Canadian Association for Community Living

THE RIGHT TO BE SAFE

A Resource Guide addressing Violence against People with Intellectual Disabilities in your Community
Acknowledgements

We wish to thank the following individuals who served on the National Advisory Team and who greatly contributed to the success of this project through their feedback, support and commitment to anti-violence in our communities:

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Danny Soucy — Grand Falls, New Brunswick
Cari Gibbons — Toronto, Ontario
Marsha Dozar — Winnipeg, Manitoba
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We all have the right to be safe. What does that mean? It means freedom from chemical, physical, and emotional abuse or any form of abuse.

Abuse is something that is hurtful to the individual or potentially hurtful. Especially when you are talking emotional abuse. Someone may say something to you that hasn’t sunk in, until you walked away.

There are many different groups that are involved in helping to keep people safe — police, self-advocates, friends — a circle around the person to help them see what is abuse and what they can do. There are groups out there today that are already thinking and working on this issue and it is important to hook up to them.

The person that is abused often will not report the abuse, because there are not people around that will listen and take action or they will say “Oh that didn’t happen.” They won’t pass the message along to someone that could help. Try to tell people about the abuse, that you feel comfortable with and that may help you.

And for those that are trying to help, often what someone is saying is really something else. They are trying to say something through a message. They may be trying to say, “I am being abused and what can I do about it?” It is up to us to figure out ways to find that message and work with the person to figure out what the problem is and how to stop the abuse.

This resource manual is the start of talking about a very hard topic, but it is only the starting point. It hopefully will inspire lots of conversation and further thinking about what abuse is and what communities can do about it.

I think this resource guide is a positive way to help in that journey. We know that it is going to be a long ride, but we all have these stories, so feel free to share.

Peter Park
Board Member, Canadian Association for Community Living
Past National Coordinator, People First of Canada 1984-2001
Founding Member, People First of Ontario
About This Manual

What is it?

This manual provides an introduction to a practical step-by-step method that will enable communities and community organizations to work towards the goal of preventing and addressing violence against people with intellectual disabilities in Canadian communities.

It is part of a larger set of methods and training supports developed by Praxis International, a non-profit research and training organization that works toward the elimination of violence in the lives of women and children. Their work attempts to bridge the gap between what people need and what social systems or sectors provide. Praxis has developed a resource entitled The Praxis Safety and Accountability Audit Tool Kit. This resource offers a comprehensive method for examining and addressing where people “fall through the cracks” in systems dealing with domestic violence, child welfare, and other human service sectors.

We have adapted this approach in this resource for Associations for Community Living across the country and other community organizations who advocate and work with people with intellectual disabilities. The aim is to assist in making communities safer for people with intellectual disabilities who are vulnerable to violence in their lives.*

The intention of this guide is to alert communities to the issue of violence against people with intellectual disabilities and to offer an introduction to a particular type of approach for addressing violence in people with intellectual disabilities’ lives.

With this in mind, this resource first provides information on the issue of violence against people with intellectual disabilities. It then offers an approach to organizing your community to come together to talk about this issue as it pertains to their particular experiences and needs.

* The Canadian Association for Community Living (CACL) is a Canada-wide federation of 13 provincial and territorial associations that work to advance the human rights and full inclusion of people of all ages with an intellectual disability and their families. Founded in 1958 by parents of children with intellectual disabilities who wanted supports and services within the community instead of in institutions, CACL has become one of Canada’s ten largest charitable organizations, and has grown into a federation of 10 provincial and three territorial associations comprising of 420 local associations and over 40,000 members. For more information please visit CACL website at www.cacl.ca for more information and links to provincial and territorial associations.
The next steps of the community audit process is to pull the audit team together and begin framing and designing the process. You are now ready to conduct the audit. By using the “eight key methods” approach, auditors can methodically examine the practises of organizations(s) by focusing on the gap between what people experience and what agencies aim to provide and how that gap is produced. This method helps communities find solutions to identified problems.

By following this step-by-step method you are able to identify the places in the operation of your organization where abused people with intellectual disabilities are vulnerable. In addition, you can identify the places where, in the interaction of your organization with other agencies, people with intellectual disabilities who are experiencing violence in their lives are not being properly served.

This tool should also help agencies better coordinate their services and work more effectively together towards the identification and eradication of violence in individuals’ lives.

The ultimate goal is to prevent, reduce, and eventually eliminate those places of organizational and system-level practice that contribute to people’s vulnerability to violence. We hope to strengthen the capacity of communities to better serve people with intellectual disabilities who are experiencing violence in their lives.

Once organizations have engaged with their communities in the initial steps as outlined in this resource tool, it is recommended that they then make use of Praxis’ more hands on training tool kit.

Why is this approach important?

The focus of the “safety audit” approach is on how the systems that are in place, rather than those working within those systems — may not be meeting the needs of those they are trying to serve.

