



**Centre for Research**  
on Violence Against Women and Children



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# The Change Panel Pilot Project

## An Evaluation of the Safety of Victims of Domestic Assault in a Restorative Justice Process

**Investigator: Colleen Purdon, Grey Bruce Court  
Coordination Committee**

Date: July 2003

Funded by: Scotia Bank, Justice Canada Victim's Fund

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ISBN#

# **The Change Panel Pilot Project**

*An Evaluation of the Safety of Victims of Domestic  
Assault in a Restorative Justice Process*

**July 2003**

**A Project of the  
Grey Bruce Court Coordination Committee**

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**Project Funded by  
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and  
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## Executive Summary

Domestic assault raises highly complex issues for the victims of the assault, their offenders, and everyone in their immediate circle. This project, funded by Justice Canada and the Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children, allowed the Grey Bruce Court Coordination Committee (GBCCC) an opportunity to examine victim safety in a restorative justice approach to domestic assault called the Change Panel Process. The Change Panel model was developed in 2000 as part of the First Charge Intervention project. It is a restorative justice approach within the judicial process to deal with the relational and emotional aspects of domestic assault cases. The model brings together victims, offenders, family members, friends and service providers to repair the harm caused by the assault and to focus the offender on change. From the beginning, the Change Panel model raised many questions about safety for victims of violence. This project allowed us to work closely with four families and an advisory group of women of experience to explore in detail victim safety at all stages of the Change Panel model.

The goals of the project were:

- To collect information and recommendations on victim safety from an Advisory Committee made up of women of experience who act as monitors and observers for an initial pilot of the Change Panel Process.
- To conduct 8 Change Panels and collect feedback on the safety of victims from women who participate, panel participants and the panel facilitator.
- To determine if the Change Panel Process model is safe for victims and to make any changes necessary for the model before further implementation.

The results from this initial pilot suggest that the Change Panel process is a helpful and safe tool for victims of violence when strict safety protocols are in place, and there is ongoing contact with the victim throughout the process. Offenders who were involved in the process had varying degrees of success in following through with their plans to change their abusive and violent behaviours. A more extensive and longer term evaluation project would be necessary to determine if the Change Panel model helps men to change their behaviour. For the short term, offenders involved in the project did not engage in any violent behaviours over the course of the project.

Women involved in this project valued having input into a structured plan for the offender that let them see his change over time.

*‘It structured a plan and made him stick to it’* (Victim Participant)

Several women stated that they felt safer because of the Change Panel because of the project’s emphasis on safety planning, the close contact with the victim, and because it brought everyone together.

*‘The Change Panel helped. It was another avenue to talk, with everyone together. There is no other place to do this. Having our families involved helped to keep him*

*accountable. There is ongoing family support. His Dad continues to check in with him – how he’s feeling and how he’s doing - almost every day.” (Victim Participant)*

## **Project Recommendations**

### ***Recommendations from Victims***

1. Consider conducting more than one circle with participants (one to develop the plan, a second circle to check on follow up and a third circle to evaluate the plan).
2. The Change Panel process should be offered, as it is another avenue to talk and bring people together, especially family members. Having our families involved helps keep the offender accountable
3. Only use the Change Panel when the couple is not living together. In that way the Change Panel can be used to pressure the man to change, and it can be a tool for the victim to have some control over the abuser and set boundaries with him.
4. The parents of the couple should be involved in the Change Panel. They need education about abuse and the impact of the abuse on everyone.
5. It is very important for the victim to have contact with a counsellor at the Men’s Program. The contact with the Men’s Program helps the woman to set boundaries and truly recognize that it is possible that he will be violent.
6. The Change Panel could start with asking the man to tell everyone what he wants to change.
7. Make sure that support people are really support people and follow through with the plan. They should not lie or protect the offender. They need to hold the offender responsible and not help him with his avoidance of responsibility.
8. Make sure the offender is not lying during the Change Panel.

### ***Recommendations for Model Development from Advisors and the Evaluation Team***

1. Include screening for intergenerational domestic violence with all panel participants to ensure that past violence is identified at an early stage in the panel preparation.
2. Review with the offender the impact of the violence on his victims as part of the assessment phase, in particular the impact of the violence on the children.
3. The time frame for the actual Change Panel needs to be more open.
4. Proper preparation is necessary for all panel participants and a panel cannot go forward without it.
5. Service providers who attend panels as supports for the victim or perpetrator need more information on their role, and can play a more active role.
6. In cases where participants are not linked to support services, consider inviting staff from key agencies (women’s counselling services, child witness counsellors, addiction or mental health providers) to present on resources.
7. Place more emphasis on support for children and making the experiences of the children more present in the Change Panel process. .
8. More focus on “repairing the harm” to the victim is needed during the Change Panel.

9. More focus on creating a “healing space” for the participants is needed. Look at Aboriginal models and connect with the work currently being done in the First Nations communities in Grey and Bruce.
2. The Crown Attorney office and the Change Panel Coordinator need to work together to ensure that evaluation reports on the offender’s completion of his Change Plan are available for consideration by the court.
2. Review the timing of the Change Panel and how it fits as part of the Court Process, especially in light of the Domestic Violence Court Process and Early Intervention program.
2. Consider holding the Change Panel at different times in the overall court process in a way that fits best with the overall situation of the offender and the victim. In some cases the Change Panel would be more appropriate after the court proceedings are completed.

### **Recommendations to GBCCC for Next Steps**

- 1. Seek project funding for a full implementation the Change Panel Process to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the process towards stopping abuse and to identify any longer term victim safety issues.**
- 2. Make revisions to the Change Panel model using the recommendations from this project as a guide.**
- 6. Continue to focus clearly on victim safety and support throughout all phases of the Change Panel.**

## **Acknowledgements**

Our deepest thanks go to all of the participants in the pilot who volunteered to be part of this research project and generously shared their time and their feedback while dealing with difficult life decisions and events. In particular, we wish to thank the victims of violence who worked with the project to evaluate victim safety, and the men who volunteered to participate in the Change Panel process as part of their court proceedings.

Thank you to the members of the Advisory Committee, Lynnette Poag, and Pamela Wyld. Kim George, Jennifer Keddy and Prin Johnson. This dynamic group of women brought their expertise, their wisdom and their first hand experience of domestic violence to the project in so many ways. They remained deeply committed to the project from the beginning until the end: through the development and design phase, as observers at panels, as advisors and a listening ear for the Project Coordinator, and with their recommendations for the final evaluation of the Change Panel model.

Thank you to the all members of the Grey Bruce Court Coordination Committee for their support of this project. The members of the Change Panel Evaluation Team, Sally Dobson, Ann Schneider, David Hay, and Clark Schneider, are thanked for guidance, advice and input on the project start up and the final evaluation.

Thank you to the Grey County Crown Attorney office, Crown Attorney David Hay and his staff, for their support of the project, to Kathryn Stoyke and the Victim Witness Assistance Program, and to staff at the Men's Program Grey/Bruce for assistance with referrals and victim support.

Thank you to Women's House of Bruce County, the sponsoring agency for the project, and to Anne Collins, Executive Director and Bernedette Scott, Administrative Assistant.

Thank you to our academic advisors who provided support and assistance with this project: Art Lockhart, Humber College, Dr. Joan Pennell, North Carolina State University, Dr. Gale Burford, University of Vermont, Professor Donna Coker, University of Miami School of Law.

Thank you to the many other agencies and their staff who collaborated in this project: The Owen Sound Family Y Youth Justice Circle Project, The Men's Program Grey/Bruce, The Women's Centre (Grey & Bruce), the Children's Aid Society of Owen Sound and the County of Grey, and the Owen Sound office of Probation and Parole.

Thank you to the community organizations that provided space for the Change Panels: the Salvation Army, Central Westside United Church, and Rockwood Terrace in Durham.

Thank you to our funders: Justice Canada, Victims Fund and to Marc Rozon for his assistance and support, and the Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children and Nora Shanahan.

## Background

The murder of Arlene May in 1996 provided the impetus for members of the justice and social service sectors in Grey and Bruce Counties to look for new ways to improve safety for the victims of domestic violence in their community. The Grey Bruce Court Coordination Committee (GBCCC) was formally founded in 1997.

The GBCCC began to develop a model for a comprehensive rural response to domestic violence, guided by the recommendations from the Provincial May/Illes Inquest, and the subsequent Joint Committee on Domestic Violence Report to the Attorney General of Ontario in 1999. With funding support from the Ontario Women's Directorate, Status of Women Canada, Justice Canada and community agencies, the GBCCC researched and developed the First Charge Intervention Process (FCIP) model which included a component for a restorative justice approach to domestic violence within the criminal justice system, called the Change Panel. An overview of the Change Panel model is attached as Appendix A.

The First Charge Intervention Process (FCIP) model included a total of five components designed to increase the deterrent impact of a first charge and increase the safety of women and children through:

- ◇ A **Seamless System Response** to domestic violence in the community through the GBCCC, with annual community audits and report cards to support a consistent community response to the perpetrators and victims of domestic violence.
- ◇ A **Women's Track** to coordinate the justice and social service response to women with a focus on risk assessment, safety planning, linking women with professional and community supports, information and advocacy services, and mechanisms to include the voices of women of experience in the FCIP.
- ◇ A **Children's Track** with specific interventions for police, the CAS, and Victim Services to support and protect children who witness violence, advocate for their needs, support women in the protection of their children, and reduce the trauma of the system intervention for children.
- ◇ A **Men's Track** with a series of interventions designed to engage men in a change process when there is a window of opportunity - immediately following the charging event. They include: a Men Mentoring Program within 48 hours of the charge, a three week Education for Change Program, longer term Group Counselling, and involvement in an Alumni Program.
- ◇ The **Change Panel Process**, a voluntary restorative justice component, within the judicial process. It brings together family and community members in a closely scripted and prepared process to support the man in the development of his Change Plan to end abusive and controlling behaviour, and to hold him accountable for change. (Final Report 2000)

In addition to the development of the FCIP model, the GBCCC completed a consultation process with women who experienced domestic violence and developed five central

### *Markers for Accountable Service Delivery in Domestic Violence*

- 0) Services work in a way that is truly helpful
- 0) Services engage in protection actions that work, and focus these on the offender
- 0) Services level the playing field between the victim and the offender and between the service users and service providers
- 0) They ‘fill in the cracks’ and close loopholes in the system
- 0) Services prevent violence and abuse.

These Accountability Markers were applied to all components of the FCIP model in 2000 at a workshop that included women of experience, volunteers from the Men’s Program and service providers. The FCIP model received qualified and cautious “yes” for its accountability to women’s experiences.

The Change Panel was viewed as having the potential to effectively meet the following accountability markers:

- working with the victim as a team member,
- holding the offender accountable,
- addressing the power imbalance between the victim and offender, and
- preventing further abuse.

