

Defend Dignity

Advocacy Handbook

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Mission Statement

Defend Dignity exists to end all sexual exploitation in Canada. Commercial sexual exploitation includes: pornography, strip clubs, escorts, massage parlours, and prostitution. All involve the selling of sexual services, which undermine the dignity of women, men, and children and are detrimental to a healthy society.



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Purpose of this Handbook

- To build a cohesive advocacy network across Canada for the issue of sexual exploitation
- To inform volunteers about the best ways to communicate with elected officials

This handbook is specific to Defend Dignity and accompanies *The Art of Advocacy, a handbook for non-profit organizations* by Habitat for Humanity with permission. *The Art of Advocacy* contains very valuable information that explains how to be effective advocates for a cause.

For a copy of this handbook, please go to <http://www.habitat.ca/files/4752180162832249.pdf> or search online for the *Art of Advocacy* handbook.

Defend Dignity

Defend Dignity (dD) is a justice initiative of The Christian and Missionary Alliance. We act as a catalyst for individuals and churches to end sexual exploitation in Canada through:

- Awareness of the realities of sexual exploitation
- Advocacy for law and policy reform
- Aid for individuals, churches and agencies

This Handbook

Focused communication is key to help exploited people and those at risk, affording an organized way to share information about things that matter to the people who can effect positive change.

This two-fold communication activity includes

1. becoming educated about the issues, both within your community, and in trends across the country; and
2. creating opportunities to communicate with those in your church community and with leaders.

This handbook is intended to assist you to deliver the message to those who need to hear it. We will reference *The Art of Advocacy* as a resource for advocacy specifics alongside this handbook.

Communicating

Build a communications team

Build a local communications team that can speak to community leaders about local issues. Your team should also be able to bring federal issues to the attention of the local congregation and the local community, informing and urging communities to take appropriate action. This may include letter-writing, petitions, or other actions as deemed appropriate.

As a team, you should have the following skills:

- Research capability for local current events that may impact related issues
- Research capability for provincial/territorial current events
- Connection to dD for two-way information regarding events and updated news
- Some comfort giving presentations
- Basic computer skills (letter-writing, email, internet)

Additionally, if there is an opportunity to share success stories, the following would be helpful though not necessary:

- Interviewing skills
- Writing skills
- Identify other support
- List local organizations, groups, individuals who are sympathetic to social justice issues. These will be resources for researching stories or for creating a unified voice for positive change.

We welcome all participation, but we **request that you let the Defend Dignity office know of your involvement**. This is so that we can keep you informed of national efforts, and that we will be informed about your efforts so that we can work together. We are most successful when we speak with one voice.

Find your message

Defend Dignity has created key messages to:

- Create support of Bill C-36, also known as *Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act*. For the full text of the Bill, go to http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/annualstatutes/2014_25/FullText.html.
 - Get in contact with all levels of government and reiterate why you are in favour of this type of legislation.
- Challenge the demand for commercial sexual services.
- Understand the impact of pornography and other forms of sexual exploitation.

All levels of government are impacted by these issues and are potential contacts.

Create local, provincial, and federal support for Bill C-36.

Locally:

- Encourage your local mayor and council and police chief to implement Bill C-36 and its regulations.
- Describe the local situation and why Bill C-36 should be enacted, using personal stories of those needing help in your community.
- Use statistics, if possible.
 - For example, Regina city council was handed an application to license a strip club, the first in the city to serve alcohol where there was stripping. Twenty-one different groups applied to make presentations to the council, citing the documented link between prostitution and strip clubs. The council voted the application down based on the need for more regulations to ensure worker safety. As well, the people who met one another while presenting to the council formed a loose coalition to ask the Saskatchewan government to repeal the law that had made it possible to have stripping and alcohol in the same venue.
- Present your concerns to the local board of education, highlighting the well-being of children.

Provincially:

- Contact your premier and attorney general, as well as the provincial association of police chiefs, and encourage them to ensure that the new legislation is enforced in all communities throughout your province.

Federally:

- Contact the Minister of Public Safety, asking him/her to expunge the prostitution-related charges for people who have been prostituted. The new law decriminalizes the selling of sex, but many exploited people still have records under the former laws. A criminal record will make it very difficult for them to be successful if and when they leave prostitution.
- Encourage the Ministers of Justice and Public Safety to mount a substantial public awareness campaign about the dangers of prostitution and other forms of commercial sexual exploitation, as well as the impact of the new legislation.

Challenge the demand for commercial sexual services:

- Research the demand of prostitution and other forms of commercial sexual exploitation. A place to start is the Defend Dignity website, <http://defenddignity.ca/addressing->

[demand/](#), and the website of an initiative that dD is co-leading, Buying Sex is not a Sport, <http://www.buyingsexisnotasport.ca/>.

- Ask the Minister of Justice to fund further research into the demand of sexual exploitation.
- You may want to advocate for a specific initiative to challenge demand, like a national “Arrest John” day, or something provincial or local in nature.

Understand the impact of pornography and other forms of sexual exploitation:

- Use the Prostitution and Porn facts on the Defend Dignity website as a starting point for your research: <http://defenddignity.ca/files-dl/>
- Locally, speak to school board trustees and council members about how this is impacting the young people in your community. Start a dialogue about ways that the education system can take preventative action. Prepare and suggest a couple of ideas. Contact Defend Dignity for assistance.

What to say:

- Meet with your local communications team and those that you have identified as sharing a similar mandate or values to keep informed about what is happening locally, and where you may be able to speak. Remember that speaking in support of good is as important as speaking against risky or dangerous proposals.

Who will you speak to?

