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13th WAVE CONFERENCE *11 - 13 October 2011, Rome*

THE METHODS GROUP FOR THE D.I.RE SHELTERS

The Methods Group of the Shelters which have been assiduously attended by the Anti-violence Centres of Florence, Ancona, Latina, Milan, Bologna, Como, Prato Trieste, Caserta, Montecatini, Lucca, has met 5 times between 2010 and 2011 and on each occasion, we have worked on a plenary basis as well as divided into two sub-groups: one concentrating on the work done with the women guests and the other on the work aimed at promoting the mother/child relationship. The final objective of both groups is to prepare a **booklet of good practice** to be used in the running of a Shelter for battered women and their children.

The women group

The Women Group mainly worked on the theme of emergency and on relationship aspects: regarding the relationship between the operators, the relationship between operators and the women in the shelter and the relationships between the women guests in the shelter, as we are all convinced that it is only through the relationships between women, that one can escape from violence.

We exchanged information as to how the Shelter is managed and how to conduct the interviews. One of the problems that emerged from our discussions was the relationship between our operators and institutional services, especially when Anti-violence Centres are conducted in conjunction with a Public Institution or charge a fee or some sort of rent. Public institutions often send women with a different mandate to ours.

The Women Group drew up some guide-lines to be followed in **emergencies**, which were approved by everybody. The group moreover drew up a questionnaire on the relationship theme, which will enable us to assess the most frequently recurring critical events and the strategies adopted by each different Shelter. The questionnaire answers provided by the various Anti-violence Centres who took part in the meetings are being currently assessed. This task is being carried out by a sub-group comprising Milan, Como, Florence; an initial elaboration is available.

We attach a scheme of the guide-lines to be followed in emergencies and the basic outline of the questionnaire.

Definition of the emergency

a) “The woman is not at home and /or does not want or cannot return home”

This emergency definition is shared by all and every Anti-violence Centre deals with these situations on a regular basis. Generally these situations can be reported by the woman herself, by the social services, the police, the hospital emergency wards, colleagues, etc.

Entrance procedures

The procedures activated – each with their specific aspects – are extremely similar. In the case of an emergency being reported, the social services or the person or persons who has/have reported it are contacted and if very urgent, many Anti-violence Centres find a hotel or pension for the

immediate emergency, should there be insufficient conditions for the woman to be given hospitality in the Shelter straight away.

- Evaluation interview
- Report
- Report to the police and/or the judiciary
- Introductory interview with mother and child

b) “The woman in the Shelter is in emergency”

As regards the work within the Shelters and working in and with emergencies is an “everyday occurrence”. An interesting definition is the possible different perception of the emergency by the operator and by the woman, which may not always coincide.

An “emergency” is generally understood to be an unforeseeable event.

Scheme of the relationship questionnaire

Relationships between the women:

- Relationships between the women operators and guests
- Relationships between the women guests
- Relationships between the women operators

Considering the differences between each Anti-violence Centre and with particular reference to the organisational aspects, it is important to answer very specifically, for better comprehension and for comparative purposes.

Organisational aspects of the Anti-violence Centre one is working in

- 1) How many hours do the operators, the consultants and the volunteers respectively spend per week in the Shelter?
- 2) Are there reference operators who take charge of the women guests? How many? (*Clarify in each case what a reference operator implies; e.g.: the person who keeps track of the operations and the contacts with the services, etc.*)
- 3) How is a reference operator selected?
- 4) What are the advantages and the disadvantages of your choice?
- 5) Should volunteers be present in your Anti-violence Centre, briefly describe what their duties in the structure are (*are the volunteers given the same duties as the paid operators? Details of the operator: who she is, what she does and what training has the Shelter/ Ante-Violence Anti-violence Centre operator been given?*)

Aspects of the work with the women

- 6) Do we carry out all the interviews with the women during the exit from violence?
- 7) If so:
 - What kind of interview (*formal-informal; focused; example of assessment, of the elaboration of the ill treatment, consultancies, etc.*) ?
 - How often do the interviews take place?
 - Where do the interviews take place (in the Shelter or at the Ante- Violence Anti-violence Centre)
 - Are the interviews compulsory?
- 8) What are the objectives of the work with the woman?
- 9) What instruments are employed?
- 10) What are the resources of the relationships created between the guests?