Specific recommendations were made for a pilot implementation of the Change Panel model that formed the basis for the project described in this report:

- *As the Change Panel is a completely new strategy for addressing domestic violence in our community, women of experience must play a key role in its implementation and evaluation.*
- *The man must be held accountable in an effective way. Men who do not seem willing or able to participate authentically must be screened out*
- *The Change Panel needs to be accessible and user friendly.*
- *The timing of the Change Panel needs to be considered and evaluated.*
- *The power imbalance between the woman and the service providers present (at the panel) needs to be addressed.*
- *Family court issues also need to be incorporated into this process*  
(Final Report 2000)

In April of 2000 the GBCCC began a phased in implementation of the components of the FCIP model in the community. Funding proposals to Justice Canada and the Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children were submitted for a preliminary pilot and evaluation of the Change Panel Process to examine in detail safety issues for victims involved in the Change Panel model with the assistance of women of experience as advisors to the project. Work began on the project in the fall of 2001.

## **Project Goals and Objectives**

The primary purpose of the project was to conduct a preliminary pilot and evaluation of the Change Panel Process in order to examine specific safety considerations and needs from the perspective of the victims of domestic violence, before proceeding with a larger pilot implementation of the process.

Three goals were set for the project:

**To collect information and recommendations on victim safety from an Advisory Committee made up of women of experience who act as monitors and observers for an initial pilot of the Change Panel Process.**

### **Objectives**

- To recruit 6 diverse women of experience to act as project consultants and observers,
- To consult with advisors on how the model can be further developed for victim safety and recommendations for the next steps in model implementation.

**To conduct 8 Change Panels and collect feedback on the safety of victims from women who participate, panel participants and the panel facilitator.**

### **Objectives**

- To liaise with the Crown Attorney and Court, and the Men's Program for suitable referrals for the Change Panel Process,
- To train 4 facilitators in abuse specific work
- To screen, assess and prepare participants for involvement in the Change Panel Process
- To complete post panel evaluations with participants and follow up with victims.

**To determine if the Change Panel Process model is safe for victims and to make any changes necessary for the model before further implementation.**

### **Objectives**

- To develop recommendations for victim safety based on project outcomes and make revisions to the Change Panel model
- To complete a final report for funders, Advisory Committee and the GBCCC

## **Project Challenges and Limitations**

The pilot nature of this project and complexity of both restorative justice concepts and integrating these into the court process created unique challenges and limitations for this project. In addition, the project experienced delays that led to an extension from a planned for 8 months (July 2001 until March 2002) time frame to a project that has lasted almost 24 months (completion June 2003).

- The Ontario government introduced the Domestic Violence Court and Early Interventions at the Grey County Court in the fall-winter of 2001, just after the Change Panel Project started. This focused the Crown office, Duty Counsel and the GBCCC away from the Change Panel Project, and resulted in a great deal of confusion for project participants.
- In the winter-spring of 2002 there was a prolonged labour dispute involving court and probation staff that impacted on the court and probation systems, and referrals to the Change Panel project;
- Throughout the summer and fall of 2002 there were no appropriate cases for the Change Panel, due to a higher than usual number of serious domestic assault cases that did not meet our criteria for assessment;
- It was difficult engage defence lawyers in this process because of the pilot nature of the project, and the confusion created by the introduction of the Domestic Violence Court at the same time we were conducting the pilot. An information package was sent out to all the members of Duty Counsel for Grey County at the start of the project, but it did not result in referrals for the project.
- There were a total of 9 referrals for the Pilot Project, but 3 of these cases were screened out and 2 did not choose to participate in the project.
- The lack of appropriate referrals, and difficulties getting referrals for the project resulted in only 4 of the planned 8 panels being completed. The amount of data collected is much smaller than anticipated. Fortunately, the 4 panels included a diverse sample of situations and participants, and provided a rich source of data.
- One victim did not wish to complete the final follow up evaluation of victim safety when she was contacted. She did participate in the evaluation of the Change Plan for a report to the court, and no safety issues were reported at that time.
- The many delays and lack of referrals made it difficult to maintain momentum or visibility with this project. In addition, this project was a pre-pilot of the model, and the lack of more extensive information about restorative justice may have contributed to the low referrals.

## **Project Methodology**

The Project Methodology is presented as it was outlined in the proposal to Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children (bold, italic text), as well as brief report on how the methodology developed over the project:

### ***Recruit a diverse, six member Advisory Committee of women who have experienced domestic assault to monitor and advise the Change Panel Process from beginning to end***

Six diverse women of experience volunteered to be advisors for this project. The women represented the diversity of our rural community. Two women lived in a small city, 2 women lived in towns, one woman lived in a small village and one woman lived in a First Nations community. Four women were single or separated and two lived with a partner. Two women had children at home, one woman had a grown child at home, two women had grown children, and one woman did not have children. There were two First Nations women, three women of English/Irish or Scottish heritage and one woman of Dutch/German heritage on the Advisory Committee. Four women were able bodied, one woman was disabled and one woman had her disability under review. The women ranged in age from early 20's to over 60.

The Advisors brought a wealth of knowledge about domestic violence and abuse, and the impact of this abuse on women, children and men, to the project from their personal experience. All advisors were living without abuse at the time of the project, although two women still experienced some concern about their safety. Five of the advisors had experienced abuse from male intimate partners as adults, and one woman experienced witnessing abuse at home as a child. Several advisors had experience with abuse at different stages of their lives in the form of child abuse, child witnessing, and dating abuse. Advisors experienced different kinds of abuse, including physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, financial control, witnessing abuse as a child, and most had multiple experiences of abuse. Women with children reported that their children witnessed the abuse, and some were also abused. All of the Advisors reported that they had feared for their safety because of the abuse, and interestingly all six of the Advisors reported that they feared for the safety of their abuser because of his threats of suicide. Most Advisors feared for the safety of their children and other family members because of the abuse and two women said they feared that they would lose their emotional stability (go crazy) because of the abuse. Four of the women reported that they feared for their lives at some time, or the lives of their children, because of the abuse. Five of the advisors feared for their physical safety because of the abuse.

The Advisory Committee began with six members, but one woman moved during the project. The five members remaining were actively involved over the entire duration of the project.

***Conduct six to eight Change Panels using the FCIP model and trained facilitators. Each panel will be monitored by the Advisory Committee and observed by one or two members of the Advisory Committee for specific victim safety issues, using a standard monitoring/observation tool.***

The Advisory Committee monitored and observed four Change Panels over the course of the project. Two Advisors were at each panel to monitor and observe the proceedings. They used two observation tools that they helped to develop to document and evaluate victim safety at each Change Panel.

***Conduct interviews with each victim involved in the Change Panel Process directly following the panel and 6 weeks after to assess and document any safety issues, concerns or recommendations.***

The Project Coordinator completed a check in with victims at the end of each panel. All victims were interviewed by telephone or in person in order to prepare the written evaluation of the Change Plan. A formal assessment of victim safety, using a standard tool developed for the project, was completed with three of the four victims at the end of the project. One woman declined participation in the safety follow up interview.

***Use and evaluation tool and complete evaluations with all panel participants on the effectiveness of the panel, participant satisfaction and safety directly following the panel.***

Each panel participant completed an evaluation of panel effectiveness, participant satisfaction and safety using a standard evaluation tool at each of the four Change Panels.

***Complete a post panel analysis of victim safety that includes input from the advisory committee, facilitation and panel participants***

The observers and facilitator completed a brief discussion on victim safety and follow up action at the end of each of the four panels. The Advisory Committee met with the Project Coordinator, panel facilitators and members of the GBCCC Evaluation Committee and completed an analysis of victim safety, based on the complete documentation from the four panels.

***Collate all data and findings and prepare a final report with recommendations for next steps in the implementation of the change Panel process model, and any necessary changes to the model to address victim safety.***

The members of the Advisory Committee, Evaluation Committee and the Project Coordinator identified recommendations for next steps and model changes. A draft report with the collated data and findings was presented to the GBCCC for their review and recommendations at their June 2003 meeting.

## **Development of the Project Tools**

### **Tools and Procedures for Project Implementation**

The Project Coordinator developed a manual for the project that was based on the research and findings completed for the FCIP Final Report, and in consultation with the Project Advisors, GBCCC members, and the Crown office.

Detailed, specific procedures and tools were prepared:

- ✓ Information packages and Consent forms and procedures for all participants.
- ✓ the application process for the offender,
- ✓ liaison with the Crown office and Counsel,
- ✓ screening and assessment procedures with the offender,
- ✓ screening, information and safety processes with victims,
- ✓ information guidelines for panel participants,
- ✓ a detailed facilitation package outlining the roles and responsibilities for the Project Coordinator and the panel facilitator,
- ✓ a script for the actual panel,
- ✓ participant evaluation forms for completion by all participants at the end of the panel,
- ✓ forms for the completion of a Change Plan for submission to the Crown and the courts, forms and procedures for the evaluation of the Change Plan, and report to the Crown

A one day training workshop at the beginning of the project was held with Art Lockhart, our project advisor from Humber College, for the Project Evaluation Team and facilitators to review and refine the manual. The Advisory Committee formally reviewed the draft manual and made additional suggestions for changes. The manual was revised as the project unfolded, and as a result of the final project evaluation.

The final version of the evaluated Change Panel Manual, with procedures, tools, forms and evaluation processes is appended to this report as a separate document.

### **Development of Observation and Victim Safety Evaluation Tools**

The members of the Project Advisory Team and the Project Coordinator developed:

- tools and procedures to assess victim safety as part of the preparation for the Change Panel for inclusion in the Change Panel manual,
- procedures to enhance victim safety during the assessment, panel and follow up processes,
- an Observation Tool for Advisors to monitor victim safety during a Change Panel
- an Evaluation Tool for observers to evaluate victim safety at the time of the Change Panel
- a Victim Evaluation of Safety tool for victim follow up at the completion of the Change Panel Process.

Kathy Underwood from the Women's Centre (Grey & Bruce) and a member of the GBCCC, provided important advice and guidance for the development of the Victim Evaluation of Safety tool.

The members of the Advisory Team began by reviewing the Accountability Markers from the FCIP report developed by victims of violence on how services can be accountable to the safety of victims. They examined the Change Panel model in the FCIP Final Report and safety issues that were identified as a result of that research.

A series of mini workshops were held to develop evaluation processes and tools for the project. The first workshop addressed the broad concept of "Safety" with the following outcomes:

***Safety Is.....***

- **Having a safe location and setting** – 2 exits, locks, police know the panel is happening, no weapons, no alcohol, comfortable, phone
- **When women are asked about safety** – women are asked about weapons; what they need to feel safe; background of the relationship and what happened before; about the children and if children will be manipulated or used by the abuser, what safety concerns she has during the panel and after the panel, what "red flags" we need to look for that would indicate that the situation is not safe for her.
- **Safety plans for the woman are in place** – at the beginning, for the panel situation, as follow up for the woman after the panel. There is an interest in the woman's safety expressed throughout the Change Panel, and women know what to do to be safe.
- **The woman has control in the process** – whether she attends or not, enough physical space in the panel from the abuser, knowing that there is help and support for her, and that when she calls there will be a response, not having to worry about sudden changes, not having to worry about retaliation, good preparation for the woman.

