

Supporting women in rural and remote communities

June 4, 2020

Webinar prepared for CLEO

Disclaimer

This webinar is for general information purposes only and is not legal advice. It is not intended to be used as legal advice for a specific legal problem. This webinar was recorded on June 4, 2020 and reflects developments in the law before that date.



CLEO

Community Legal Education Ontario
Éducation juridique communautaire Ontario





About our presenter...

Pamela Cross is a feminist lawyer; a well-known and respected expert on violence against women and the law for her work as a researcher, writer, educator and trainer. She is the Legal Director of Luke's Place Support and Resource Centre in Durham Region, where she leads the organization's provincial projects, including research, training and advocacy.



We acknowledge that the land from which we are presenting this webinar is the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of Scugog First Nation.

Luke's Place

- Durham Region: services for women who have left abuse & are engaged with family law
- Provincial & national level: research, resources, training & systemic advocacy

Webinar supported by



FamilyCourtAndBeyond.ca



LukesPlace.ca



LukesPlaceTraining.ca



Disclaimer

This webinar is not to be interpreted
as legal advice.

Only a lawyer can provide legal advice.

We recognize

- Men can be victims
- Abuse happens in same-sex relationships
- Trans or non-binary folks may face abuse in relationships

Abuse rooted
in misogyny
& traditional
male power

Women are
subjected to
most serious
forms of
coercive
controlling &
physical
violence

We use
gendered
nouns &
pronouns
when talking
about
violence
within
families

Agenda



Definitions of "rural" and "remote"

Lived realities, including violence against women

Family law issues

Barriers to leaving abuse

Strategies for supporting women

WHAT IS A RURAL OR REMOTE COMMUNITY?

Dictionary definitions:
urban is the norm, rural
is other to that norm =
Rural needs/issues
invisible

Government:
communities with
populations fewer than
10,000

Census:
20-30% Canadians live
in rural areas

Additional factors:
distance to urban
centre, lifestyle, self-
identity, culture,
history, employment

Rural

- Low population density
- Small towns and villages
- Countryside
- Lack of public transit

Remote

- Particular challenges of isolation, distance

WHO LIVES THERE?

Stereotypes

Romanticized

- Clean & healthy living, friendly, close-knit
- Farms, small businesses
- No crime

Bigoted, offensive

- Racist, uneducated

Ill informed

- Conform to old-fashioned values
- No LGBTQ2S, people of colour or immigrants

People living in rural & remote communities

Born there,
move there

All races, skin
colours, many
languages

LGBTQ2S

Indigenous, in Canada for
generations, newly
arrived immigrants/
refugees

Various abilities

REALITIES OF RURAL LIVING & THE IMPACT ON WOMEN LIVING WITH VIOLENCE

Ontario Rural Woman Abuse Study

Community Abuse Programs
of Rural Ontario, 2000

[www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/
cj-jp/victim/rr00_15/rr00_15.pdf](http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/cj-jp/victim/rr00_15/rr00_15.pdf)

Ontario's Family Court Support Workers

[www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca/
english/ovss/family_court_support_worker_program/](http://www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca/english/ovss/family_court_support_worker_program/)

Distance

An issue for everyone

Women dealing with abuse

No vehicle: limited in
ability to meet with
others

Vehicle: abuser may
monitor use

Police response times are affected

Lack of public transportation

Compounds distance challenges

Practical & psychological isolation

Reliance on others:
privacy & economic issues

Takes time

Limited communication technology

No cell reception in some areas,
unreliable reception in many others

Landline only through party lines

Isolated areas: almost every call is long
distance

Many areas in Ontario are without high
speed internet (see <https://www.ic.gc.ca/app/sitt/bbmap/hm.html?lang=eng>)

Limited services

Few shelters / violence against women services, mental health or substance use services, counselling programs

Challenging to be fully accessible

Services often centralized in hub: privacy issues

No alternatives if turned down

Limited legal services

Family courts may operate only a few days a month

Very limited court-based services

Long travel time to nearest family court

Judges, duty counsel rotate, may not be familiar with the community

Lawyers

Fewer lawyers in rural communities, may be none in remote communities

Generalists who practice many kinds of law

Very few specialize in violence against women

Abusers “conflict out” all local lawyers

Women must travel far or wait for a local lawyer

Unusual patterns are noted, rumours begin

Her activities may be reported back to partner/former partner

Lack of privacy

Difficult for woman to collect information & to leave

Lack of privacy can isolate her from safety

Firearms

“One day he told me I was going to be a hunting accident. We were up in the bush 40 miles away, with the two children and the gun and all those bullets.”

