



Come Together 2008

... a dialogue between people with intellectual disabilities, their support networks and Manitoba policing agencies



Basic challenges

- High rates of victimization of people with intellectual disabilities
- Under-representation as victims / complainants in the criminal justice system
- Over-representation as accused / offenders
- Ongoing trauma caused by abuse / violence



Why 'Come Together 2008'?

- People with intellectual disabilities come into contact with police...
 - As victims, witnesses and offenders
- Police officers and victim service workers sometimes need help...
 - Investigating cases involving people with intellectual disabilities; accommodating, assisting, interviewing and supporting them; and even charging them



Why ‘Come Together 2008’?

- Addressing issues concerning people with intellectual disabilities can involve difficult challenges
 - It’s a complicated area
 - No one has all the ‘answers’
 - There is a need to pool insights and tips, and to listen and learn from one another



What we're trying to achieve, today

- Create relationships
- Develop trust
- Get key challenges and issues on the table
- Suggest and explore solutions, real or potential
- Lay out next steps or further things needed in light of 'bright ideas' that surface during the day's discussions



Who are people with intellectual disabilities?

- Technical and not very ‘friendly’ definition: significantly lower than average intellectual functioning (IQ <70 +/- 5), together with difficulties in two or more activities of everyday living (e.g., communication, money management, personal care, learning), the onset of which is before 18 years of age.
 - Old terms: ‘the R word’; ‘mental handicap’
 - In many instances multiple disabilities and behavioural issues are involved
 - Also including FAS / FAE



Another approach

- Just people, like you and me
- Who tend to have a harder time doing many of the things that you and I can do without major difficulty
- And who may even need assistance quite often from others
- But who often have clear insight into the human condition, the people they know and their life situations



Stakeholders include...

- Children and adults with intellectual disabilities themselves
- Their families (and friends)
- The community more generally (incl. people, systems, laws, policies, etc.)
 - Disability service organizations
 - Advocacy organizations
 - Police, victim service workers, Crowns...



Some cross-cutting themes:

- The “victim” and the “offender” may be one and the same person and may require multiple supports and services
- Issues of differing availability and access to various supports depending on rural / urban communities
- Issues of training and time for professionals to listen, to ensure needed supports are available over the long-term, to ensure system responsiveness, etc.



Victimization - key issues (selected)

- People with intellectual disabilities:
 - Are devalued, have little power and therefore have an increased vulnerability
 - Are disproportionately victimized in society
 - When victimized, are often within the care of community organizations
 - Often have decisions made *for* them by someone else
 - Are typically confused and intimidated by the legal process



Victimization - key issues (selected)

- They are sometimes further victimized by systems that are supposed to help. For example:
 - Barriers to disclosure in situations of heightened risk/ abuse
 - Perceived lack of victim credibility
 - Charges often not laid
 - Cases are thrown out of court
 - Little access to counseling or treatment, all resulting in further harms



Vulnerable Persons Act

- VPA
 - Places focus on people deemed to lack capacity for decision making around personal care or property
 - Principles and obligations:
 - Vulnerable persons have capacity for decision making unless demonstrated otherwise and should be encouraged and supported to make their own decisions
 - Substitute decision making a ‘last resort’
 - Duty for service providers, substitute decision makers and committees to report ‘abuse’ and ‘neglect’



VPA definitions

- ‘Vulnerable person’ — adult with a mental disability in need of assistance to meet basic needs concerning personal care or management of personal property
- ‘Mental disability’ — significantly impaired intellectual functioning existing concurrently with impaired adaptive behaviour and manifested prior to the age of 18 years, but (but not exclusively a psychiatric disability)
- ‘Incapacity’ for personal care or to manage personal property — inability to understand relevant information or inability to appreciate the reasonably foreseeable consequences of a decision or lack of a decision.



Thresholds of significance

- VPA and Criminal Code protect against abuses (sexual, physical, mental/emotional, financial) and neglect
- Thresholds of significance: incidents that cause or are likely to cause
 - Death
 - Serious physical or psychological harm
 - Significant loss of property



Key messages of recent research in Manitoba...

