

Introduction

Training for Change was originally created as an instructional CD of short strategies and tactics to help anti-violence women's advocates do political action and lobbying on issues of concern to women who experience violence.

The CD was created as the wrap-up activity in a two-year project undertaken by OAITH primarily during 2003 and 2004. It was first born out of a discussion with member shelters of the Association at an Annual Meeting in 2002.

At the time, shelter representatives worried that cuts to services for women and children and a swing to right-wing political agendas at all levels of government were affecting women's ability to do social change work to end violence against women. They identified an erosion of political activism and public advocacy within the shelter movement, activism that had always been the catalyst for progress in our struggle to end violence against women.

After extensive consultation with members across Ontario, OAITH put together a two-day training, also called Training for Change, and toured the province in the spring of 2004 providing workshops to shelter workers.

A manual used in those workshops honoured the advice from many OAITH member shelters that information for busy shelter staff and volunteers had to be short and easy to access. The manual became the basis for the CD—information from it has been incorporated into this short, sharp compilation of tips and tools for public advocacy work.

Training for Change Guide takes you through the process of developing political action, from the first stages of evaluating your idea for social change, to creating strategy for action, to some of the key forms of political action that have worked for women and many equality seeking groups in the past—lobbying government, creating media buzz and doing direct public action. You can also download an Action Plan template to jot down a summary of your action plan and to assist your group to develop strategy and tactics in all areas of action.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to the Committee members who worked on this project, to the women from shelters all over Ontario who gave their advice and insights into the development of the training workshops and to all women who continue to do the difficult but rewarding social change work necessary to end violence against women.

We also want to thank Charles Dobson of the Vancouver Citizens Committee for their generous permission to adapt or reprint parts of their writings on developing political activism skills and strategies.

4 Things a Woman should Ask

Public policy and advocacy work begins with analysis of the issue or policy that you want to change from an equality rights perspective. Here are four questions you should ask about every social policy or issue to help frame your social change work:

- ♀ How does it affect women and other equality seeking groups?
- ♀ Who is benefiting from lack of action on the issue? Whose power is protected or strengthened?
- ♀ What expertise and knowledge from my experience as a woman can I bring to this issue?
- ♀ How does it affect different women differently, especially marginalized women?

From: Women, Power and Politics by Kira Heineck.

Eileen Morrow, OAITH Coordinator was the principle writer of this CD on behalf of OAITH.

Creating the Overall Strategy

- ♀ Define the **goal**. This is the broad result you want. Example: Make the welfare system more responsive to women.
- ♀ Define the **objectives**. Objectives are more immediate and specific. Example: Raise welfare rates.
- ♀ Conduct **research** — you need to get the facts to build a strong argument. You know, but you need to show you know.
- ♀ Identify **opponents** and **obstacles**. What stands in your way? Who can make the changes you want?
- ♀ Identify **allies**: Women’s advocates and community activists that are working on the same or similar issues. Contacts on the inside of the system that may be able to feed you information may also be allies, but remember they have responsibilities to the system and limits to their support.
- ♀ Create a **coalition** group with equality-seeking allies.
- ♀ Identify **primary** and **secondary** contacts. Primary contacts are those who can make the change. Secondary contacts are those with influence or power over the primary contacts. Example: The primary contact may be the Attorney General of Ontario. The secondary contact may be the Premier or ‘informers’ and advisors, such as civil servants.
- ♀ Devise your **tactics**. Tactics are the actions you will take to get what you want. Example: Meeting with decision-maker.
- ♀ Create a detailed action **timetable**. Campaigns should have a beginning, middle and end. In between, you should have target dates for completing your work in detail.
- ♀ **Do a SWOT analysis**
SWOT analysis looks at the strategy’s overall:
 - Strengths
 - Weaknesses
 - Opportunities and
 - Threats.You can also apply it to a message you want to send, an idea, a person or a group. Apply it to both your group and the opposition.
- ♀ **Imagine**
Play scenarios of your strategy and tactics.
How will they play out? Use a “what if?” process to play out possible scenarios.
“What if no one shows up to the event? What if we can’t get a meeting with the politician?”

Evaluating Objectives

Planning is necessary if you have limited time and want to make your collective efforts count. It should move from the general to the specific, from the big picture to the small, from the long term to the short, from "what" to "how".

How do your objectives score?

Whatever objective you choose, test its value by asking:

- ☞ Will it **improve women's lives**?
- ☞ Is it easy for others to understand?
- ☞ Is it **specific**? Will you know when you've reached your objective?
- ☞ Will it have an **immediate impact**?
- ☞ Will it contribute to reaching long-term goals?
- ☞ Will other women and groups want to **help**?
- ☞ Will it create **community** among women?
- ☞ Is it **attainable**?
- ☞ Is it attainable with available resources?

