



# RESPONSIBILITY + ACTION = POWER

CRIME PREVENTION WEEK ~ NOVEMBER 1 - 7, 2014

Crime Prevention is Everyone's Responsibility

## Preventing Revictimisation<sup>\*\*\*</sup>

### The Issue

The term *revictimisation* refers to a pattern in which a victim of abuse and/or crime has a statistically higher tendency to be victimised again, either shortly after the initial offence or as in cases of child abuse, much later in adulthood. The latter is particularly notable in cases of sexual abuse.

While an exact percentage is almost impossible to obtain, samples from many studies suggest the rate of revictimisation for people with histories of sexual abuse is very high. The vulnerability to victimisation experienced as an adult is also not limited to sexual assault, and may include physical abuse as well.

Reasons as to why revictimisation occurs vary by event type, and some mechanisms are unknown. Revictimisation in the short term is often the result of risk factors that were already present, which were not changed or mitigated after the first victimisation; sometimes the victim cannot control these factors. Examples of these risk factors include:

- living or working in dangerous areas
- chaotic familial relations
- having an aggressive temperament
- drug or alcohol usage
- unemployment

### The Impact

An individual's traumatic experience, socialization or beliefs can result in vulnerabilities that increase a victim's risk for revictimisation in some of the following ways:

- Numbing of responsiveness to the environment may decrease the individual's ability both to identify cues of threat and to respond effectively to actual danger.
- The reduced energy levels in the aftermath a crime or trauma may decrease an individual's personal resources available to take action to protect oneself from danger.
- Physically, the downward social mobility often associated with chronic and disabling emotional and psychological distress increases vulnerability to revictimisation.
- Employment instability reduces economic resources which can result in an increase to the individual's dependency on others.
- Damage to the victim's self-concept can create a sense of self-blame, shame or low self-esteem.
- Victimization can result in disruptions in the individual's ability to develop healthy emotional attachments and associations.
- Victimization or witnessing violence or abuse, can socialize a victim to believe that such behaviour is normal or acceptable.

<sup>\*\*\*</sup>Adapted from The Center: Posttraumatic Disorders Program; *Centering* newsletter Vol 2 Fall 1996 *Preventing Revictimization*



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## Victim Services

Victim Service Programs are designed to assist victims and witnesses of crime and traumatic events. To aid in the prevention of potential revictimisation, the objectives of Victim Service Programs are to:

- Lessen the impact of crime and traumatic events through providing crisis intervention and emotional support; information on the reactions one may experience in the aftermath of a crime or traumatic event; practical assistance; referral to additional supports services, such as counselling, to assist the individual to process and recover from their experiences.
- Educate victims and witnesses on their legal rights as enshrined by law in the BC *Victims of Crime Act*; provide information about the criminal justice system and updates on the status of the police investigation and court case.
- Increase the immediate safety of victims of crime through: providing risk assessments and assistance in the creation of safety plans; referrals to have a home security check completed; and assisting in accessing emergency funding to assist with home safety expenses to secure premises for the victim.
- When necessary, assist in relocating the victim to a safe place (transition house, new community, temporary shelter); assist in accessing protective measures for those who qualify; and assist in accessing cellular phones, if available, to connect to 911 for those in unsafe situations (e.g. domestic violence).

## Dealing with the Aftermath of a Crime or Traumatic Event

Crime and traumatic events affect everyone differently. Victims may suffer physical and/or emotional effects which are not only painful, but may be confusing and frightening as well. Some common feelings a victim of crime or trauma may experience include:

- Shock
- Numbness
- Sense of violation
- Powerlessness
- Anger
- Fear
- Anxiety
- Shame
- Depression
- Sense of grief
- Confusion
- Aloneness
- Loss of trust

It is important for those who have experienced the impact of crime or trauma to look after themselves and get the help and support they need.

## Where to Get Help

There are over 160 Victim Service Programs across the province. These programs are staffed by Victim Service Workers who are trained to assist victims of crime and trauma. To find a Victim Service Program in your community contact:

**VictimLink BC:** Free and confidential services are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week in over 100 languages, providing information on services to victims in communities across BC and referral information. 1-800-563-0808 or [www.victimlinkbc.ca](http://www.victimlinkbc.ca)

**Ministry of Justice** – Victims and Witnesses of Crime and Violence webpage: provides information to victims and witnesses of crime, violence, or abuse. [www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/victimservices](http://www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/victimservices)



[www.bccpa.org](http://www.bccpa.org)

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