- More guns in rural homes than urban ones
- Guns are used more often in rural domestic homicides than urban ones

Exploring the Links: Fire Arms, Family Violence and Animal Abuse in Rural Communities

- 66% - said firearms made them more fearful for their safety
- 70% - impacted decisions about whether to tell others about abuse / seek help
- 83% - who knew the guns were loaded said they were fearful
- 45% - partner had threatened to harm pets / farm animals
 - 41% - partner did harm / kill the animal

Abuser's position in the community

He may have a great deal of power



She may not be believed

Animals

Significant presence in families

Pets, working animals, livestock

Emotional &/or economic connection

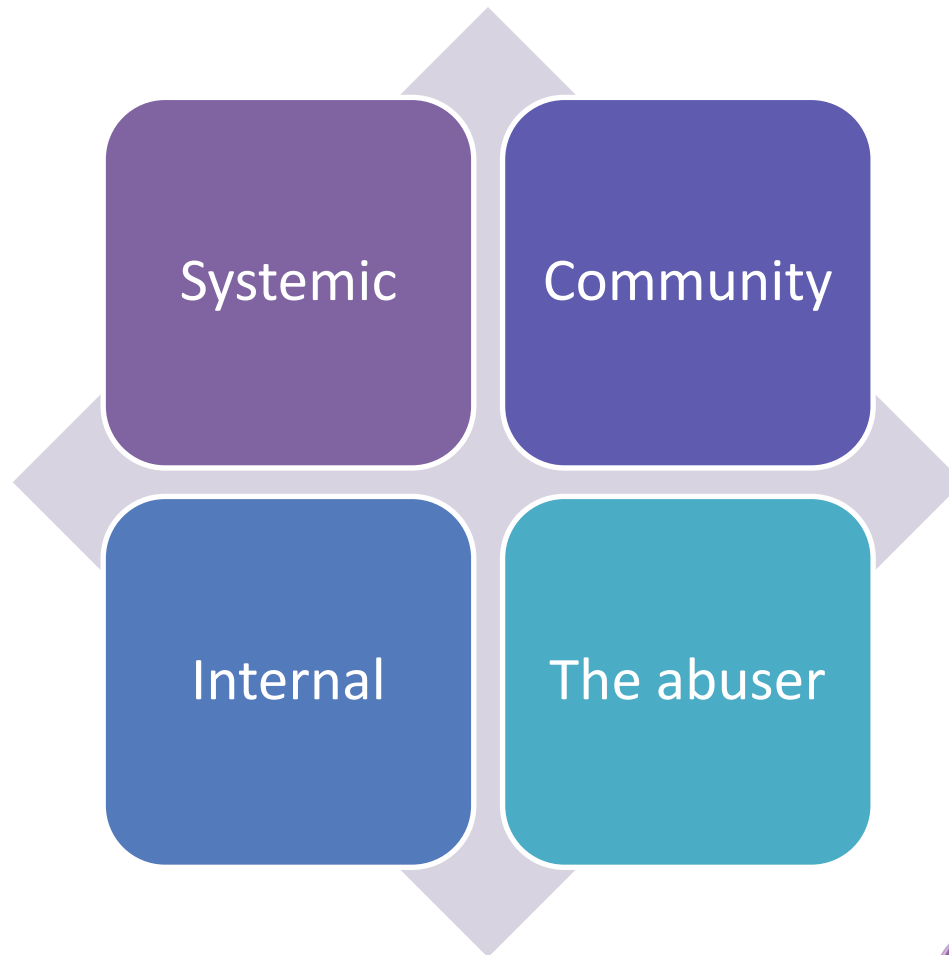
Abuser

Threatens/kills pet: psychological abuse

Kills/neglects livestock: financial abuse

BARRIERS TO LEAVING

There are always barriers



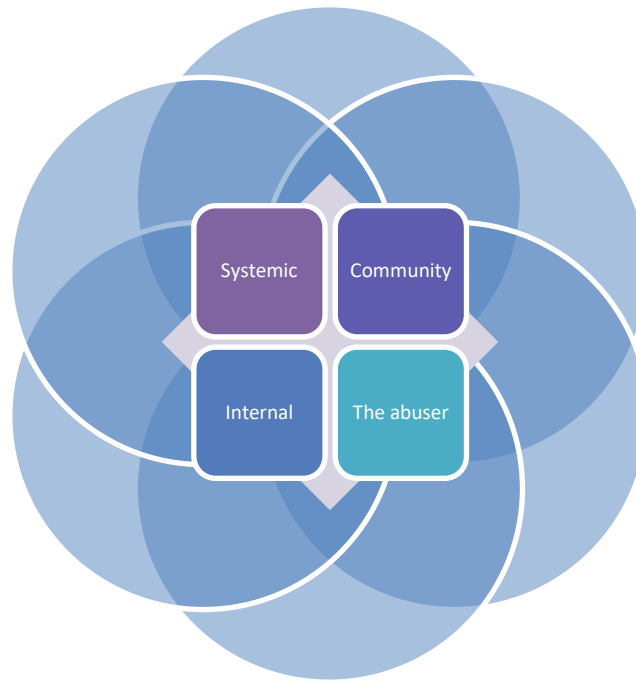
Barriers in small communities

Long distances from friends, family, services

Isolation within the community

Lack of legal representation & services

Fear for animals, family business



Difficulty finding housing or employment

Guns in the home

UNIQUE FAMILY LAW ISSUES IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

