Bullying is that community strategies need to enable all service agencies to work together at all levels – the management level, the administrative level, and the street level.

Community agencies, police, shelters, faith-based organizations, schools, health services, corrections and all others involved need to be able to pool their talents and energies to provide the best possible solutions to the concrete problems individuals and families face.

² These five goals were identified in a study of community-based programs that engage community people in helping to prevent or reduce family violence. This material was adapted from the publication entitled *Preventing Family Violence: Community Engagement Makes the Difference* produced by the Family Violence Prevention Fund, San Francisco CA, 2002. The concepts are applicable to preventing bullying as well.

All those involved also need to take into account the unique needs and circumstances of people from various cultures, young people and seniors, and people with disabilities. And they need to involve people directly affected by family violence and bullying, and those close to them.

Co-ordinated plans and strategies should be in place in communities across the province, building on the work that has already been done in many communities.

Co-ordinated plans and strategies can strengthen co-ordination and collaboration at four levels:

1. **Front-line co-operation** and shared case management and co-ordination working with specific children, youth and families affected by family violence and bullying;
2. **Community and area interagency co-operation to identify service gaps** and to create and maintain services for children, youth and families affected by family violence and bullying;
3. **Community and area interagency co-operation to respond to social issues** that affect families – in this case, family violence and bullying;
4. **Regional co-operation** to develop mechanisms at management and governance levels to address policies or protocols that affect communities' ability to prevent family violence and bullying.

A tool to look at community involvement

People involved in helping to address family violence and bullying in their communities may have different degrees of engagement, as illustrated in the following chart.³

³ Chart is from Assembly Committee on Community Engagement: *Community Engagement: A Strategic Framework and Guide, Draft 3*. Alberta Children's Services, 2004.



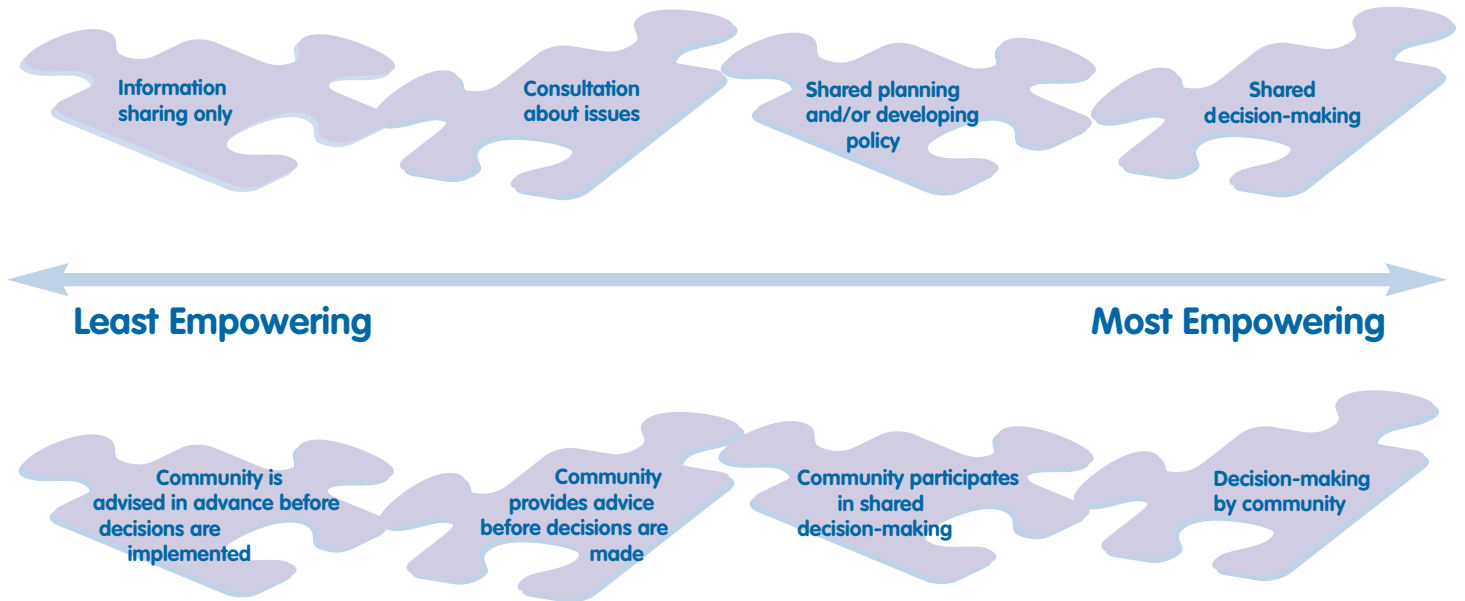
Levels of community engagement

Levels of community engagement	What happens at this level
Shared decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision is completed via a community of defined participants involved before, during and after this action. • Decision making approach (e.g. autocratic, democratic, consensus⁴, unanimous) is formally established and used to make the decisions. • Communication of decision(s) to identified stakeholders (interested parties) is completed shortly after the decision.
Shared planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A joint activity in which two or more parties develop their ideas and find common ground on issues and challenges, short or long term desired futures and potential goals and strategies to meet those goals. <p>Community-focused shared planning is composed of key elements of thoughts and communication designed to give meaning by focusing on the impact of change in the use of all involved community resources.</p>
Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The formal exchange of relevant information, opinions, input, advice and feedback collected for consideration from the community members attending the session.
Information sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The formal exchange of topic relevant information amongst the community parties attending the session.

⁴ “Consensus” does not mean that all group members believe the best decision has been reached, but it does mean that no one in the group is ethically or professionally violated by the proposed plan and associated decisions, and everyone in the group is willing to support the plan and decisions.

The ladder of citizen involvement

When communities are more engaged in making decisions, their level of empowerment also increases, as illustrated in the following diagram:⁵



Collaborative community processes help to empower communities as they work to achieve goals that support and strengthen their residents.



⁵Diagram is from Assembly Committee on Community Engagement: Community Engagement: A Strategic Framework and Guide, Draft 3. Alberta Children's Services, 2004.

Office for the Prevention of Family Violence and Bullying

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