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The Partner Assault Response Program (PAR): A Part of the Domestic Violence Court System

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Funded by:

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METRAC

METRAC, Action on Violence

- works to prevent violence against women and youth
- a not-for-profit, community-based organization

www.metrac.org

METRAC's Community Justice Program

- provides accessible legal information and education for women and service providers
- focuses on law that affects women, from diverse backgrounds, especially those experiencing violence or abuse

FLEW, Family Law Education for Women in Ontario

- provides information on women's rights and options under Ontario family law and other relevant laws when families break down
- in 14 languages, accessible formats, online and in print

www.onefamilylaw.ca

www.undroitdefamille.ca

Presenters

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Topics to be Covered

1. What is PAR?
2. Who is PAR for?
3. PAR Program course content
4. How does PAR affect women
 - a) Complainants of domestic assault
 - b) Accused of domestic assault
5. How does a person get referred to PAR?
6. “PAR-like” counselling
7. Additional Resources

Information is accurate as of March 8, 2016



What is PAR?

What is PAR?

- PAR is the **Partner Assault Response** program
- a 12-session course for people accused of domestic assault
- part of the specialized Domestic Violence Court system
- set up and funded by the Ontario government
- PAR courses provided by community agencies
- offered in 63 locations across the province



Who is PAR for?

Who is PAR for?

The PAR program is designed to benefit:

- **offenders** charged with assaulting an intimate partner (domestic assault)
- the **partner/victim** who is the complainant in the domestic assault case
- the **community**, which has an interest in reducing intimate partner violence and increasing the safety of women and other vulnerable groups

Who is PAR for?

Offender: a person charged with assaulting their intimate partner

- must be **found guilty or plead guilty** to the charge, or
- if Court will accept a Peace Bond to resolve the case, accused person must **accept responsibility** for causing their partner to fear for their safety
- offender must help pay for PAR program (according to ability to pay)

PAR: for domestic assault offenders

PAR is designed to help an offender:

- identify intimate partner violence and abuse
- understand causes and effects of intimate partner violence and abuse
- understand non-violent strategies and skills for healthy relationships
- gain self-awareness of personal triggers and warning signs that lead to violent behaviour
- reduce the chances of reoffending

Who is PAR for?

- Only for a person who is able to fully participate and benefit from the program
- PAR intake workers will refuse to admit someone if:
 - actively using alcohol or drugs in a way that prevents participation in a PAR group
 - severe mental health issue makes participation in PAR group impossible

PAR: for domestic assault complainants

PAR is designed to help a complainant/partner:

- through outreach about the offender's attendance at PAR
- to report concerns about the offender and safety
- do safety planning
- get emotional support
- find referrals to community agencies

PAR: benefits to the community

Research shows that:

- 1 in 4 men (25%) re-assaults his intimate partner
- the rate of re-assaults is less among men who successfully complete counselling programs about intimate partner violence (as compared to men who drop out)
- in Ontario, about 79% of offenders who start the PAR program, successfully complete it (2014 - 2015)



PAR Program Course Content

PAR Program course content

- 12 group sessions - 2 hours per session
- Groups facilitated by a male and female counsellor
- 9 standard topics:
 - 1) Defining Domestic Abuse and Violence
 - physical and sexual assault, emotional and psychological abuse, controlling behaviour
 - 2) How Beliefs and Attitudes Affect Behaviour
 - childhood experiences as they relate to domestic violence behaviour, community and social values
 - 3) Effects of Abuse on Partners, Children and Self
 - harmful short and long-term impacts, different thinking and behaviour, how to be a good dad, linking childhood experiences of family violence to current behaviour, looking at patterns

PAR Program course content

4) Understanding Warning Signs and Triggers

- activities and feelings that have come before abusive behaviour in the past, ideas for change

5) The Impact of Alcohol and/or Drug Abuse

- not a cause, but a risk factor for domestic abuse

6) Healthy Relationships

- respect, partnership, responsibility, honesty, trust and support

PAR Program course content

7) Respectful Communication

- talking and listening by both partners

8) Dealing with Conflict

- effective non-violent ways to handle conflict, differences between passive, assertive and aggressive behaviour

9) Responsibility and Being Accountable

- offenders identify how they need to change, develop a plan for improvement

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How does a person get referred to PAR?

