



MANITOBA ASSOCIATION  
OF WOMEN'S SHELTERS

# Comprehensive Introduction to Red Flag Laws in Canada

An overview of the purpose, legal  
framework, and implementation  
of Red Flag laws in Canada

Funded by Public Safety Canada

[www.maws.mb.ca](http://www.maws.mb.ca)



# Land of Acknowledgement

The Manitoba Association of Women's Shelters (MAWS) carries out its work on the original lands of the Anishinaabe, Ininew, Anishinew, Dakota and Dené Peoples, and the National Homeland of the Red River Métis.

We respect the Treaties that were made on these territories, we acknowledge the harms and mistakes of the past and present, and we dedicate ourselves to moving forward in partnership with Indigenous communities in a spirit of reconciliation and collaboration.

# About Us (MAWS)

**We are a network of women's shelters across Manitoba dedicated to providing safety, support, and resources to women, children and gender-diverse individuals affected by violence and abuse.**

**We provide leadership and support for organizations working with those experiencing abuse by identifying and addressing common areas of need, strengthening standard practices, providing a unified voice for advocacy and increasing public awareness of gender based violence.**



# About Red Flag Laws

MAWS received funding to mobilize training and education on Red Flags Laws across Manitoba. From Winnipeg to Thompson, frontline professionals are being trained on these Laws.

**Red Flags Laws were advocated for** by the National Association of Women and the Law (NAWL) and by PolySeSouvient, a Canadian gun-control advocacy organization.



# Amendments to Red Flag Laws

Red Flag Laws are subject to ongoing amendments as lawmakers, legal experts, and stakeholders continue to evaluate their implementation and impact.

Amendments may address the scope of petitions, procedural timelines, evidentiary requirements, due process considerations, and the roles of those involved in the application process.

**It is important for all parties to stay informed of current legislation, as Red Flag Laws may differ by jurisdiction and are subject to change over time.**

# What Are Red Flag Laws?

- Red flag laws, also known as **extreme risk protection orders (ERPOs)**, allow courts to **temporarily remove firearms** from individuals deemed a risk to themselves or others.
- They aim to prevent **gun violence, suicide, and domestic harm.**

Red Flag Laws legislation is subject to changes based on Amendments.

These Amendments aim to strengthen the legislation to better support victims and survivors, as well as advocates and frontline workers assisting with the application process.





# Why Red Flag Laws?

- Firearms in domestic situations increase the lethality of violence
- Red Flag Laws are the result of steps to reduce domestic gun violence

# Background & Context

Legal Foundation  
Bill C-21 (CAN)

1990s

**Originated in the  
United States (US)**

This law, called an Extreme Risk Protection Order (ERPO), was passed after a deadly shooting at the Connecticut Lottery headquarters.

2021–  
2024

**Canada introduced similar  
mechanisms through Bill C-21**

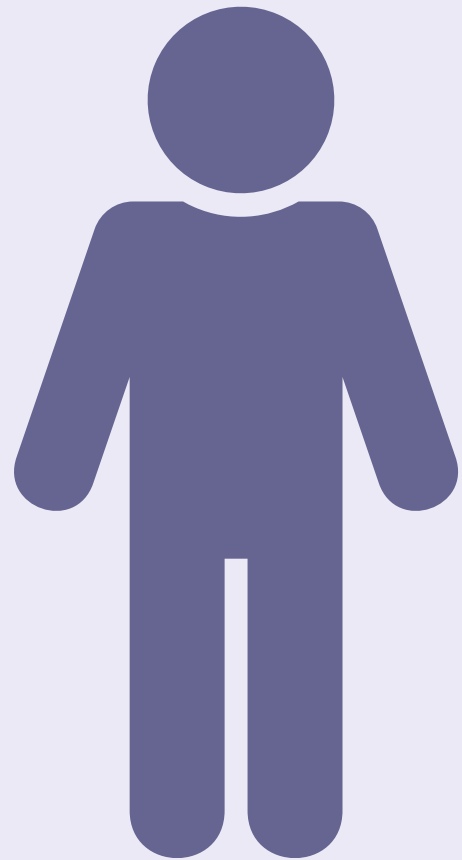
Bill C-21 introduced federal measures allowing individuals to apply to courts to remove firearms from a person posing danger.

Now

**Designed to strengthen public  
safety while respecting rights**

Expands the authority of law enforcement and courts to act on credible threats.

