



# Gender-based violence: strengthening supports and services for Muslim women and girls

## Speakers:

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# Facilitators



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# What you can expect today

## **Lunch and Learn Series**

1 hour in total (presentation and Q+A)

This is legal information, not legal advice.

Recording/slides/resources will be sent out afterward.

Closed captioning enabled. ASL Interpretation provided.

**The information is current as of today's date Dec 8, 2022**



# Land Acknowledgement

CLEO's work takes place across the home and traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Haudenosaunee, and the Wyandot peoples, on land that many of us know as Ontario.

Today, we acknowledge the disproportionate amount of violence that impacts Indigenous women and girls, trans and two-spirited people across this country. We acknowledge the complicity of all levels of government, the police, legal systems and courts that have allowed the loss of life of these women and girls to continue today. We know that the ongoing impact of colonialism and devastation caused by the residential school system are also major contributing factors.

It's important in this context that we recognize the incredible amount of work, decades of advocacy and leadership from Indigenous organizations and communities, families and survivors of violence that lead to the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (2016) and the National Action Plan just released this year outlining 231 Calls for Justice.



# What is gender-based violence (GBV)?

Gender-based violence is a global phenomenon. It exists in all societies and communities. It is violence that is directed at someone because of their gender, gender expression, gender identity or perceived gender.

In Canada, gender-based violence is a serious issue. While it affects everyone, women, girls, trans, two-spirit and gender queer/gender non-binary people are disproportionately impacted.

Gender-based violence isn't unique to Muslim women and girls in Canada.

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# GBV Statistics

- About 1 in 3 women worldwide have been subjected to either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime.
- About once a week, a woman is killed by her partner in Canada (on average).
- In a single day in 2019, over 1,800 women and 1,500 children were staying in shelters or transition houses (on average).

# Why focus on Muslim communities in Canada?

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Unfortunately, like any other community, GBV is prevalent in Muslim communities. According to Statistics Canada, “after Christianity, Islam was the second most commonly reported religion in Canada in 2021, with nearly 1.8 million, or 1 in 20, people. Racism and Islamophobia often heighten the GBV faced by Muslims.


As a result, it is becoming more and more important to address the growing needs of Muslims, particularly those of women, girls, trans, gender queer/gender non-binary and two-spirit individuals.

The Muslim community is not homogeneous. There is incredible diversity within Muslims in terms of levels and types of spiritual practice, sect, socioeconomic status, ethnic and national background, cultural practice, etc. There is also cultural diversity within Muslims who belong to the same ethnicity. These differences are critical in understanding the unique experiences and needs for support faced by members of Muslim communities.

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## Unique barriers Muslim survivors/victims of GBV may face

- Language barriers (especially for newcomers)
- Lack of information about anti-violence services
- Concerns regarding immigration status/fear of deportation
- Lack of information about laws in Canada, legal rights, and access to justice
- Fear of heightening islamophobia if they speak up
- Fear of losing their children
- Lack of accommodation in services for cultural or religious needs
- Social isolation
- Distrust in authorities in Canada
- Underemployment/lack of recognition of foreign credentials
- Concerns about racism and cultural stereotyping from service providers



# Using an intersectional lens to understand GBV and the barriers to supports and services

**Intersectionality** shows us that people have multiple, intersecting identities and that these identities can overlap and give rise to unique experiences of discrimination and oppression. In other words, different intersections of social identities create unique positions of power and privilege as well as unique experiences of oppression. When it comes to GBV, different and overlapping social identities inform an individual's experience of violence and access to supports and services

# Build bridges with CCMW

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It is important to building bridges among community workers committed to supporting victims/survivors of GBV.

**CCMW's Legal Services Coordination program** is the first-ever legal services coordination program geared specifically to Muslim women in Canada. It provides culturally appropriate legal services coordination for Muslim women seeking legal counsel on family law issues. It serves as a one-stop referral service designed expressly for Muslim women to address their unique needs resulting from complexities related to Canadian and Muslim family laws.

**CCMW's Addressing barriers for Muslim women and girls facing GBV project** provides services coordination for Muslim women facing GBV and IPV. It also includes the development of a change strategy and tools to address barriers Muslim women and girls face in dealing with GBV. This includes a GBV review guide that organizations and institutions can use to assess their policies, programs and services that are relevant to Muslim women and girls facing GBV.



# How can we strengthen supports and services for Muslim Women and Girls Facing GBV?

As service provider organizations, it is important to critically assess our **policies, programs, and service delivery practices** from time to time to determine whether they are effectively and appropriately serving the needs of our diverse clients facing GBV.

