


**Muskoka Victim Services**  
*Family Court Support Program*  
*"Practical Support in*  
*Navigating the Family Court System"*



*Wendy Spring, Family Court Support Worker*

---

---

---

---

---


---

---

---

**Muskoka Victim Services** provides on site assistance to victims of crime.

*Personal:*  
*Assault;*  
*Sexual Assault;*  
*Criminal Harassment;*  
*Abduction;*  
*Homicide;*  
*Bullying;*  
*Hate Crime.*



*Property:*  
*Fraud;*  
*Robbery;*  
*Home Invasion;*  
*Vandalism.*

---

---

---

---

---


---

---

---

**Muskoka Victim Services** provides on site assistance to victims of abuse:

*Physical;*  
*Emotional;*  
*Sexual;*  
*Elder Abuse.*



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Muskoka Victim Services provides on site assistance to victims of **personal tragedy**:

*Sudden Death*

- S.I.D.S.
- drowning
- substance abuse
- still born;

*Suicide/Threat of Suicide;  
Death Notification;  
Medical Crisis.*




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Muskoka Victim Services provides on site assistance to victims of **unforeseen circumstances**:

- Disaster;*
- Motor Vehicle Accident*
- Fatality;*
- Fire;*
- Flood.*




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Purpose of Muskoka Victim Services**



To respond to the needs of victims of crime or traumatic events by providing:

- Immediate crisis assistance (24/7);*
- Practical support;*
- Referrals to community services.*

To reduce the impact of trauma for victims and encourage their resilience.

To work closely with emergency response organizations to free them to attend to other crises.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Muskoka Victim Services will...**

*Dispatch Crisis Responders to enable the person to deal with the immediate situation.*

*Assist the person in regaining a sense of personal control.*

*Help the person determine their most pressing concerns.*

*Assist the person in deciding what needs to be done immediately and what things might be helpful in the long term.*

*Maintain complete confidentiality and non-judgemental support.*

*Provide ongoing support, follow-up and referrals*

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

The **Victim Quick Response Program (V.Q.R.P.)** exists to:

*Provide assistance to victims (female and male) in the immediate aftermath of a violent crime...*

- Homicide*
- Serious Assault*
- Domestic Violence*
- Sexual Assault or*
- Hate Crime;*

*Lessen the impact of violent crime through immediate support to victim;*

*Increase the immediate safety of victims of violent crimes.*




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

What does V.Q.R.P. do?

*Emergency expenses:*  
 Home safety expenses (e.g. doors, windows);  
 Transportation costs (out of town travel);  
 Dependent care  
 Children  
 Elderly or  
 Special needs dependents.

*Crime scene clean-up* (up to \$1,500)

*Funeral expenses* (up to \$5,000 in homicide cases)

*Counselling services* (I.e. if wait list or distance interferes with timely support , up to \$1,000 counsellor of victims choosing)

---

---

---

---

---

---


---

---

The **SupportInk Program** exists to:

*Provide assistance to victims (female and male) of*  
*Domestic Violence*  
*Sexual Assault*  
*Criminal Harassment (Stalking).*

*How? By:*  
*Assistance to develop a personal safety plan;*  
*Providing a cellular phone;*  
*Information about and referrals to other services*  
*Victim Witness Assistance Program*  
*Sexual Assault Services*  
*Family Court Support Program*  
*Family Law Information Centre*  
*Shelters*




---

---

---

---


---

---

---

---

The **Family Court Support Program** exists to support victims (female and male) of domestic violence.



