

Domestic Violence Resources and Supports for Women who are Refugees and Refugee Claimants

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Battered Women's Support Services (BWSS)

We contribute to the freedom and liberation of girls from gender-based violence, and we affect social change through the provision of direct services, training and education programs. We work on systemic advocacy and law reform.

For 40 years, we have been providing crisis intervention, community-based victim services, counselling, legal advocacy, employment program, and other specialized services to girls and women who experience gender-based violence

We respond to:
10,000 calls a year
200 counselling appointments a month
150 crisis intervention appointments a month
100 legal advocacy appointments a month
We held 8 specialized support groups a month
280 women on wait-list

We will explore the social issue of gender-based violence and its impacts on Refugee Women, Refugee claimants, their families and their communities.

Outline

- Introduction to Domestic Violence
- Domestic Violence in Refugee Communities
- Key Issues and Challenges
- How to Support Women Facing Domestic Violence
- Supports and Resources for Refugee Women Experiencing Domestic Violence

Outline

- Safety concerns
- Safety risk assessment
- Safety planning

Why Women leave their countries of origin?

- Forced migration
- Gender persecution
- Sexual violence
- Oppressive cultural practices
- Trafficking
- Sponsorship
- Family
- Better Future

Why Women leave their countries of origin?

- Child brides
- Forced marriages
- Mail order brides
- Poverty
- Fleeing country of origin with partner due to other forms of persecution

Root Causes and Contributing factors to gender-based violence

Colonization Capitalism Globalization

Racism Sexism Homophobia

Gender Roles & Gender Expectations
Religion

Spiral of Gender Violence

- Intersectionality
- Social, economic and political conditions that contribute to gender violence, bound women's reproductive rights and self-determination

ADULT

Domestic Violence, Same-sex domestic violence, violence by fathers-, mothers-, sisters-, brothers-in-law and natal family members; Sexual abuse includes marital rape, forced to watch and imitate pornographic acts, extreme sexual neglect or coldness; Economic abuse includes ruined credit, gambling; isolation, permanent or temporary abandonment; Battery during pregnancy; Coerced into criminal activity; Extreme exploitation of household labour; Sexual harassment by employers, other employees, fathers-, brothers-in-laws, clergy, therapists, doctors; Victim-blaming, rejection by community; Forced into unprotected sex, infected with STD's, STI's, HIV; Denying mothers access to, custody of children, international abduction/kidnapping; Intimate homicide, femicide, honour killings; Withholding adequate food, clothing, daily necessities, Stalking, cyber-stalking.

YOUNG ADULT

Date violence, drug-facilitated rape; Rape, including wartime rape; Denied choice of marriage partner and/or sexual orientation; Dowry-related deaths; Intimate partner violence; Sexual harassment at work, college

ELDER

Physical abuse by adult children, caretakers; Spousal abuse; Exploitation of household labour, child care; Withholding health care, medications, daily necessities; Demeaning widowhood; Coerced suicide pacts or mercy killings.

CHILD

Little or no schooling; Child labour; Child prostitution; Physical abuse; Neglect; Abandonment; Incest; Sexual abuse; Molestation; Abusive "teasing" by sibling; Virgin cleansing.

INFANT

Female foeticide; Sex-selected abortion; Infanticide; Mal/under-nourishment by withholding nutritious food; Medical care withheld.