In the review guide developed by CCMW, we propose using **four guiding frameworks** to assess whether supports and services are **effective and appropriate** for Muslim Women and Girls Facing GBV.

In this webinar, we will take you through the exercise of how we can review our **service delivery practices** using the four frameworks. For detailed information on reviewing policies and programs, please consult our [guide](#).



# The Four Frameworks

We will discuss these four guiding frameworks and what questions you can ask to check compliance of your service delivery practices with these frameworks

1. Human Rights law
2. Trauma and Violence-Informed Approach
3. Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression (ARAO)
4. Cultural Safety

Note: This presentation does not contain references on the concepts discussed. For a full list of footnotes, please see the [Review Guide](#).

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# Human Rights Law

To assess whether your service delivery practices are “effective and appropriate,” you can begin by checking whether they are grounded in our human rights laws

- The federal and provincial human rights legislation of Canada is the most relevant when it comes to assessing your legal obligations with respect to your policies, programs and services.
- *The Canadian Human Rights Act* applies to First Nations governments or federally regulated companies, such as banks, trucking companies, broadcasters and telecommunication companies. Each province and territory has its own Human Rights legislation that applies to provincially regulated bodies.
- Most service providers in Canada are bound by provincial human rights laws (e.g. the *Ontario Human Rights Code* in Ontario)

*Note: If you are unsure of whether the federal or provincial legislation applies to your organization, seek legal advice.*

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# Human Rights

To assess whether your service delivery practices are “effective and appropriate,” you can begin by checking whether they are grounded in the principles of human rights

## Human Rights laws

- a. Protect against **discrimination** and **harassment** by service providers on certain grounds, such as race, national or ethnic origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, etc. These are called prohibited grounds of discrimination.
- b. Make it a **duty** for service providers **to accommodate** people by adjusting rules, policies and practices so that they have equal access to services.

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# Human Rights

To assess whether your service delivery practices are “effective and appropriate,” you can begin by checking whether they are grounded in the principles of human rights

The federal and provincial human rights laws each have their own definition of discrimination and harassment, but broadly:

- **Discrimination** is an action or decision that treats a person or group badly because of certain aspects related to their identity (i.e.. prohibited grounds of discrimination), such as race, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, etc.
- **Harassment** is a form of discrimination and includes any unwanted physical or verbal behaviour that offends or humiliates someone based on the prohibited grounds...It is behaviour that persists over time, but serious one-time incidents can also be harassment. Harassment can include unwelcome jokes or remarks, threats or intimidation, and unwelcome physical contact.

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# Human Rights

To assess whether your service delivery practices are “effective and appropriate,” you can begin by checking whether they are grounded in the principles of human rights

- **Duty to accommodate** means that sometimes service providers may have to make different rules or provide special treatment to ensure equal participation of marginalized groups and make sure that discrimination doesn't happen. For example, if a client wants to come to your office at a different time than your regular appointment times for clients because of a religious obligation, you have a legal duty under human right legislation to accommodate the client.
- Accommodation has a limit, which is called “**undue hardship.**” In other words, if providing the accommodation is too costly for the organization or creates health or safety risks, that becomes a point of hardship and accommodation can no longer be provided.

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# Human Rights

## Questions for review

- Are any of the actions of those delivering services discriminatory?
- Are diverse groups being accommodated based on their needs?
- Are services provided based on community needs and interests?
- Have diverse sections of the community been consulted to ensure services are responsive to their needs?
- Are diverse communities reaching out and using the services, and participating in the feedback process?

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## Case Study (Human Rights)

A mosque in Sudbury has a clear policy on welcoming everyone to the mosque who wants to pray or speak to the Imam, regardless of gender, gender identity, gender expression or sexual orientation. The Imam's office is on the second floor and the elevator is out of order. One day, when a Muslim trans woman in a wheelchair tries to enter the mosque, she asks a staff person to speak to the Imam about her experience of family violence and requests to speak to him on the first floor due to the condition of the elevator.

The staff person refuses to accommodate the woman and does not call the Imam down to the first floor. Further, he states that the mosque does not allow trans people to enter its premises.



# Case Study (Human Rights)

Problems:


- Violation of human rights in the area of services based on more than one prohibited ground: gender identity, gender expression, and disability.
- Creates a significant barrier for a vulnerable group of Muslim women who require supports and services for GBV.