**How?**  
*Provide victims with information about the family court process;*  
*Document the history of abuse for the court;*  
*Refer victims to specialized services and supports;*  
*Help with safety planning related to court appearances;*  
*Accompany victims to appointments with lawyers to assist with communication flow and information retention;*  
*Accompany victims to court proceedings where appropriate.*

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Goal: Improve Access to Justice for Aboriginal Women**

**Barriers:**

- \*Limited awareness of MVS  
FCSP = family court (f+m)  
Supportlink = criminal court (f+m)  
VQRP = criminal victims (f+m)
- \*Confusion with VWAP;
- \*Limited time for Family Court Support (8 hours per week);
- \*Clients who reunite with alleged abuser results in end of service, yet risks persist;
- \*Limited availability of lawyers who will accept legal aid cases;
- \*Use of Duty Council and having to repeat traumatic event sharing and lack of consistent court representation;
- \*Conflict of interest regarding Duty Council.

13

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Barriers cont'd...**

- \*No connection with First Nation communities;
- \*No unified service model involving MVS and Shelters;
- \*Limited referrals from community partners;
- \*Court delays = 2 days of court per week has been consistent for years, while case volume has increased, therefore, clients experience prolonged court involvement;
- \*Court delays = Extra travel costs for clients
- \*Prolonged court involvement means increased caseloads for FCSP as cases not resolved quickly;
- \*Lack of space at court house for private legal consultations compromises client privacy.

14

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Gaps in client understanding regarding legal system:**

- \*Do not expect delays, results in frustrations;  
-time away from work (often not paid)  
-finances not accessible  
-custody arrangements in flux
- \*Clients are usually not prepared nor resourced to endure a long resolution process;
- \*Often do not have a formal separation date that is mutually agreed upon;
- \*The extent of detail and volume of documentation required is a surprise to most clients;

15

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Gaps cont'd...**

- \*Surprised by involvement of other agencies or services and their processes  
e.g. OCL, Children's Aid, PARS;
- \*Surprised by denials for Legal Aid due to income level;
- \*Abuse of bankruptcy process to hide assets
- \*Self-representation by alleged abuser interferes with court process
- \*Lack of confidence in the court process and outcomes;

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Gaps cont'd...**

- \*Not aware that charges cannot be withdrawn at their request;
- \*Confused by obstacles when/if they wish to reunite

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Suggestions:**

- \*Inclusion of First Nations' representatives on D.A.R.T. Committee – provide a voice at the table;
- \*Training on Crisis Responding of First Nations community members by Muskoka Victim Services so they can either be prepared to support their neighbours or can jointly participate with MVS in supporting victims – provide ownership and partnership in service delivery;
- \*Discussions with Band Leadership, District and DART members regarding resources for victims if they wish to remain in their own community or seek safety outside of community – lessen the perception of being trapped;

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Suggestions cont'd...**

- \*Create one community protocol for domestic violence, rather than multiple individual protocols – to increase collaboration, clarify roles, identify resourcing, enhance interdependence and mutual accountability;
- \*Rotate location of D.A.R.T. meetings to include First Nation locations. Rotate chair and create a strategic plan for the next 3 to 5 years with clearly defined objectives – to increase community ownership, ensure equality of voices being heard and spark synergy towards tangible outcomes.

19

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Suggestions cont'd...**

- \*Provide education regarding domestic violence and resources available in an informal, culturally sensitive manner, e.g. perhaps First Nations grandmothers and mothers meet with representatives of the support organizations who are grandmothers and mothers during a jointly prepared meal – providing opportunity to perceive similarities in life situations and creating relationships for future contact should need arise;
- \*Engage men in the community to explore domestic violence perhaps starting with younger teens and seniors – to enhance the profile of seniors in the community and encourage their influence upon the younger generation. Must be activity based rather than conversational.

20

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Suggestions cont'd...**

- \*Engage with husbands and fathers about domestic violence by exploring their situations (employment, responsibilities, racism) and the stressors they face.

21

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

*How to reach us...*

**Muskoka Victim Services**



**Where:** \*29 Manitoba Street, Bracebridge  
\*Summit Centre, Huntsville  
\*Gravenhurst site coming

**When:** 24/7

**How:** \*Phone (705) 646-6544  
\*Toll Free 1-877-229-2217  
\*[www.muskokavs.ca](http://www.muskokavs.ca)  
\*Through O.P.P.

22

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---