# Who Can Request a Red Flag Order?



- **Anyone with credible evidence of risk**
- **Family members**
- **Intimate partners**
- **Law enforcement**
- **Healthcare professionals**

# Protection & Privacy Measures

- Applications can be made confidentially to protect applicants.
- Courts assess both public safety and privacy concerns.
- Penalties apply for false or malicious claims.

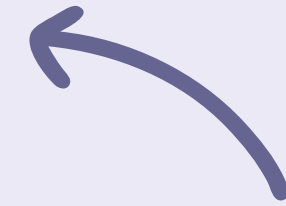


# Firearm Access Limitations Under Red Flag Laws

- Temporary removal of firearms while the risk is assessed.
- Permanent prohibitions possible in high-risk cases.
- Applies to PAL (Possession and Acquisition Licence) holders.
- Includes all firearm types and ammunition.

What steps do you think would need to be in place for people to be held accountable for false and malicious claims? (ex. community members, law enforcement, etc.)

Police & courts are often not trusted in many areas around the world. **How might one's cultural background impact help-seeking, reporting, and access to justice?** (ex. shame, mistrust, language, isolation, stigma, etc.)



Who decides what is "credible" evidence?

What happens when Orders such as these are decided by a justice system known for inequitable and discriminatory practices?

What needs to be considered so that the process – from start to finish – is culturally responsive a) for the applicant and b) for the accused?

How might our unique worldviews and biases impact our decisions?

# How the Process Works

**1**  
Application to the court citing risk evidence.

**2**  
The judge assesses the application and may issue an immediate order.

**3**  
Firearms and licenses may be temporarily seized.

**4**  
Review and renewal hearings ensure due process.

# Comparison: 'Red Flag' vs. 'Yellow Flag' Laws

## Red Flag

Court-ordered **removal of firearms** from individuals posing an imminent risk.

## Yellow Flag

**Temporary suspension** or review of a firearm license by the Chief Firearms Officer (CFO), **pending medical or safety assessment.**

*Both aim to prevent harm but differ in process and scope.*



## Benefits

- Prevents suicides and gun-related violence
- Empowers communities and families



## Challenges

- Balancing safety with civil liberties
- Ensuring consistent enforcement across provinces

# Challenges in Implementation

**Awareness  
and access**

**Court capacity  
and data gaps**

**Cultural competency  
training**

**Coordination  
across services**

# Article Review & Discussion

**CBC Article:** Doctor says proposed 'red flag' gun laws will help physicians save lives.

## Doctor says proposed 'red flag' gun laws will help physicians save lives

The proposed law would allow doctors and others to petition the court to seize a person's firearms

CBC Radio · Posted: Feb 04, 2020 4:44 PM CST | Last Updated: February 6, 2020



An emergency room doctor says 'red flag' gun laws will help physicians save lives. (CBC)

What concerns are expressed in this article about the practical application of Red Flag Laws?

| Comprehensive Introduction to Red Flag Laws in Canada

In considering our current broken systems and the criminalization of Indigenous peoples, what are the potential harms that the Red Flag Laws could create for Indigenous individuals and communities?

**What challenges might emerge when you consider the following:**

- Awareness & Access
- Court Capacity
- Data Gaps
- Cultural Competency & Cultural Humility
- Coordination Across Services



## Reflection & Discussion

**What are the potential harms that the Red Flag Laws could create among all vulnerable individuals and communities?**

- BIPOC
- Newcomers
- Homeless/street-involved
- Lower socio-economic status
- Substance involved
- Person with a disability
- 2SLGBTQIA+ people