TEENAGER

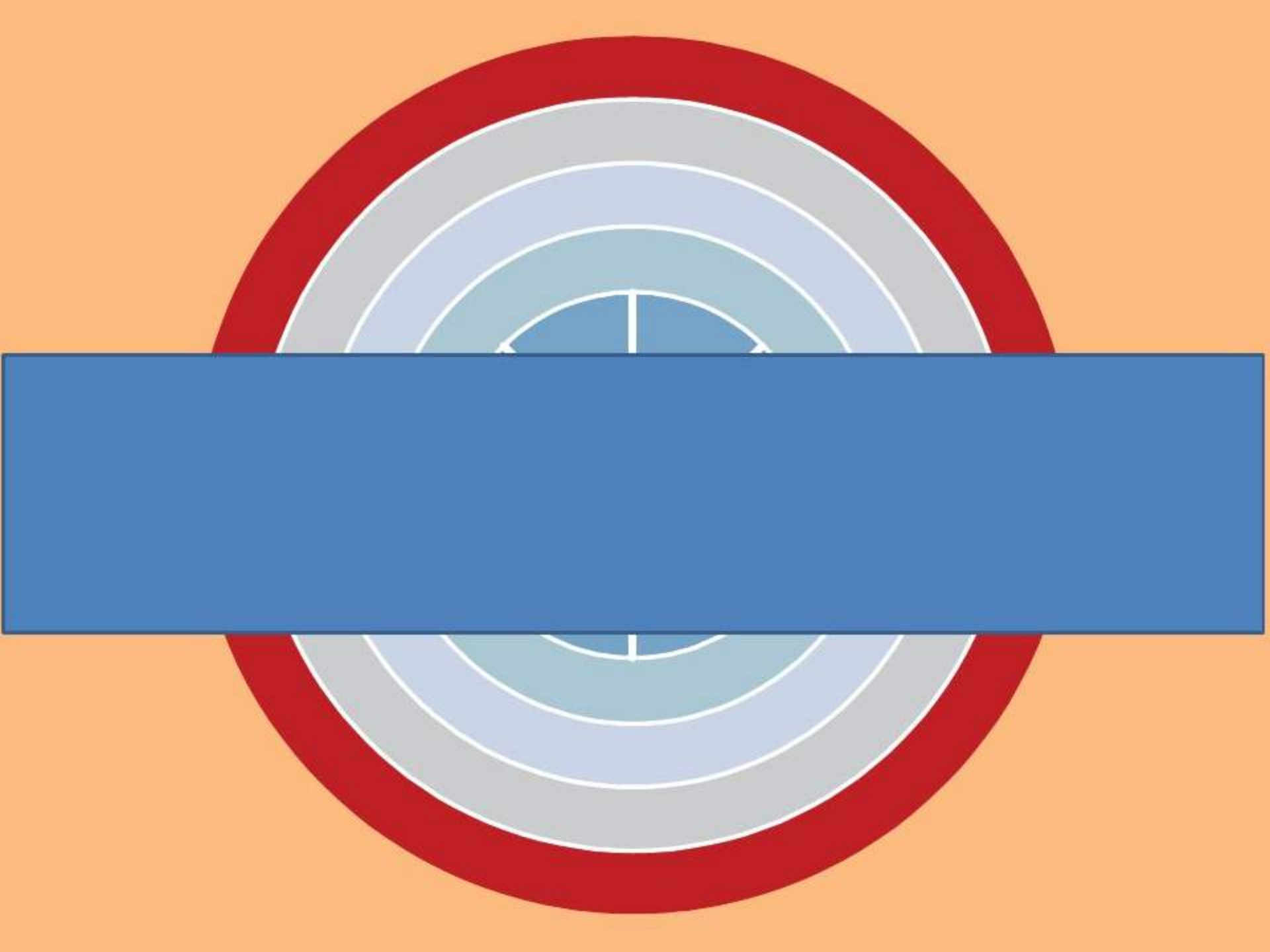
Coerced sexual initiation, rape; Forced marriage to parent's choice, much older man, teen's rapist; Ignorance about sex, anatomy, sexual health; Control over sexuality and sexual orientation; Trafficked; Forced into prostitution; Cyber-stalking by boyfriend or unknown predators; Date violence; Harassment, public lewdness; Sexual harassment by extended family, teachers, coaches, peers.