Research and list all local elected officials and representatives for your area and their contact information. Identify, if possible, potential best allies of those elected. If they are established (two or more terms), check the record of how they voted on related issues:

- Are they business friendly? Is there a type of business that they seem to favour?
- Are they self-identified as supporters of family? Do they have families?
- Which committees have they been appointed to while in office? Does this indicate an interest?

If they are new to office, look at their campaign platform and the description of what they stand for:

- Family
- Business
- Justice
- Other

When communicating with a leader, refer first to the common ground that you may share. For example, if they are business-friendly, talk about the negative impact of certain types of business on the business community, such as strip clubs. Mention the need for increased policing. Also talk about doing the right thing. If their focus is sports, agree with the benefits of

sports in supporting a healthy personal lifestyle and the benefits of team sports to individuals and communities. Tie this healthy lifestyle conversation to the horrors of sexual exploitation and how to help all constituents.

Choose which level of government that best suits your specific issue of concern. To support a federal law, keep in close contact with your MP (Member of Parliament) and other interested and supportive MPs. Also keep other levels of government informed of what you are concerned about.

If the issue affects local business, the mayor and council should be the focus of expressing concern, keeping your MLA/MPP (Member of the Legislative Assembly/ Member of Provincial Parliament) and MP informed, as well as community members who are also in positions of authority and who share local concerns.

School trustees have a strong interest in the well-being of children and may be mistakenly overlooked as advocates of social change. Boards of education have large budgets, direct access to the provincial government, and a duty of care to youth and families. They are valuable allies.

Advocacy Preparation

Fact Sheet

Prepare a one-page fact sheet about various local, provincial, and federal issues. Start with the Prostitution and Porn facts on the Defend Dignity website at <http://defenddignity.ca/files-dl/>.

Presenting your message

When an issue is important and an elected person doesn't appear to understand the gravity of the situation, it is easy to feel frustrated and angry. Please remember that this is a person that has made personal sacrifices in order to serve. Even though they may not understand an issue in the way that you know it, they want to do what is best as they understand it. They deserve communication that is kind and clearly demonstrates the issue. Most of all, remember that God has chosen them to be in government; for that reason alone, they deserve respectful communication.

The decision is announced by messengers, the holy ones declare the verdict, so that the living may know that the Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of people (Daniel 4:17).

Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right (1 Peter 2:13-14).

The king's heart is like a stream of water directed by the LORD; he guides it wherever he pleases (Proverbs 21:1 NLT).

Presentations

Print and written

Prepare a variety of materials for when the opportunity arises. This may include some or all of the following:

- A letter with a brief summary of the problem and a rationale of what you want, the “ask” for a specific course of action, and your contact information.
- A document outlining your position with appendices of supportive facts and research.
- A copy of a short, relevant, factual article (or summary of an article).
- Fact cards.
- A summary of your group/organization or a brochure, if applicable.
- A PowerPoint presentation suitable for meetings.

Elevator speech

Be able to state in thirty seconds:

- What is the problem or situation that needs changing?
- What do you suggest that people do in order to effect the change?
- When, where, and how can they do this?

Public presentations

- City councils and boards of education allow delegations two to five minutes to deliver a presentation. This is a wonderful opportunity to share not only with elected officials, but with the community at large. These meetings are often recorded and may be available on the city’s website. Be sure to keep to timelines.
 - Council meetings are often televised locally
 - Ensure that the number of and profile of constituents are highlighted in the presentation, not just facts from another community
 - Your delegation should be mentioned
 - Bring handouts for all council (and senior staff)

Letters

For letters to all elected officials and bureaucrats, please refer to the *Art of Advocacy* for details, but

- be brief;
- be respectful, positive, and upbeat even in the face of potential controversy; and
- identify as a constituent and bring statistics for other, interested constituents.

It is not effective to write a letter to a leader that starts out berating and continues with threats. Be respectful, but get your point across. Please find below a suggested structure and content:

1. Salutation: use the proper title and position. See *Art of Advocacy* for protocol.
2. Recognize their position: “Thank you for your service to our community/country.”
3. Invite them to see the problem in the situation: “There is a [problem such as – new strip club, piece of legislation, etc.], that is of concern to our community, and I would like to address this with you.”
4. “As the [organizations and researchers] show, this is a problem for us in terms of [increased police costs, breakdown of families, increased criminal activity, etc.]” Approach them realistically and know your research.
5. Thank them for their anticipated action: “Thank you so much for looking into this and doing what is best for constituents.”

These suggestions are in addition to the structure indicated in the *Art of Advocacy*. Please see defenddignity.ca for sample letters for current issues.

Follow up

- Ask for an action to be taken that you can follow up later. For example:
 - A letter written on your behalf
 - An introduction to other elected potential supporters
 - A list of others that should be included in the information loop
- Ask for feedback
- Write a thank you letter after the meeting regardless of the outcome:
 - Gratefully acknowledge the time that was taken to meet with you
 - Indicate that you look forward to following up in the future
- Stay in touch. Keep them informed of new developments. If there are no new developments, write a note or phone and just let them know that you are still interested and seeking action. Remain polite.

Media relations

- Letters to the editor of the local newspaper
- Retweeting or sharing dD posts through social media
- If you have a personal and on-topic story to relate and can include a call to advocacy action,
 - call in to a talk show; or
 - write a column for the community newspaper

Please refer to *The Art of Advocacy* by Habitat for Humanity for the following:



- Guidelines for registered charity advocacy
- Six things you must do before you start an advocacy campaign
- Seven tips to creating an effective legislative strategy
- Writing a letter
- Emailing as an advocacy tool
- Meeting with your elected officials
- Participating in government consultations
- The importance of working with the media
- Writing a letter to the editor
- How to sustain and increase your advocacy effort

Defend Dignity Contacts

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