**How do we measure the “success” of Red Flag Laws?**

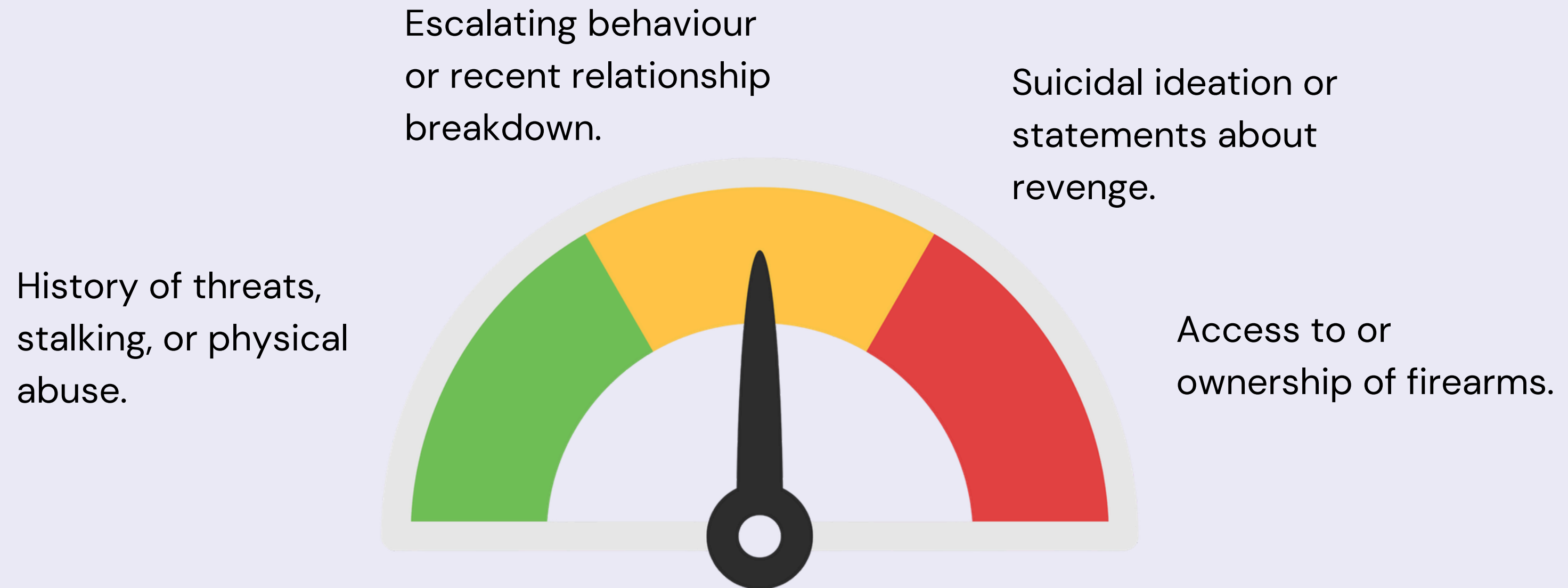
# Shelters Supporting Clients with RFLs



## **Role of Shelter & Crisis Workers**

- **Listen to and document** safety concerns.
- **Encourage clients to share** firearm-related risks with police.
- **Connect clients with Legal Aid** Manitoba or Victim Services.
- **Support emotional safety** planning and confidentiality.

# Risk Assessment Indicators for Shelter Staff





# Maintaining Client Safety & Confidentiality

- **Never confront** the respondent directly.
- **Use secure** communication channels.
- **Coordinate with law enforcement** discreetly.
- **Prioritize client** autonomy in decision-making.

# Cultural Lens on Red Flag Laws

- Culture shapes access and willingness to use red-flag tools.
- Silence, stigma, mistrust may inhibit applications.



# Barriers & Challenges

- Stigma, fear, immigration concerns.
- Mistrust of authorities.
- Community pressure or cultural silence.

# Case Example

## (Hypothetical Scenario)

A client reports fear of ex-partner who owns firearms.

Staff document threats and contact police.

EPO is granted; firearms removed.

Client receives Legal Aid and Victim Services follow-up.

1

2

3

4



# Case Study

## Canada

- **Example: Refugee woman experiencing Intimate Partner Violence and firearm threat.**
- Friend applies for red-flag order → intervention successful.

# Cultural Responsiveness Means...

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) can be **culturally embedded**.

