

## TRAUMA & VIOLENCE INFORMED RESPONSES TO ADDRESSING OFFICER INVOLVED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children (CREVAWC) at Western University is partnering with the London Police Services (LPS) and the Woodstock Police Service to develop a trauma and violence informed (TVI) implementation model that includes customized training and resources to address family violence more effectively, both within police services and for the general public.

Policing is on the front-line of today's toughest social challenges. Increasing poverty, the opioid crisis, homelessness and family violence create complex conditions that require police officers to understand trauma and violence informed responses so that they are better prepared to address each unique situation and so that they can mitigate the impact of these situations on their own lives. The research is clear that untreated trauma, whether direct or vicarious, has a cascade effect that destroys lives.

Research also shows that 40-80% of first responders experience high rates of secondary and vicarious trauma that affects their ability to cope. If the emotional consequences of trauma are not addressed, officers' wellbeing and personal relationships are compromised as well as their ability to perform their job optimally. Trauma impacts police service organizations in the form of lost productivity, staff turnover and poor organizational health. As a result, police services are looking for ways to address and reduce the high costs of untreated trauma in their organizations. Moreover, becoming a Trauma and Violence Informed (TVI) police service has broad potential implications for serving the larger community, as a TVI approach creates a common language, principles and practices that will enhance partnerships with other service organizations working to address family violence.

CREVAWC, LPS and WPS will address family violence through collaborating with researchers and professionals working on TVI practice to develop evidence based, police specific policies, procedures, training and resources. The first step will be to work with police leadership to understand the principles of a TVI approach and to identify ways of using existing resources to mitigate the impacts of vicarious trauma on uniformed officers and civilian staff in the organization. All officers and civilian staff will receive education about TVI practice and how it is being implemented in their service. Mitigating the impacts of vicarious trauma and deepening the understanding of how trauma impacts victims will help officers to respond to domestic violence situations internally and with the public more effectively.

## THE PROJECT HAS FOUR ELEMENTS:

- 1 Organizational TVI implementation model: includes establishment of a police service TVI accountability team, training and support for existing psychological and peer support programs and community partnerships to advance TVI practices internally within police services and in response to family violence situations in the community.
- 2 Training: develop and provide customized training about TVI practice for police services to foster a work environment that incorporates support and resources for preventing and intervening when officers experience vicarious trauma with the goal of helping them to build healthy personal relationships. This will involve breaking the negative stigma commonly associated with acknowledging and seeking help for vicarious trauma, for three audiences; front-line officers, civilian staff and police family members.
- 3 Collaborate with mental health professionals and researchers working on TVIC on the development and implementation of the model.
- 4 Pilot and evaluate the model with a mid-sized urban police force and a small urban/rural police force.

A TVI approach to foster a healthier policing culture has obvious implications for the community. When serving people who have experienced family violence, systems and providers that lack understanding of its complex and lasting impacts risk causing further harm.

We plan to hold a forum for representatives of police services from across Ontario at the end of our project to encourage a broader discussion about the rationale and value of becoming trauma and violence informed as police services. Our police partners want to work with us to be able to provide train-the-trainer sessions to other police services interested in adapting and implementing the work for their workplaces.

Our police partners will also share information about the resources and training through their professional networks.