By conducting a comprehensive examination of how policies and practices operate within a service system, we begin to see where the individual’s needs can and do get lost or are not recognized. An agency acts in accordance to its rules, procedures, and protocols, and therefore cannot “do” certain things unless authorized to do so. The attempt here is identify what policy or procedure is holding them back from not doing what they could or should be doing. This approach also helps workers see themselves as part of a bigger system.

With this approach we are examining both how organizations are set up and how they work together in their community. More concretely what this means is — What are the rules? The procedures? The processes? and How do organizations link? What are the rules, procedures and processes between organizations? We are not as concerned with the individual workers within those systems. This is because individuals must act within the rules, procedures, and processes of their organization.

The audit process asks you to describe the broader things in the community that affect a person’s experience of abuse. Equipped with this knowledge you can then engage in a closer, more detailed examination of the systems at work, on an organizational and community level. This helps to identify the gaps between what an organization does and the lived experience of the people they support. Problem areas are then located in order to identify the things that need to be changed.
For years the disability movement has been approaching the issue of violence against people with disabilities through education and training of relevant sectors, i.e. justice system, support services for abused women, etc... Yet the problem of abuse still exists at alarming levels.

This community level approach allows for a closer look at how service systems operate. It walks individuals through systems in order to identify the exact places where people are falling through the cracks. We ask the questions about gaps in services to the people that are actually negatively affected by them. It allows us to see how we, as workers and service users, are all part of a bigger system and that is the reason why we “act” or behave as we do. This shift in the way of thinking, helps us to better understand our work environment, helps us to change our behaviour — collectively, rather than only holding the individual responsible and accountable for their actions.

At the same time, we recognize that some individuals intentionally harm or hurt others, often against the rules. If this is happening in your community, the safety audit approach should help you identify how this continues to happen and what can be done to address it.

Who developed it and how?

The Canadian Association for Community Living (CACL) partnered with Ellen Pence of Praxis International. Four pilot sites were selected and asked to use Praxis International’s and Dr. Dorothy Smith’s (Professor Emeritus University of Toronto) “Institutional Ethnography” approach to begin to examine the problem of violence against people with intellectual disabilities in their own communities.*

Four pilot sites were chosen to represent a diversity of community needs. The rural Francophone community of Grand Falls in New Brunswick, the diverse ethno-racial, and cultural community of Toronto Ontario, large urban and Aboriginal community of Winnipeg Manitoba, and lastly representing Territorial issues in Whitehorse Yukon.

The four sites worked with their local and provincial ACL to support the audit process. The following facilitators guided the process in local sites:

- Whitehorse, Yukon: Vicki Wilson
- Winnipeg, Manitoba: Marsha Dozar
- Toronto, Ontario: Cari Gibbons
- Grand Falls, New Brunswick: Danny Soucy

After the facilitators attended a two day training session conducted by Ellen Pence, they went back to their communities to conduct a safety audit. Based on the sites’ findings and recommendations for changes to the process, CACL developed this resource tool.

This guide builds on the lessons learned from each local site. A brief summary of lessons and results is provided below.

* For an overview of Institutional Ethnography see Dorothy Smith’s Everyday world as problematic: A feminist sociology. Toronto, Ontario, 1987: University of Toronto Press. Also you can visit the Praxis International’s website at www.praxisinternational.org for more information on how institutional ethnography has been applied to develop the safety audit approach.
### KEY LEARNINGS

**Toronto, Ontario**

This community met with several challenges in establishing an audit question. Many people that were brought in felt unsure about the process. The community felt that an audit was not needed as the issue was being addressed in the community already. The approach felt artificial as the community was asked to come up with a specific issue to address, instead of having a specific issue to begin with that the community wanted to look at. A topic was never agreed upon for an audit question to be formulated.

Given the difficulties in establishing an audit question for the team, the focus shifted to the broader scope of the project. The team focused on answering the question of what things needed to be present in order for an audit team to be successful.

The recommendations coming out of Toronto suggested that prior to conducting an audit, you need to ensure that the following things are in place:

- Go to the managerial level at the onset to inform the recruitment process of the Audit Team
- Dedicate a day to build the Audit Team
- Spend a lot of time as a team working on the development of the Audit Question itself and how to formulate it.

*Cari Gibbons, Toronto, Ontario*

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### KEY LEARNINGS

**Winnipeg, Manitoba**

In this community a team made up of police, Mental Health workers, Advocates, a college instructor, and representatives of local Associations for Community Living (ACLs) was established to work on the issue of FAS Spectrum disorder and in particular what contributes and reduces violence for women with FAS who live on the streets. These women have a variety of identities, i.e. Aboriginal, drug addicted, street workers, etc..

They collected information, learning about the lifestyle and life on the streets, the social service system that these women come into contact with. The team then brought in Ellen to facilitate a session to make sense of the data collected when they realized that they had just scratched the surface of this issue. They met again to re-think how to approach this issue and to prioritize areas of focus. The following lists their conclusions on where work need to be continued:

- Address the myth of “Choice” — People are being perceived as choosing the street lifestyle, rather than understood as people falling into a lifestyle due to the multiple barriers that they are presented with;
- The need to broaden the definition of the Vulnerable Persons Act to include this population; and
- Services need to be developed that meet the needs of women, specifically woman who are drawn back to the streets.