For projects that face opposition, add the following questions:

- ☞ Is there a **clear decision maker** who can deliver the goods?
- ☞ Is it attractive enough to **raise money**, if needed?
- ☞ Is it **deeply felt**?
- ☞ Will it help to **build organizing skills**?
- ☞ Will it give women a sense of their own **power**?
- ☞ Is there a basic **principle** involved?

Look beyond the obvious

A VAW group might decide on an obvious objective such as lobbying for more police officers to fight crime. But if you look beyond the crime of violence against women to the cause, you might decide a campaign for universally accessible childcare is an objective more likely to help all women build violence free lives.

New groups should begin with **smaller projects** that have a high probability of success over the short term. To be effective, your group should pursue only one **objective at a time**.

Research

You must know both the issue and the systems thoroughly before putting a strategy into action. This takes ‘research’ or information gathering, **even for the most well informed advocate.**

- ♀ Think about what you already know — you have identified an issue based on your own experience and that of the women you work with. You **know** the problem.
 - ♀ Back up your own and women’s knowledge with concrete information — numbers, stories, and supportive facts. **Show** you know.
 - ♀ Gather information by a variety of relevant sources: stats collection, shelter budget information, information from women using the shelter and frontline shelter workers, information from community allies and coalitions, OAITH and external academic research related to the issue.
 - ♀ Show that the problem is **serious** and **widespread** — it is not just a small local issue affecting a few women and children.
 - ♀ **Research current policy and legislation** on the issue. Review solutions to the problem and provide evidence that they work, or will work.
 - ♀ Research the issue outside your community. What has been done in other places?
 - ♀ Include information geared to your audience — impacts on women and children as a human rights and social responsibility issue; costs of violence (or relatively low cost of response) if public spending is an issue; impact on the community if public support is needed, and so on.
 - ♀ **Research your opponents:** political party platforms and ideology, useful statements made by politicians in Government or Opposition (“When you were in cabinet you said...Now what are you going to do?”), written and unwritten policy and procedures of the system you want to change, budget information of the government you want to influence.
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Adapted from: *The Citizen's Handbook: A Guide to Building Community in Vancouver*

Analyzing Public Policy

You need to have an analysis of any policy or legislation that you want to create or change *within your current political context*.

- ♀ What are the **current politics** involved in making change on the policy? Is it a 'hot button' issue? Does the public care? Is your change perspective even in the consciousness of policy makers? Is the timing right for changes to the policy? For example, did the government promise to make changes during an election or lobby for the change while it was in Opposition?
 - ♀ What is the **government's stake** in the issue the policy addresses? For example, a government elected to favour business or cut government spending will not easily accept your argument that welfare rates must increase. Action in this environment will be challenging.
 - ♀ What are the **barriers** to getting the current government to change or create a policy? Does it have resource constraints, other priorities, or counter lobbying against the policy or legislation that you want?
 - ♀ What is the **government's underlying philosophy/ideology** about violence against women? How does your policy change issue fit with this? If the government thinks violence against women is a mental illness, how will you persuade it to implement strategies for equality rights?
 - ♀ **How important is the policy change** to your group or to the women you work with who will be affected? Don't shape your actions only to changes that you think will be easy to make if women need you to challenge the difficult issues.
 - ♀ What is the **view of Opposition** political parties on the issue? Are they allies or indifferent?
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Choosing Tactics

Tactics are the *actions* you take

- Be **creative** and imaginative.
- Choose tactics that will be **fun**, interesting, or exciting when possible. Some tactics are necessary even if they're not fun—like lobby meetings and letter writing.
- Choose tactics that are **doable** for your numbers and your resources.
- Does the key decision maker agree with your objectives and your solutions? If so, **cooperative tactics** make sense.
- Does the decision maker agree with your objectives but not your solutions? If so, consider tactics focused on **persuasion, negotiation**.
- Does the decision maker completely disagree with both your objectives and your solutions? Then **confrontation** may be the only option.

What do you want to achieve?

Consider your end. Do you want to:

- Show decision-makers the **size** and concern of your constituency, or **build morale** in your group?
- Build public support** in the media, or build support of allies or others that have influence on the decision-maker?
- Win an objective by **giving the other side something** it wants (credit, votes, support)?
- Win an objective by depriving or threatening to **deprive the other side of something it wants** (credibility, respect, support)?