- Some harms are reflected clearly in the Criminal Code and VPA and are commonly understood
- Some are subtler
 - There are lots of ‘grey areas’
- People are very uncomfortable talking about mistreatments; fear about speaking is pervasive



Sexual abuses

- Were reported by research participants
- Pervasive concern / worry
- Incidents include ‘grey areas’ where consent – or what looks like consent – seems to be given by adult women



Physical abuse

- Staff and others hitting / ‘manhandling’
- People who inspire fear of harm
- Physical abuses not reported so much
- Sometimes reported along with sexual abuses



Emotional and mental abuse

- Not so much ‘one time’ events that are seriously ‘damaging’
- More focus on ‘grey areas’ that are degrading and harmful over time
 - Nastiness, name calling, threats, coerciveness, bullying over time
 - Being denied privileges
 - Being treated ‘sharply’ by staff and others who lose their temper




Financial abuse

- Sometimes large amounts of money
- Staff and management sometimes implicated
- (Internet fraud)
- Sometimes amounts stolen not large, but with potentially significant impact (e.g., theft from a woman who is poor)
 - ‘Merchant abuse’



Neglect

- Focus not so much on the kinds prohibited by the Criminal Code (e.g., resulting in injury of health, endangerment of life, risk of leaving destitute)
- More focus on ‘grey areas’
 - Leaving on the toilet
 - Not changing after soiling clothes
 - Not being welcomed or engaged
 - Indifference; lack of affection
 - Being left unattended while staff ‘do their own thing’



The offender / accused - key issues (selected)

- Individuals with intellectual disabilities have unique needs that require a knowledgeable, seamless approach / response across the whole criminal justice system (police, alternative measures, court, prison, parole, probation).
- There is a need for more responsive and coordinated community support system to work with and support police and other agencies on issues of victimization and intellectual disability.

The witness – key issues

- The person's communicating with others who are not well known to him/her
- Remembering the sequence of events
- Perceived credibility





Basic assumptions for today

- Everyone here today
 - Is or will be struggling with the issues
 - Is making good faith efforts to do their level best
 - Has something to contribute
 - Has something to learn




RCMP mission, vision, values and commitments

- Has elements that are similar to those of other police agencies
- Displayed, here, as reflecting common values and commitments



MISSION - The RCMP is Canada's national police service. Proud of our traditions and confident in meeting future challenges, we commit to preserve the peace, uphold the law and provide quality service in partnership with our communities.

A decorative graphic on the left side of the slide consists of a vertical grey line and a horizontal grey line intersecting at a point. To the left of the intersection is a light green square, and to the right is a light brown square. The lines and squares have a slight gradient and are semi-transparent.


VISION - We will:

- be a progressive, proactive and innovative organization
- provide the highest quality service through dynamic leadership, education and technology in partnership with the diverse communities we serve
- be accountable and efficient through shared decision-making
- ensure a healthy work environment that encourages team building, open communication and mutual respect
- promote safe communities
- demonstrate leadership in the pursuit of excellence



CORE VALUES OF THE RCMP - Recognizing the dedication of all employees, we will create and maintain an environment of individual safety, well-being and development. We are guided by:

- integrity
- honesty
- professionalism
- compassion
- respect
- accountability



COMMITMENT TO OUR COMMUNITIES - The employees of the RCMP are committed to our communities through:

- unbiased and respectful treatment of all people
- accountability
- mutual problem solving
- cultural sensitivity
- enhancement of public safety
- partnerships and consultation
- open and honest communication
- effective and efficient use of resources
- quality and time service



Reminder: What we're trying to achieve, today

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Basic ground rules

- *Everyone* belongs, here
- *Everyone's* point of view matters
- *Everyone* has something to contribute and learn...

so...

- Speak up! Share your point of view!
- Listen respectfully and mindfully to others
- Avoid criticizing one another



How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.

Anne Frank



Basic ground rules

HAVE FUN!



What's next?

- Break!
- Be in your concurrent sessions by 10:15
- 11:55 – 12:55 Lunch!!
- 1:00 – 2:30 Concurrent sessions
- 2:30 Another break!!!
- 3:00 Large Plenary – Pulling the pieces together
- 4:30 Closing