*Marsha Dozar, Winnipeg, Manitoba*

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### KEY LEARNINGS

**Grand Falls, New Brunswick**

In this community the facilitator brought individuals from many different sectors together, such as government representatives, hospital personnel, mental health professionals, etc.. They convened a few meetings before they decided on the audit process that they would engage in. They chose to observe intake sessions in a mental health institution and interviewed the intake workers to find out details of their job description and job responsibilities. They then engaged in an analysis of this input and came up with the following three recommendations:

- They need to have an advocate that would support the system to keep workers up to speed and show how an individual is being “processed”
- Need to develop a list of questions in order to identify abuse at the point of intake. This should be incorporated into the questionnaire
- Needs to be a partnership with all key stakeholders in the community, to ensure bridging. This partnership should be formalized through the establishment of a coalition, that would meet a few times a year to continue to discuss the issues.

*Danny Soucy, Grand Falls, New Brunswick*
How do you use this guide?

It is recommended that you initially read the whole guide from beginning to end. This way you will obtain an overall understanding of how people with intellectual disabilities experience violence in their lives and how that differs, and is the similar to others’ experience of abuse.

You then can familiarize yourself with each step of the community audit process this guide outlines.

If you then decide to implement a safety audit within your organization or even attempt to mobilize your larger local community, the information presented in this resource will help you to develop a customized work-plan based on the steps outlined in this guide.
The Issue: Violence for People with Intellectual Disabilities

Who are people with intellectual disabilities?

The way in which we understand and define disability has been the topic of much controversy. The World Health Organization refers to disability as “any restriction or lack (resulting from an impairment) of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being”.

This is problematic because of its emphasis on the individual’s deviation from a set standard of normality. Disability activists ask us to acknowledge that it is the limitations or lack of accommodation that society imposes that limit advantage to full participation in society, rather than an individual’s characteristics. In this context, the problem of disability is not with the impairment. Rather “disability” arises from the barriers to equal participation that are in place in society. When we are attempting to identify barriers and strategies to eliminate those barriers, it is more constructive to focus on the areas where social systems and services have the “deficiency” in meeting the diverse needs of all members of our communities, rather than the individual.

There are general categories for understanding the diverse realities of people with disabilities including; mobility and agility, hearing, vision, learning disabilities, speech or verbal communication disabilities, psychiatric, and intellectual disabilities. These are only useful however when we are cautious not to label people, recognizing everyone’s individuality and that these are broad categories that are not mutually exclusive.

The term “Intellectual Disability” replaces what was once known as “mental retardation”. People with an intellectual disability may have delayed or limited development in learning, that can affect one’s ability to comprehend, remember or discern. While people labelled this way have a considerable range of cognitive skills, their capacities are often underestimated. Historically, people with this disability have lived in institutions and/or in highly protective situations with their families, where they have been denied suitable educational opportunities and a chance to learn about their rights.
The experience of violence for people with intellectual disabilities

Numerous national and international research studies have confirmed that people with intellectual disabilities experience violence at a much higher rate than the non-disabled population. For women with intellectual disabilities the rates of abuse are even higher.

Research indicates that 83% of women with disabilities will be sexually abused in their lifetime and 40% to 70% of girls with an intellectual disability will be sexually abused before the age of 18. Among men with intellectual disabilities, 32% to 54% have been sexually assaulted. Further, women with disabilities are sexually assaulted at a rate at least twice that of the general population of women. Almost 80% of women with disabilities have experienced physical violence by their intimate partners compared to 29% of women without disabilities. Research affirms that sexual offence is the most common type of abuse.

People with intellectual disabilities are vulnerable to various forms and types of violence in their lives, such as:

**Physical** — This includes hitting and other forms of punishment, forced consumption of medications, invasive and inappropriate personal care, use of restraints, punishment-based behaviour modification, etc.

**Sexual** — This refers to unwanted acts of a sexual nature often by a care-giver or personal care assistant.

**Psychological and emotional** — This type of violence can include the denial of rights, necessities, privileges or opportunities by persons in a position to promote or safeguard the well-being of the person affected, denial of love and affection, verbal attacks, or threats to withhold care or institutionalize.

**Neglect** — This can happen when a care-giver ignores a person's personal, physical, medical and nutritional needs.

**Partner Abuse, Domestic Violence and/or Woman Abuse** — This type of violence refers to abuse that occurs in the context of intimate relationships.

**Institutional Violence** — This refers to violence that occurs in a residential or hospital setting, perpetuated by staff and other residents. Violence can include non-physical abuse and physical assault, the need to 'control' residents with the use of drugs, seclusion and restraint, and neglect. A 1990 study found that 40% of nursing and intermediate care workers admitted to physical abuse of clients.