*Potential Safety Issues and Strategies in the Change Panel Process are.....*

<b>Potential Safety Issue</b>	<b>Potential Strategy</b>
The man goes out of control in the panel and assaults the woman, or other participants	Assess men for their ability to maintain control and screen out uncontrolled men
The man uses hot drinks or cups as weapons at the panel	Don't have hot drinks or ceramic cups
Emotions run very high at the panel, and the man takes it out on the woman during the panel or afterwards	Prepare participants ahead of time, follow up with the woman after the panel
The woman is scared at the panel, and can't participate or stand up to the abuser	Prepare the woman ahead of time and learn about her fears.
Children will be used as pawns during or after the panel	Prepare participants, support children before and during the panel
Men will use emotional abuse, controlling tactics and/or mind games to instil fear, silence, or blame women. Example – code words or staring at the woman.	Ask women about these behaviours as part of preparation, and develop a safety plan
If the woman lives with the man before the panel, he will threaten her or manipulate her to say certain things in the panel to help him	Assess as part of preparation
The man will resent the woman more because of the panel, and will take it out on her afterwards	Safety plans for women and follow up
The woman may not be able to leave the panel or flee in physically or emotionally dangerous situation	Ensure the setting is safe with two exits.
The woman won't have enough support or follow up after the panel.	Ensure safety and support plan is in place with follow up

*Red Flags to Watch for during the Change Panel.....*

***In the Man watch for:***

- Changes in his voice – louder, edgy, controlled, self talk, innuendo
- Silences and/or sighs – mumbling, or refusing to say something again so everyone can hear,
- Physical appearance – unkempt or uncared for, using clothing to send messages to the woman or the group.
- The support people he brings – wicked in laws, dangerous people
- Gestures – finger pointing, fists, feet, hitting movements, nervous tapping ,

- Eye contact or eye movements – rolling eyes, staring, looking at the door, staring down.
- Change in colour – flushing, draining of colour, popping veins, sweating, agitation.

***In the Woman watch for:***

- Signs of intimidation – head down, silence, agitation
- Changes in body language – looking small, protective gestures, signs of tension
- Changes in voice – quieter, insecure, not challenging

At the next Workshop the Advisory Committee developed rating scales for victim safety and recommended that the assessment of victim safety occur at initial assessment and following the Change Panel. In addition, the Advisors developed a comprehensive list of “red flag” behaviours in men, women and children that could indicate safety issues during the Change Panel. The Advisors concentrated on the non verbal communication that a perpetrator of violence could use to control or manipulate his victim in a setting such as the Change Panel, and the behaviours of the victim that could indicate feeling unsafe or threatened.

At the third meeting the draft Observation Tool and Observer Evaluation of Safety Tool were reviewed and refined for use by the Advisors/Observers at the Change Panel. In addition work was done to develop a Victim Safety Evaluation tool to follow up with victims on safety issues at the completion of the process.

The tools and procedures developed by the Advisory Committee were used at each Change Panel for this project. They are included in the Change Panel Manual (Evaluation Tools) as a separate document attached to this report.

## **Safety Protocols**

### ***Safety for the Advisory Committee Members***

The safety and well being of members of the Project Advisory Committee was of the utmost importance in this pilot project. The Project Coordinator and the members of the Advisory Committee developed a detailed safety protocol for the project that included:

- ✓ The support that the Project Coordinator provides for members of the Advisory Committee
- ✓ Contact numbers of community agencies and services for support and counseling
- ✓ A “Safety Plan” for Advisors who act as Observers at the Change Panel
- ✓ Strategies for Self Care for Advisors to use during the project, and following the observation of a Change Panel.

The Safety and Support protocol is attached to this report as Appendix B

## *Safety Procedures for Victims of Violence*

### **Change Panel Model Procedures**

The Change Panel model developed in 2000 included specific victim safety measures at each of the four stages of the process: Assessment Phase, Preparation Phase, During the Panel and Follow Up from the Panel. These procedures are summarized in Appendix C of this report, and are outlined in detail in the companion to this report, the Change Panel Manual, in the Victim Participant Package.

### **Project Ethics Process**

In addition to the Change Panel model procedures, an ethics procedure for women participating in the Change Panel Pilot was developed for the project. The Ethics Process included:

- ✓ The criteria for selecting cases for participation in the project,
- ✓ The process for providing women with information about the project, information on community supports, and working with her on risk and safety issues,
- ✓ The process and safety criteria for involving women in the project,
- ✓ The process for informed victim consent for the project, and how information would be used,
- ✓ The role of the Project Coordinator in the development of safety plans and review of victim risk with women and children involved the project

The Ethics Process that was used with every woman in this project is attached to this report as Appendix C

## **Data Collection and Analysis**

### ***Data Collection:***

Data for the project was collected from:

- ✓ Minutes of the Advisory Committee meetings
- ✓ Notes from the Training Session with the Evaluation Team
- ✓ Documentation: Crown Attorney Screening Tool, Offender Applications and Offender Assessments for all offenders involved in the project.
- ✓ Documentation of Victim Safety and a Victim Safety Plans completed with all victim participants
- ✓ Notes from preparatory meetings with Panel Participants
- ✓ Documentation of Participant Evaluation completed by all Panel Participants
- ✓ Documentation of Observer's Victim Safety Evaluation and Observation Tool
- ✓ Documentation of Post Panel debrief with Facilitator and Observer's
- ✓ Review of Change Plan outcomes and Reports prepared on the Evaluation of Offender for Follow Up on the Change Plan
- ✓ Documentation of Follow Up conversations with victims, offenders and panel participants
- ✓ Documentation of Victim Follow Up Interview: Evaluation of Safety
- ✓ Notes from the Final Project Evaluation Workshop with Advisors and Evaluation Team

- ✓ Recommendations from GBCCC review of the draft final report
- ✓ Recommendation from the Advisory Committee on the draft final report

### ***Data Analysis***

The Project Coordinator completed a preliminary analysis of data collected from the sources listed above. It included some statistical analysis from participant evaluations, the presentation of summary case studies, as well as a compilation of qualitative data from participants and the Advisory Committee.

The Project Coordinator, Advisory Committee and members of the Evaluation Team reviewed the preliminary data and identified Key Themes for each of the four case summaries and preliminary recommendations based on the project outcomes.

The Project Coordinator compiled a draft Final Report, which was reviewed by the GBCCC at its regular meeting in June 2003. Recommendations for action were further developed at that meeting.

The Advisory Committee reviewed the Final Draft Report and recommendations and provided final comments for the completion of the Final Report.

### **Project Outcomes: Four Case Summaries**

The project outcomes are presented in the form of four case summaries that present the diversity and uniqueness of each Change Panel. The Case Summaries provide detailed information throughout the four phases of the Change Panel, and include summaries of the evaluations by panel participants, and Project Advisors/Observers. A summary of the follow up Safety Interview with the victim, and any recommendations from the victims is included, as well as Key Themes identified at the Advisor/Evaluation Team workshop at the end of the project.

Some identifying information in these case summaries has been altered to protect the confidentiality of participants.

## **Change Panel Summary – Panel #1**

### **Case Description**

This panel involved a man who applied for the pilot after he was charged with assault for a second time while on probation for a first offence. His probation officer and the Crown Attorney recommended the man for the project. He accepted responsibility for actions. He was connected to the Men's Program, who also recommended him for the pilot. A restraining order allowed him on his property for business purposes and to contact his partner for business purposes, but not to reside. A court date was set for a First Appearance and he planned to plea guilty.

The offender assessment did not reveal any safety issues for the victim. The man was highly motivated to change, expressed a sincere wish to improve his relationship with his wife, and have her understand that he was sorry for what happened. He had difficulty naming a support person for himself (no close friends), except for parents and the parents of his partner.

The panel was attended by the offender, the victim, their 10 year old daughter, the parents of the offender (support for the offender), the woman's mother (support person for her granddaughter), the woman's counsellor (support person for the victim), and a counsellor from the Men's Program.

### **Summary from Assessment of Victim Safety**

The woman did not feel at risk of harm or believe the offender would use the Change Panel to manipulate her. She suggested that her daughter also attend the panel because she was deeply affected by the assaults. She did not have safety concerns about the panel for her daughter. She believed that the offender was very motivated to change. The woman had a written safety plan in place, was involved in abuse specific counselling, and was connected to a counsellor at the Men's Program.

### **Summary from Panel**

- A Change Plan was developed and agreed upon with input from all participants,
- The Plan included the offender completing Men's Program and continuing as a volunteer at completion; Structured outings between victim and offender to discuss their relationship; offender increases responsibility and time spent parenting his children; Continued counselling for victim; change in court order to allow offender in the house so he could be more active in parenting, but not to reside.
- The participants agreed to get together to evaluate the plan in 2 months.
- The child attended the panel, with her grandmother as a support person. She left proceedings twice (did not appear distressed), participated actively, and provided important information for offender and family members on the impact of the violence on the children.

## Advisor's Observation

### *Observing for Safety - Advisor Observation Tool*

Behaviours of Offender noted: Offender body tension and agitation (sweating, hand tapping), Vocal intimidation (threatened that he never forgets), Threatening gesture (made a fist when his father was speaking).
Behaviours of victims noted: Changes in her voice (insecure, quiet), Body posture (head down, Child left the room twice), Body tension (Biting fingernails, arms crossed, hugging body).

### *Observer's Evaluation of Victim Safety – 2 Observers reported:*

<b>Overall Sense of Safety for Woman and Children at the Panel</b>	<b>Response</b> <b>Always</b> <b>Most of the time</b> <b>Some of the time</b> <b>Never</b>
Woman treated respectfully and listened to by the man	<b>1 Most of the time</b> <b>1 Some of the time</b>
Woman treated respectfully and listened to by other participants	<b>2 Most of the time</b>
Woman was able to present her story in her own way.	<b>1 Always</b> <b>1 Most of the time</b>
There was a balance of power between the woman and man demonstrated.	<b>1 Most of the time</b> <b>1 Some of the time</b>
The woman was able to get support and resources.	<b>1 Always</b> <b>1 Most of the time</b>
Children were treated respectfully and listened to by adults.	<b>1 Always</b> <b>1 Most of the time</b>
The man was held accountable for his actions.	<b>1 Always</b> <b>1 Most of the time</b>
The man appeared to participate in a sincere and respectful way.	<b>1 Most of the time</b> <b>1 Some of the time</b>
Overall Safety Rating	<b>Safe</b>

**Panel Participant Evaluation- Total evaluations completed: Nine (9)**

<b>Participant Evaluation (Rating Scale: Excellent Good, Fair, Poor; Two questions required Yes or No response)</b>	<b>Response: Excellent/ Good/Yes</b>	<b>Response: Fair/Poor/ No</b>
Preparation for the Change Panel adequate?	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>
Location of the Change Panel?	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>
Were the right people at the Change Panel?	<b>Yes (9)</b>	<b>0</b>
Did you get the information you needed?	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>
Were you able to say what you thought was important?	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>
Were you satisfied with the way the panel was run?	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>
Were the right people involved in the decisions about the Change Plan?	<b>Yes (8)</b>	<b>No (1)</b>
Are you satisfied with the Change Plan that was reached?	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>
Was the Change Panel a safe and respectful process for you?	<b>Yes (9)</b>	<b>0</b>

**Comments from Evaluations:**

- The probation officer should have been at the panel
- Spend more time on how the Change Plan will be monitored
- It was great
- Have lots of Kleenex
- Not enough information before hand

**Evaluation of Offender’s Completion of the Change Plan**

- All participants in the panel were contacted to prepare the Change Plan evaluation. The evaluation report was submitted to the Crown for consideration in sentencing.
- The offender followed through with all of the Change Plan items, with the exception of taking more time for himself.
- All participants reported that there was no more physical abuse, but there was some verbal abuse.
- The report from the child included information that she believed her mother should talk to her Dad more. Her Dad was spending much more time with her which was good, and he had stopped spanking. She said he should stop yelling.
- The victim continued with counselling support for herself.
- All participants reported that the risk of more abuse was now low, but the couple continued to experience conflict in their relationship

**Court Outcome**

The evaluation of the Change Plan was presented for consideration for sentencing. The man was sentenced to probation. The court outcome was supported by the victim and panel participants.