How does a person get referred to PAR?

A person must be:

- charged with a domestic violence offence
 - assault of spouse, partner, dating partner
- 18 years or older when the offence happened
- ordered by the Court
 - to attend PAR, or
 - to attend counselling as directed by a Probation Officer

How does a person get referred to PAR?

Attending PAR can be a condition of:

- a bail order (release before trial)
- a conditional sentence (to resolve the charge)
- a probation order (to resolve charge, may follow time in jail)
- a Peace Bond (a “Recognizance” to keep the peace, to resolve the charge)

Does the offender have to go to every PAR session?

Yes.

- offenders attend PAR because of a Court order
- The offender must attend all 12 sessions
- The PAR counsellor writes a report to the Court when the offender leaves the program
- If an offender re-assaults or breaks a condition of a court order, PAR can find him “in breach”, and he must go back to Court

Does the offender have to go to every PAR session?

There can be negative consequences, if the offender does not fully participate and complete the PAR program

- May be a violation of a Peace Bond or Probation Order (a criminal offence)
- Court can order a different outcome for the assault charge



How Does PAR Affect Women

How Does PAR Affect Women

Complainants of Domestic Assault

- the partner of an offender attending PAR will be contacted by a PAR counsellor
- PAR must try to contact the partner at least 4 times
- PAR offers to provide support, help with a safety plan, refer to other services
- Partner can agree or refuse to talk to PAR

How Does PAR Affect Women

Complainants of Domestic Assault

- PAR can report offender's progress in sessions
- If partner talks about ongoing abusive or controlling behaviour, this can be raised generally in a PAR session
- PAR tells partner in advance:
 - if she says offender has assaulted her again, PAR counsellor must report to police
 - if PAR believes children are at risk of harm, they will contact police or Children's Aid Society

How Does PAR Affect Women

Women Charged with Domestic Assault

- Can be referred to a PAR program
- Some PAR groups for women in same-sex relationships
- PAR course content is the same for everyone
- Many women accused are also survivors of intimate partner abuse

How Does PAR Affect Women

Women Charged with Domestic Assault

- Some PAR courses for women recognize the different impacts of charges on women
 - may contact partner by letter, only after she leaves PAR
 - may refuse to accept calls from men
 - may not disclose location of woman
 - may include safety planning
 - may discuss possible involvement of Children's Aid Society
 - may discuss employment impacts from charges



“PAR-like” Counselling

“PAR-Like” Counselling

- Some private counselling services call themselves like “PAR” or “court approved”
- Expensive and convenient
- Private counselling does not have to follow government guidelines
- Private counselling does not do partner contact or provide any supports to the complainant

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Exercise: Sample Situation 1

Sample Situation 1

Christa's partner Sam was charged with assaulting her, and the Court ordered him to attend a PAR program.

Three weeks ago, she got a call from a PAR counsellor who said Sam had just started attending PAR and asked Christa if she would like to hear back about how he does at the program.

Christa said she has broken up with Sam, she doesn't care what he's doing, she just wants him to stay away from her. She asked PAR to not contact her again.

Yesterday, Christa found some flowers with no note on her doorstep, and she is afraid Sam is going to try to force her to go out with him again.

Can she still call the PAR counsellor?

Sample Situation 1

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Christa said she has broken up with Sam, she doesn't care what he's doing, she just wants him to stay away from her. She asked PAR to not contact her again.

Yesterday, Christa found some flowers with no note on her doorstep, and she is afraid Sam is going to try to force her to go out with him again.

Can she still call the PAR counsellor?