There are a number of reasons why people with intellectual disabilities are more vulnerable to violence than people who do not have disabilities. Along with negative stereotypes, and the lack of support for caregivers, other reasons include:

- People with intellectual disabilities and their families are often poor and isolated and lack the supports they need. This can increase stress levels and make abuse more likely.
• People with intellectual disabilities have a history of institutionalization and even with a strong de-institutionalization movement, they are still much more likely to be institutionalized than other people, whether in a residential setting (this refers to both large buildings and smaller group homes) or in a hospital environment.

• Due to this historical segregation, people with intellectual disabilities often lack social and communication skills due to the exclusion from schools, the workforce, and community activities. This may result in an inability to deal effectively with abusive situations, or they may feel that they are responsible for the abuse, or that they “deserve it”.

• People with intellectual disabilities have also been socialized to be “grateful” and compliant, making them “good victims” and easy targets for potential abusers.

• People with intellectual disabilities are often unaware and have not been given information about their own sexuality — making them unaware that sexual abuse is wrong.

The Offenders

People with intellectual disabilities are most likely to experience abuse at the hands of someone they know — family members — including one or both parents, grown children, acquaintances, caregivers or attendants, residential staff, health care providers, and intimate partners. Abuse can happen at home, in public areas, the workplace, schools, as well as care and recreation facilities.

Barriers to Disclosure

There are many barriers for people with intellectual disabilities in disclosing the abuse they are experiencing and seeking help, including:

• A person may fear that an abuser will retaliate if authorities are contacted, or that they may be punished for reporting abuse, especially within institutional settings.

• An abuser may be the only source of care for a person in need, therefore reporting abuse may lead to the removal of a necessary source of support.

• For some people it may be difficult to name or recognize what they are experiencing as abuse.

Anti-violence information is not reaching people with intellectual disabilities. There is a lack of accessible and appropriate services and resources that are sensitive and knowledgeable of the experiences, contexts, and thus needs of abused people with intellectual disabilities.

Even when a person is able to overcome the many obstacles to reporting abuse, they then experience multiple barriers within the system, often related to communication and credibility.
Communication difficulties and limited verbal skills may cause the abuse to not be seen as credible and therefore not taken seriously.

Those working in the social services, health care, and justice systems may use complex words, speak fast or combine concepts when intervening with a victim thus further confusing the person and making it difficult for her/him to express what has happened.

While the issue of violence against people with intellectual disabilities has different manifestations and occurs in different locations, it is most definitely a critical issue needing immediate attention. Every community will have different resources and policies affecting how this issue is dealt with and thus will be at different stages of responding.
The Community Audit Process

Getting started. Who takes the lead? Any group can take the lead for initiating a safety audit in their community — the local Association for Community Living, an agency, various service organizations, etc. But for the audit process to be successful, the community has to name and own the issue right at the beginning. Your first job therefore in setting up a community safety audit is to assist in this process.

It is important that all stakeholders in the community feel that they have the power to truly contribute and make the changes they want to see happen. All key players need to be brought in right at the onset of the audit process in order for true community buy-in and cooperation.

This step also contributes to the development of a shared group identity thus resulting in a sense of equity and community ownership and responsibility for this issue. Once brought together the community should first hear a presentation about the particular experience of violence for people with intellectual disabilities in general and specifically within their community. Then information about related services and supports should be shared.

Step 1: The community names the problem

Organizing a community forum

One way to bring people together is to organize a community forum, where key people can come together to begin discussing the issue.

It is important to be sensitive to who conducts the facilitation of this forum, the best time for the forum to occur, and the best process and agenda for this event.
**Invitation List**

You could begin by making a list of relevant players and stakeholders to invite. This checklist may be helpful in developing an invitation list. You do need to adjust this list to socio-demographics of your “community”:

- Associations for Community Living
- People First Organizations
- Other support services for people with intellectual disabilities (include group homes, other associations, recreational programs, etc.)
- Violence Against Women's services (such as shelters, sexual assault centres)
- Relevant government officials
- Generic community and social service centres
- Health centres and hospitals
- Police and victim services
- Organizations serving immigrants, ethno-racial peoples
- Aboriginal organizations
- Women’s organizations
- Organizations geared to the homeless or low income populations
- Francophone
- Youth organizations
- Seniors organizations

**Communication**

The invitation needs to demonstrate that violence against people with intellectual disabilities is a community issue. Some people and/or organizations will need to know that this is an issue and that it is relevant to them. For example, immigrant organizations may have anti-violence projects, but have not yet focused any of this work on people with disabilities from immigrant backgrounds. They would need to know that violence against people with intellectual disabilities is a critical issue that is most likely occurring in their communities.
The community forum

The first objective of the community forum would be information gathering. You may want to determine:

- The nature and extent of the issue of violence against people with intellectual disabilities in your community;
- Who the main people concerned are, i.e. advocates, family members, people with intellectual disabilities, service providers, police, etc..
- What types of support services are out there and what has already been done;
- What challenges people are experiencing; and
- What the needs in the community are around this issue.