## Victim Follow Up Safety Evaluation

<b>Safety During Preparation Phase</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ No safety issues identified. The man did not try to influence her or the children during the preparation phase..</li></ul>
<b>Safety During the Panel</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ No safety concerns. The woman said she was treated respectfully, was able to present her story, and the process held her partner accountable. She did not feel threatened by any of the behaviours observed by the Advisors, but did feel nervous herself.</li></ul>
<b>Safety After the Change Panel</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ No safety issues or new incidents of physical abuse. The couple is now living together. Her partner followed through with the Change Plan. She rated the overall safety of the Change Panel as “very safe” and would recommend it to other women, if the circumstances were correct.</li><li>➤ She noted that the offender completed a group on the impact of violence on children (My Dad’s Group) and organized marriage counselling, in consultation with her, at his own initiative, after he completed his Change Plan.</li><li>➤ The Change Panel “structured a plan, and made him stick to it”</li><li>➤ There is continued family support and “check ins” with the offender</li></ul>
<b>Recommendations from the Woman for Model Development</b> <p>The woman recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ That there be more than one circle – she would have preferred 2-3 sessions (one to develop the plan, a second circle to check on follow up and a third circle to evaluate the plan). The woman said it was too “crammed” with only one circle.</li><li>➤ The Change Panel process be offered as it is another avenue to talk and bring people together. “I enjoyed it because there was nothing out there like that – where you have family with you, where you can bring your whole family. Having our families involved helped keep him accountable”</li></ul>

## Key Themes Identified by Advisors and Evaluation Team

- There was no support plan for the child victim developed as part of the Change Plan. The child made an important contribution to the Change Panel, and this was acknowledged by all participants, but any follow up support needs of the child were not discussed.
- The emotional nature of the Change Panel was difficult for service providers, who were new to this process. They needed more preparation in regards to the nature of the Change Panel experience and their role. In particular, service providers were influenced by the emotional outpouring of the offender, and his tendency to feel sorry for himself. Observers were concerned that the man used his emotionality, most likely unintentionally, to pressure the victim and other participants to cave in to his needs. Service providers could do more to keep the offender on track and focused on repairing the harm he as caused to his victims.

- The timing of this Change Panel was safe. Even though it was not a first offence, the man was known by probation and the Men's Program. The process started 3 months after the offence. The Change Plan allowed the man immediate access to the Men's Program.

## **Change Panel Summary – Panel #2**

### **Case Description**

This panel involved a married man with young children, who was charged with a first offence of assault. The man was living at home with his wife and children at the time of the application. He applied for the pilot when the Crown Attorney made his defence lawyer aware of the process. The man stated at the Assessment that he believed it was important for him to do what the Crown suggested. A First Appearance date was set and he planned to plea guilty. The man admitted responsibility for his actions and harm and expressed regret for the hurt caused to his wife. He reported that the assault was an isolated event as a result of substance abuse issues, which he was now in treatment for. He did not identify any victim safety issues.

Although it is a requirement that applicants complete three sessions of the Education for Change at the Men's Program, the project Evaluation Team agreed to make an exception and allow this case to proceed after completion of one session because of a scheduling conflict with the man's substance abuse program. The man expressed frustration with the delays he experience with the court system. The man requested that the panel occur before his court date, to avoid an additional adjournment. There was a very short time period to organize and prepare for this panel, but the Project Coordinator, in consultation with members of the Advisory Committee and Evaluation Team, agreed to proceed.

The panel was attended by the offender, his partner, a married couple (the man was the support person for the offender, and the woman the support person for the victim), and a counsellor from the Men's Program.

Two Advisors and a member of the Evaluation Team observed the panel.

### **Summary from Assessment of Victim Safety**

The woman reported that assault was the first and only experience of violence by the offender. She feared for her life and that of her partner (threats of suicide) at the time of the assault, but did not have any safety concerns at the time of the assessment, or have any safety concerns for the children. She rated the potential for offender change as good and said he was very motivated to change. The victim was not connected with any support services and did not plan to access services. She said she got support from a friend and her family. She was provided with information and developed a safety plan with the coordinator. She expressed initial misgivings about participation, saying she felt forced to jump hoops, but then decided she would participate.

### Summary from the Panel

- There was inadequate preparation time for the two support people because of the rush to complete the panel before the offender's court date.
- The participants were very intellectual in their approach, and had difficulty expressing feelings at the beginning of the panel. Later, when attention turned to developing the Change Plan, they became very emotional, and frustrated.
- A Change Plan was developed that no one really liked, but everyone agreed to in the end.
- The offender was controlling throughout the panel. He challenged the facilitator and at one point he got up and left the room in anger.
- The victim was upset and angry about suggestions to have to have the offender address abuse issues and attend the Men's Program as part of a Change Plan. She said she was overwhelmed by demands on her to attend programs and take on additional childcare and household tasks so her partner could attend groups. No supports for her were suggested or included in the Change Plan.
- The woman had a high level of shame about the assault and the impact on her and the family.
- The Change Plan that was developed included the offender continuing with addiction counselling and support, completing the Education for Change at the Men's Program (2 sessions remaining), the offender and victim continuing to communicate openly, and engaging in some fun activities.
- Observers and professionals expressed concern after the panel about the lack of support for the victim, her high level of frustration with the system, and the fact that offender was not going to address abuse issues as part of his Change Plan. One observer was concerned about victim safety, the other observer was not.
- Participants showed little insight or concern about the impact of the violence on the children.

### Advisor's Observation of Victim Safety

#### *Observing for Safety - Advisor Observation Tool*

Behaviours of Offender noted:

Fidgeting and finger tapping at times; loud and controlling; finger pointing; body tension (agitation and sweating)

Behaviours of victims noted:

Woman did not look fearful; Close to tears at times when thinking about people who know (about the assault); Looked away a few times; head down; body tension.

***Observer's Summary of Victim Safety: 2 Observers reported:***

<b>Overall Sense of Safety for Woman and Children at the Panel</b>	<b>Rating: Always Most of the time Some of the time Never</b>
Woman treated respectfully and listened to by the man	<b>1 Always 1 Most of the time</b>
Woman treated respectfully and listened to by other participants	<b>1 Always 1 Most of the time</b>
Woman was able to present her story in her own way.	<b>1 Always 1 Most of the time</b>
There was a balance of power between the woman and man demonstrated.	<b>1 Always 1 Some of the time</b>
The woman was able to get support and resources.	<b>2 Some of the time</b>
Children were treated respectfully and listened to by adults.	<b>N/A</b>
The man was held accountable for his actions.	<b>1 Always 1 Some of the time</b>
The man appeared to participate in a sincere and respectful way.	<b>1 Always 1 Some of the time</b>
Overall Safety Rating	<b>Safe</b>

***Panel Participant Evaluation - Total evaluations completed: Five (5)***

<b>Participant Evaluation</b>	<b>Response Excellent/ Good/Yes</b>	<b>Response Fair/Poor No/Don't Know</b>
Preparation for the Change Panel adequate?	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
Location of the Change Panel?	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>
Were the right people at the Change Panel?	<b>Yes (4)</b>	<b>1 Don't Know</b>
Did you get the information you needed?	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>
Were you able to say what you thought was important?	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>
Were you satisfied with the way the panel was run?	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>
Were the right people involved in the decisions about the Change Plan?	<b>Yes (3)</b>	<b>2 Don't Know</b>
Are you satisfied with the Change Plan that was reached?	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>
Was the Change Panel a safe and respectful process for you?	<b>Yes (4)</b>	<b>1 No</b>

### **Comments from Evaluations:**

- Very long
- Need more preparation
- Perhaps there should be a Change Panel that also can address the system changes that could help abusers and victims.
- Focus in earlier on the woman's needs and frustration – “drowning”. Empower the woman.

### **Evaluation of Offender's Completion of the Change Plan**

The Change Plan was evaluated two months following the panel and a report was prepared for court. The offender, victim, Men's Program staff, and the offender's Addiction program were contacted to evaluate the completion of the plan. The offender completed all goals set out in Change Plan. The victim did not report any safety issues or concerns.

### **Court Outcome**

The Evaluation of the Change Plan was submitted to the Crown and the man received a Conditional Discharge.

### **Victim Safety Evaluation**

The victim received a copy of the Safety Evaluation, but when she was contacted for follow up she did not wish to complete the interview.

### **Key Themes Identified by Advisors and Evaluation Team**

- The facilitator for this panel was not the person who met with the victim (the Project Coordinator completed the interview). The victim may have felt more supported during the panel if she had met and talked to the Facilitator as part of the preparation.
- The preparation for the panel was rushed and driven by the offender and his wish to have the panel completed for his court date, and his unwillingness to seek an adjournment. It did not feel right at the time, and both the Project Coordinator and Facilitator felt pressured, but agreed in the end to accommodate him. Panel participants, especially the two support people and the Men's Program staff, did not have enough preparation for the panel, and this impacted on the outcome. It would be better to wait, even if this meant that the family dropped out of the process, than proceed with a panel without good preparation.
- There were a small number of people at this panel and a strong sense that all of the participants (with the exception of the staff member from the Men's Program) were in a collective denial about the violence in the relationship. A larger group, with more diversity of experience and connection with the family would have helped to broaden support for both the offender and the victim.
- The woman did not receive the support she needed as a result of this panel. She remained isolated and was forced to carry an unequal share of home and parenting responsibilities to support her partner's treatment. Her hurt and resentment with

- this situation was not acknowledged during the panel, and practical strategies to shift the focus of responsibility on her partner were not found.
- There was no feeling that the offender was repairing the harm done to his victim. The focus of the plan was on the man and his needs, not on actions to repair harm to the victim.

### **Change Panel Summary – Panel #3**

#### **Case Description**

This panel was with an unemployed, married man. It was his first charge of assault, but he had previous convictions, including jail time for non violent crimes. There were five children at the home, and police were called by oldest child when the assault occurred. The man had pleaded guilty and was in Early Intervention of Domestic Violence Court process. The Children’s Aid Society was involved and the offender had supervised visits with the children. There was a restraining order in place that allowed contact with victim to arrange access visits with the children, but not to reside at the home.