- 11) What are the main causes of conflict amongst the group of women guests?
- 12) What kind of instruments are used in managing the conflicts within the group of women guests?
- 13) What are the resources of the relationships created between the guests and the operators?
- 14) What are the main causes of conflict between the guests and the operators?

Team aspects

- 15) What are the main causes of conflict within the operating team?
- 16) What room is there for the management of the conflicts between operators?
- 17) Are all of us supervised?
- 18) If so, how often?
- 19) Do some operators only work with children/minors?
- 20) If so, do conflicts arise with the operators who only work with the women?

The childrens group

This group confronts the difficult theme of the relationship between mother and child in situations of abuse. Progress in exiting from violence is often blocked for shorter or longer periods, because, in confronting this problem, the abused women feel judged and are afraid that their children will be taken away from them. In order to support the parenthood issue, Anti-violence Centres adopt various strategies: self-help groups within the Shelter, self-help groups in the Centres, interviews with a psychologist, who only sees the woman in order to support her relationship with her offspring. An assessment grid has been drawn up for this group as well, in order to understand how this theme is confronted and feed-back from the Anti-violence Centres is expected.

The scheme for this instrument is attached.

Observation/assessment grid

The Minors Group has drawn up a grid for the observation of the mother-child relationships in the Shelters which has been approved by all the Ante-Violence Anti-violence Centres that took part in the national meetings of the Shelters.

It is a working instrument for the operators to make it easier to observe and assess the parenthood issue. It enables one to build up a mental scheme and focus ones attention on various areas of the child's life, examining a series of aspects, such as eating and sleeping habits, personal hygiene, play, response to crying, scholastic achievement, aptitude to relating with others. The grid is planned to operate on two levels – one concentrating on assessing the child and one assessing the mother-child relationship. When making use of this instrument, it might be advisable to notice the discrepancies and the diverse perceptions caused by the two levels of observation: for instance a child might relate positively to his/her peers, whereas the mother could perceive the situation differently, etc.

Area of development	Assessment of the child	Assessment of the mother/child relationship
FOOD	Variety of food	Variation in proposed food
	Type of appetite	Type of attitude to food
	Keeping to times and places where meals are taken	Keeping to times and places where meals are provided
SLEEP		
	Ways of falling asleep	Strategies of getting the child to fall asleep
	Problems related to sleep	Awareness of the problems and strategies adopted to confront them
PERSONAL CARE HYGIENE AND HEALTH	Self-reliance in washing and dressing him/herself related to the child's age	Ability to modify the self-reliant/ dependant relationship
	Symptoms of illness	Ability to correctly assess the child's health
PLAY	Variety of games	Varying playing opportunities
	Playing time	Respecting playing times
	Playing companions	Proposing playing opportunities
	Playing schemes and keeping to the rules	Authority in reproof and adequate attention
	Interaction with other children both inside and outside the Shelter or Centre	Proposing interaction with other children and suggesting the use of outside structures
CRYING	How the child cries	Emotional response to the child crying
	Recovery times	Ability to console
SCHOOL	Respect of school obligations	Respect of school obligations
	Relations with other children	Relations with the parents of other children
	Relationship with teachers	Contacts with teachers
	Scholastic achievements	Level of value given to scholastic achievement
RELATIONSHIP APTITUDE	Capacity and way of expressing emotion	Understanding and responding to the child's emotions
	Role in the mother-child relationship	Role in the mother-child relationship
	Experience of the father-figure	Emotional response to child's experience
	Demand for physical contact	Response to demand for physical contact