Family law is the same for people
everywhere in Ontario

BUT...

- Usefulness of the law
- Access to lawyers,
courts, police

Depends on
where you live

Examples 1/3

Attending a Mandatory Information Program session at courthouse 4 hrs drive away

Few lawyers, fewer accepting legal aid certificates, even fewer with violence against women training

All court officials fly in for the day in remote communities: very difficult to get proper legal representation, long delays impact safety

Examples 2/3

Privacy? Some family courts are located in hockey arenas & shopping malls

Confidentiality? Police officer who takes her 911 call may be the abuser's relative; her lawyer's spouse may be her child's teacher

Restraining orders? Police response time may longer; people routinely move across jurisdictions

Examples 3/3

Fewer supervised access & exchange sites for children

Putting distance between her & the abuser post-separation may impact arrangements for children

Transporting children between parents more difficult, time consuming, expensive

If kids go to school far from father, difficult to participate in school/extra-curricular during their time with him

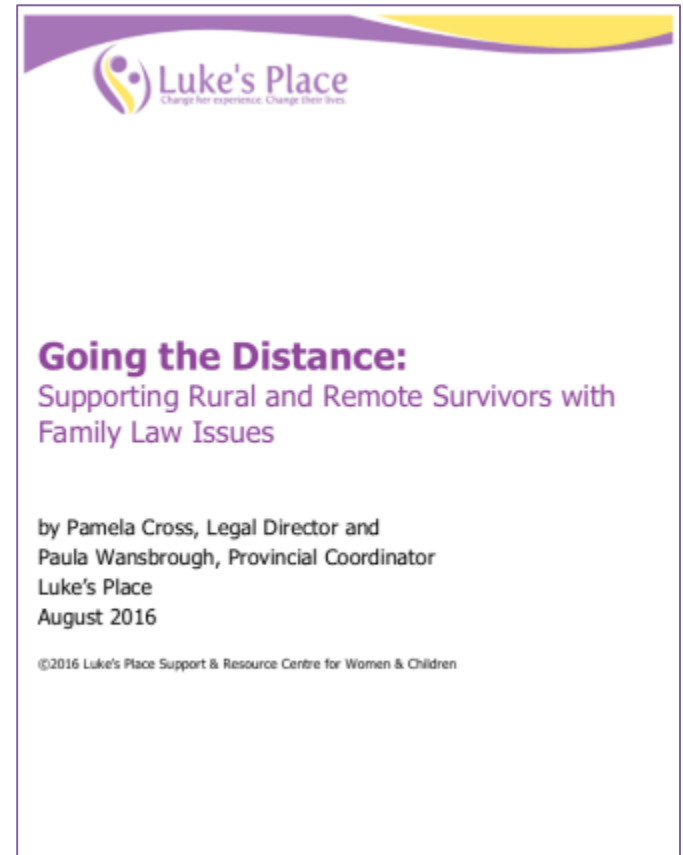
Long distance telephone access time may create an economic barrier for some

STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT WOMEN

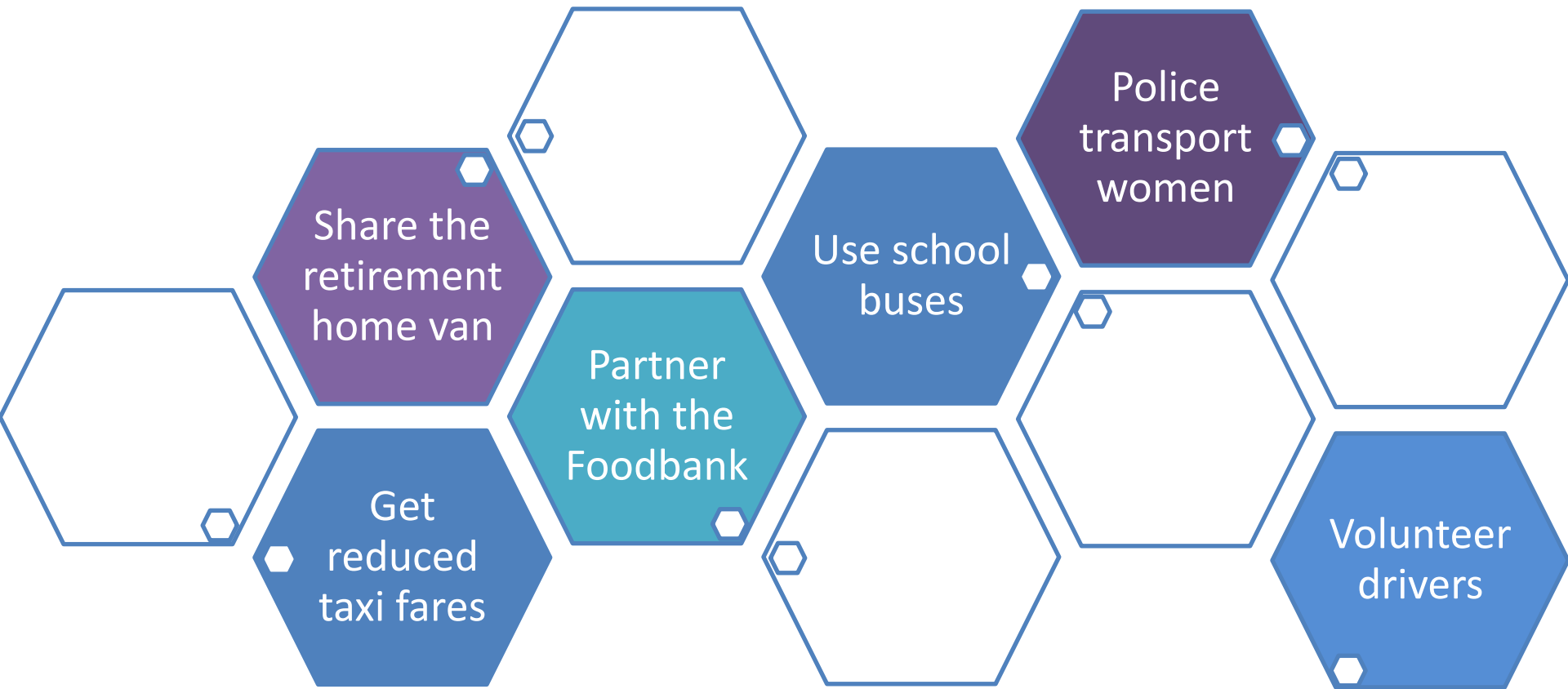
Sources

- Family Court Support Workers
- Women's advocates in rural & remote regions
- Eastern rural Ontario community after DV homicides

Available in
Going the Distance
from Luke's Place
LukesPlace.ca



Collaborate with other services



Shelter strategies

Donation drive for gas cards

Social media donation requests

Ask Google to remove shelter location from Google Maps

Develop smart device policies

Connect with Safe Pet Program
www.ovma.org/pet-owners/safepet-program/

Build kennels at the shelter

Mandatory Information Program

Ask MIP coordinator if
women can use
LAO's online Family Law
Information Program

[www.legalaid.on.ca/
data/hidden/
FLIP_en-MIP/player.html](http://www.legalaid.on.ca/data/hidden/FLIP_en-MIP/player.html)

Shelter worker?
Collaborate
with your family
court to do
presentations
at the MIP
sessions