The assessment revealed a man who admitted responsibility for actions and harm to the victim. He was remorseful, wanted to make amends and possibly reconcile with his partner and children. He reported that his partner was interested in the Change Panel. The man was motivated to participate and identified family members as support people. He lived in a rural area and had no transportation. The offender said alcohol was a factor with his abuse. He said there no safety issues for victim because he was not drinking and they were not living together.

The Change Panel was attended by the offender, his father as his support person, the victim, her CAS worker as her support person, and a staff person from the Men’s Program.

Two Advisors observed the panel.

#### **Summary from Assessment of Victim Safety**

The couple had been together since the woman was 15 and her partner was always controlling, jealous, and afraid of losing her. She said his behaviour was worse when drinking. She had no concerns about offender as a risk to her safety at Change Panel or for retaliation after the panel. The Project Coordinator developed a safety plan with victim. The woman was not connected to abuse services, but knew about them. The woman did not have a great deal of support, with the exception of her family. The woman did not want her daughter (13) to participate in the panel. The child who called the police was in an open custody facility and did not wish to have contact with his father. The victim was struggling to cope with the demands of single parenting, behavioural problems with her children, her healing, and dealing with her partner, his unemployment and the resulting lack of money for the family.

### **Panel Preparation**

The preparation for this panel was extensive and complex. The Project Coordinator completed several face to face interviews with family members and repeated telephone contacts with the victim, offender and supports. The Panel was organized and cancelled 3 times before it was finally completed on the fourth attempt. The victim had difficulty finding a support person for herself, which resulted in the first cancellation, and cancelled a second time because of illness. The offender cancelled the third time because he had to work. He did not contact the Coordinator, but had his mother call and cancel.

During the preparation interview with offender's parents they expressed concerns about offender's drinking. They blamed the victim for the violence because she does not parent children properly, and the present situation on the fact the child had called the police ("none of this would be happening if \_\_\_\_had not called the police").

The victim suggested that her son attend Change Panel, but the youth not willing to talk to coordinator or attend the panel. The Coordinator was able to provide staff at the Open Custody facility with information on the potential effect of witnessing abuse, calling police and the subsequent blaming by adults that the youth experienced.

### **Summary from Panel**

- Change plan was developed with input from all participants and agreed by all. The plan included: the offender attending the Men's Program, the victim and offender attending marriage counselling after he has completed the Men's Program if both parties agree (Men's program to provide a letter of support before this can happen); ongoing counselling and support for victim.
- The panel process suffered because of delays and cancellations. The offender was motivated to participate at the beginning of the process, but by the time the panel took place he was resistant and at times uncooperative.
- The victim and offender both cancelled scheduled times for the panel. Other participants and support people dropped out of the process because of the numerous cancellations. The offender was very difficult to reach and often did not return calls, and had no transportation which made rescheduling difficult. He had his mother call to cancel a panel instead of calling the coordinator himself.
- The CAS caseworker, who participated as a support person for the victim, said that she was glad she attended because she learned what the victim was truly dealing with and the extent to which the offender and his family rejected the notion that his violence impacted in any way on the children.
- The offender and his support person reinforced one another during the panel with their denial of the impact of the violence on the children, and holding the victim accountable for the offender's violence (it takes two to fight).
- The panel was very long (3 hours). The offender arrived late. He often did not answer questions or did not have anything to say. He requested a smoke break and became agitated when the facilitator said the break would come at a later time. The facilitator used "waiting" as a strategy to make space for him, which dragged out the process.

- The offender was very frustrated and was disrespectful towards the facilitator on several occasions. This was surprising to the facilitator who had spoken to him on many occasions previously and did not expect this behaviour.
- The victim was happy with the process and the outcomes, and the offender was not happy.

### **Advisor's Observation of Victim Safety**

#### ***Observing for Safety - Advisor Observation Tool***

Behaviours of Offender noted: Vocal intimidation; Body tension (agitation, sweating); threatening gestures towards facilitator (shaking head, pounding fist on leg); use of silence to control or intimidate used throughout the session (towards facilitator); does not appear to listen to the woman; Intimidating eye contact (rolling eyes at facilitator, staring); misogynist behaviours directed towards all women at the panel (victim, victim support person, facilitator); Man not interested in outsider's help, just wanted the process over.
Behaviours of victims noted: Head down most of the time; appeared to want to cry; quick change of body language when father-in-law spoke; body tension most of the time (arms crossed, looks small, hugging body); looks down when he offender) talks;

#### ***Observer's Summary of Victim Safety - Completed by 2 Observers:***

<b>Overall Sense of Safety for Woman and Children at the Panel</b>	<b>Rating Always Most of the time Some of the time Never</b>
Woman treated respectfully and listened to by the man	<b>2 Some of the time</b>
Woman treated respectfully and listened to by other participants	<b>2 Always</b>
Woman was able to present her story in her own way.	<b>1 Most of the time 1 Some of the time</b>
There was a balance of power between the woman and man demonstrated.	<b>1 Most of the time 1 Some of the time</b>
The woman was always able to get support and resources.	<b>1 Most of the time</b>
Children were treated respectfully and listened to by adults.	<b>N/A</b>
The man was held accountable for his actions.	<b>1 Most of the time</b>
The man appeared to participate in a sincere and respectful way.	<b>2 Some of the time</b>
Overall Safety Rating	<b>safe</b>

***Panel Participant Evaluation- Completed by 6 participants***

<b>Participant Evaluation</b>	<b>Response Excellent/ Good/Yes</b>	<b>Response Fair/Poor No/Don't Know</b>
Preparation for the Change Panel adequate?	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>
Location of the Change Panel?	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>
Were the right people at the Change Panel?	<b>5 Yes</b>	<b>1 No</b>
Did you get the information you needed?	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>
Were you able to say what you thought was important?	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>
Were you satisfied with the way the panel was run?	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>
Were the right people involved in the decisions about the Change Plan?	<b>5 Yes</b>	<b>1 No</b>
Are you satisfied with the Change Plan that was reached?	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>
Was the Change Panel a safe and respectful process for you?	<b>5 Yes</b>	<b>1 No</b>

**Comments from Evaluations:**

- More supports for the woman (needed)
- Difficult to hear due to the furnace
- Disturbance when people walked in
- Older children in the family could have been involved
- Facilitator noted “Could have asked the offender what was needed in the plan to repair the harm to children, and protect them from further harm after he rejected suggestions from CAS to address this issue.”
- “I wonder if the process could be a bit faster”
- Offender was often impatient, uncooperative.
- Victim rated the process overall at high level (good-excellent)
- Offender rated the process overall at low level (fair)
- Facilitator rated the panel as not a respectful process for her because of the behaviour of the offender.

**Evaluation of Offender’s Completion of the Change Plan**

An evaluation of the Change Plan was prepared by the Project Coordinator and was forwarded to the Crown office. The offender, victim, CAS and Men’s Program were contacted to prepare the report. Two of the five goals set in the Change Plan were completed, and a third goal was in progress. The remaining two goals could not be started until the offender successfully completed the Men’s Program. The victim and offender noted positive progress and agreed to keep the Change Plan in place for

completion. The CAS took over monitoring the plan. The report was not used for sentencing consideration.

**Court Outcome**

Probation with condition to attend the Men’s Program

CAS plan of care includes offender attending the Men’s Program Father’s group (to address impact of violence on children and parenting). Man has agreed to this plan. Supervised access at the resource centre in place. All children are now involved or plan to attend group counselling for child witnesses of domestic violence as part of the plan of care.

***Victim Safety Evaluation***

<p><b>Safety During Preparation Phase</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The victim did not have any safety concerns during the preparation phase. She noted that it was important for her that she was contacted directly by the Project Coordinator, and that she was not living with the offender. She said it would be difficult to be honest about safety if she was living with the offender while preparing for the panel:, “living with the offender forces you to lie to save face and smooth things over”.</li> <li>➤ The victim had a safety plan in place, and felt that all women should have safety plans.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Safety During the Panel</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The victim did not have any concerns about her safety at the panel.</li> <li>➤ She did not wish to present her story at the Change Panel in detail because there were too many strangers present, so she presented it in “point form”.</li> <li>➤ The Change Panel held her partner accountable, but he still only accepts what he wants to accept. Both the offender and his father were the “same old” and didn’t want to see things or open up.</li> <li>➤ She noticed behaviours that were observed by the advisors, also that the offender’s father used the same behaviours. They did not frighten her, but indicated to her that they did not want to be at the panel.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Safety After the Change Panel</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The victim felt safe after the panel. Her contact with the counsellor at the Men’s Program increased her overall feeling of safety and support.</li> <li>➤ Her partner has followed through with the Change Plan, which has helped her feel safe, but also made her strong to hold him accountable to the plan.</li> <li>➤ She rated the Change Panel Process as very safe overall, and valued the good communication with the Project Coordinator and the Men’s Program, and the close contact with her throughout the process.</li> <li>➤ The victim valued the emphasis on safety throughout the Change Panel Process</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recommendations from the Woman for Model Development</b></p> <p>The woman recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Only use the Change Panel when the couple is not living together. In that way the Change Panel can be used to pressure the man to change, and it can be a tool for the victim to have some control over the abuser and set boundaries with him.</li> </ul> <p><i>“The shoe is on the other foot. Once he hits you once it makes it easier. Now I know</i></p>

*this is true and now I know he wants to hit me. I don't let it happen"*

- The parents of the couple should be involved in the Change Panel. They need education about abuse and the impact of the abuse on everyone.
- It is very important for the victim to have contact with a counsellor at the Men's Program. *"The man's perception of the situation is often very different than what is really happening. My partner told the Men's Program that we were reconciling when it was not the case at all. It was just what he wanted."* The contact with the Men's Program helps the woman to set boundaries and truly recognize that it is possible that he will be violent.
- *"The work for men is very hard. They need to learn you don't always get what you want, and that throwing a fit and anger won't get you what you want either"*
- The Change Panel could start with asking the man to tell everyone what he wants to change.

### **Key Themes**

- The Change Panel helped to provide new supports for the children in this family. It put the impact of the violence on the children at the forefront for family members, the CAS and the staff at the Open Custody facility. The CAS worker was able to use information from the panel for a plan of care to address the impact of witnessing violence on the children.
- The Change Panel put everyone on one page – family members and professionals and offered new information to all. It illustrated the importance of having the agencies involved in the lives of family members at the panel.
- Organizing Change Panels for marginalized families that are poor, have no transportation, few supports, and face multiple issues (abuse, addictions, unemployment, health issues) takes time and patience. There are multiple barriers for these families, and it was important to be able to offer rescheduling and flexibility to accommodate the many issues faced by both the victim and the offender.
- The woman was able to use the Change Panel process to set boundaries with her partner, and the Change Plan provided her with a way to hold him accountable for change. This helped her with her decision making process about whether or not to reconcile and made her less vulnerable to pressures from her partner to respond to his needs.
- The woman was able to broaden her support system through the Change Panel.