Evaluating tactics

- Is the tactic focused on a **primary or secondary contact**?
- Is it based on a thorough **understanding of the contact**?
- Is the tactic **in tune with other action** that is happening on the issue and in **solidarity** with other social justice activists?
- Does the **issue** demand action?
- Is your group **comfortable** with the tactic?
- If it is confrontational, has your group tried options for cooperation and negotiation?

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Common Organizing Tactics

To accomplish a goal you may need to use a **combination of tactics**. There are many variations on these ideas. Use your **imagination!!**

Lobbying

- Letters and calls to politicians
- Meetings with politicians
- Meetings with Opposition parties
- Meetings with civil servants and political party staff

Legal processes

- Lawsuits
- Charter challenges
- Inquests
- Public inquiries

Media

- Press releases and media conferences
- Letters to the Editor
- Opinion pieces
- Media events

Education

- Literature tables at community events
- Leaflets, posters
- Films, speakers
- Public panel discussions and debates
- Teach-ins (a teach-in is a long meeting with many knowledgeable speakers)
- Newsletters

Public actions

- Speak-out—a public or opportunity for women to speak about their experience

Timing Your Action

When you're thinking about action it's important to consider the **best time** to make your move. Finding time to do public policy advocacy is difficult so you want to make sure all your efforts go to times when someone may listen or make the change you want.

Government processes and markers as opportunities for action

- Fall and spring—Opening of the new government sessions.
- Winter and spring—**Budget** estimates and pre-budget hearings.
- Spring—Government budget days.
- Introduction of any legislation that affects women and children.
- Public hearings** on legislation.
- Government **consultations**.
- Political party policy conventions.
- Elections and pre-election platform** planning times. Now that the Ontario provincial election is pre-determined by legislation, you can plan well in advance.
- Times when **events and public pressure** may influence government. Unfortunately on the issue of violence against women, this often comes when women are murdered, for example in the summer of 2000 when many women, including Gillian Hadley, were murdered in a short few weeks and media was asking for action.
- Response to **research and public legal processes**. Governments sometimes act when new research is made public or a legal process, such as the inquest into the death of Gillian Hadley, occurs.
- Visits** of Premier or other Cabinet members to your community.

Equality **marker** days

- March 8: International Women's Day
- March 21: International Day for Elimination of Racial Discrimination
- April 17: Equality Day
- May: Sexual Assault Awareness Month
- June 21: National Aboriginal Day
- September: Take Back the Night
- October: Women's History Month
- November: Wife Assault Prevention Month

Common Organizing Mistakes

- ♀ Too much emphasis on **organization** and too little on **mission**. Creating little bureaucracies that drain energy.
- ♀ Too many **meetings** and too little **action**. People want something concrete to do rather than endless talking about doing.
- ♀ Too much **deciding** and too little **creating**. People need time to brainstorm if they are to be creative and use their imagination. Balance creative discussion with task-focussed decision-making.
- ♀ **Too many people**. Large groups are not better than small. Working groups can include smaller groups of women and share participation.
- ♀ **The wrong people**. Ensure that the group has representation from all women affected by the issue you are raising. Consider recruitment of women based on the needs of the campaign or coalition for skills, diverse equality seeking perspectives, commitment and time.
- ♀ **Too little contact**. Maintain regular contact with group members. Share information with everyone.
- ♀ **Objectives outmatch resources**. Don't pick an action or strategy that requires many people or a lot of money if you're not sure you can deliver.

Adapted from: *The Citizen's Handbook: A Guide to Building Community in Vancouver*

Coalitions and Campaigns

Coalition: an alliance of women or groups working together for a common goal.

Why are coalitions important?

- There is **strength** and protection in numbers.
- You break the isolation and fear of speaking out alone.
- You can take on larger issues — you **share** work, knowledge and resources.
- You build **solidarity** with other women and groups — you become a movement.
- You form alliances that bring women together more easily in the future.
- Ongoing, broad and **inclusive** alliances create a more powerful response to issues.

Choosing allies

- Begin by seeking other **women's groups** as allies.
- Look to other **equality-seeking groups** in the community (anti-poverty or housing advocates, Aboriginal and immigrant community groups, unions, etc.)
- Make sure **those** most **affected** by the issue are represented in your coalition.
- Think about **specific advocates** in your community to include because of their skills and resources.
- Consider how different groups operate?** Different groups have different processes for being involved in actions or coalitions.
- Consider the **agendas** of different allies? They may have different reasons for joining. Do those reasons fit the overall objective?
- Resources and time are stretched to the limit—you must show others how the coalition **meets their needs** as well as yours.
- You can welcome an ally that may not agree with you on every issue or strategy, but don't include allies that water down the objective.
- A coalition is **not** a service coordinating committee or a women's support group. It is a political, **action-focussed** group.