- a) No, because she told the PAR counsellor she didn't want to have any contact.
- b) No, because she doesn't know for sure the flowers are from Sam.
- c) Yes. If she is afraid of Sam while he is still attending the PAR program she can contact them at any time for information and help.

Answer

Answer: c) Yes. If Christa is afraid of Sam while he is still attending the PAR program she can contact them at any time for information and help.

The PAR program is for partner/survivors of domestic assault, as well as for offenders. It is available to support partner/survivors in many ways, and can offer emotional support, safety planning, and referral to other community resources at any time while the offender is attending PAR courses.

It can be important for the PAR program to know if Sam is starting to contact her without her permission, and if he is scaring or threatening her. Harassing and threatening behaviour can be discussed in the group sessions (without connecting it to Christa).

In addition, if Sam breaks an order to stay away from Christa or threatens to harm her, he may be asked to leave the PAR program, or found to be breaking a Probation Order or Peace Bond, and may be charged again, or face a new sentence from Court.

If Christa is afraid, she can also consider calling the police.



Exercise: Sample Situation 2

Sample Situation 2

Mara has been in an abusive relationship for years. After she got married, it started with Ahmad saying he had “a husband’s rights” to sex, whenever he wished. He controls their money, tells her she would be “a terrible mother”, and has sometimes been physically violent.

One night, Mara pushes him away when he yells and moves toward her, and her ring cuts his face. He calls the police, and she is charged with assaulting him.

The Court sends Mara to attend PAR, and she goes while she is living at a shelter. Before she starts, the PAR program worker tells her about a rule that says her husband has to be contacted to tell him when Mara will start the program, and that he can contact PAR if he has any concerns.

When Mara moved to the shelter, she told Ahmad she wants a divorce and she is now terrified that he will try to find her and force her to go home. Is there anything Mara can do so that the PAR program does not contact Ahmad?

Sample Situation 2

Mara has been in an abusive relationship for years. After she got married, it started with Ahmad stating that he had “a husband’s rights” to sex, whenever he wished. He controls their money, tells her how she is a “bad mother”, and has sometimes been physically violent.

One night, Mara pushes him away when he yells and moves toward her, and her ring cuts his face. He calls the police, and she is charged with assaulting him.

The Court sends Mara to attend PAR, and she goes while she is living at a shelter. Before she starts the 12-week PAR program, they tell her that there is a rule that the partner of the person attending PAR has to be contacted, they will tell him when Mara will start the program, and that he can contact PAR if he has any concerns.

When Mara moved to the shelter, she told Ahmad she wants a divorce and she is now terrified that he will try to find her and force her to go home.

Is there anything Mara can do so that the PAR program does not contact Ahmad?

- a) No, the PAR program is a government program, and the PAR counsellors have to follow the rule to contact the complainant/partner of the person in the PAR program.
- b) Yes, the partner contact “rule” is only a guideline from the government, and if Mara tells the PAR counsellors not to contact Ahmad, they don’t have to.
- c) Yes, Mara should be honest with the PAR counsellors about her concerns, and ask them to not contact Ahmad or disclose anything about where she is.

Answer

Answer: c) Yes, Mara should be honest with the PAR counsellors about her concerns, and ask them to not contact Ahmad or disclose anything about where she is.

Mara should explain why she doesn't want Ahmad to find out where she is. The PAR counsellors are supposed to contact partners, and be open to hear their concerns while the accused person is attending PAR sessions, as a way to increase the safety of partners who have been abused. But if Mara believes *her* safety is at risk, the PAR counsellors will also help protect her safety, as best they can. If she tells them about her safety concerns, the PAR counsellors may have discretion in the way they deal with the partner contact rule.

Abusive partners sometimes call the PAR agency to further abuse the accused person, hoping to find out where she is and get other information about her. This is the reason why some PAR agencies do not accept calls from men, or do any direct partner contact while a woman accused is attending PAR. Instead, a letter could be sent after she completes the program or is discharged for any reason.

