

KAREN'S FLOWER SHOP
 Visit us at
www.karensflowershop.com
 487 Laurier Ave.
 878-2881

Community Page

Response protocols for victims more effective

By **HOWARD MOZEL**
 Special to The Champion

Heralded in 2002 as a breakthrough for victims, the Halton Community Response Protocols for Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence have now been enhanced to be even more effective.

That was made clear recently at the Halton Regional Centre as representatives from 28 social agencies signed the updated protocols and viewed portions of a new CD-ROM that serves as both a training tool on their use and a resource on related information.

According to Debbie Melmer, of Halton Child and Youth Services and co-chair of Halton Sexual and Domestic Violence Collaborative, the new-and-improved protocols are the end result of feedback from attendees of the original 2002 launch of the initiative and accompanying training session.

The overall result has been the ability of relevant agencies to reach out more co-operatively to their counterparts and ultimately provide better services for those who need it.

"It's opened doors not open before," said Ms Melmer.

In 1999, the Halton Sexual and Domestic Violence Collaborative — formerly known as the Sexual/Wife Assault Project — agreed that it was important for the community to develop a comprehensive response protocol so that all victims of sexual assault/domestic violence would receive a consistent, knowledgeable and compassionate response from any given agency in Halton.

The protocols were designed to help ensure that victims aren't wronged a second time by falling through gaps in the very system that's trying to help them.

That's accomplished by opening clear lines of communication between all stakeholders and giving them a better understanding of the others' roles. So doing, those in need of their help are less likely to slip between the cracks.

Enshrined in the protocols is the belief that all victims receive a "consistent, knowledgeable and compassionate response anywhere in Halton" from medical and legal services to counseling and support. Their overriding principles include, but are not limited to, ensuring respect and dignity, quality care, service accessibility, agency accountability, advocacy, support and confidentiality.

Signatories ranged from Nina's Place, Halton Healthcare Services and the Halton Trauma Centre to Halton Hills Community Support and Information, the Distress Centre of Oakville and Burlington Counseling and Family Services.



On hand for the signing of the updated response protocols for victims of domestic abuse and sexual assault were, from left, Milton Councillor Cindy Lunau, Oakville Mayor Ann Mulvale, Burlington Councillor Carol D'Amelio and Halton Regional Police Chief Ean Algar.

Photo by RIZIERO VERTOLLI

Following the launch of the protocols in 2002, collaborative members made a commitment to enhance and sustain them for the future. Over the course of 2004-05 the protocols were modified to enhance their effectiveness for service providers and the community they serve.

Gaps in the protocols were reduced with the inclusion of additional community agencies as members while a brochure entitled 'You Have Choices' was developed to inform survivors and their service providers of the options available for assistance in the Halton community.

For the protocols to be successfully enhanced and maintained in Halton, training of all front line staff and service providers continues to be essential — and that's where the CD-ROM comes in.

'Cross-sectoral training' allows participants to explore the role each service has in responding to

victims/survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence. That serves to enhance communication, working relationships and alleviate historical barriers.

All stakeholders will hopefully have a clearer understanding of the beliefs and principles of the protocol as well as the options available to survivors.

The goal is to provide a consistent, compassionate, comprehensive and knowledgeable response from all service providers within Halton to survivors.

In short, said Halton Region Health Department Public Health Nurse and Collaborative co-chair Linda Graydon, the CD-ROM helps ensure that everyone involved is on the same page when it comes to dealing with victims.

Ms Graydon went on to explain that many

"informal linkages" between agencies were also forged as a result of this new-found co-operation, such as agency staff being able to put faces to names.

With the launch of the updated protocols and their accompanying tools last week, Ms Melmer and Ms Graydon hope that the work of the collaborative and the use of the protocols will increase the safety and well-being of all victims of sexual assault/domestic violence in Halton.

About 100 agency staff and community stakeholders were registered for last week's training session and official launch.

As for the future, Ms Graydon said the collaborative is looking forward to feedback from users of the CD-ROM as well as to wider distribution of the You Have Choices brochure, such as in schools, walk-in clinics and family doctors' offices.

TV COGECO

Truly Local Television

www.cogeco.ca

NORTH HALTON STUDIO

Laurier Plaza

500 Laurier Avenue

Milton, ON L9T 4R3

905-878-9306

Cogeco Cable Channel 14 Programming Schedule — Tuesday, December 13 - Monday, December 19, 2005

Tuesday, December 13	Wednesday, December 14	Thursday, December 15	Friday, December 16	Saturday, December 17	Sunday, December 18	Monday, December 19
1:00pm SportsZONE Live (Replay)	12:30pm Roundtable: Halton 211	12:00pm Swap Talk (Replay)	12:00pm Rockwood Farmers' Parade of Lights	3:00pm Georgetown Santa Claus Parade	10:30am TVC Sports: Jr.A Hockey - Buffalo vs Burlington	12:00pm Georgetown Santa Claus Parade
6:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	1:00pm Halton Hills Council Dec 12 2005	1:00pm Rockwood Farmers' Parade of Lights	12:30pm Coming Home For Christmas	4:00pm TVC Sports: Jr.A Hockey - Buffalo vs Burlington	5:00pm Georgetown Santa Claus Parade	1:00pm Halton Hills Council Dec 12 2005
6:30pm Acton Santa Claus Parade	4:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	1:30pm Coming Home For Christmas	1:00pm Halton Region Council	6:00pm - Midnight Plugged In! EXTRA	6:00pm Halton Hills Council Dec 12 2005	6:00pm - 7:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA
7:30pm Coming Home For Christmas	6:00pm Santa & the Kids	6:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	5:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA		9:00pm - Midnight Plugged In! EXTRA	7:00pm Rockwood Farmers' Parade of Lights
8:00pm Auto Experts (Live)	7:00pm Coming Home For Christmas	7:00pm Santa & the Kids	6:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA			7:30pm Coming Home For Christmas
9:00pm Halton Hills Council Dec 12 2005	8:00pm Swap Talk (Live)	8:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	6:30pm Georgetown Santa Claus Parade			8:00pm SportsZONE Live
	9:00pm Rockwood Farmers' Parade of Lights	8:30pm Coming Home For Christmas	7:30pm Coming Home For Christmas			9:00pm - Midnight Plugged In! EXTRA
	9:30pm Coming Home For Christmas	9:00pm Halton Region Council Dec 14 2005	8:30pm - Midnight Plugged In! EXTRA			
	10:00pm - Midnight Plugged In! EXTRA					