Key decisions

- Focus:** Is this a single or multi-issue coalition? Single-issue coalitions are effective in attracting a broad-based group. Multi-issue coalitions raise awareness about interconnections of issues but are harder to maintain.

Getting Women Involved

Women who have experienced violence have been at the forefront of the most positive changes in prevention and response to woman abuse. Their insights and passion **created the women's anti-violence movement**. Effective political action will not happen without their involvement and their voice.

Tips for getting women involved

- ④ Create **focus groups** with women around specific issues (i.e. legal aid)
- ④ Encourage women to **talk** about their experiences
- ④ Ask women to invite other women to discussion or action meetings
- ④ Go to where women are (instead of asking women to come to you, try going to them)
- ④ Look for ways to collect names, addresses, phone numbers (have sign-in sheets at your meetings and/or events). At events organized by others, ask women to add their information to petitions and/or requests-for-information – in return hand out an issue sheet or an explanation of how your group is attempting to address an issue
- ④ Try to **include women who are under-represented** (go to women in the group you are trying to reach and ask how they would like to be approached; address their issues; use your connections; identify the group as women you want to work with, not as a target group you want to bring on your side)
- ④ **Listen** to the voices of women
- ④ **Believe** in the abilities of women
- ④ Build on the **strengths** of women
- ④ Give them space to work
- ④ **Share** skills, contacts, experience

Things to consider

- ④ What are the **barriers** in your community that prevent women from becoming involved? How can they be overcome?
- ④ How can meetings be made more appealing to women?
- ④ What **resources** do you have that women can use—office supplies, meeting rooms, etc.
- ④ What **skills, contacts and experience** can you share with women in a positive way?
- ④ How can women be supported to join community coalitions and action groups? Example: accompany women to their first meetings; organize women to go in a group together; provide food for the meeting and other supports such as childcare and transportation.

How Government Decisions Are Made

- Party platforms—this is **the agenda of the political party** created before elections to win votes. Review of the platform can give important clues as to the direction and priorities of a new government. It is also important to track when political parties are reviewing their platforms prior to an election. Try to influence the Party before it writes the platform material.
 - Ideology of the political party—within the party platforms and statements, as well as the history of the party, you can learn **the values of the policy-makers**. Does the party support more or less government spending on programs in general? Does the party believe violence against women is a crime or an equality rights issue?
 - Money**—how much will the change cost? How much will it cost not to make the change? Does the government have the money to make the change?
 - Timing**—is it election time?
 - Public pressure—how much **public concern** is there for the issue? Does it attract media attention? Has it created work within the government systems? For example, one particularly horrific situation that captures media attention may lead to changes that were not possible before.
 - Legislative or legal processes**—inquests, lawsuits and public inquiries may lead to changes. Example: the Charter of Rights challenge on the ‘spouse in the house’ welfare rule or the May-Iles and Hadley inquests.
 - Research**, especially if it generates media or public attention. Example: the Walking on Eggshells report of the experiences of abused women on welfare.
 - Global influences**, such as the globalization of economic forces leading to less support for social programs and privatization of public services.
 - Federal/provincial/territorial interactions and **jurisdictional issues**. The provinces and territories may be working with the federal government on a direction for the whole country that affects your work.
 - Voting patterns**—who traditionally elects the Party? Example: the Ontario Liberals owed the majority of their votes in the 2002 provincial election to women.
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Basic Lobbying Tips

Traditional lobbying of politicians and government officials (or other community system officials) is still the most common form of public advocacy that women's services do to press for change. To be an effective advocate for women and children, women's advocates must engage with systems and policy makers in solidarity with survivors.

Basic lobby tips

- ♀ **Know what you want and who can get it for you.** Which government or system is responsible for the issue? If you don't know, call political offices and ask them. Or start with the contacts you already have: other social justice advocates, system officials, OAITH and so on.
- ♀ **Know your policy maker.** Research the basic background and positions of the people you want to influence. For politicians, research the Party platforms and positions of the representatives on your issues, both Government and Opposition.
- ♀ **Decide which strategies you will use** and map out a plan, including timelines and time commitment, participants and key messages you want to deliver in all your actions.
- ♀ **Research** relevant legislation and any written policy on your issue, if needed, and have a thorough understanding of any new legislation and its impact on women before you act.
- ♀ **You will need friends to lobby on a large scale. Decide who you need at the table to plan your strategy and to participate for the maximum impact for women.**
- ♀ Even when there is no burning issue to lobby, you can use the time to **build a relationship with the political reps** in your area. Invite them to your events and to the shelter to speak with the women or staff. Send them material about your service and ask them to use it in making referrals for women who visit their offices seeking help.

