

Gender-based violence:

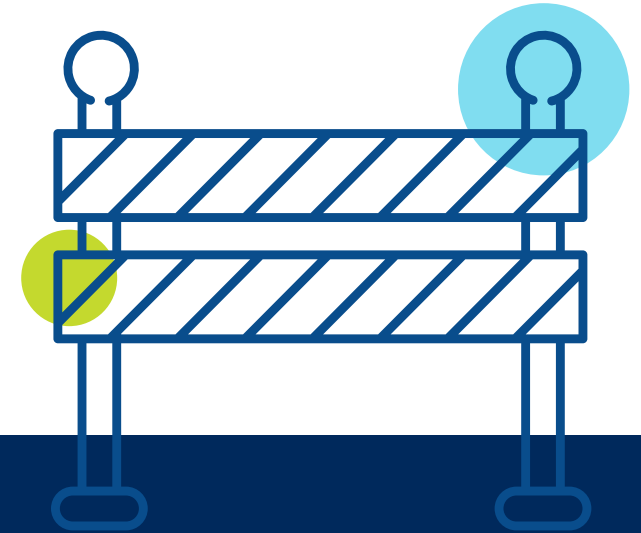
Creating trauma-informed dental care environments

Gender-based violence (GBV), including intimate partner violence (IPV), which is the most common form of GBV, is an epidemic in Canada, with 44% of women reporting experiencing violence from a partner in their lifetime.

IPV often results in trauma to the face, head, and neck directly impacting oral health. But the long-term effects of trauma can impair health, social and economic outcomes for survivors, above and beyond the obvious dental issues such as missing teeth and abscesses.

Despite the significant and widespread dental harms caused by gender-based violence, survivors continue to face major barriers to accessing the care they need.

As federal and provincial governments are taking action to improve access to dental care and have commitments to address GBV in all forms as a public health crisis, we recommend that ongoing dental care reforms explicitly integrate GBV considerations by ensuring trauma-informed, equitable access to care for survivors.



Barriers to Care

1

Affordability

Many women can not afford dental care due to a lack of insurance or income insecurity. Government programs are often limited in scope and do not cover comprehensive dental procedures to meet complex needs.

2

Availability

Few dentists are equipped to treat patients with histories of trauma from GBV or have established GBV protocols in the clinic.

3

Acceptability

Women report racial discrimination and misogyny within dental settings, which deter women from seeking or returning to care. The lack of culturally sensitive and trauma-informed dental services makes the clinical environment feel unsafe and alienating.



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Actions Recommended



1

Expand Public Funding for Dental and GBV-Responsive Care

Increase and align federal and provincial investments in the Canadian Dental Care Program and GBV support services to eliminate financial barriers and ensure survivors can access comprehensive, affordable oral health care.

2

Mandate Trauma-Informed and Culturally Safe Dental Training and Education

Integrate mandatory, ongoing training in trauma-informed, anti-racist, and cultural safe care into dental education and professional development to build practitioner capacity to deliver sensitive, survivor-centred care.



3

Establish Integrated Care Health-Dental-Social Care Models

Embed dental services within broader health and social care systems through formal collaboration with GBV, mental health and community services to deliver coordinated, holistic, person-centred support for women.



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