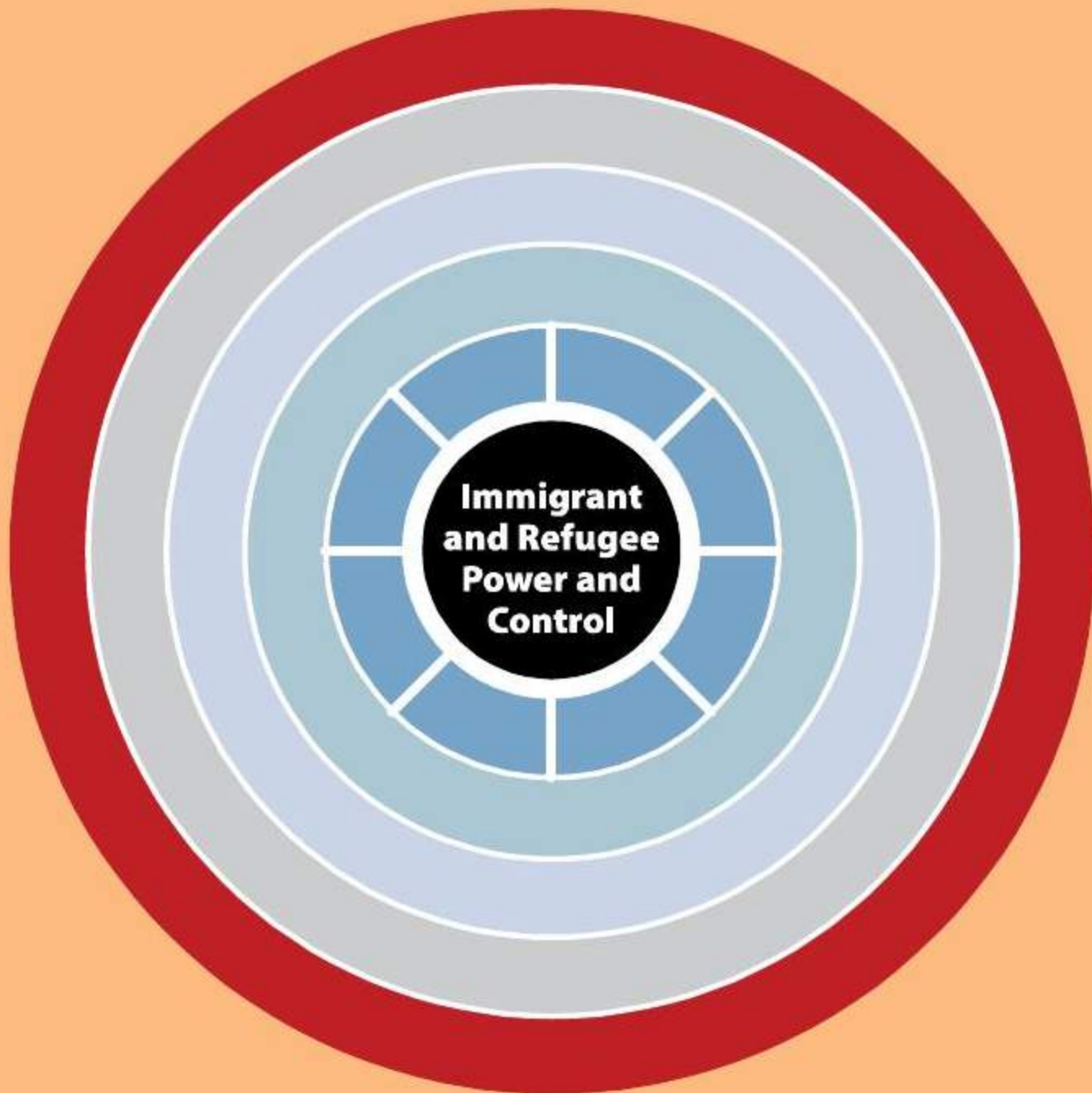
Contributing Factors of Violence Against Women