Some lobby strategies

- ♀ Meetings with, calls and letters to **politicians and government staff** working on your issue.
- ♀ Meetings with, calls and strategizing with members of the **political Opposition**.
- ♀ Participating in **public policy processes**, for example, hearings or consultations on proposed policy or legislation.
- ♀ Lobbying at **media or other public activities** (Take Back the Night, December 6, or other community activities).

Consider these points

Lobby Meetings

This is the most effective way to lobby—and the hardest to arrange. Here are some pointers.

- ♀ Write a **brief letter of request** for a meeting with a follow-up phone call. The policy maker will want to know what issues you want to discuss and who will attend.
- ♀ **Know what you** want from the meeting. Choose two to three (maximum) issues to discuss at any meeting.
- ♀ Choose two to four (maximum) representatives to attend. **Don't go alone.**
- ♀ Plan in advance what each of your reps will say and write down the **key messages**. Prioritize them. You will likely have only about ½ hour to present your issues and get response. If you receive more time, expand on the issues.
- ♀ **Come on time and leave on time.** At the beginning of the meeting, ask the policy maker how much time you will have.
- ♀ Make sure you **know your issue completely**. Present your case simply and clearly. Don't get off topic, don't argue and don't overwhelm them with information.
- ♀ **Listen to and answer questions carefully.** Sometimes you may need to identify an unspoken agenda behind a question. Sometimes the policy maker is simply trying to get more information and understanding of your issue.
- ♀ If you are worried that the policy maker (especially a politician) may monopolize the conversation, you can anticipate this at the beginning by **setting the agenda**. Say something like: "We have a number of things to cover today and want to make the best use of your time with us, so I may be moving us along from time to time." Then you can interrupt without seeming to be rude.
- ♀ Be polite and calm, whatever the response.
- ♀ It is very unlikely that you will get any significant commitment, but try to get some idea of what they are prepared to do for **next steps**. Politicians like to be able to say 'yes' so try to find something they can agree with among your requests, for example a further meeting. Try to set up some process whereby you can contact them for follow-up to keep the relationship going.
- ♀ Assign one of your reps to **take accurate notes** for review after the meeting. You may hear what you want to hear, but the notes may reflect a less specific or positive commitment.
- ♀ Get the **names and roles of everyone** in the room. Political and government staff are important contacts who have access to your policy maker that you don't. You will want to follow up later with them to build a relationship.
- ♀ **Leave material behind** which supports your issue. Do not de-brief about the meeting until you are out of the building.

Lobby Phone Calls and Letters

Lobby phone calls

Calling a policy maker is **easier and less time-consuming than arranging a meeting**, for both of you, but you cannot bring support. Phone calls, however, are more personal and immediate and more effective than letters and emails.

- ♀ You will **not likely reach the policy maker** on the first try. If not, speak to the assistant (such as the Executive Assistant of a Cabinet Minister). These folks are close to the person you want to influence and can advocate for you if they choose. Build a relationship with them.
- ♀ Usually **you will not be able to cover more than one issue** in a phone conversation. Make sure you know what you want to say before you call. Keep the call short—five to ten minutes. **Take notes.**
- ♀ If need be, **ask to meet** with the policy maker or assistant to provide further information, especially if you want to discuss more than one issue.
- ♀ **Follow up** with a letter outlining your points. Thank the policy maker for the time and for listening to you.

Lobby letters, faxes and emails

Contacting policy makers by letter is **less effective than a meeting or phone call**, but it's almost a sure thing that someone will read your letter. Some tips:

- ♀ Your letter should be **no more than two pages** long.
 - ♀ Outline who you are and what issue you want to have addressed. Be **clear, concise and concrete**. Provide information about additional resources that the policy maker can access to support your position.
 - ♀ **Provide solutions** to the issue and what you want the policy maker to do about it. Give reasons why this solution is in the best interests of the women and the policy maker.
 - ♀ **Request a response** and provide a contact name and information for the policy maker to use.
 - ♀ Try to **make letters 'individual'**. Mass mailings, emails and faxes of lobby letters are common tools for advocates but you must be sure that you can generate substantial numbers of them. If you can't, it's a bit like having a demonstration where no one shows up.
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Attracting Media

