

What is the DVCO?

Across Canada domestic violence is recognized as a unique crime requiring a unique criminal justice response.

The Smithers Domestic Violence ‘Court Option’ (DVCO) is a specialized criminal justice process for individuals who have been charged with spousal assault, and who are interested in taking responsibility for their actions and participating in the Counseling Program.

These individuals will receive assessment, counseling, support and supervision. They will have the opportunity to change their unwanted behaviours.

Benefits to an individual in the program may include gaining self respect by taking responsibility, gaining respect of family & friends by being accountable for their actions, setting an example for others, and showing their commitment to positive change in their lives. They may learn how to strengthen their relationships and enhance their quality of life.

For victims interested in participating, the DVCO provides support, safety planning, and information. Referrals can be made to counseling for women and children.

For more information:

**Smithers Domestic Violence
‘Court Option’ Coordinator**
250-

Smithers RCMP
250-847-3233

**Smithers Community
Corrections**
250-847-7365

Smithers Crown Counsel
250-847-7364

Specialized Victim Assistance
250-847-9000

or through the Smithers Domestic Violence ‘Court Option’ website:
http://www.domesticpeace.ca/sto_pviolence_dvcourt.html



Smithers Domestic Violence ‘Court Option’



Working with Smithers families to end domestic violence



What is domestic violence?

Domestic violence is the harming of an intimate partner through verbal, physical, emotional, or sexual abuse.

While disagreements and anger are normal in a relationship, healthy disagreements do not involve hitting, pushing, kicking, yelling, threatening, or demeaning.

Assault and uttering threats are crimes in Canada.

Domestic violence costs BC hundreds of millions of dollars per year in criminal justice expenses, medical expenses, compensation expenses, lost income, counseling & support expenses.

The longterm and far-reaching psychological and emotional costs to individuals, families, and communities is much greater.

What are the effects of domestic violence on the person being abused?

- Fear, terror, anxiety, confusion, always on guard, depression
- Loss of self-esteem, self-confidence, self-determination
- Humiliation, secrecy, mistrust, isolation, does not feel believed

What are the effects on children of witnessing domestic violence?

- Fear, anxiety, depression, a sense of it being their fault
- Changes at school, disinterest in usual activities
- Insecurity, watchful for danger
- Acting out: bullying, rebelliousness, anger, etc.
- Inability to form healthy relationships. Learn that violence in a family is normal behaviour.
- Adult Behavior: tries to keep the family safe, minimize the danger, protect the abused, take on extra responsibility, highly achieve, be perfect, keep the secret

What are the effects of violence on the person using it?

- Loss of self-respect
- Loss of respect from others
- Shame, anger, depression

How does the Smithers Domestic Violence ‘Court Option’ work?

Step 1: An individual is charged with spousal assault and makes their First Appearance in court. They are given information on the DVCO, and they discuss their options with a lawyer.

Step 2: If the individual is interested in taking responsibility for their actions and chooses to apply to the DVCO, they are referred to the Men’s Counseling Program & Community Corrections for a suitability and risk assessment.

Step 3: Once accepted to the DVCO, the individual must plead Guilty to the spousal assault charge.

Step 4: The individual participates in the program, including 17 group counselling sessions. If there are children in the family, they take an additional parenting component. Monthly case management meetings and check-ins are held with a Judge throughout the program.

Step 5: The individual successfully completes the program, and goes before the Judge to be sentenced. The Judge takes into account their work & progress while in counseling.