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# Case Study (Human Rights)


Best practices:

- At the policy and program level, there should be a training requirement of mosque executives, volunteers and the Imam on policies and human rights.
- Staff (including mosque executives, volunteers and Imams) should acquire the necessary training, and read and understand the policies on anti-discrimination and anti-harassment.
- If staff is unsure about the policy, they should speak to management and ask questions.
- Welcome the individual into the mosque and request the Imam to meet the individual on the first floor.
- Provide her with a comfortable space to wait while the Imam arrives.



# Trauma and violence-informed Approach


“Trauma and violence-informed approaches are policies and practices that recognize the connections between violence, trauma, negative health outcomes and behaviours. These approaches increase safety, control and resilience for people who are seeking services in relation to experiences of violence and/or have a history of experiencing violence.”



# Trauma and violence-informed Approach

## What is Trauma?

- “experience of, and a response to, an overwhelmingly negative event or series of events, from wars and disasters to accidents and loss.”
- Impacts a person’s sense of safety, self and ability to regulate emotions
- Responses to trauma can include substance use and poor mental health.
- Trauma can cause neurobiological changes that can have long term effects on one’s behaviour.
- These can create triggers where present events can lead to perceiving potential threats as real, even if they are not, by recreating past traumatic events



# Trauma and violence-informed Approach

## Principles

- Understanding
  - what trauma and violence are, and how they impact people's lives and behaviours
  - that violence and trauma are shaped by gender stereotypes and inequities
  - that racial discrimination and colonial systems of oppression, disability, and precarious immigration status create even higher risks and disproportionate experiences of violence and often retraumatize victims/survivors.
  - that different types of violence can lead to different experiences of trauma. E.g., a victim of human trafficking will not experience trauma in the same way that a victim of a hate crime will.
- Creating emotionally and physically safe environments.
- Fostering opportunities for choice, collaboration, and connection.

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# Trauma and violence-informed Approach

Questions for review

- Are those delivering services (management, staff and volunteers) creating a physically and emotionally safe environment through their actions and words?
- Are they meeting the client where they are at? Are their instances of probing the client for information even if they are not ready to share details yet?
- Are staff members being judgmental about a client's faith, their culture, or any part of their identity or experience? Are they making any assumptions?
- Are they equipped to recognize triggers?

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# Trauma and violence-informed Approach

## Questions for review

- If a client reacts in an unexpected way, are they taking the time to reflect and try and understand what may have happened to them?
- Are they exercising compassion, and empowering them through recognizing their strengths, and acknowledging and validating their experiences?
- Are they providing the space for them to communicate their needs and concerns freely?
- Do they listen attentively, and ask questions if there is something they don't understand?
- Do they ask them if they would like a break, or if there is anything else you can do to support them?
- Do they follow up with them on a regular basis?

# Case Study (Trauma and Violence-Informed Approach)

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A South Asian, Muslim woman who has faced GBV has come to your agency for housing support. The worker at the agency sits down with her to complete her application for subsidized housing. The client has not disclosed that she has faced GBV. In the next room, another worker is speaking on the phone to another client. The worker in the next room is speaking loudly enough for this client to hear parts of the conversation. The worker in the next room is reiterating the incidents of violence faced by the other client, and this triggers the first client. She begins to cry, and asks to leave.

The worker who is helping her with her housing application begins probing for information, and finally, the client discloses that her husband used to beat her regularly and although she has left him, he still stalks her and abuses her over the phone. The client is Muslim and wears the hijab. The worker remarks, “Well, this is what happens when you practice such backward faiths. Why didn’t you leave earlier?”

# Case Study (Trauma and Violence-informed Approach)

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## Problems:

- Not recognizing the trigger and de-escalating the situation by closing the door in the other room or asking the other worker to speak more quietly.
- Instead of asking what the worker can do to help the client, and offering assistance, probing for questions and retraumatizing her by making judgments about her faith.

# Case Study (Trauma and Violence-informed Approach)

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## Best practices:

- Ensure client safety by providing a comfortable and welcoming physical space (i.e., a private room).
- Offering the client water when she began to cry and immediately closing the door or asking the other worker to close the door.
- Offering a break to the client, or if the client insists on leaving, ensuring that she leaves safely. Offering to call a taxi or Uber for the client depending on the relationship/trust with the client and comfort level (check in with client first).
- Asking if the client would like to reschedule the meeting.
- When the client disclosed the abuse, offering compassion by acknowledging and validating her experience rather than making stereotypical remarks about her faith and culture.

# Q&A

Please use the Q&A box to ask questions.