Tips for attracting media

- ☎ **Know what is news.** Media like to cover: conflict and controversy, change and new information, powerful people and systems, something that has an impact on large numbers of people, bizarre happenings, human interest stories and current events and situations that are timely (e.g. December 6).
- ☎ **Know the media in your area.** Call the Assignment Editor of print, radio and TV outlets in your area and collect information about: deadlines; names and contact information for reporters that cover the issues you want to highlight; check the media outlet's website for contacts; sympathetic reporters or columnists that you can build a relationship with; learn which media contacts are not supportive as well.
- ☎ **Create a media list**—email and fax—that you can use in the future. Reporters move around, so update it regularly.
- ☎ **Know your media formats and likely outcomes.** Coverage in print is more detailed—a ¼ page story is good and best if it appears on page one above the fold; good TV news coverage is about 10 seconds. Radio is immediate and may allow for longer interviews of two minutes or longer, depending on the show.
- ☎ **Make yourself available.** Don't hide. When media contacts call, it's an opportunity to raise the profile of your issues and your organization.

Why is media work so important?

- ☎ Media **shapes the public debate** about social policy issues.
 - ☎ You **reach women** with your message.
 - ☎ You **educate** the voting public.
 - ☎ You **build** the **profile** of your group.
 - ☎ Your profile **increases your influence and builds community support** when you need it.
 - ☎ **Decision makers notice** press coverage and your ability to attract it.
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Media Advisories and Releases

Know the difference between a press advisory and a press release. Advisories announce an event, like a press conference or action. A press release includes more information about the issues.

Media Advisories:

- ♀ Press releases **announce an event** or press conference.
- ♀ Media releases should be **no more than two pages** long, preferably double-spaced with wide margins.
- ♀ Make sure that the “headline” on your advisory is enticing to editors who assign the reporters and that it **captures the key purpose** of your event.
- ♀ Provide just enough information to suggest that it will be worthwhile for media to take time to attend, and that more important information will be available at the event.
- ♀ **Highlight critical information.** Details like time and exact location of event should be featured with a box or bold type.
- ♀ Provide a follow up **contact name and number** for further details.
- ♀ Send your advisory 1 week before your event and a second notice 2 days before. An exception to this rule would be if you need to call an urgent press conference to react to an event or announcement. In this case, follow up immediately with phone calls to key media contacts.
- ♀ Follow up with phone calls to media contacts to ask whether or not they will be attending.

Media Releases:

- ♀ The **media release is used to reach media contacts that were not able to come to the event** or press conference, decided not to come but regretted it later when other media covered your event, or didn't hear about your event when it was announced. Media releases are also used to react to events, such as government announcements or other news, when the media hasn't called you and you want them to hear your point of view.
- ♀ The media release should have the date and “for immediate release” before the headline.
- ♀ Media releases should **read like a short newspaper piece**, with a brief descriptive headline and a strong opening sentence (or “lead”) that answers as many of the 4 Ws as possible: “when, where, who, why.” The 4 Ws are the backbone of all newspaper stories.
- ♀ Each paragraph should be no more than one or two sentences.
- ♀ Your media release should **focus on your “key messages”**.

Media Interview Tips

- ♀ **Choose media spokeswomen** carefully. They should be articulate, quick thinking and calm under stress. Reporters like frontline and personal experience in comparison to, say, academics and public relations reps.
- ♀ **Prepare well** for contact with media. Plan and practice what you will say—out loud if you are a newcomer to this role. Role-play questions—both friendly and unfriendly. The more experienced you are and the more you know about an issue, the less time this will take.
- ♀ Before the interview, you **ask what the story is about**, who else will be interviewed, what the angle or slant of the piece will be, and when it will appear or be aired.
- ♀ If you are being asked to respond to a new announcement or piece of research, etc. you can ask the reporter to fax or email it to you and then make arrangements to call and talk when you've had a chance to review it. Call back before or at the agreed time.
- ♀ The reporter is not your friend, no matter how friendly s/he may be. Don't get too cozy or too confrontational. Don't speak "off the record". It is better not to talk at all about information that has to be given off the record to reporters. Don't say anything to a reporter that you don't want to see on the news.
- ♀ **You know more than the reporter** about your issue, so don't be intimidated. Be confident and friendly. Understand that the reporter may make mistakes because of limited information, analysis and knowledge, so provide background materials whenever you can to expand their understanding.
- ♀ Know and **repeat your key messages** in different ways throughout the interview. If the interview is planned in advance, you can anticipate what questions may be asked and prepare answers beforehand.
- ♀ Be **simple, concrete and brief** and use plain language, no jargon. Give short examples from real human experience to illustrate your points, but don't tell long anecdotal stories. E.g. "Women we see eat less so their children will have enough food." Paint a picture of what the issue means to women and children.
- ♀ Make eye contact with the reporter, especially on television. Maintain a friendly style and don't respond to hostility with angry responses. Listeners will side with the person that remains calm and polite under fire.
- ♀ **Be accurate and never lie**. Reporters who write inaccurate information based on what you tell them won't trust you again.

