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Canadian observatory on the justice system's response to intimate partner violence

Progress Report

2010-2011 (June)

Canadian observatory on the justice system response to intimate partner violence
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Welcome to the Canadian observatory

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In 2007, the Canadian observatory on the justice system's response to intimate partner violence (the *Canadian observatory*) received funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council for a multi-year project to establish a research network. Currently the Canadian observatory is an international network of researchers, practitioners and policy-makers in Canada, Australia, United Kingdom, and United States. The *Canadian observatory* supports rigorous inter-jurisdictional analysis on justice responses to intimate partner violence. It is housed at the Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research, University of New Brunswick, under the leadership of Dr. Carmen Gill, Director.

The *Canadian observatory* is comprised of various teams and committees responsible for specific activities of the network. This report provides progress to date on the work of the following current teams and committees.

This is our second progress report. It covers the time period from June 2010 to June 2011.

"This report continues the mandate to keep partners up-to-date on the progress of our activities."

Data collection and data sharing: Moving forward on the justice system response to intimate partner violence
NOW on WEB

In the late spring of 2010, the Canadian observatory held a one-day workshop in Ottawa to bring together university researchers and federal, provincial, and territorial governments. The workshop was sponsored by the Canadian observatory and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. The goal of the workshop was to engage government researchers and policy makers in the work of the Canadian observatory to further collaborations and dialogue about research and justice responses to intimate partner violence and to move forward on data collection and data sharing. A set of proceedings (available on website at www.unb.ca/observ) was compiled. It includes suggestions by workshop delegates to strengthen relationships and move forward with data collection and data sharing between governments and the Canadian observatory.

Data warehouse

A goal of the Canadian observatory is the creation of a national data warehouse for storing and sharing data on the justice system's response to intimate partner violence. Initially the data warehouse will focus on accused who are involved with the justice system however future plans also involve the inclusion of data regarding the victims of intimate partner violence. The first task in establishing the data warehouse involved the development of a grid (variable list and code book) to gather information from various sources on offenders in Canada. This instrument which was piloted in Canada during 2007-08 and 2008-09 in three other countries (Australia, United Kingdom, United States) helps to ensure that the data collected in various jurisdictions will be comparable regarding the justice system response in intimate partner violence cases.

The next task in establishing the data warehouse involved the development of formal research agreements which provide for the release of information by governments to site researchers and ultimately the Canadian observatory. To date, research agreements have been developed and signed with the Yukon Territorial Government and the Government of New Brunswick.

“Data sharing is key to good policy.”

Data collection on victims

In 2009 a sub-team began to the development of a data collection instrument with a specific focus on victims who are entering the justice system. There is limited information on victims in the Criminal Justice System (CJS) files and thus the activity is a bit challenging. However, the team has compiled a set of research questions, draft grid, accompanying code book, a rationale for variables. The team will meet in Montreal in September 2011 to finalize the grid and code book and to discuss plans for moving forward with data collection on victims.

Program of research

New grant

The Canadian observatory was awarded \$20,000 from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council to develop a program of research.

This award will enable the network to more fully develop a program of research to examine the impact of justice system responses to intimate partner violence. The program of research will be a multi-country (Canada, Australia, UK, USA), interdisciplinary (e.g. sociology, criminology, health, education, social work), and multi-sector (e.g. universities, governments, community-based organizations) approach to understanding how justice is conceptualized and how justice responses impact victims, accused, children, and professionals. It will examine both traditional and specialized justice responses, the processes involved in determining effectiveness of specialized versus traditional processes, and the interaction between criminal and civil courts.

Compiling policies on justice response to IPV

By documenting government policies the Canadian observatory will be able to make deeper connections among parts of the policy cycle, that is, from a focus on policies, development and intent, to the implementation of policy in practice and procedure, in order to speak to policies impacts. In 2008 the policy scan sub-team began the compilation of federal/provincial/territorial government policies relating to the justice system's response to intimate partner violence.

In June 2011 the Canadian observatory held a successful meeting in Calgary between Canadian members and provincial/territorial governments. The goal of the meeting was to discuss the role and function of the Canadian observatory in relation to the identification, dissemination, analysis and development of criminal justice policies pertaining to intimate partner violence and to inform and engage provincial and territorial governments in the policy work of the Canadian observatory.

New scholars

Postdoctoral fellowship program

The Canadian observatory invites new scholars to participate in the network through a post doctoral fellowship program. Postdoctoral fellows of the Canadian observatory and their programs of research continue to reflect a diversity of research topics.

Steve Sellers of Griffith's University has been awarded a renewal of his fellowship. His research is an investigation of Australian police officers' attitudes and responses to intimate partner violence.

The Canadian observatory will be holding competitions for new postdoctoral scholars throughout the winter 2012.