## **Change Panel Summary – Panel #4**

### **Description of the Case**

This case involved an married offender with no children. He was unemployed and facing serious financial problems, had no transportation and was living with his parents. He was charged with assault, mischief and uttering threats, his first criminal charge. The offender had pleaded guilty and was in the Early Intervention program of the Domestic Violence court. There was a restraining order in place and no contact allowed with the victim.

The offender had completed the Education for Change at the Men's program and spoke very highly of the program. He was interested in the Change Panel as a way to get back together with his wife. He recognized the need to change, and accepted responsibility for the harm caused to his partner. He also felt it was important for his wife to recognize her role in their problems, particularly their financial problems. He did not identify any safety issues for his partner. He identified his partner's sister and her husband and his parents as supports.

The panel was attended by the offender, his father and mother (offender support), the victim, her sister (victim support), her sister's husband (support for both parties) and a staff from the Men's Program. The victim's brother in law disclosed that he was abusive in the past towards his partner, but he had stopped drinking and abusing. He was very remorseful about his past behaviour, and very motivated to help the victim and offender with their issues.

Two Advisors observed the Panel.

### **Summary from the Assessment of Victim Safety**

The couple had been together 15 years and married for 8. There was no violence until 4-5 years ago when verbal abuse began, and these episodes have been increasing (blaming, yelling, put downs). There were no previous assaults and the victim had no concerns that the offender would manipulate or control her through the Change Panel, or retaliate if he is not satisfied with the outcome. The victim believed the offender has potential for change with anger management. She was very frightened by the assault, which included the offender pouring gas on the floor and threatening to burn the house down. She has no vehicle or transportation, but has a friend who helps her out. She identified her sister as a support person. The Project Coordinator worked with the victim to develop a safety plan, in particular what to do if the offender came to the house. The woman was not connected to any support services and said that she gets support from her sisters. They do not live in the area, but are accessible by phone. She was provided with information on abuse specific services and encouraged to use the 24 hour crisis line.

### **Summary from Panel**

- No safety issues were identified during the panel
- The Change Plan was developed with participation from all present and agreed to by all.

- The Change Plan included: a change to the restraining order to allow the victim and offender to have contact in a safe setting once or twice a week to talk about issues that concern them; the offender completing the Men’s program, the offender taking responsibility and talking about his feelings with friends and family; the offender taking responsibility to get help dealing with stresses in his life; the offender and victim working together on improving communication; the offender working on improving communication; the victim finding supports to help her deal with changes she wants to make.
- The offender often blamed the victim for his problems during the panel.

### Advisor’s Observation of Victim Safety

#### *Observing for Safety - Advisor Observation Tool*

Behaviours of Offender noted: Body tension (agitation, sweating); Non verbal intimidation (sighs, mumbling); Intimidating eye contact (staring at the victim).
Behaviours of victims noted: Body Tension (arms crossed, hugging body); Avoids eye contact.

#### *Observer’s Summary of Victim Safety – Completed by 2 Observers*

<b>Overall Sense of Safety for Woman and Children at the Panel</b>	<b>Rating: Always Most of the time Some of the time Never</b>
Woman treated respectfully and listened to by the man	<b>1 Most of the time 1 Some of the time</b>
Woman treated respectfully and listened to by other participants	<b>2 Always</b>
Woman was able to present her story in her own way.	<b>2 Always</b>
There was a balance of power between the woman and man demonstrated.	<b>1 Some of the time</b>
The woman was always able to get support and resources.	<b>2 Most of the time</b>
Children were treated respectfully and listened to by adults.	<b>N/A</b>
The man was held accountable for his actions.	<b>1 Some of the time</b>
The man appeared to participate in a sincere and respectful way.	<b>1 Most of the time</b>
Overall Safety Rating	<b>Safe</b>

***Panel Participant Evaluation- Evaluations completed by 8 Participants***

<b>Participant Evaluation</b>	<b>Response Excellent/ Good/Yes</b>	<b>Response Fair/Poor No/Don't Know</b>
Preparation for the Change Panel adequate?	<b>8</b>	<b>0</b>
Location of the Change Panel?	<b>8</b>	<b>0</b>
Were the right people at the Change Panel?	<b>7 Yes</b>	<b>1 N/A</b>
Did you get the information you needed?	<b>8</b>	<b>0</b>
Were you able to say what you thought was important?	<b>8</b>	<b>0</b>
Were you satisfied with the way the panel was run?	<b>8</b>	<b>0</b>
Were the right people involved in the decisions about the Change Plan?	<b>8 Yes</b>	<b>0 No</b>
Are you satisfied with the Change Plan that was reached?	<b>8</b>	<b>0</b>
Was the Change Panel a safe and respectful process for you?	<b>8 Yes</b>	<b>0 No</b>

**Comments from Evaluations:**

- Open and motivated offender
- Need more space for offender and victim to expand on their feelings and thoughts.

**Evaluation of Offender's Completion of the Change Plan**

The evaluation of the Change Plan was completed and forwarded to the Crown office. The offender completed one element of the Change Plan, the completion of the Men's Program, which was the element that was also required by the Early Intervention process of the Domestic Violence court. His group leader stated that the offender did not address his anger or change his behaviour and continued to blame the victim for his violence. The offender did not follow through with other Change Plan elements such as meeting weekly with his partner, improving communication with his partner, or talking to his partner before making decisions. In fact, he did not contact the victim until months later because he started a new relationship. The victim was extremely hurt and confused by this behaviour, in light of the commitment made at the Change Panel, and the fact that she learned about the new relationship from a family friend. The victim reported that the offender's parents assisted him in avoiding her and hiding the truth about the new relationship. The offender admitted that he did not follow through with most of the Change Plan and did express some regret that he was not more honest and open with the victim about his new relationship. The victim was in contact with a counsellor from the Men's Program and found this very helpful.

## Court Outcome

The report from the Change Panel was not presented to the court, as the court date preceded the date for the completion of the Change Plan. The offender was given an Absolute Discharge.

## Victim Safety Evaluation

<p><b>Safety During Preparation Phase</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Victim had no concerns about her safety during the preparation phase. There was a court order in place.</li><li>➤ The offender did not try to influence her during the preparation phase but did send her letters saying he wanted her back.</li></ul>
<p><b>Safety During the Panel</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Victim doesn't believe the offender heard a thing she said at the Change Panel.</li><li>➤ There were no things that happened at the Change Panel that made her feel unsafe, but she thought he behaved like a different person.</li><li>➤ Both the observers and the victim noticed some behaviours that could be attempts to frighten or control. Both noticed the offender staring at the victim, his agitation.</li><li>➤ The victim noticed other behaviours of the offender that frightened or controlled her: "he tried to outdo me – looking for an argument. He was angry, but I didn't give him an opportunity."</li></ul>
<p><b>Safety After the Change Panel</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ <i>"the Change Panel as a whole was a betrayal because nothing happened"</i></li><li>➤ <i>"The offender did not follow through with the Change Plan, so I don't know if he changed. He has gone over to someone else so we don't know"</i></li><li>➤ The victim rated the Change Panel as very safe.</li><li>➤ The victim would recommend the Change Panel to another woman if it's what both party's want and the support people are on board.</li><li>➤ The victim has concerns about family members as support people for the offender, because they will lie and protect their own. They will blame the victim and not hold the offender responsible at all. They may help the offender avoid responsibility.</li></ul>
<p><b>Recommendations from the Woman for Model Development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Make sure that support people are really support people and follow through with the plan. They should not lie or protect the offender. They need to hold the offender responsible and not help him with his avoidance of responsibility.</li><li>➤ Make sure the offender is not lying during the Change Panel.</li></ul>

## Key Themes

- The Court did not request an interim report on the man's progress with his Change Plan for consideration for sentencing. The man's non compliance with his plan, and lack of honesty with the Change Panel process was, in the opinion of

the project, important information for sentencing. The man received an Absolute Discharge at a time when he did not carry out the plan for change that he had developed and agreed to.

- Although there were no physical safety issues for the victim, the process was not respectful for her, or repair the harm done to her by the assault. In fact, the victim felt further abused and betrayed by her perpetrator because he did not follow through with a plan to work through their relationship issues.
- It was not possible to hold this man accountable for following through with his Change Plan. In this case, family members did not support the plan in a way that held the offender accountable. The family members were motivated to protect the offender from any contact with the victim, and maintained until the end of the process that the victim was responsible for the behaviour of the offender.

## Findings from the Pilot Project

### Project Outcomes

Project Goals and Objectives	Project Outcomes
<p><b>To collect information and recommendations on victim safety from an Advisory Committee made up of women of experience who act as monitors and observers for an initial pilot of the Change Panel Process.</b></p> <p><b>Objectives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ To recruit 6 diverse women of experience to act as project consultants and observers,</li> <li>➤ To consult with advisors on how the model can be further developed for victim safety and recommendations for the next steps in model implementation.</li> </ul>	<p><b>This goal has been met.</b> Women of experiences acted as advisors and observers throughout the project. They provided information on victim safety that was used to develop observation and evaluation tools for the project, and to develop safety protocols for victims involved in the pilot.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Six diverse women were recruited and five were involved from the beginning until the end of the project.</li> <li>✓ Advisors provided recommendations on victim safety throughout the project, and recommendations for the next steps in model development and implementation</li> </ul>
<p><b>To conduct 8 Change Panels and collect feedback on the safety of victims from women who participate, panel participants and the panel facilitator.</b></p> <p><b>Objectives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ To liaise with the Crown Attorney and Court, and the Men’s Program for suitable referrals for the Change Panel Process,</li> <li>➤ To train 4 facilitators in abuse specific work</li> </ul>	<p>A total of 9 referrals for the project were assessed, and five cases were screened out or did not wish to participate.</p> <p><b>Four Change Panels were completed. Feedback was collected from victims of violence, panel participants and the panel facilitator on victim safety for each panel..</b></p> <p><b>Outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ An application procedure and form for use in the Crown office and Men’s Program was developed, as well as the criteria for referral.</li> <li>✓ Four facilitators were trained for the project. Two facilitators</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ To screen, assess and prepare participants for involvement in the Change Panel Process</li>   <li>➤ To complete post panel evaluations with participants and follow up with victims.</li> </ul>	<p>conducted panels.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Nine applicants were screened for the project. Four applicants completed the entire panel process. All participants for the Change Panel were prepared and received an information package.</li>   <li>✓ Post panel evaluations were completed with all panel participants (28 evaluations). Follow up was completed with all victims, and a Victim Safety Evaluation was completed with three victims.</li> </ul>
<p><b>To determine if the Change Panel Process model is safe for victims and to make any changes necessary for the model before further implementation.</b></p> <p><b>Objectives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ To develop recommendations for victim safety based on project outcomes and make revisions to the Change Panel model</li>   <li>➤ To complete a final report for funders, Advisory Committee and the GBCCC</li> </ul>	<p><b>The Change Panel Process was evaluated as safe for victims when proper screening and safety procedures are in place. Recommendations for further model development before implementation were developed.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Revisions to the model for victim safety were made during the pilot and are summarized in this report.</li>   <li>✓ A final report on the project was prepared and reviewed by the Advisory Committee and the GBCCC.</li> </ul>

**Findings from the Evaluation of Victim Safety**

**Assessment and Preparation Phase**

*No victims reported safety concerns as part of the assessment and preparation phase* for the Change Panel. Safety Plans were completed with three victims, and a fourth had a Safety Plan in place at the time of the interview.