Press Conferences

- Ⓣ Never call a press conference unless you have **something new** to say or announce.
 - Ⓣ Hold the media conference in time to **meet media deadlines**. Morning is best. The day of the press conference may depend on the issue but should be on a day when print coverage the following day will be read.
 - Ⓣ Whenever possible, book a **location that is media friendly**—is easy to get to, has electronics that media can plug into, adequate space to move with cameras and equipment, little extra noise and good lighting.
 - Ⓣ **Arrive on time** so you can set up, greet the media and ask them to identify themselves or sign a sign-in sheet. Choose someone from the group to greet them.
 - Ⓣ Choose **two or three speakers**, maximum, to deliver your message. One speaker should ‘chair’ the event, introducing speakers and making an opening statement about the purpose and agenda for the media conference. Speakers should represent **different experiences or perspectives** on the key messages: shelter worker, survivor, woman speaking to differential impacts of race or ability, and so on.
 - Ⓣ Review the pointers for interviews in the “Media Interview Tips” section of this CD.
 - Ⓣ The opening presentation and speeches should be **short, no more than half an hour**. Speakers should speak for only a few minutes about the key messages to leave ample time for questions. Media will also want to time after the structured event to talk ‘one-on-one’ with certain speakers to get fresh comment.
 - Ⓣ Documents released should have an ‘executive summary’ or **highlights** of any detailed information you release.
 - Ⓣ Provide **something visual** for TV cameras to shoot, other than ‘talking heads”. Examples: banners, enlarged displays of your key information, props such as buttons, flowers, etc.
 - Ⓣ Wear **dark or vibrant (but not splashy) colours**—little or no white clothing or high contrast stripes/checks that interfere with television signals. Keep **still** and calm.
 - Ⓣ Speak normally, but be **expressive**. Lean forward and listen to the speakers.
 - Ⓣ Provide **media “kits”** for reporters that include the media release, a copy of the opening statement, any documents you are releasing, short background fact sheets to support your position, names and contact information for the speakers. **Help the reporter write the story.**
 - Ⓣ Start and finish on time. Thank media representatives for coming. If you have to cancel the media conference, notify media contacts immediately.
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Public and Direct Action

The Women's Movement in Canada has a long tradition of inspirational direct public action. For example in 1973, the now annual *Take Back the Night* march was born in Vancouver.

- ♀ Direct action means taking your action **directly to the public** and trying to pressure for change through public agitation rather than asking policy makers to make the change for you.
- ♀ Direct action includes things like strikes, boycotts or demonstrations such as a 'feed-in' for hungry people or a 'tent city' weekend. It can also include smaller actions as part of a larger strategy; for example, in 1995, shelter women brought thousands of empty tuna cans to Queen's Park after a Tory Minister said that the poor could survive on low welfare rates by eating cheap tuna. Another example: in 1995, OAITH collected over 10,000 keys from women's shelters across Ontario and, with media representatives in tow, delivered them to the same Minister asking that the government unlock the doors keeping abused women and their children trapped in abusive situations.
- ♀ Direct action may also include **civil disobedience**, such as spray-painting, road blockages or sit-ins. Of course these are illegal and should be considered with careful thought and consideration of the possible consequences. Specific training in non-violent civil disobedience is recommended for large actions of this kind. Civil disobedience was a key strategy used by Ghandi and Martin Luther King Jr. in their struggles for human rights.
- ♀ Public action usually requires **good media support** to be successful. See Media Relations for more information on developing media skills.

Things to think about:

- ♀ Direct public action makes a powerful statement and can be a **lot of fun!**
 - ♀ It can be less threatening in some communities than in others, for example in larger urban settings vs. smaller close-knit communities.
 - ♀ It should be thoroughly discussed, well organized and **planned well in advance**. The exception might be a spontaneously planned demonstration to protest an urgent issue.
 - ♀ Public action can be a confrontational tool, but it doesn't have to be. Sometimes confrontation and strong action to attract public attention is the best option available.
 - ♀ This is part of political action that can have consequences, depending on the action you choose, but remember, there are also consequences when you don't do anything.
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Time & Money

These are two biggest barriers identified by OAITH members in our work with shelters about doing public advocacy. There are no easy solutions, but here are some tips that might help.