The second objective would be that the community forum will provide an opportunity to network and share information with groups that traditionally would not be in the same room together.

A third objective of the forum is to hear people’s real stories which will greatly contribute to how to best pose the problem.

A fourth objective of the forum would be to begin to identify interested organizations, leadership and the key players/roles for the Audit Team.

Community definition of the problem

The information gathered from the Community Forum should help describe the nature, key elements and extent of the problem. It would be best to document the outcome of the forum in order to assist in the next steps of the Audit Process.

The report on the Community Definition of the Problem could follow this format:

- Purpose of the Forum
- Who Attended
- The Issue of Violence Against People with Intellectual Disabilities in your Community
- Real Stories — narratives
- Towards a Community Safety Audit — next steps towards an Audit Team, interested people/organizations, leadership, etc…

The most important outcome of this step is that you not only understand the extent of this problem but you also attain an evidence-based sense of how people are perceiving this problem in their community.

The community consultation process allows for the people in the community to “own” this issue and develop their own way to talk about it. True to life stories and examples serve to make this issue real and tangible to the community and those experiencing or working to eradicate it.
**Step 2: Pulling together the Audit Team**

The role of the Audit Team is to identify how community organizations, services and systems think about, deal with, and act responsibly on anti-violence and safety issues. Team members will participate in mapping, observing, interviewing, gathering of data, analysis of data and the final report, (Please see Forming the Safety Audit Team: Things to Think About from The Praxis Safety and Accountability Audit Tool Kit).

It is important to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (see The Praxis Safety and Accountability Audit Tool Kit — Audit Training Guide for an example) that will outline the background, rationale, and the terms of the audit and that will clearly present the roles and responsibilities of the team.

**The recruitment process**

The first step is to begin the recruitment process for the Audit Team. Your team should be representative of many diverse sectors, organizations and social groups, (i.e. ethno-racial, income, sexual orientation and identity, immigrant, First Nations, older and younger people, etc.). Ideally you would it would include family members, and individuals with intellectual disabilities. They should be able to meet the time commitment required and should have the skills complimentary to the team.

When choosing the team think about the strengths that this team can bring to the audit process and some of the potential obstacles that they might face.

**Choosing an Audit Coordinator**

The make up of the Audit Team should represent key stakeholders in the community. Therefore the person who coordinates and leads the Audit Team should be someone who is well known, connected and involved with many organizations and cross-sectoral initiatives. They should also have many established relationships and networks. The Coordinator should be external to the organization in pursuit of a more objective review. It is critical that the Coordinator has knowledge, training and experience with the safety audit approach.

The responsibilities of the Coordinator will be to design, organize, and develop the work-plan of activities for the auditors and provide support and training to the team.

The Site Facilitator should have extensive training and experience in this methodology in order to ensure successful experiences and outcomes. If this is possible, then the Site Facilitator will be equipped to provide the suggested team training. If the Site Facilitator is in a training process, then the training should be conducted by
Creating the audit question

Based on the results of the community forum and background research, you will want the audit question to focus on the particular organizations, agencies, groups that are involved in the practises and policies that reflects the core issue. Your audit question will address the key factors that place people at risk, as identified by Community Forum participants.

Starting off with a core group of advocates, you would identify the key elements of the inquiry and frame the primary concern. It is important that this is a new question that we don’t already have answers to.

The audit question is essential to guiding the project. Much time and attention must be paid to this critical step. The audit question serves as the basis for the team’s work-plan, i.e. the team’s role is to answer this question — therefore the entire audit depends on this crucial step.

Be sure to develop a focused question and remember as you are framing this question, it should be specific to the organization(s) that you are auditing.

**Audit Question**

**Grand Falls**

What are the policies and practices that allow us to tolerate the repeated abuse that a person with an intellectual disability experiences?
### LESSONS LEARNED: THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS

**Toronto, Ontario**

Recruitment posed an extra challenge for the facilitator because she was fairly new to the community. There were few pre-existing relationships to draw upon and credibility was difficult to establish. Gaining participation in a fairly open-ended project with a new approach, was understandably difficult.

“In smaller settings, many of the people involved may already know each other, enabling a more informal process of recruitment. In a larger urban setting, service providers may not have the same sense of community and connection with each other. This may drive the need for a more formal sense of recruitment, such as a presentation or in-depth information package.”

_Cari Gibbons, Toronto Site Facilitator_

A lack of endorsement of the project by various management bodies was also viewed as a barrier to recruitment. Without this level of buy-in, it is difficult for individuals to commit to the process.

“Recruitment of team members would benefit from approaching management levels to make a presentation or proposal. This would allow managers from the start to understand what would be needed from the participating members, and would allow for an easier flow of communication between team members and the organization. Management may also have a good sense of which persons would be best suited to participate in the project.”