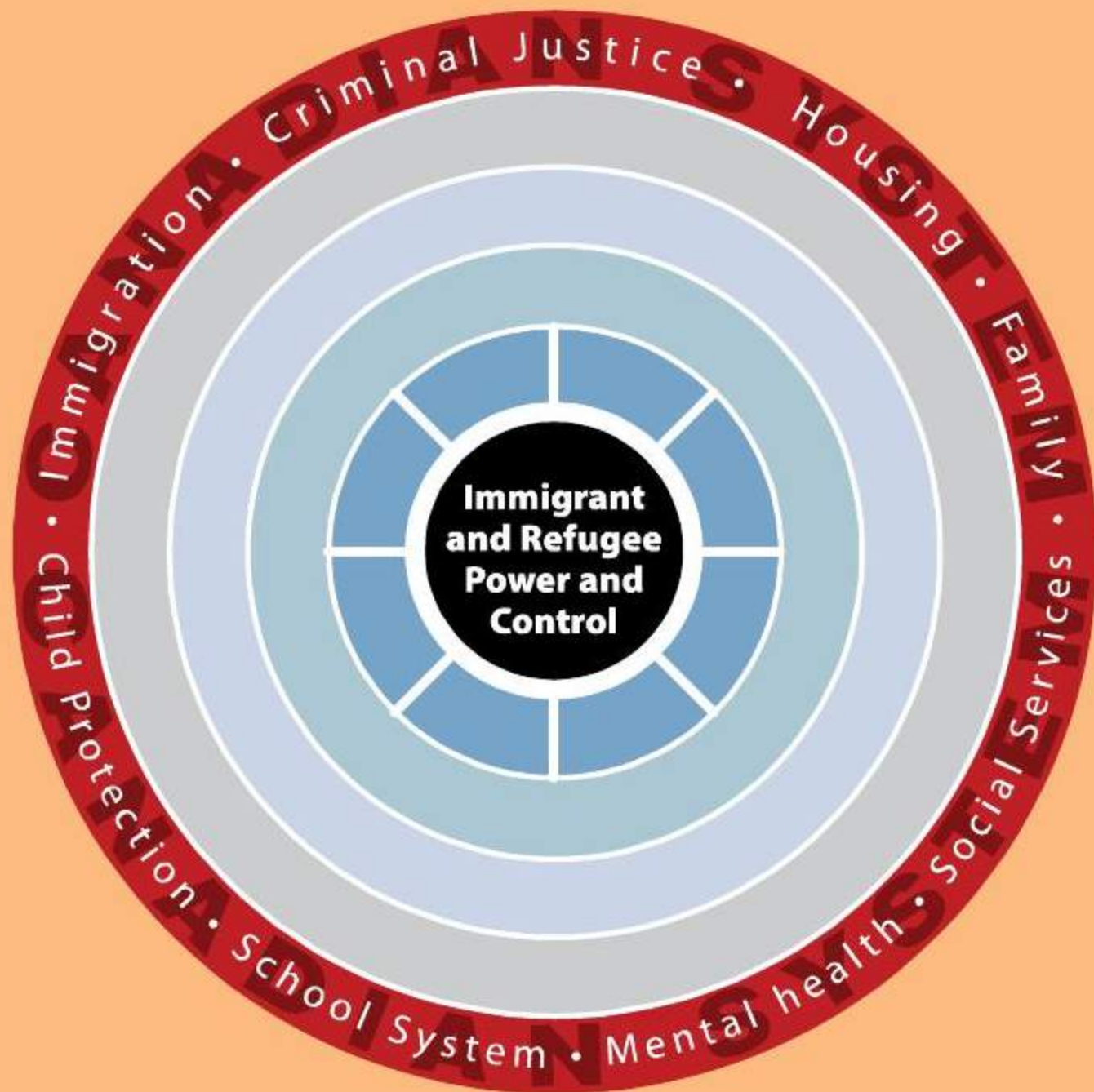
- Hierarchy as normal
- Violence as an acceptable way of resolving conflict
- Women are objectified
- Women are taught to submit (especially to men)
- Men are taught to dominate (especially women)

