

2.3 Terms of Reference:

Domestic and Sexual violence are predominately gender based and perpetrated most often against women and children. Adult women and children are more at risk of dying or suffering grave harm. Where men experience these forms of violence, the impact can also be devastating. The demand for service by male survivors of child sexual abuse is recognized. While more service options presently exist for women and children, men receive the same level of professionalism and compassion within our available resources.

There is a need for an integrated community response to abuse. For this the protocol suggests strategies for agencies to develop linkages with other area community partners including victim/survivors, to enhance the awareness of respective roles and responsibilities and to facilitate the development of information sharing process.

These definitions have been adapted from the Ontario Government Domestic Violence Action Plan and Sexual Violence Action Plan.

2.3.1 Domestic Violence:

Domestic violence is any use of physical or sexual force, actual or threatened, in an intimate relationship. Intimate relationships include those between the opposite-sex and same-sex partners. These relationships vary in duration and legal formality, include current and former dating, common-law and married couples. Although both women and men can be victims of domestic violence, the overwhelming majority of this violence involves men abusing women.

These crimes are often committed in a context where there is a pattern of assaultive and controlling behaviour. The violence may include physical assault, and emotional, psychological and sexual abuse. It can include threats to harm children, other family members, pets and property.

The violence is used to intimidate, humiliate or frighten victims, or to make them powerless. Domestic Violence may include a single act of abuse. It may also include a number of acts which may appear minor or trivial when viewed in isolation, but collectively form a pattern that amounts to abuse. Criminal Code offences include, but are not limited to homicide, assault, sexual assault, threatening death or bodily harm, forcible confinement, harassment/stalking, abduction, breaches of court orders and property-related offences.

2.3.2 Sexual Violence is:

Is a broad term that describes any violence, physical or physiological, carried out through sexual means or targeting sexuality. This violence takes different forms including sexual abuse, sexual assault, rape, incest, childhood sexual abuse and rape during armed conflict. It also includes sexual harassment, stalking, indecent or sexualized exposure, degrading sexual imagery, voyeurism, cyber harassment, trafficking and sexual exploitation.

Sexual Violence can be committed against strangers, acquaintances, co-workers, family members and spouses.

When a partner is charged with a sexual offence within the context of an intimate relationship, the criminal justice system responds within the parameters defined for acts of domestic violence.