**Providing culturally relevant services.**

**Culture affects** access and effectiveness.

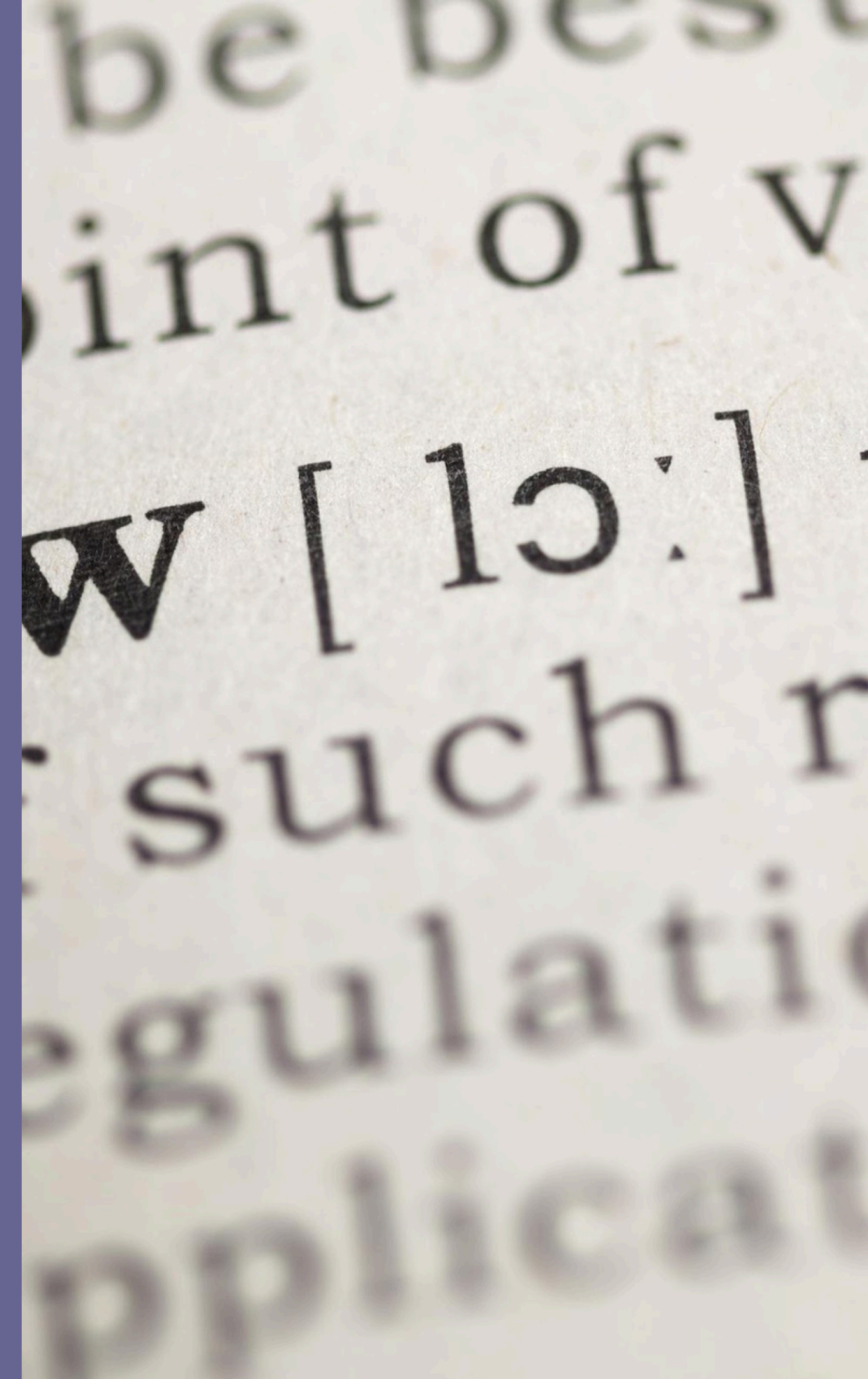
**Integration is key.**

# Recommendations



# Recommendations: Policy & Practice

- Culturally-safe awareness campaigns.
- **Justice and police training.**
- Cross-sector collaboration
- **Community partnerships.**



# Future Outlook

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- Red Flag laws mark a shift toward preventive gun safety
- **Success depends on public awareness, access, and fairness**
- Ongoing evaluation will refine the balance between rights and safety



# Collaboration with Police & Courts



Police enforce firearm seizures and EPOs.



Shelter workers can provide victim statements.



Judges review risk evidence to determine order length and conditions.

# Opportunities for Advocacy

- Culturally responsive and trauma-informed awareness campaigns
- **Justice and police/RCMP training**
- Cross-sector collaboration campaign/  
Community partnership building





## Training & Resources for Staff

- **RCMP and local police liaison contacts**

[Contacting Police](#)

[Contact the Manitoba RCMP](#)

- **Public Safety Canada – Red Flag Law Resources**

Public Safety Canada offers resources on "Red Flag" laws, which allow individuals to apply for an emergency prohibition order.

- **Canadian Women's Foundation – Firearms and GBV Resources**

[Gun Violence Against Women and Girls is Preventable](#)

[Queering GBV Prevention and Intervention: A Toolkit for Service Providers](#)

[Gun Control & Violence Prevention](#)

# Legal Supports in Manitoba

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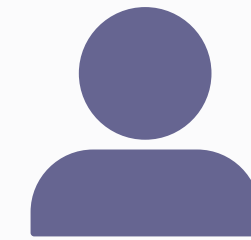
- **Legal Aid Manitoba:** assistance for protection orders and firearm concerns.
- **Manitoba Justice Victim Services:** supports and safety planning.
- **Family Law Manitoba:** Resources for protection and custody concerns.



**Legal Aid Manitoba**  
**Aide juridique Manitoba**



# Thank YOU!



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