_Cari Gibbons_

A lack of clarity about actual audit team member roles also made recruitment difficult. The political context of the social service system was also complex and at times at odds with the project. Service representatives were leery of exposing their organizations to an audit because of perceived negative consequences.

“In our setting, funding was an interesting dynamic that seemed to be a factor hindering the process. With many large service organizations competing for much-needed dollars, it seemed that many agencies were reluctant to open themselves up to the audit process. If the focus of the issue was taken off of them, they may have been more willing to carry out the process.”

_Cari Gibbons_

The Toronto audit team was composed of four individuals from local organizations, but the full audit team never convened throughout the project.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Audit Question</strong></th>
<th><strong>Winnipeg</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“What contributes to or reduces the violence against women with FASD who live on the streets?”</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Audit Question</strong></th>
<th><strong>Whitehorse</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>“What exists in the policies and procedures of service systems to increase or decrease the risk of abuse/offending for people with FASD when they move from children’s services to adult services?”</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Audit Question</strong></th>
<th><strong>Toronto</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>A specific audit question was not formalized but the main focus of the Toronto site’s work was on peer-to-peer violence and violence perpetrated in group homes.</td>
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### Step 3: Designing the audit process

**Orientation and background research**

Once the audit team is pulled together and an Audit Coordinator is in place, the Audit Team needs to begin to design the audit process. First you need to identify what it is you hope to achieve.

There are a variety of purposes for conducting audits. The following is an adaptation of the *Praxis International’s Audit Planning Guides*’ objectives:
The purpose for conducting the audit is also closely linked to the community’s definition of the problem of violence against people with intellectual disabilities.

Next it is important to attain a sound sense of what has been done already in this area. By developing an understanding of the history of addressing this problem, you are better equipped to expand and build on this work. It is very important that auditors understand how people within the organization have and continue to perceive this issue. Develop a good sense of who has been involved in the past in the design and implementation of related projects and where they stand now. There is a need to learn from and validate past efforts, in order to demonstrate your respect for boundaries and territory.

Understanding your community context

Having attained an understanding of the community’s definition of this problem, it is now important to analyze the community context for addressing this issue i.e. how is the community response organized in terms of health and social services, disability services, specific anti-violence programs and services, etc..

There are a series of questions that can be asked when attempting to learn more about how the community is set up to respond to the issue of violence. These questions* are specific to your local community and aim to gather the following type of information:

- Who are the key players and policy makers?
- Who is not interested in participating in this issue and why?
- Who has the power to make or limit change?
- How are various minority and/or marginalized social groups (i.e. ethno-
racial, women, Aboriginal, seniors, youth, etc.) represented in the decision making and planning processes?

- What anti-violence services are available to people with intellectual disabilities in the community?
- What advocacy groups are involved?
- What other community-specific groups could be involved, i.e. ethno-specific, First Nations, women's groups, etc..
- What specialized anti-violence projects have been implemented in the past? Are they still in operation?
- Were they or are they still successful?
- What studies and research has been done in the past in this area? Were recommendations acted upon?

**Identifying resources for the audit**

It is also important to identify the resources in the community that will be available to support the audit process. This will assist you in developing an audit that can be realistically and practically implemented. Find out:

- What financial resources are available for the audit.
- What personnel resources are available
- What non-financial resources are available in the community
- What skills are available in the community (i.e. facilitating, management, organizing, public speaking, etc.)

You have to be aware of the political sensitivities that are present in the organization(s) that you will be auditing. This is informed by how the organizations are set up and operate, and what has been done in the past.

Remember to explore financial support that is available at all levels of government, i.e. municipal, provincial/territorial and federally that could potentially support an anti-violence initiative. Many communities are highly organized around anti-violence work and have regularly excluded the issue of violence against people with intellectual disabilities. It is recommended that you tap into these pre-established anti-violence networks, that are often cross-sectoral in nature, particularly in the larger urban areas.

**Organizing the audit process**

Once the community has named the problem and an audit team is in place, the next step is to design and organize the audit process.
Who will participate in the audit process?

You would want the participation of all the key stakeholders including people with intellectual disabilities, their families, management and direct service staff. People who have both internal and external affiliations to the organization or institution being audited. You will need to be clear about the distinction between who is on the audit team versus who will serve as sources of information. Who will participate in your audit, will also depend on what audit question you choose.

Outreach to participants: a communication strategy

You will need to develop a communication strategy which would include a presentation plan that uses common phrases that explain how to think about and understand the issue of violence against people with intellectual disabilities.

You will be able to find many key phrases and examples for communicating this process in the Praxis’ resources listed at the end of this guide.

The presentation plan must be formulated in such a way as to “make light bulbs go off” and secure the audience’s buy-in. You may consider not using the term “interview”, i.e. we would like to talk to you, in order to collect information about …”

Start off with the understanding that we are not looking at people or individuals but examining how institutions and systems function. Inherent in this perception, is that everybody needs to re-think how they understand the operations of the organization and therefore everyone needs training.