- ♀ Focus on **simple, concrete projects with a short timeframe**. Do not work on more than one or two objectives at one time.
 - ♀ Keep your group small.
 - ♀ Choose an objective that doesn't require a lot of new research.
 - ♀ Think of ways to **incorporate some of the tasks into your day-to-day work**. Example: collect research information from women in the shelter during a regularly scheduled residents meeting or mothers' group; talk to allies about supporting the objective as part of outreach activities.
 - ♀ If you can't start your own campaign, **join another group or campaign** that is already formed. Example: OAITH projects or lobby efforts or the Hands Off campaign that was organized to stop the clawback of the child tax benefit supplement in Ontario.
 - ♀ **Use the tools and actions of related campaigns**. Example: Ask a group you think is well organized to give you their media list and start from it to create your own.
 - ♀ Don't try to do it all yourself—form a campaign **coalition with allies** who can share the tasks, costs and time.
 - ♀ **Share the resources** to do the work--supplies, phone and fax, office space.
 - ♀ **Ask more well resourced allies for help**—unions can provide printing, equipment or some money for your campaign. Some community or faith groups can provide space for meetings.
 - ♀ **Involve volunteers, Board and women using your services**, as well as student placements, in the work of doing research or other tasks.
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♀ Learn to **deflect irrelevant questions**. The “question I can’t or don’t want to answer” is a big fear for many women new to media work. If you don’t know something, don’t make it up. Tell the reporter that you will search for the information and call them back. If you don’t want to answer a question because it doesn’t address your key message, bridge back to the points you want to make: “The most important issue, though, is...” “We take a slightly different slant in that for us, the key issues are...” “That issue is important but it doesn’t address the primary concerns for women, which are...” No matter where the reporter wants to go, politely made a transition back to the main points you think are important for the public to understand.

♀ Don’t say “no comment” because you don’t want to answer a question.

♀ No, **you can’t see the story**, hear the tape or check the article before it is printed. Don’t ask. Reporters are not allowed to give editing privileges to interview subjects.

- ♀ Include a quote or two from your media contact, speaking to your key messages. Smaller papers and media outlets may use your words or your release as a story in their publication, so **write it for them**.
 - ♀ Finish the release with the **name and contact** information for one or two media spokeswomen for further information and follow-up interviews. If you are sending a fax or email, write -30- at bottom of the last page to indicate “the end”.
 - ♀ Email or fax your media release to your media contacts **immediately after an issue surfaces** that you want to respond to or **immediately after your event** or press conference has taken place.
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♀ Thank the policy maker for the meeting and **follow up** with a thank you letter that outlines the main points of your message again and any commitments that may have been made by the policy maker and yourselves.

♀ Is there a chance you could **win something**? Don't focus on a result you just can't win, or win at least some part of—failure demoralizes supporters. Look for short-term and long-term results.

♀ Is the issue something that will **link you with other allies**? Allies make you stronger.

♀ Will the issue **raise your profile**, especially with women who may need services?

♀ Will the issue provide **opportunities to learn** new skills and gain expertise?

♀ What other ways can women contribute to action work if they cannot participate in an ongoing way: provide their story, participate in a focus group, write a letter to the government, write a poem or article for a newsletter or report, do a media interview?

♀ **Timeline:** Is the purpose of the coalition to design and carry out a time-limited campaign or to form an ongoing alliance of women to respond to unfolding issues? A campaign is easier to organize and more appealing to busy advocates because it has a beginning, middle and end.

♀ **Resources:** What kind of resources (i.e. time, office space or supplies, funds) can you and others commit? (The answer will help you discuss possible actions)

♀ **Decision-making:** How will decisions be made and who can make them?

♀ **Communications:** How will members communicate? Do all have access to email, phone, and so on? Who will be responsible for information sharing?

-  November 20: National Child Day
 -  November 25: International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women
 -  November 25 to December 10: 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence
 -  December 3: International Day of Disabled Persons
 -  December 6: National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women
 -  December 10: Human Rights Day
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- Tribunal—a mock trial to hear and document women’s experiences and ‘judge’ the systems involved
 - Town hall meeting—groups and women speak to media or policy makers about the issue
 - Street fair—festive atmosphere with displays, information tables and entertainment
 - Street theatre—public skits that send a message
 - Opinion wall—constructed to permit messages, art work, poems about the issue
 - Conferences and workshops designed to develop actions and recommendations for public policy change
 - Leafletting and selling buttons with key messages
 - Resolution campaign—getting many groups to sign on to your messages and solutions
 - Petitions
 - Boycotts and strikes
 - Demonstrations and rallies
 - Activity for public and media attention—Example: the Poverty Game
 - Art and graffiti with political messages
 - And many, many more...
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