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# Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression (ARAO)

- “The method and process by which we understand how systems of oppression such as colonialism, racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, classism and ableism can result in individual discriminatory actions and structural/systemic inequalities for certain groups in society. Anti-oppressive practices and goals seek to recognize and dismantle such discriminatory actions and power imbalances.”
- “At an organizational level, it is a way of looking at our work in the sector, which allows us to change our personal and systemic practices in order to reduce or eliminate service barriers for...clients.”

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# Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression (ARAO)

“An Integrated Feminist Anti-Racism, Anti-Oppression (IF-ARAO) lens

- allows us to analyze the ways in which forms of systemic oppression, including colonialism, racism, classism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia, ageism...and sexism marginalize survivors of violence, leaving them with less social, political and economic power than cis-gendered men in our society.”
- “survivor-centered and focuses on the lives and realities of women and marginalized people ... It affirms victim/survivors' right to safe spaces in the groups, agencies, and institutions they encounter in their lives, including their pathways out of violence and their healing journeys.”

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# Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression (ARAO)

## Principles

- Recognizes that power and privilege exist in society and that these are based on skin colour, sexuality, gender, orientation, class, age, faith, and ability...privileges are institutionalized and maintain unequal relationships between people and groups
- Victims/survivors are the experts of their own lives and are not to be blamed for their experience of violence
- Women and gender-diverse people's oppression needs to be understood by using an intersectional perspective.
- Every victim/survivor has a right to safe spaces in the groups, agencies, and institutions they encounter in their lives, including their pathways out of violence and their healing journeys.
- The ideas, thoughts and beliefs of people who "belong" to groups that are highest on the social hierarchy create "dominant culture." Dominant culture becomes the standard or norm by which everyone is compared

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# Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression (ARAO)

Questions for review

- Are clients feeling safe and understood when accessing services?
- Are services being advertised in various languages and formats?
- Are clients' agency to make their decisions and express their needs being respected?
- Are trainings being completed by staff and volunteers?



## Case Study (Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression)

A women's shelter has a policy on ARAO, which requires all staff to complete ARAO training upon being hired. A staff member who was hired while the Executive Director was away on vacation, did not complete the training. The training requirement was overlooked by the supervisor of the new employee.

One day, while speaking on the phone with a Muslim woman, a GBV survivor who was looking for general information about shelters, the employee made a remark that she doesn't understand why the woman wouldn't leave her violent culture and family immediately and come to the shelter.



# Case Study (ARAO)

## Problems:

- The checks and balances for ensuring that all staff complete ARAO training were not applied.
- The employee completely disregarded the woman's needs and experience, imposed her own worldview and perspective in offering assistance and reinforced the Islamophobia and racism that Muslim communities face.

## Best practices:

- Ensure that all staff complete required ARAO training on a regular basis.
- Receive client feedback regularly to check whether staff are complying with ARAO.
- Ensure staff members are communicating with clients in a non-judgmental manner and treating GBV victims/survivors as experts of their own experiences.

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# Cultural Safety

- The concept of “cultural safety” extends beyond cultural competence.
- Cultural safety is the outcome you achieve through respectful engagement and understanding and addressing the power imbalances inherent in our systems.
- urges service providers to recognize the impact of their personal culture on their professional practice. The practice of cultural safety prioritises how service users define safety for themselves.
- A culturally safe environment: where people with diverse backgrounds and experiences feel spiritually, physically, socially and emotionally safe and free from discrimination and a denial of their identity and needs.
- A way of working rather than specific knowledge about cultures.

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# Cultural Safety

## Principles

- Examine how your beliefs and values, families and community influence how you interact with others.
- Reflect on our own privilege and acknowledge power relationships, the context of white privilege, and actions that disempower on an individual and collective level.
- Recognises culture as a strength.
- Question colonial power relationships and language and collaborate with marginalized groups to create other ways of knowing and being in the world.
- Work alongside your clients, making space for marginalized communities to share their lived experience and treat them as experts of their own experience.
- Understand their needs and taking steps to ensure they are not alienated from the organization.
- Ensure that you do not diminish, demean or disempower others through your actions.
- Refrain from stereotyping, discrimination, and racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic or other demeaning and harmful commentary.

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# Cultural Safety

## Questions for Review

- Even if those who are delivering the services are trained in cultural safety, are they practicing it on the ground?
- What is the client's experience?
- Are they using language that is advancing stereotypes against certain cultures?
- Are they speaking in a condescending manner, without allowing the clients to express their needs and share their experiences?
- In the efforts to ensure cultural safety, are they inadvertently excluding other groups?