So Mara should be honest with the intake counsellor about her situation, and ask that they don't contact Ahmad while she is attending PAR or give him any information about her.

Presenters

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Additional Resources

Domestic Violence and Abuse

For information, if your partner or family member is abusive or violent:

Assaulted Women's Helpline <http://www.awhl.org/>

- 24 hours/7 days; multiple languages
- Toll-free: 1-866-863-0511; TTY: 1-866-863-7868

Legal Aid Ontario http://www.legalaid.on.ca/en/getting/type_domesticviolence.asp

- Available to every immigration status
- Free telephone interpretation services for languages other than English and French
- Toll-free: 1-800-668-8258; TTY: 1-866-641-8867

Family Violence Authorization Program (Legal Aid Ontario)

- Free 2-hour emergency meeting with a lawyer
- Offered through some shelters and community legal clinics
- Toll-free: 1-800-668-8258; TTY: 1-866-641-8867

FLEW (Family Law Education for Women) Resources page

<http://www.onefamilylaw.ca/en/resources/>

Domestic Violence and Abuse

Barbra Schlifer Legal Clinic

- Toronto: 416-323-9149 x278 (legal intake) TTY: 416-3231361
- Free counselling, referral, legal and interpreter services to survivors of violence (Family, Criminal and Immigration law)

Partner Assault Response programs and other victim services in Ontario

<http://services.findhelp.ca/ovss/>

Domestic Violence and Abuse

Network of Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Treatment Centres

www.sadvtreatmentcentres.net

Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres

www.sexualassaultsupport.ca/

Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (OAITH)

<http://www.oaith.ca/>

Family Court Support Workers

- Check local community agency or call Toll-free:1-888-579-2888 or 416-314-2447

Additional Resources (Family)

Legal Aid Ontario

<http://www.legalaid.on.ca/en/getting/default.asp>

- Toll-free: 1-800-668-8258; TTY: 1-866-641-8867
- Toronto: 416-979-1446 (accepts collect calls)

Family Law Information Centres (FLICs)

http://www.legalaid.on.ca/en/getting/type_family.asp

Family Law Services Centres (FLSCs)

<http://www.legalaid.on.ca/en/contact/contact.asp?type=flsc>

Family Law Education for Women (FLEW)

<http://www.onefamilylaw.ca/en/resources/>

Femmes ontariennes et droit de la familles (FODF)

<http://undroitdefamille.ca/>

Ontario Women's Justice Network (OWJN)

www.owjn.org

Additional Resources (General)

Victim Crisis Assistance and Referral Services (VICARS)

- Immediate, on-site service to victims of crime 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- Toll-free: 1-888-579-2888
- Toronto: 416-314-2447

Victim Support Line (VSL)

- province-wide, multilingual, toll-free information line providing a range of services to victims of crime
- Services available from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m., 7 days a week in 13 languages
- Toll-free: 1-888-579-2888
- Toronto: 416-314-2447

Court Prep

www.courtprep.ca

- provides information on the Canadian legal system and prepares victims and witnesses to give evidence

Ontario Justice Education Network

<http://www.ojen.ca>

Toronto: 416 947 5273

Additional Resources (General)

Law Society of Upper Canada Lawyer Referral Service

<http://www.lsuc.on.ca/with.aspx?id=697>

- Toll-free: 1-800-268-8326
- Toronto: 416-947-3330
- TTY: 416-644-4886

Toolkit for a good Client-Lawyer Relationship

<http://schliferclinic.com/vars/legal/pblo/toolkit.htm>

- Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic

Ministry of the Attorney General

<http://www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca/english/>

- Toll free: 1-800-518-7901
- TTY: 1-877-425-0575

Find a community legal clinic near you

<http://www.legalaid.on.ca/en/contact/contact.asp?type=cl>

211 Canada.ca

<http://211canada.ca/>