*No offenders reported concern that they were a risk to their partner’s safety* during the assessment or preparation phase. Four offenders completed a plan on the action they would take to keep the victim safe during the Change Panel process.

*All panel participants reviewed ground rules for safety as part of their preparation* for the Change Panel and agreed in writing to abide by these rules. No support person reported any concerns about the safety of the victim as part of the preparation for the panel.

*Some panel participants requested more preparation for the Change Panel, and six rated preparation as fair or poor.* Three of these responses were from the panel that was rushed at the request of the offender to meet his court date.

*A specific safety and support plan was put in place for a child victim who participated* in a Change Panel. This included having a support person for her, having activities available for her (crayons, paper, etc.) for use during the panel, and encouraging her to leave whenever she felt like it with her support person.

**During the Change Panel**

*A total of 26 of the 28 completed participant evaluations said the Change Panel was a “safe and respectful process”* One facilitator reported that the panel was not respectful for her because of the behaviour of the offender directed towards her. One other panel participant answered “no” to the question. The following chart presents a summary of the responses from the participant evaluations:

<b>Participant Evaluation Summary from Four Panels – a total of 28 participants responded, but not all participants answered all questions.</b>	<b>Responses: Excellent, Good or answered Yes</b>	<b>Responses: Fair, Poor or answered No</b>
Preparation for the Change Panel adequate?	<b>22</b>	<b>6</b>
Location of the Change Panel?	<b>24</b>	<b>4</b>
Were the right people at the Change Panel?	<b>25</b>	<b>1</b>
Did you get the information you needed?	<b>25</b>	<b>3</b>
Were you able to say what you thought was important?	<b>26</b>	<b>2</b>
Were you satisfied with the way the panel was run?	<b>26</b>	<b>2</b>
Were the right people involved in the decisions about the Change Plan?	<b>24</b>	<b>2</b>
Are you satisfied with the Change Plan that was reached?	<b>25</b>	<b>3</b>
Was the Change Panel a safe and respectful process for you?	<b>26</b>	<b>2</b>

*Most panel participants were satisfied with the way the panel was run and with the Change Plan that was developed.*

*All of the Change Panels were rated as “safe” or “extremely safe” by Advisors who observed.* The observers rated the way the victim was treated in the panel using a 4 item scale (Always, Most of the time, Some of the Time, Never). There were no ratings of “never” at any of the panels. The following chart is a summary of the observer’s responses on the rating sheets from the four panels:

<b>Observer’s Summary of Victim Safety for Four Panels – A total of 8 observers responded, but not all observers answered all questions.</b>	<b>Responded: Always or Most of the Time</b>	<b>Responded: Some of the time</b>
Woman treated respectfully and listened to by the man	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>
Woman treated respectfully and listened to by other participants	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>
Woman was able to present her story in her own way.	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>
There was a balance of power between the woman and man demonstrated.	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
The woman was able to get support and resources.	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>
Children were treated respectfully and listened to by adults.	<b>2</b>	
The man was held accountable for his actions.	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>
The man appeared to participate in a sincere and respectful way.	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
Overall Safety Rating	<b>Safe</b>	

**Victim Safety Following the Change Panel**

*Victims did not report any safety concerns after the panel, or new incidents of violence when they contacted for the evaluation of the Change Plan Report.*

*Victims who participated in the Victim Safety Follow Up Interview did not report any new incidents of physical violence.*

*One woman declined to participate in the Victim Safety Interview and no data on her safety was available.*

*One woman reported incidents of verbal abuse, and one woman reported emotional abuse.*

*A child reported that the offender stopped spanking, but continued to yell.*

## Recommendations

### Recommendations from Victims

- Consider conducting more than one circle with participants (one to develop the plan, a second circle to check on follow up and a third circle to evaluate the plan). The woman said it was too “crammed” with only one circle.
- The Change Panel process should be offered as it is another avenue to talk and bring people together, especially family members. Having our families involved helps keep the offender accountable
- Only use the Change Panel when the couple is not living together. In that way the Change Panel can be used to pressure the man to change, and it can be a tool for the victim to have some control over the abuser and set boundaries with him.
- The parents of the couple should be involved in the Change Panel. They need education about abuse and the impact of the abuse on everyone.
- It is very important for the victim to have contact with a counsellor at the Men’s Program. The contact with the Men’s Program helps the woman to set boundaries and truly recognize that it is possible that he will be violent.
- The Change Panel could start with asking the man to tell everyone what he wants to change.
- Make sure that support people are really support people and follow through with the plan. They should not lie or protect the offender. They need to hold the offender responsible and not help him with his avoidance of responsibility.
- Make sure the offender is not lying during the Change Panel.

### Recommendations for Model Development from Advisors and the Evaluation Team

*Include screening for intergenerational domestic violence with all panel participants to ensure that past violence is identified at an early stage in the panel preparation.*

*Review with the offender the impact of the violence on his victims as part of the assessment phase, in particular the impact of the violence on the children.*

*The time frame for the actual Change Panel needs to be more open.* Don’t schedule or prepare participants for a two hour session, as this may not give them the time they need to work through the emotions and arrive at a plan.

*Proper preparation is necessary for all panel participants and a panel cannot go forward without it.* It is better to not have a panel at all than to proceed without all participants properly prepared.

*Service providers who attend panels as supports for the victim or perpetrator need more information on their role, and can play a more active role* providing information to the other panel members on resources and interventions for consideration in the plan, and another perspective to the participants on the impact of the violence. For example, a CAS

worker could provide participants with information on the impact of violence and abuse on children, especially in a situation when the children themselves do not choose to attend a panel, and their voices are not presented.

***In cases where participants are not linked to support services, consider inviting staff from key agencies (women’s counselling services, child witness counsellors, addiction or mental health providers) to present on resources and common issues to the other participants at the beginning of the panel. They would leave and not participate in the circle and the development of the plan, similar to the approach used in the Family Group Conferencing model. Panel participants would then have more information to craft the plan.***

***Place more emphasis on support for children and making the experiences of the children more present in the Change Panel process.*** The CAS could provide both a support role for children, and present the voice at the panel when the children themselves are not present. Children are natural observers in the family and speak with a non judgemental voice that is important to be heard and can be more accessible for adults.

***More focus on “repairing the harm” to the victim is needed during the Change Panel.*** The development of the man’s Change Plan should not be rushed into until the participants have explored the harm done to the victim fully. In addition there needs to be more attention paid to ways that the offender will repair harm to his victims, and meet the needs of the victim as part of his plan.

***More focus on creating a “healing space” for the participants is needed.*** Look at Aboriginal models and connect with the work currently being done in the First Nations communities in Grey and Bruce.

***The Crown Attorney office and the Change Panel Coordinator need to work together to ensure that evaluation reports on the offender’s completion of his Change Plan are available for consideration by the court.***

***Review the timing of the Change Panel and how it fits as part of the Court Process, especially in light of the Domestic Violence Court Process and Early Intervention program.*** The DV Court is a new process that was not in place when the Change Panel model was developed, or at the beginning of the pilot. Consultation with the Crown Attorney office and Duty Counsel is necessary to review how the Change Panel can fit within the DV Court process.

***Consider holding the Change Panel at different times in the overall court process in a way that fits best with the overall situation of the offender and the victim. In some cases the Change Panel would be more appropriate after the court proceedings are completed*** for example a Change Plan could be incorporated with supervision for probation to provide additional tools to monitor offender accountability.

## Recommendations for Next Steps

- 1. Seek project funding for a full implementation the Change Panel Process to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the process towards stopping abuse and to identify any longer term victim safety issues.** The implementation needs to include education for the public, the justice system and for service providers on restorative justice approaches and how the Change Panel fits within the overall justice and social services response to domestic violence in the community. The project should also involve women of experience as advisors.
- 1. Make revisions to the Change Panel model using the recommendations from this project as a guide.** In addition, consult with women on whether or not a Change Panel can be conducted effectively and safely when the woman and man are living together. The experience of this project, and the feedback from victims of violence suggest that it would be very difficult for women who are living with their partners to participate freely. One women said that if she was living with him she would be forced to lie for him as well.
- 1. Continue to focus clearly on victim safety and support throughout all phases of the Change Panel.** All victims expressed appreciation for the focus on their safety in the research project. Screen out any cases that do not meet criteria for victim safety, as developed in this project. In addition, place more emphasis on victim support in the preparation phase, especially to actively link women with support services. Only one woman in this project had assessed abuse specific services at the time of the assessment, which indicates an ongoing need for more victim support.

## Conclusion

This project allowed the GBCCC to examine in detail a restorative justice approach to domestic assault. The Change Panel process was developed as an early intervention to deal with the relational and emotional aspects of domestic assault cases that the adversarial court process cannot address. It brings together victims, offenders, family members, friends and service providers to repair the harm caused by the assault and to focus the offender on change. From the beginning, the Change Panel model raised many questions about safety for victims of violence. This project allowed us to work with four families and an advisory group of women of experience to explore in detail victim safety issues and concerns at all stages of the Change Panel model.

Domestic assault raises highly complex issues for the victims, offenders and everyone in their immediate circle. In three cases in this project the victim or the offender disclosed witnessing their father's violence and their mother as victims as children. In two Change Panels these same parents attended as support people and witnessed how their adult children dealt with the domestic violence openly with a clear focus on change. In three cases the families faced layers of issues and challenges; poverty, substance abuse, unemployment and poor health, that compounded the overall problems for participants. In all four cases the participants struggled with the highly complex court and social service system response to domestic assault where no one has the responsibility of bringing the many perspectives and people in each case together. The Change Panel process was the only occasion for family members, friends and social service workers to "get on the same page" in regards to the reality of the violence, and to work together to support safety for victims and change for the offenders.

The results of this initial pilot suggest that the Change Panel process is a helpful and safe tool for victims of violence when strict safety protocols are in place, and there is ongoing contact with the victim throughout the process. Offenders who were involved in the process had varying degrees of success in following through with their plans to change their abusive and violent behaviours. A more extensive and longer term evaluation project would be necessary to determine if the Change Panel model helps men to change their behaviour. For the short term, offenders involved in the project did not engage in any violent behaviours over the course of the project.

Women involved in this project valued having input into a structured plan for the offender that let them see his change over time. One woman said: *'It structured a plan and made him stick to it'* Several women stated that they felt safer because of the Change Panel because of the project's emphasis on safety planning, the close contact with the victim, and because it brought everyone together.