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## Case Study (Cultural Safety)

You are responsible for referring clients facing GBV that contact your organization to appropriate services. You have two clients, both with apparently Muslim names, who have come to you for referral to legal services for family violence. You immediately refer them to a Muslim lawyer who specializes in family law. It turns out that one of the clients does not identify as Muslim, and has already had a negative experience with this lawyer who has made discriminatory remarks against non-practising Muslims, queer Muslims, and those who belong to minority Muslim sects.



# Case Study (Cultural Safety)

## Problems

- An assumption that just because somebody's name sounds Muslim, they identify as Muslim.
- An assumption that someone who identifies as Muslim will automatically want a Muslim lawyer.
- These assumptions can create barriers for Muslim women to seek support from your organization.

## Best Practices

- Ask clients if they identify with any particular faith and whether they would like to be referred to a Muslim lawyer.
- Ask if they have worked with this particular lawyer before and what their experience was.



## Resources and supports

### **CLEO's Steps to Justice:**

#### [Partner Abuse](#)

[My safety plan: Use this plan to help you and your loved ones stay safe from family violence](#)

[How can I keep my abusive partner away from me after I leave?](#) (includes information on peace bonds and restraining orders)

[Steps in a Family Law Case](#) – Flowchart

### **CLEO:**

[Do you know a woman who is being abused? A legal rights handbook](#)

[Family Violence when a women is sponsored by a spouse or partner](#)

[Making a humanitarian and compassionate \(h+c\) application](#)

### **CLEO's Guided Pathways:**

CLEO's [Abuse and Family Violence Guided Pathways](#) are online interviews that give you information and resources to help you prevent abuse and violence.



## Resources and supports

### Canadian Council of Muslim Women

#### [Policy, Program and Practices Review Guide: Strengthening Supports and Services for Muslim Women and Girls Facing Gender-based Violence](#)

CCMW's [Legal Services Coordination program](#) is the first-ever legal services coordination program geared specifically to Muslim women in Canada. It provides culturally appropriate legal services coordination for Muslim women seeking legal counsel on family law issues. It serves as a one-stop referral service designed expressly for Muslim women to address their unique needs resulting from complexities related to Canadian and Muslim family laws.

CCMW's [Addressing barriers for Muslim women and girls facing GBV project](#) provides services coordination for Muslim women facing GBV and IPV. It also includes the development of a change strategy and tools to address barriers Muslim women and girls face in dealing with GBV. This includes a GBV review guide that organizations and institutions can use to assess their policies, programs and services that are relevant to Muslim women and girls facing GBV.

[Muslim Women's Family Law and Legal Rights Project](#) includes six digital booklets with updated comparative information on Canadian family laws and family laws of Muslim-majority countries as well as an informative webinar series.

CCMW's [Marriage Contract Toolkit](#) includes an information booklet, sample marriage contract, and sample marriage certificate downloadable in both English and French.



# Resources and supports

## Community Resources

### **Luke's Place**

[Supports for Service Providers](#)

[After She Leaves manual for Service Providers](#)

[Family Court and Beyond: A survival workbook for women](#)

[Virtual Legal Clinic](#)

### **METRAC/Ontario Women's Justice Network**

[Protection Orders: a basic guide to peace bonds](#)

[Protection Orders: a basic guide to restraining orders](#)



## Resources and supports

### Community Legal Clinics

**Contact your local community legal clinic**

[Find your local clinic](#) or call 1-800-668-8258

**519 Legal Clinic** for LGBTQ2S+ communities

[Anti-violence initiatives](#)

**Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic**

Legal, counseling and interpretation services to marginalized and racialized populations of women who have survived violence. [Contact here.](#)

**Luke's Place Virtual Legal Clinic**

[Clinic Hotline and Email](#)

**SHARE - Sexual Harassment and Assault Resource Exchange**

[Gender-based violence in the workplace: supports and legal advice for workers](#)



## **Calls to action: Truth and Reconciliation**

- [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action](#)

## **National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered indigenous Women and Girls**

- [National Action Plan 2021 + 2022 Progress Report](#)
- [Final Report](#)
- [Their Voices Will Guide Us](#) (Student and Youth Engagement Guide)

## **Education**

- [Indigenous Canada - Free Course](#)

## **Whose Land?**

Learn about where you are situated, information for land acknowledgements and learn about the treaties and agreements signed across Canada (Turtle Island).

- [Whose Land?](#)



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