



Responding to the Needs of Older Women who Experience Intimate Partner Violence: The RESPOND Study

STUDY PURPOSE: To gain a better understanding of the needs, experiences and barriers to supports faced by diverse older women who experience intimate partner violence (IPV)

What did we learn about programs for older women?

Through doing a web search, we found about 80 examples of programs that supported older women in some capacity. We also interviewed 9 administrators of these programs.

Type of Program Identified	Description
Individual in-person counselling and support	Counselors (e.g. social workers, therapists, etc.) provide various types of psychosocial and educational in-person supports
Individual help over the phone via crisis line or help line	Confidential and anonymous free services provided over the phone in real time, local and national services
Educational and/or therapeutic support provided in a group setting	Psychoeducational support groups or group counseling provided to small groups of older women at varying intervals of time (e.g. biweekly). Groups tend to be drop-in with flexible attendance. Examples include retreats, workshops, and community-based educational activities.
Shelters and housing	Provision of safe accommodation and support for older women for varying lengths of time (e.g. emergency short-term stays, longer-term second and third stage housing).

What other resources are needed to support older women ?

- “Housing”
- “Next steps when dealing with financial abuse, medication abuse, and pet abuse”
- “Legal aspects (matrimonial and division of property)”
- “Age-specific tools”
- “Caregiver support”
- “Hearing from members of different groups who can teach us better ways to serve them”
- “Navigating the legal system as an older woman”
- “Link between poverty and IPV vulnerability”

Battling Ageism:

- These programs seem to be offered in isolation with not always a great deal of support for their existence
- Administrators are advocates for resources and champions for the existence of these services
- Sometimes there is tension with domestic violence programs serving younger women

What did we learn about supporting diverse older women?

We interviewed 22 people in the Maritime provinces including 4 older women who experienced IPV and 18 people who supported older women.

Older Women who are Black

Lead: Ingrid Waldron iwaldron@dal.ca

A history of oppression in the Black Nova Scotian community, including a mistrust of service providers, and a fear of disclosure due to shame, embarrassment, and a reluctance to further stigmatize Black men and the Black community as prone to violence, have contributed to silence among older Black women who experience IPV.

Ways to Improve service access:

- Cultivate partnerships and relationships
- Create campaigns to decrease stigma
- Conduct workshops and share information on social media and via organizations (e.g. Black churches) to raise awareness about IPV and available resources

Older Women who are Arabic

Lead: Salma Almkhaini: salma.almkhaini@dal.ca

Older immigrant Arabic women tend to under-report IPV and underuse support services due to stigma and/or shame, immigration status, under/unemployment, social isolation, fragmented service delivery, and lack of knowledge about the available services.

Ways to Improve service access:

- Have resource materials in Arabic and have Arabic speaking employees
- Healthcare and Arabic associations need to proactively educate Arabic women about IPV
- Improve the referral system and ability to navigate among legal, social, and medical services

Older Women who are Francophone

Lead: Danie Gagnon danie.gagnon@unb.ca

Older Francophone women in New Brunswick experience unique barriers to IPV supports such as being official language minorities, the policy and service structure, and language environments (literacy, geography, service location, etc.).

Ways to Improve service access:

- Supports in minority Francophone settings should have French-speaking employees.
- Written materials designated for older Francophone women should be offered in both official languages.
- Remain flexible to address the needs of older Francophone women who also belong to other minority groups (e.g. newcomers).

Older Women who Live in Rural Places

Lead: Heather Helpard hhelpard@stfx.ca

From our conversations, we learned that older women who experience IPV in rural environments feel the need to meet traditional gender role expectations, not interrupt social structures, and may have limited accessibility to transportation and health and social services. Leaving one's home and community is not always preferred.

Ways to Improve service access:

- Enhance older women's voices and visibility
- Promote a redefinition of older women's self-worth and purpose
- Build supportive rural networks for older women who experience IPV
- Create collaborative community connections

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