

## Vancouver & Lower Mainland Multicultural Family Support Services Society (VLMFSS)

**LET'S WORK TOGETHER TO END FAMILY VIOLENCE**

# Our Office

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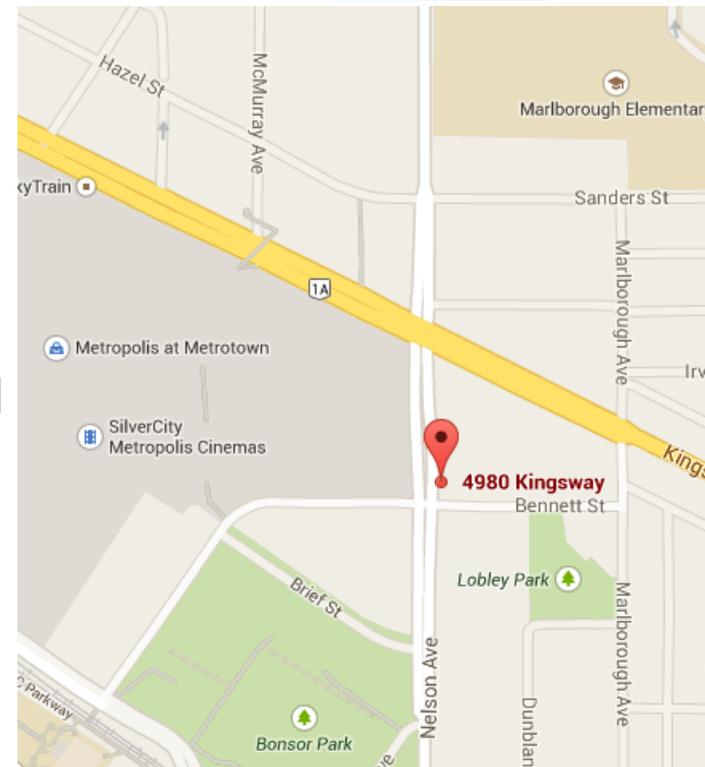
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# History and Mandate

- Non-profit organization, registered charity
- Founded in September 1991
- Counselling, advocacy and support to immigrant, refugees, visible minority, non-status women and children experiencing family violence in Metro Vancouver
- Bi-lingual, bi-cultural workers
- Free and confidential services provided as long as it is needed in over 24 languages
- Education and consultation to professionals working with immigrant families

- **Ministry of Justice**
- **Ministry of Children and Families Development**
- **Public Health Agency of Canada-CAPC**  
(Community Action Program for Children)
- **Service Canada**



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# **FAMILY VIOLENCE**

- A WOMAN IS KILLED EVERY 6 DAYS by her intimate partner.

In 2011, 76 out of 89 spousal homicide victims (over 85%) were



- EVERY DAY, over 3,300  (along with their 3,000 children) are forced to sleep in an emergency shelter to escape domestic violence. Every day, 200 women are turned away because shelters are full
- EACH YEAR, over 40,000 arrests result from domestic violence: that's about 12% of all violent crime in Canada.  
Only 22% reported, the real number could be much higher

Source from Canadian Women's Foundation



- ▶ **Total 10,273 incidents of spousal assault reported to police in 2005** (EVABC)
- ▶ **74 % involved a male offender; 16 % involved a female offender** (EVABC)
- ▶ **Spousal assault accounted for 26% of all assaults reported** (EVABC)
- ▶ **Most victims were  between 25 and 46 years of age** (EVABC)
- ▶ **From 1999 to 2004, 183,000 (15 years +) were victims of spousal violence** (Stats Can 2006)
- ▶ **Domestic violence: the most numerous case type for Crown counsel**  
**In 2008/09, Crown counsel received 10,224 domestic violence cases**  
**: 14 % of all cases** (Criminal Justice Branch, 2010)

## Violence against women in relationships includes:

- ❑ **Physical Assault:** hitting, punching, choking
- ❑ **Sexual Assault:** any forced sexual contact
- ❑ **Threats:** threats to harm the woman, her children and pets and/or other family members
- ❑ **Emotional Abuse:** insults, intimidation, neglect, control, isolation, etc
- ❑ **Financial Abuse:** withholding, stealing or controlling money
- ❑ **Murder**



# Signs of Potential Abuse - 1

- ❑ Injuries with range from minor to major  
(bruises, fractures, internal injuries)
- ❑ Bruise marks that resemble cigarette butts
- ❑ Nausea
- ❑ Persistent headache
- ❑ Poor self-image
- ❑ The acceptance of under-estimation by others

Source from VLMFSS Manual *Through the Eyes of a Child*



- Feelings of personal helplessness : withdrawal and lack of self-interest**
- Apathy, exhaustion, depression**
- Never out shopping on her own**
- Lack of appropriate clothing and sundries**

Source from VLMFSS Manual *Through the Eyes of a Child*



FROM THE WOMENS'

# Cultural Perspectives



**Most of VLMFSS clients come from collective thinking societies. The emphasis is on others first rather than oneself. Some come from war-torn countries and with military/dictatorship regimes;**

**They fear to make decisions , worry about impact on others, e.g. family image, children's future, what community will think of her and her children (ostracization and isolation;)**

Many have the preconceived notion that, as mothers, they will have the right to care for the children and some fear that they will be taken away after they reach a certain age and then given to their father, as it happens in some countries, e.g. Iran.

Women coming from nations where there is corruption, bribery and war are used to think that only the privileged can get services. Authority holds the ultimate power. Because of this, women fear initiating judicial proceedings.

Sometimes, they do not fully trust the helper, as they see them as “part of Government” and fear that a service provider can pass their information on to Immigration or Police.

It is important for service providers to explain one's role to the woman in clear, simple language, to emphasize on confidentiality policy and professional ethics. However, asking them to sign written agreements or do written assessment, taking notes etc. in their presence, creates often a high level of anxiety if the service provider has not taken enough time to build up trust with the client.

## **Immigration issues:**

**Fear of being deported , as abusers often tell them**

**Often immigration documents are taken away from the women as a form of control and women fear they will not be able to replace them;**



**Women without immigration status do not qualify for any financial assistance from the system, unless they have a Canadian born child or a child with Canadian citizenship.**

**Legal Aid will cover sometimes issues dealing with R.O., child custody and support;**



**SUPPORTING IMMIGRANT, REFUGEE  
AND VISIBLE MINORITY WOMEN  
EXPERIENCING ABUSE**

A service provider should strive to:

Form a connection with women seeking help regardless of their race and class;

Move outward from where they are , e.g.: recognize their eventual fear of accessing the judicial system, even for registering documents, (in some cultures it is considered shameful for women to go to court.)

A service provider should strive to:

Try to understand the world view of the women;

Avoid generalizing the women's experiences and patronizing the women from different cultures;

Avoid being insensitive to the women's individuality (prejudging on the basis of stereotypical beliefs about race and culture) and disbelieving the women's stories of oppression;

**Avoid assumptions of “sameness.” e.g. a study found that four Asian communities (Korean, Cambodian, Vietnamese and Chinese) each had unique cultures and immigration histories and consequently, they held somewhat different attitudes about family violence;**

**Find a balance between sameness and difference. There will be variables, depending on the women's background, like rural vs urban, educational levels, literacy levels, age, mental health and other issues;**

**Build on the woman's strengths. She is not a victim. She is a survivor and a fighter. By asking for help, she has taken control of her own life and vanquished her own fears.**

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**THANK YOU**

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