*"The Change Panel helped. It was another avenue to talk, with everyone together. There is no other place to do this. Having our families involved helped to keep him accountable. There is ongoing family support. His Dad continues to check in with him – how he's feeling and how he's doing - almost every day."*

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## Appendices

### Appendix A An Overview of the Change Panel Model

At the centre of the First Charge Intervention Process is the Change Panel, a restorative justice approach within the judicial process. Although the courts and police play a critical role in criminalizing domestic violence and providing immediate protection to victims, the adversarial nature of this system can set survivors of abuse at risk when they are compelled to testify against abusers they may be emotionally attached to, financially dependent on, and from whom they rightly fear retaliation. It cannot deal effectively with emotional and verbal abuse, or the impact of repetitive violence on victims. The justice response to abusive men does not have the ability to implement early, effective interventions immediately following the charging event that will motivate men to take responsibility for their abusive behaviour, and for changing it. A traditional justice response cannot “stop the violence”; because it cannot manage things it was never designed to do. (MacLeod 1990).

The Change Panel deals with the relational and emotional aspects of the case that the conventional justice system cannot address. It is collaborative strategy that brings together service providers, victims, offenders, extended family members and support people, to widen the ‘circle of concerned people’ in order to protect all family members. (Pennell & Burford 1999). The Change Panel focuses the offending person on accessing help from family and social service supports, and taking responsibility for his actions. It is not a forum for repairing the relationships between the offender and his victims in order to “keep the family together”, nor is it a diversion from the judicial process. The offending person participates voluntarily in the process without any promises or guarantee that his participation will change the eventual outcome when the charge comes to court.

The Change Panel is an early intervention, which can be accessed following an initial assessment for participation in the FCIP, and the completion of a three week Education for Change program, a component of the Men’s Track. In order to participate, the man would need to accept responsibility for the abuse, and be willing to participate in a process that will support him in the development of a Change Plan to address his abusive and controlling behaviours.

The Change Panel offers the woman and children, and other family members or affected people, who are the victims of the domestic assault, an opportunity to speak directly to the offending person on the impact of violence for them. The incident that resulted in the first charge of assault can be put into the context of the history of violence and abuse that victims experience. The victims of the assault may use the information and experiences they have in the Change Panel to develop their own plans for safety, support, and their plans for next steps. The Change Panel provides a safe place for victims and family members to express their needs, and direct their knowledge and experience, towards the

development of man's Change Plan. It offers a place where family members have input into a plan to stop further violence, abuse and harassment.

### ***The Purpose of the Change Panel***

The Change Panel brings together people who have been affected by the abuse to begin a process of repairing the harm that has been done, and to put in place a plan that will prevent further harm and abuse.

### ***Goals of the Change Panel Process***

6. To prevent further abuse in the family through a restorative process that involves family members, their support people, and community supports,
5. To validate the experiences, and strengthen the voices of victims, in a process that is victim-directed,
5. To engage the person who has abused in the development of a Change Plan and to support him in changing his abusive behaviour.
5. To hold the person who has been abusive accountable and responsible in meaningful and practical ways,
5. To recognize the harm that has been done by the abusive behaviour, and to begin a process of making amends,
5. To address power imbalances in the family in order to create space for choices that will stop violence and promote the well being of all family members,
5. To provide a community response to domestic violence that meets the needs of all family members, is culturally appropriate, and balances the power among family, community and government

### ***The Four Phases in the Change Panel Process***

There are four distinct phases in the Change Panel Process:

- ◆ Assessment
- ◆ Preparation for the Panel
- ◆ Conducting the Panel
- ◆ Follow Up

Within each phase there are key elements and processes to accomplish the general goals of the Change Process, and the specific goals of the panel participants. The members of the Grey Bruce Court Coordination Committee used the work of Pennell and Burford in the Family Group Decision Making Project as a basis for discussion and the development of the phases for the Change Panel component of the First Charge Intervention Process. (Final Report 200, Appendix E p 3-13)

## **Appendix B Safety and Support for Advisory Committee Members**

The safety and well being of members of the Project Advisory Committee is of the utmost importance in this pilot project. The Project Coordinator will provide support for members of the Advisory group as follows:

- Observers receive background information on each case. They may choose to decline acting as an observer at a Change Panel that they do not feel comfortable with, or involves people they know in the community.
- A debriefing session will be held immediately following each Change Panel, where the facilitator and observer can talk about any events or disturbing issues that may have arisen, and develop immediate support and follow up plans.
- The Coordinator of the project will check in with the observer after each Change Panel to ensure the observer is supported, and to assist in follow up support plans in the event of a disturbing incident.
- The observers will discuss cases with other members of the Advisory Committee as part of the review of all cases. Advisory members provide support and opportunities for observers to share experiences. This group will also document the impact of the Change Panel on observers, as part of their evaluation of the Change Panel.
- Observers and all members of the Advisory Committee receive information on self-care, and community supports as part of their preparation and training before the project begins.

### **Safety and Support Contact Numbers**

Advisory Committee members may contact the following services if they need information or help to address safety concerns during the project:

Police: 911  
Crisis Telephone: 1 800 265-3722 or 371-1600. 1 800 265-3026 or 396-5301  
Sexual Assault Helpline: 1 800 720-7411

Woman Abuse Counselling Services: 376-0755 (Women's Centre, Owen Sound)  
398-9655 (Women's House, Kincardine)

Men's Program: 372-2720  
Change Panel Coordinator: 376-7145

### **Safety Planning for Advisors in the Project:**

The members of the Advisory Committee have developed the following “Safety Plan” to use during the Change Panel Pilot Project:

4. The Change Panel will be held in a safe and secure location that meets safety criteria for the project, and that has been pre checked by a member of the Advisory Committee. Wherever possible the Change Panel will be held in a public building such as a police station, hospital, CAS office or similar setting.
4. A telephone will be available in the room during the Change Panel. Consideration should be given to having a cell phone for this project.
4. Change Panel participants will not have access to the full names or the addresses of Advisory Committee members who act as observers.
4. Advisory Committee members will park in a separate area, and not with participants.
4. The Advisory Committee members will be part of the debriefing discussion with the facilitator following the panel, and will leave the building with the facilitator and coordinator.
4. Advisory members will contact the Coordinator after the panel if they have any safety concerns, and will contact police if safety issues present following a panel.
4. Advisory members may contact Women’s House or Women’s Centre at any time if they experience retraumatization through their participation as observers, or need support to deal with their own issues.
4. Advisory Committee members may contact the Project Coordinator at any time to discuss safety issues or concerns that arise out of their participation in this project, and may chose to discuss these more fully at regular Advisory Committee meetings.

### **Strategies for Self Care:**

Project Advisors have developed the following Self Care strategies that they will use during this project:

- Regular check ins on self care at Advisory Committee meetings
- Debriefing with friends after participating in panels, while maintaining confidentiality.
- Organizing time to walk, run, exercise or be outside.
- Speaking to a counsellor at Women’s House or Women’s Centre
- Taking time to do enjoyable things such as: movies, coffee and talking with friends, a massage, computer games, read, meditation, laughter.
- Taking a hot bath, or time to relax in a quiet place.
- Planning a transition time after a Change Panel, to practice self care.

## **Appendix C Victim Safety in the Change Panel Model**

### ***Assessment Phase:***

- The offender is asked to provide information on victim safety issues from his perspective, as well as the action he will take to ensure victims will be safe from further harm and abuse during the Change Panel Process.
- A meeting with the victim is conducted as part of the assessment to assess her safety and support and to develop with her the specific safety and support strategies for both the woman and the children for the Change Panel Process.
- A formal safety plan is completed with the victim that includes information on the history and pattern of the violence, the potential for the offender to manipulate or control the victim, the victim's sense of risk, and what interventions the victim with need from the panel facilitator to participate safely during the panel, and the risk of retaliation if the man is not satisfied with the outcome or process of the Change Panel.

### ***Panel Preparation***

- Potential participants are screened for safety, and not invited if they pose safety risks,
- Victims have the option of attending, or in the case of safety concerns, sending an advocate or written material to the panel,
- Victims chose a support person to come with them to the panel for immediate and follow up support.
- The project coordinator consults with an Advisory Committee to discuss any safety concerns that arise in the preparation phase.
- The coordinator ensures that a safety plan is in place to address the possibility of violence immediately before the panel takes place (in hallways, parking lots etc.) or if violence becomes an issue during the panel. This includes: notifying local police of a panel, a security back up plan, and a detailed safety and security protocol created in consultation with local police services
- The room for the panel has two exits, and there is enough space for victims and their support people to meet separately from the offender before the panel begins if this is necessary for safety.

### ***Conducting the Panel***

- A set seating plan is in place to provide a safe and structured environment for the panel participants,
- All participants must agree to ground rules for safety before the panel begins, and these ground rules are reviewed at the beginning of the panel.
- The plan that is developed in the panel focuses on the development of plans to end the offender's violence behaviour, thereby increasing the safety of the victims. All members of the Change Panel must agree and sign off on the Change Plan.

### ***Follow Up from the Panel***

- The Coordinator follows up with the victim's directly following the panel to review safety plans and to make any changes she feels necessary.
- The Coordinator reviews victim safety as part of the evaluation of the Change Plan and preparation for the written report on the outcomes of the plan for the courts.

## **Appendix D**

### **Ethics Process – Safety for Women Participating in the Change Panel Pilot**

This project is a participatory research project that will involve women who have experienced domestic violence in the Change Panel process, as both subjects and participants.

Cases will be identified for participation in the project by the Grey Crown Attorney, the Victim Witness Assistance Coordinator, or the Coordinator of the Men’s Program when they meet the following criteria: First charge situation; Level one assault; Voluntary participation; Men must attend three weeks of the Education for Change Program; before they participate in the project.

Each woman who is interested in participation, or who is referred as a potential participant will be contacted by telephone by the Project Coordinator and provided with initial information about the research project and the Change Panel process. The Coordinator will ask each woman if she thinks involvement in the project would put her at risk. Women will be informed that their decision to participate in the project is entirely voluntary, and will not have any impact on services and supports they receive. They are informed that if they volunteer to participate, they may stop their involvement in the project at any time, if they no longer wish to be involved, without any impact of supports or services. Each woman will be offered an appointment with the Project Coordinator to discuss her participation in the project more fully, if she would like to consider involvement.

At the appointment the woman is given detailed verbal and written information about the project. The Project Coordinator and woman then discuss safety and risk factors for her participation. Each woman is asked if she believes there will be any potential harm to her or her children as a participant, or for providing feedback in the project.

A Safety Plan is discussed with each woman who attends the interview, and will include safety planning during the Change Panel Process for women who volunteer to participate. The Coordinator also explores each woman any coercion or pressure she may be under by her partner, or family to participate.

If the Coordinator, in consultation with the Advisory Committee, believes the woman would be at risk of harm, or is being coerced, the woman will be screened out of the project.

Each women who agrees to participate in the project receives clear verbal and written materials that outline: the voluntary nature of participation, the goals, process and timeframe of the project, the way in which she will be involved in the project, available community supports and resources, Project contacts, and a Participant Consent form for her to sign that outlines the terms of her participation.

The Project Coordinator reviews safety plans and risk with women throughout the project, and women complete an evaluation of the process at the time of the Change Panel, and following the completion of the Change Panel Process.