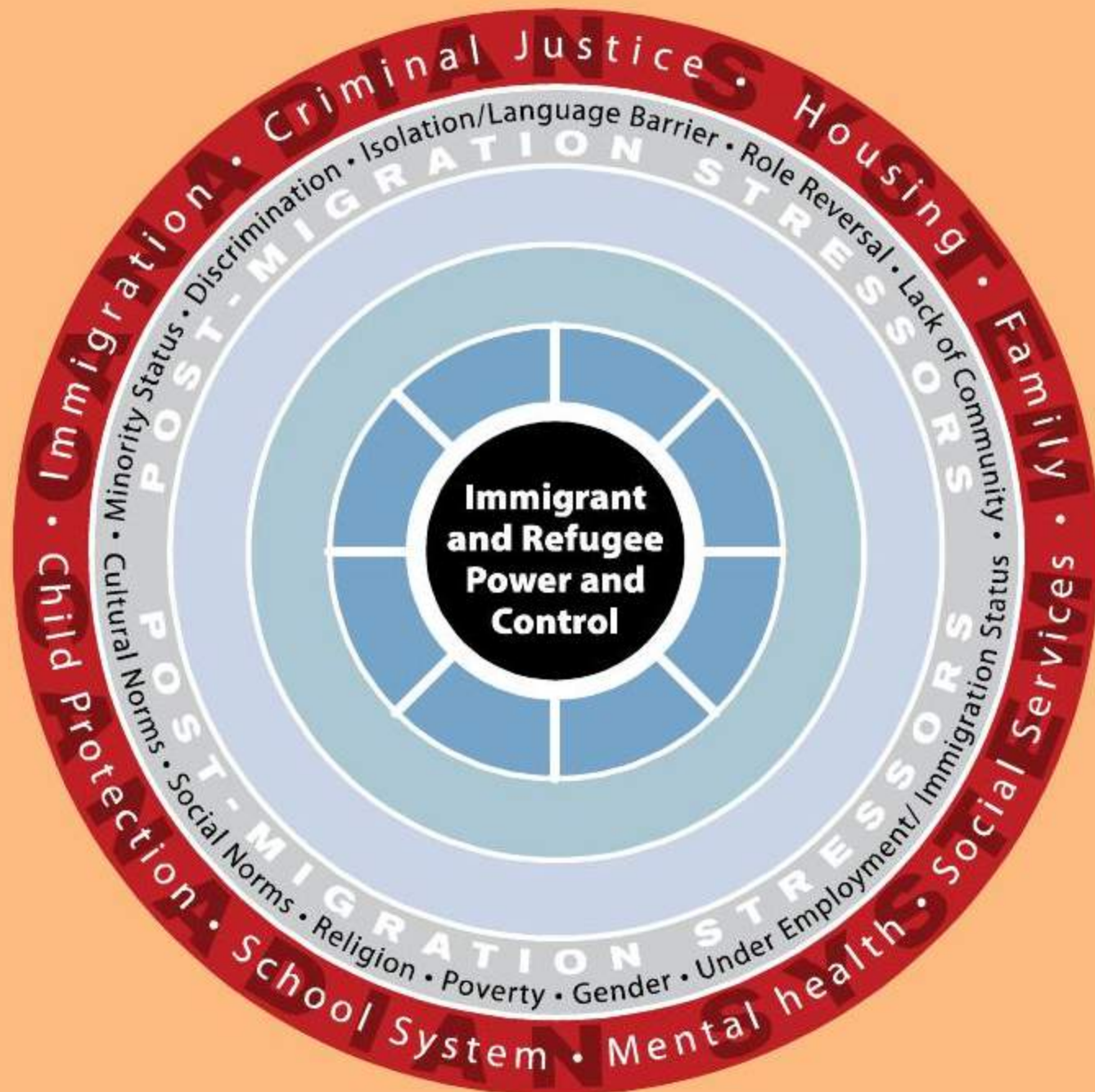
Violence Against Women in Intimate Relationships (Domestic Violence) Definition

- Is a systematic pattern of domination
- Where the abuser uses abusive tactics to maintain power and control over the woman
- Where these tactics escalate over time
- Where the woman alters her behavior in an attempt to stop the abuse





























How can we, from our different areas of work, contribute to a cultural transformation, and community accountability as it relates to gender-based violence?

Self- determination & Safety

Self-determination

- Supporting our clients towards strengthening their self-determination so they can empower themselves and seek safety for themselves and their families

Doing Initial Work

- Familiarize yourself with resources for women who have experienced abuse/violence in your area
- Listen to the woman's needs and concerns.
- Gather basic information about her situation
- Do not let “culture” to excuse violence in intimate relationships

Doing Initial Work

- Explore with her what she needs at the moment and provide the appropriate resources
- Respect her confidentiality
- Validate what she has already done to keep herself safe
- Assess and provide a safety plan

Doing Initial Work

- Ensure she understands her rights in Canada
- Ensure she has access to an interpreter who she can understand
- Acknowledge that she may not understand the Canadian legal system even when you have explained it

Doing Initial Work

- Whenever possible make a follow up plan with the woman. Remember that you may be the first person in Canada whom she can trust

Meeting women where they are

- Women are the experts of their own experience and their healing journey
- Violence against women is the result of systemic oppression

Safety Assessment

- Are you currently in an abusive intimate relationship or have you been in an abusive intimate relationship?
 - Emotional Abuse
 - Physical Abuse
 - Financial Abuse
 - Sexual Abuse
- Do you have any children here or abroad?
- Has anyone, including your partner or your in-laws, physically hurt, threatened, or injured you here or abroad?

Safety Assessment

- Has anyone, including your partner or your in-laws threatened to hurt you or to hurt someone close to you here or abroad?
- Has anyone, including your partner or your in-laws strangled you or threatened to strangled you?
- Do you feel controlled or isolated by your partner or your in-laws?
- Has anyone, including your partner or in-laws prevented you from having friendships or family relationships here or abroad?

Safety Assessment

- Have you ever reported to the police that someone has hurt you or that you were a victim of a crime here or abroad?
- Have you ever thought about calling the police for help but were too scared that someone would threaten or hurt you here or abroad?
- Have you ever sought support or accessed social services as a result of someone hurting you here or abroad?

Safety Assessment

- Has anyone kept your travel or identity documents in his or her possession?
- Has anyone controlled your money?
- Has anyone ever prevented you from seeking medical care here or abroad?
- How have you been coping?
- Substances
- Suicidal Ideation (suicide assessment)
- Self-harm
- Other

Safety Planning

- Ensure that woman learns about her rights and responsibilities in Canada:
 - Criminal Justice System
 - Child Protection
 - Support Services in her area
 - Calling 911
- Believe the women's stories
- Work from trauma informed approach
- Be informed about legal barriers that affect Refugee women
- Be transparent about processes with women and provide all the information she needs

Safety Planning

- Help women get access to a legal advocate who can help her with her legal issues
- In cases of domestic violence and when her refugee claim is attached to her spouse's, advocate for the police not to contact CBSA or Immigration, until woman has consulted with a lawyer
- Support her in finding a safe space
- Beware of sharing confidential information with her partner. It could place the woman at risk

Resources

- Resources for immigrant women working with a lawyer - <http://www.bwss.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Toolkit-for-Women-FINAL.pdf>
- Resources toolkit for lawyers to work with battered women: http://www.bwss.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/Toolkit-for-Lawyers_EIWITLS.pdf
- Resource manual for front-line workers: <http://www.bwss.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/violenceagainstwomenthelaw-resources1.pdf>
- Lobat Sadreshashemi, “Gender Persecution and Refugee Law Reform in Canada” Battered Women’s Support Services (September 2012) <http://www.bwss.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/GENDER-PERSECUTION-and-REFUGEE-LAW-REFORM-IN-CANADA-.pdf>

Resources

- When Battered women are Arrested, Empowering Non-Status, Refugee and Immigrant Women who Experience Violence - <http://www.bwss.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/whenbatteredwomenarearrested.pdf>



Thank you!

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