

Fact Sheet 3: Early Intervention Schools Program to help prevent violence against women and children

Whittlesea Community Futures is seeking State Government support to adopt a pilot program in local schools to help prevent violence and sexual assault against women and children in the municipality, with increased focus on gender equity.

What is happening right now?

- The rate of family violence in the City of Whittlesea is at a critical new high at 1249 per 100,000 people, compared to 1071 for Victoriaⁱ. This is the highest rate of reported family violence in the Victoria Police Northern Division 5ⁱⁱ.
- Over the past five years the number of incidents reported to police in the Whittlesea LGA has almost doubled (see WCF Family Violence Fact Sheet 1) leading to local agencies declaring family violence a critical public health issue for our community and establishing the Whittlesea Family Violence Taskforce to address this.
- In 2012-13, 2110 family violence incidents were reported to Victoria Police including one homicide (an increase of 35% on the previous year); in 743 of these incidents children were presentⁱⁱⁱ;
- An average of 40 incidents of family violence are reported to Victoria Police every week;
- More than half (56%) of all assaults arose from family violence;
- Family violence was the context for 46% of all rapes and 15% of all other sex offences (95% of the victims were female; 100% of the alleged offenders were male)^{iv};
- Berry Street Northern Family and Domestic Violence Service have received significantly more referrals for women (3618) from the Whittlesea municipality than from any other municipality in the northern metropolitan region (NMR)^v;

How can we build a better future?

There is a powerful rationale for embedding education about gender equity and respectful relationships in schools to prevent violence against women and children^{vi}. Early interventions with children and young people can have a lasting effect of their relationships in the future.

Schools are logical sites for violence prevention education because of the volume of young people they engage. In 2008, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and VicHealth recommended five principles for best-practice in violence prevention and respectful relationships education in Victorian secondary schools^{vii}.

Whittlesea Community Futures is requesting State Government support to adapt existing best-practice model/s to be implemented as a pilot program in local schools with increased focus on gender equity.

How much will it cost?

| Pilot | Resources | Cost (per annum) |
|---|---------------------------------|------------------|
| Preventing family violence and sexual assault: Program targeting young people (whole-of-school program) | 1 Project worker | \$100,000 |
| | Project materials and resources | |
| | School expenses | \$30,000 |
| | Evaluation | \$15,000 |
| TOTAL (per annum) | | \$145,000 |

How will the community benefit?

Children and young people spend much of their time at school. They are a captive audience for teachers and professionals to deliver programs to improve understanding of gender equity, sexual assault and family violence.

By intervening early in life in a universal setting, violence-supportive attitudes and gender stereotypes are challenged and de-normalised. Schools become environments that value and support non-violent norms by building and modelling respectful and equitable gender relations. The entire school community is supported to develop greater connection to formal and informal support and is encouraged to take action to address violence. In the long-term the community benefits from improved safety and reduced rates of family violence and sexual assault that comes from valuing gender equity and respectful relationships.

The prevention of family violence has enormous economic benefits:

- The National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children (2009, p.4) state that reducing all forms of violence against women by 10% by 2012-22 could amount to \$1.6 billion in savings^{viii}.
- VicHealth (2009, p.64) state that eliminating intimate partner violence would save the health sector \$207 million per year and save \$1.8 billion in production and leisure costs annually^{ix}.

What objectives does this help us to achieve?

Federal Government

- National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and Their Children 2010-2022
- National Plan First Action Plan 2010-2013: Building A Strong Foundation

Victorian Government

- Everyone Has A Responsibility To Act – Victoria's Action Plan to Address Violence Against Women and Children 2012-2015
- VicHealth Framework for the Prevention of Violence Against Women
- Foundation to Prevent Violence Against Women and their Children

City of Whittlesea

- Council Plan 2013-2017
- Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2013-2017
- Connect: A municipal plan for children, young people and their families 2013-2018

- Building a Respectful Community A Strategy for the Northern Metropolitan Region 2011-2016
- Department of Justice North Metropolitan Region Regional Community Safety Plan 2011

Whittlesea Community Futures

- Whittlesea Community Futures Partnership Action Plan 2011-2016

Key Messages

- Whittlesea Community Futures is seeking State Government support to implement a pilot *Respectful Relationships and Sexual Assault Prevention* program in a school setting.
- The City of Whittlesea has one of the highest reported incidents of family violence in the Northern Metropolitan Region.
- There has been a 249% increase in reported incidences of family violence in the municipality since 1999.
- Family violence in the City of Whittlesea is at an unacceptably high level and will continue to increase as the population grows. The rate of family violence in the City of Whittlesea is 1249 per 100,000 people compared to 1071 for Victoria.
- On average 3 sexual offences are reported in the City of Whittlesea every week.

ⁱ Recorded Family Incident Reports, Corporate Statistics, Victoria Police, September 2013

ⁱⁱ Banyule, Darebin, Nillumbik, Whittlesea

ⁱⁱⁱ Victoria Police Family Incident Reports

http://www.police.vic.gov.au/content.asp?a=internetBridgingPage&Media_ID=72311

^{iv} Women's Health In the North Family Violence Fact Sheet Whittlesea LGA 2012-2013

^v Police referrals received by NFDVS by LGA Financial Year Comparison July 2009 - June 2013

^{vi} VicHealth Preventing violence before it occurs: A framework and background paper to guide the primary prevention of violence against women in Victoria 2007

^{vii} Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Respectful Relationships Education violence prevention and respectful relationships education in Victorian secondary schools 2009

^{viii} National Council to Reduce Violence Against Women and their children, The costs of violence against women and their children, FACHSIA 2009

^{ix} Victorian Health Promotion Foundation The health costs of violence: measuring the burden of disease caused by intimate partner violence: a summary of the findings VicHealth 2004