Legal advice for shelter clients

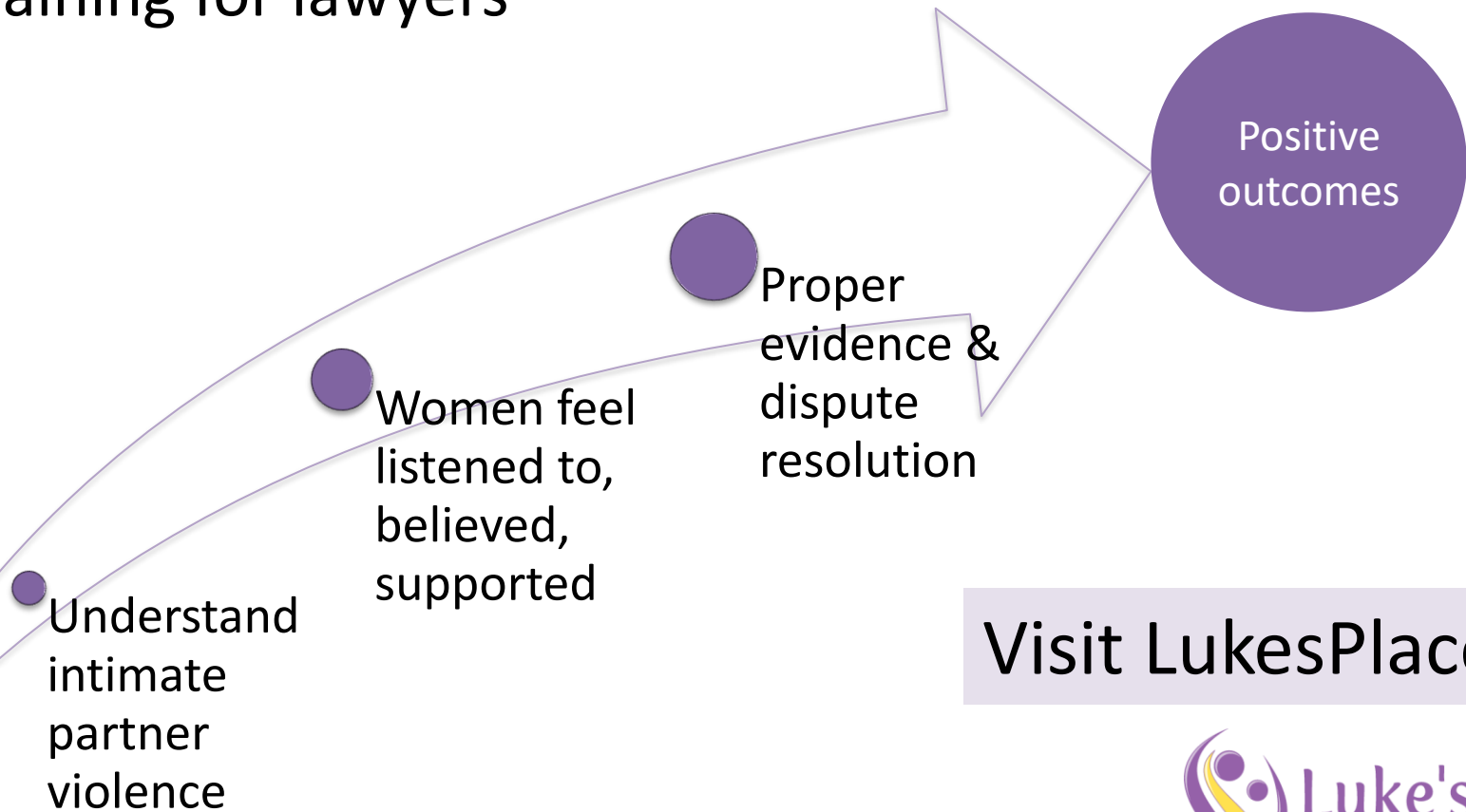
Ask your family court duty counsel to provide a regular summary legal advice clinic at your shelter

or

Join the Luke's Place Virtual Legal Clinic for video conference legal advice consultations
LukesPlace.ca/for-women/luke-place-virtual-legal-clinic/

Training for lawyers

Lawyer? Take the Luke's Place CPD accredited online training for lawyers



Visit LukesPlace.ca

Summary

- Living in a rural/remote community impacts a woman's experience of family violence
- Unique abuse tactics: firearms, threats to animals
- Unique barriers:
 - Long distances to safety & services
 - Lack of lawyers & other services
 - Infrequent court dates
 - Isolation
- Coordinated supports from violence against women sector, legal services, other community services

Thank you!

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StepsToJustice.ca