Scheduling, facilitation, and administration

Pre-schedule interviews so people are clear about what is expected of them and when. It is important to develop Confidentiality Tools for the site(s) where the audit is to take place, (See The Praxis Safety and Accountability Audit Tool for templates). These agreements will be specific to visitation, information exchange, access to records, and consents to observe and interview staff. It is recommended that you bring in outside interviewers.

Training and support for the Audit Coordinator

It is essential that the Team feel well grounded and clear about the safety audit approach before beginning it’s work. For many individuals this approach will represent a shift or new way of thinking. It is recommended that the Team have a one or two day training session prior to beginning (two is preferable) in order to fully immerse itself in the principles and process of this approach. This will provide team members with a sense of confidence and competence in the process and in their individual and collective participation. It would be helpful for team members to receive information and material prior to this first meeting to facilitate their preparation for training.
It is recommended that the following items be covered in this activity:

- A thorough presentation of the concepts of a safety audit with a completed case study to review (including a final report);
- A strategy in which to help team members understand the shift in thinking from traditional reviews and evaluations to the safety audit focus;
- A complete ‘walk through’ of the process that they will undertake;
- The opportunity to engage in case scenarios and role playing of interviews to ensure that each team member feels confident and practiced with the language and clarity of their work; and
- The collective design of a critical path (the logistics of the process) including the review of community forum findings, development of audit question, identification of potential systems to be studied, names of individuals within those systems to be interviewed, a work plan including who does what and a proposed scheduled of follow-up meetings.
Collecting Information

Who do we get information from?

In the information gathering phase of the safety audit process, we need to collect information from two groups of people: a) people with intellectual disabilities and their families and b) those involved in the health and community service sector.

What kind of information do we want?

We are seeking information about:

- The gap between what people experience (the victim’s position) and what service system provide.

- How the gap is produced in order to locate how a problem is produced.

- How to solve the problem once you locate how a problem is produced.

Where do we get this information from?

The first step is to understand the key areas where we can get the information we need for a comprehensive safety audit. Most organizations have organized their work in eight areas:

- **Administrative Practices** — This would include procedures, protocols, forms, intake processes, and any documentation process.

- **Rules and Regulations** — Any order that workers, service users, and volunteers have to follow, such as policies, and laws.

- **Linkages** — Any past, present, or future links an organization has with other services or organizations in the course of their work.

*The information from this section is adapted from The Praxis Safety and Accountability Audit Tool Kit, Tool #3 - pages 46-49, (please see Section 6 on how to access this resource.)*
Resources — This includes technological, staffing, support services, and documented resources.

Education and Training — Any professional, informal, and internal training that staff possesses or has access to.

Concepts and Theories — This is the philosophical framework of an organization, which includes language used, how things are categorized, and assumptions that are made in the course of their work.

Mission Purpose and Function — Here we are referring to three things; 1) the overall mission of an organization, i.e. “advocacy or service on behalf of people with intellectual disabilities”, 2) examining the purpose of a specific process, e.g. developing person centred plans, and 3) the function of a worker in a specific context, e.g. a residential worker in a group home.

Accountability — This includes a) the way the abuser is made accountable for his/her actions, b) the way the organization is accountable to victims, and c) the way the organization is accountable to other organizations that it links with.

Other Areas — The ninth area is for anything that we may have missed within an organization in relations to how work is organized.

Organizations tend to operate through these kinds of policies and priorities. By examining them, we can determine the effectiveness of the service that is provided. Large organizations put these policies and practices in place as ways to “standardize” their workers’ actions. These are what Praxis International calls “core standardizing methods” that organizations use to direct and control workers to act in the appropriate, authorized ways.

What questions do we ask?

What are the key questions that we need to ask for the audit?

Go through each of the above nine areas and answer the following five questions:

- How does the organization(s) and the system operate in each area. Describe the processes.
- Who designed the above 1-9? Is it locally, provincially/territorially, or nationally designed?
- What is the intent of each of the 9 practises?
- How are each of the practises working? Who does the practise benefit?
- Does this practise address the potential risks in:
  - Negative effects on disclosure?
  - The perpetuation of abuse?
  - Retaliation from the abuser?
  - Negative organizational response?
How do we get this information?

This information can be gathered using one-to-one interviews and by means of observation. The Audit Team will need to organize interviews and set up optimal times to “observe” the organization at work.

Tips for organizing and conducting the interview process

The following tips are useful to remember when organizing and conducting interviews. Remember the audit process is about examining the way things are set up to work — it is not about scrutinizing or assessing individual workers. These tips will help communicate this important point to those you need to talk with.

Organizing the interviews

- Match those you choose to interview with the questions that you are seeking to answer, i.e. ensure that you are interviewing those people who are in the best position to answer the specific questions.

- Organize an information session on the safety audit process. Deliver this session to the whole organization before the onset of the audit. This will provide the opportunity to get everyone on board, be clear about what to expect and for people to ask questions and share concerns.

- Organize the format/content of interviews ahead of time, ensuring that you build in a brief overview of the safety audit process for those who may have missed the earlier presentation. Develop an interview guide that outlines the questions you want to ask. Make sure that you stick to it, managing time appropriately.

- Ensure that you plan for enough time to collect the information you are seeking. This may mean that you have to organize more than one interview with the same person or more than one observation of one department or organizational process.

The interview process

- Consider the person that you are interviewing as a partner in this process. Treat people as co-investigators and the experts in areas that you are not. Establishing the relationship in this way, acknowledges peoples’ stake in this issue and encourages them to feel a sense of ownership of the audit process.

- Be an active listener and hold back on sharing what you think. The goal is to fully understand how people think and act. Therefore we need to try our best to be objective, and resist reacting, re-phrasing what is said, and contributing to the answers. Here it is important that interviewers are aware of their own personal bias, assumptions and opinions. Be careful that you do not appear like you are judgemental, because this will effect the honesty and nature of their responses. The
less talking and more listening and recording that occurs, the more successful the interview process.

☐ **Use examples of what you are asking for.** Examples such as, “Who participates in person-centred planning sessions?” “Have you ever been in a situation where you felt that the presence of support staff negatively effected the outcome of the plan?”

### After the interview

☐ **Review and “clean” your notes as soon as possible after interviews.** The notes will be more accurate when the interview is fresh in your mind. You will also be able to remember the non-verbal atmosphere of the interview and any key insights that occurred.

☐ Send a prompt thank-you via email or mail. This gesture recognizes the important contribution people have made to this process and it also validates their ownership/involvement in this work. It would be good to also keep people abreast of the next steps of the audit and when they can expect the results to be available.
Analyzing Information and Offering Solutions

The next step is to organize and make sense of all the information that has been collected.

The following four objectives of the audit will help you organize your findings and outline your final report:

- Identify the places where people with intellectual disabilities are vulnerable to violence.
- Identify the gaps in organizational practise and in the broader system, where we are not responding effectively to this vulnerability.
- Describe how organizational and community-wide response to violence against people with intellectual disabilities both produces and closes these gaps.
- Develop recommendations with a work-plan with activities and a timeline, that outlines the people and organizations responsible for implementing these recommendations.

Tips for organizing your findings

- Keep the Audit Question at the centre of the analysis by consistently identifying its relationship to all the findings.
- Describe the interviews, observations, and any relevant documentation that you have reviewed.
- Make concrete problem statements and be clear about why a finding is a problem.
- Ensure that you have evidence from the findings to support all problem statements.

*The information from this section is adapted from The Praxis Safety and Accountability Audit Tool Kit, Tool #4, pages 93-96, (please see Section 6 on how to access this resource.)
Steps In Analyzing Information

1) The Audit Question
   • Understand its relationship to all the findings.

2) Describe what you heard, saw, & read
   • Interviews
   • Observations
   • Text

3) Write Problem Statements by asking and answering:
   • How is what we've learned, a problem?
   • Related to the Audit Question?
   • For who?
   • As a safety problem?
   • As an accountability problem?

4) What is our evidence? From …
   • Interviews
   • Observations
   • Text
   • Do we need more information?

Source/s of the problem
   • Administrative Practices
   • Rules & Regulations
   • Linkages
   • Resources
   • Education & Training
   • Concepts & Theories
   • Mission Purpose and Function
   • Accountability
   • Other Areas

5) How is the problem produced?

6) How do we solve this problem?
   • What needs to be redesigned and how?
   • Who needs to be at the table?

7) Final Steps
   • Write a draft report
   • Get feedback from the organization
Conclusion

When the step-by-step safety audit approach is implemented, communities and community organizations are given the capacity to identify the places where people with intellectual disabilities are vulnerable in their community and they are also given the practical information that is needed to address this violence.

The idea of an “audit” offers a way to examine of how policies and practices operate within a particular organization and/or service system. This helps us identify where the individual’s needs can get lost and it assists agencies and communities to better coordinate their services to more effectively meet the needs of people with individuals and the experience of abuse.

Remember, it takes a few willing people to begin this process. It is meant to be community-based and community-driven. You may require funding to carry the process out (for hiring a facilitator, meeting costs, etc.). We hope the experiences of different communities involved in this demonstration initiative, and the guide they helped create, will help demonstrate to your community and to potential funders the practical, and ‘doable’ nature of community safety audits.

It is our hope that local communities will commit to this process and that we will witness a systematic country-wide effort towards the eradication of violence in the lives of people with intellectual disabilities. Please join us. Be part of the solution.
Key Praxis Resources

The Duluth Safety and Accountability Audit: A Guide to Assessing Institutional Responses to Domestic Violence
Available from MPDI at www.duluth-model.org 202 E. Superior Street, Duluth MN 55802 218.722.2781

The Praxis Safety and Accountability Audit Tool Kit
Available from Praxis International, 5402 North Shore Drive, Duluth MN 55804 218.525.0487
END NOTES


Please note: