



OCTEVAW CONSTITUTION

I NAME

The name of the organization is ***THE OTTAWA COALITION TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN (OCTEVAW/COCVFF)***.

Throughout this document, the initials VAW are used as a short form for the term “violence against women.” The term is intended to include, but is not limited to, sexual violence and woman abuse, as well as to children who have experienced or have been exposed to such abuse or violence. (Amended as of September 15, 2009)

II MISSION, VISION AND VALUES

Mission:

OCTEVAW is a coalition of organizations and individuals dedicated to ending violence against women and, through leadership, education, advocacy and political action, to promoting a coordinated response to women and their children who have experienced abuse.

Vision:

OCTEVAW aspires to a future in which:

- *no woman in our community need fear for her safety and well-being, or that of her children;*
- *respect for the inherent worth and dignity of all women is reflected in our public institutions;*
- *all members of the community are united in supporting efforts to ensure a permanent end to violence and abuse of women and their children in Ottawa.*

Values:

In working collaboratively to achieve equality of rights, fair access to services and resources, and social justice for women and their children who have experienced abuse, OCTEVAW adheres to feminist, anti-racist, anti-oppression and pro-choice principles, and is committed to celebrating diversity, inclusivity and the dignity of all women and their children. (Amended as of September 15, 2009)

We are committed to working towards ensuring that participation in the work of **OCTEVAW** is accessible to everyone who agrees with our mission, vision and values.
(Added as of September 22, 2008)

III PURPOSES AND OBJECTIVES

OCTEVAW works to end violence against women and their children who have experienced or have been exposed to abuse by promoting and assisting organizations in providing a coordinated response to VAW. (Amended as of September 15, 2009)

In pursuing this goal, OCTEVAW:

1. **advocates and promotes advocacy** on VAW issues by taking action to influence legislation, attitudes and practices;
2. **educates the public and raises awareness** about the issue of VAW;
3. **promotes development of and adherence to high standards** of effective service for women and their children who experience abuse;
4. **encourages and assists with the development of organizations** also concerned with ending VAW;
5. **promotes communication and cooperation** among public, private and non-profit organizations and individuals in the community who share these goals;
6. **freely exchanges information** with member organizations and individuals.

IV TYPE OF ORGANIZATION

1. OCTEVAW is an unincorporated, non-profit, non-partisan organization composed of a network of member organizations and individuals.
2. Members are located within the City of Ottawa and surrounding regions, with the exception of honorary members, who may be located anywhere.
3. OCTEVAW and its members are committed to conducting the affairs of the organization without discrimination or bias in any regard: political or religious affiliation, ethnic or national origin, race, age, marital status, gender identity, status in Canada, social position, sexual orientation or ability.

V LOCATION

The head office of OCTEVAW is located in the City of Ottawa, in the Province of Ontario. OCTEVAW may establish and maintain other offices or meeting places elsewhere, as needed.

VI MEMBERSHIP

1. Composition

OCTEVAW is composed of the following:

- a) Member organizations
- b) Individual members
- c) Honorary members
- d) Ex officio participants who are non members.

2. Admission

The following is a list of criteria related to each of the four categories of participation in OCTEVAW. In cases of doubt, the question of which category applies to a participant will be referred to the Steering Committee for resolution.

a) Member Organizations

Any organization that meets all the following criteria may apply to OCTEVAW Steering Committee for membership with OCTEVAW:

- the organization, by its stated purpose, objectives, programs and/or actions demonstrates that it is working to end violence against women and/or their children;
- the organization agrees to support OCTEVAW in achieving its purposes and objectives, and agrees with the principles enunciated in the OCTEVAW mission, vision and values statement;
- the organization is located within the City of Ottawa or surrounding regions;
- the organization agrees to designate a representative who will consistently attend OCTEVAW meetings;
- the organization agrees to sign the OCTEVAW Memorandum of Agreement regarding membership rights and obligations;
- the organization is non-partisan;
- the organization is non-profit;
- the organization is not in a position to fund OCTEVAW and thus to have potentially conflicting interests and responsibilities.

b) Individual Members

Any individual who meets all of the following criteria may apply to the OCTEVAW Steering Committee for membership with OCTEVAW:

- the individual has demonstrated a commitment to ending abuse and/or violence against women and their children;
- the individual is engaged in activities aimed at ending abuse or violence against women and children and/or protection of women and child victims;
- the individual agrees to support OCTEVAW in achieving its objectives and goals, and agrees with the principles enunciated in the OCTEVAW mission statement;

- the individual resides within the City of Ottawa or surrounding regions;
- the individual agrees to consistently attend OCTEVAW meetings, and;
- the individual agrees to sign the OCTEVAW Memorandum of Agreement regarding membership rights and obligations.

OCTEVAW is committed to facilitating the inclusion in the coalition of survivors of woman abuse.

c) Honorary Members

The OCTEVAW Steering Committee may consider granting honorary membership to individuals who, by virtue of their past contributions or achievements in ending VAW, merit the title “Honorary Member.”

d) Ex Officio Participants:

Individuals and organizations that do not meet all the criteria for membership are encouraged to contribute to, and participate in OCTEVAW meetings, excluding those meetings or parts of meetings dealing with issues pertaining to governance of the coalition. Ex officio participants have no voting privileges and are not required to pay membership fees or sign the Memorandum of Agreement.

3. Memorandum of Agreement and Membership Fees

- Upon acceptance, all members will sign the OCTEVAW Memorandum of Agreement; as necessary, this agreement may be revised from time to time by the Steering Committee, in consultation with members.
- Upon acceptance, all members will pay the annual membership fee.
- The fee schedule for members will be fixed by the membership at each Annual General Meeting and noted in the Memorandum of Agreement.
- The OCTEVAW Steering Committee may waive or reduce any membership fee it considers onerous or inappropriate.

4. Removal or Resignation

- Any member who has failed to comply with the obligations of membership as outlined in the OCTEVAW memorandum of agreement may be removed from membership or placed in a different membership category by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the members of the Steering Committee.
- Any member may submit a resignation in writing which will be effective upon acceptance by the Steering Committee.

5. Duties of Members

OCTEVAW and its members are responsible for

- articulating, safeguarding and promoting the mission, vision, values and mandate of OCTEVAW;
- approving governance structure; (Amended as of September 22, 2008)

- c) participating in the affairs of OCTEVAW through attendance at meetings, discussion and voting where appropriate;
- d) setting broad strategic directions for the coalition; (Amended as of September 22, 2008)
- e) approving proposed amendments to the Constitution;
- f) providing guidance to the Steering Committee where requested in respect of the financial affairs, activities and priorities of the coalition, principally through participation in standing committees;
- g) setting and approving annual membership fees.

VII MEETINGS OF MEMBERS

1. Frequency of meetings

- a) OCTEVAW members will meet as a whole a minimum of two times per year in general meetings.
- b) One of the general meetings will be called the Annual General Meeting (AGM).
- c) Other meetings of the membership as a whole may be called during the year for the purpose of professional development, or to carry out activities of mutual interest.
- d) Any member may call a special meeting after obtaining the support of 50% plus 1 of the membership. Such support must be proved by a gathering of signatures, which may include electronic signatures. If the special meeting is approved, reasonable notice of the date must be provided to the membership.

2. Notice

Notice of the time and place of the Annual General Meeting will be communicated to the membership at least thirty (30) days prior to the date fixed for the meeting. Notice of any meeting will remind members entitled to vote that they may do so by proxy.

3. Business of meetings

a) General meetings

At general meetings the business of the members will consist of, among other things:

- discussion and approval of any proposed changes to the mission, vision and mandate of OCTEVAW and/or to its governance structure and policies;
- participation in the strategic planning process;
- professional development.

b) Annual General Meeting (AGM)

At AGMs, in addition to any other business that may be transacted, the members will:

- conduct elections to fill vacancies on the OCTEVAW Steering Committee, based on recommendations from the nominating committee;
- vote on proposed amendments to OCTEVAW's Constitution;
- set and approve membership fees;
- receive an annual report from the Steering Committee and financial statements for the preceding fiscal year.

4. Quorum of members

Quorum for the transaction of business at all OCTEVAW meetings will consist of members present in person. This is interpreted to include their presence via telephone, proxy, teleconference or other electronic means that permit all persons participating in the meeting to communicate adequately. No less than 50% plus 1 present will constitute quorum.

5. Substitution of Members at Meetings

- a) Members agree to prepare for and attend meetings consistently and to accept those decisions made by the OCTEVAW when absent. If any organizational member is unable, due to illness or unusual circumstances, to attend a general meeting of the whole, or a meeting of a standing committee, the organization may appoint a substitute to attend in place of the absent member, and will advise the Steering Committee or the committee chair of the substitution with as much advance warning as possible. The missing member will endeavour with due diligence to inform his/her substitute of the issues at hand, and to prepare the substitute as much as possible for the meeting.
- b) Substitutes will attend and participate in meetings and vote where appropriate.
- c) Individual and honorary members may not appoint substitutes.
- d) No substitution of Steering Committee members is allowed.

6. Voting

- a) All members in good standing may vote, except for ex officio participants.
- b) Members who sign and abide by the Memorandum of Agreement, and who have paid the annual membership fee in full (unless exempted by the OCTEVAW Steering Committee) are considered members in good standing.
- c) Each member in good standing shall, at every meeting of members, be entitled to one vote in respect of each matter submitted to a vote of members.
- d) At each meeting of members every question put to a vote will be decided by a majority of votes cast. In the case of an equality of votes, the Chair will be entitled to cast a deciding vote.
- e) Voting will be by a show of hands, a declaration by the Chair that a resolution has been carried or not carried and an entry to that effect in the minutes of the meeting.
- f) Any member entitled to vote may do so by proxy, the process for which is outlined in the OCTEVAW *Policies and Procedures* manual.

7. Elections

Election procedures are described in the OCTEVAW *Policies and Procedures* manual.

8. Rules of order

The rules contained in the current edition of *Democratic Rules of Order* will govern OCTEVAW and its committees in all cases to which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with the provisions of this Constitution and any special rules of order the coalition may adopt.

VIII COMMITTEES

1. Role of and types of committees

- a) The affairs, funds and property, if any, of OCTEVAW will be managed by a Steering Committee composed of a minimum of three and a maximum of twelve;
- b) The principle issues and concerns of the coalition will be the focus of the Standing Committees: Accessibility and Outreach; Advocacy and Public Engagement; Front-line Support; and Justice;
- c) The business of all committees must be conducted with a commitment to the inclusion of all members regardless of political or religious affiliation, ethnic or national origin, race, age, marital status, gender identity, status in Canada, social position, sexual orientation or ability;
- d) The underlying concern and business of every committee is to end VAW, as defined in Part I of this Constitution. Each committee must take into account all aspects of VAW as so defined;
- e) Through its Steering Committee, OCTEVAW may create ad hoc committees, task forces and working groups as required to address issues that are not enduring in nature.

2. Election and terms of Standing Committees

- a) The chairs of the Standing Committees are elected in even years by the members of each committee;
- b) The Standing Committee chairs serve terms of two years, renewable twice, for a maximum of six (6) years.

3. The business of the Standing Committees

- a) The mandate of the Standing Committees, or any changes to the mandate, will be approved by OCTEVAW members. The basic concerns of these committees are as follows:
 - Accessibility and Outreach Committee: initiation and coordination of efforts to facilitate communication among members and to ensure that OCTEVAW, in its membership, policies and practices, lives up to its commitment to unbiased, non-discriminatory treatment and inclusion of

- all individuals and organizations within the VAW community, including women survivors of abuse and their children,
- Justice: the safety of women and their children who have experienced or have been exposed to abuse, their legal needs and interactions with the legal system in general; (Amended as of September 15, 2009)
 - Front-line Support: improved VAW services in Ottawa through enhanced coordination and accountability;
 - Advocacy and Public Engagement: initiation and coordination of advocacy and communications efforts designed to effect systemic changes related to women's equality rights and to promote understanding of VAW issues within the community.
- b) Each Standing Committee will develop an annual work plan, in accordance with OCTEVAW's strategic plan, for presentation to the Steering Committee.
- c) Standing Committees are responsible for ensuring that any proposals or recommendations they wish to make are thoroughly researched before being presented to the Steering Committee for consideration.

4. Frequency of meetings

Standing and ad hoc committees will determine the required frequency of their meetings.

IX THE STEERING COMMITTEE: COMPOSITION, POWERS AND TERMS OF OFFICE

1. Composition

- a) The Steering Committee will consist of a minimum of three (3) and maximum of twelve (12) members who reflect the diversity of the community, including the Chair, the Vice-Chair, the Secretary- Treasurer, the Chairs of the Standing Committees and up to five (5) members-at-large.
- b) The Steering Committee will maintain three permanent sub-committees, to be led and populated by members of the Steering Committee: Governance and Nominations; Finance; and Personnel.
- The Governance and Nominations Sub-committee will be responsible, among other things, for the process of recruitment, orientation and election of members and for setting out the qualifications and skills required to sit on the Steering Committee.
 - The Finance Sub-committee will oversee the financial operations of OCTEVAW, including budgeting, financial reporting and liaison with Family Services à la Famille Ottawa and funding bodies,
 - The Personnel Sub-committee will provide oversight and direction in the area of human resources and will liaise with Family Services à la Famille Ottawa in respect of all issues regarding the OCTEVAW employee(s).

2. Elections

- a) The Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary-Treasurer, and members-at-large of the Steering Committee will be elected at the AGM, in accordance with the OCTEVAW election process.
- b) Standing Committee chairs will be elected by their committees and announced at the AGM.

3. Terms

Each member of the Steering Committee will serve a term of two years, renewable twice, for a total of no more than six (6) years. The terms of office will be staggered, so as to ensure continuity and periodic renewal; the Chair, Secretary-Treasurer and members-at-large will be elected in uneven years and the Vice-Chair and committee chairs will be elected in even years.

4. Quorum

A simple majority of Steering Committee members will constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. The number of members of the Steering Committee may be increased or decreased, according to the will of the membership, by a majority of votes cast at the AGM.

5. Frequency of meetings

The Steering Committee will meet monthly, or as often as necessary to accomplish the business of the coalition.

6. Vacancies

So long as a quorum of Steering Committee members remains in office, they may by resolution or by majority vote appoint members to fill vacancies, however caused, and such appointed members will remain on the Steering Committee until the end of the term of vacancy. If there is not a quorum, the remaining members of the Steering Committee will promptly call a meeting of the members to fill the vacancies.

7. Removal from Office

- a) A member of the Steering Committee *may* be removed from office if she:
 - misses more than two consecutive Steering Committee meetings without discussion with the Chair;
 - acts in violation of the purposes and objectives of OCTEVAW or its policies and procedures; or
 - acts in any manner detrimental to OCTEVAW.
- b) Under the direction of the Steering Committee, the Governance and Nominations Sub-committee will give written notice to the member of its intention to consider the member's removal at least 30 days in advance of the next Steering Committee meeting. The member has the right to show cause, in writing or in person, as to why the removal is unwarranted;
- c) Removal is effective upon two-thirds (2/3) vote in favour at the designated meeting of the Steering Committee.

8. Duties of Steering Committee

The Steering Committee is charged with governing the affairs of OCTEVAW and is accountable to its members. Steering Committee members will conduct the affairs of OCTEVAW in all respects with a view to implementing the purposes and objectives as stated in this Constitution, in the spirit of the OCTEVAW mission, and in accordance with the governance structure approved by the members. (Amended as of September 22, 2008, September 15, 2009) Its role is to

- a) provide direction and leadership to OCTEVAW, and ensure the continuous development of a robust governance framework; (Amended as of September 15, 2009)
- b) ensure that issues including, but not limited to, sexual violence and woman abuse, as well as to children who have experienced or have been exposed to such abuse or violence, are taken into account and fairly represented in the work of all committees, and that resources are fairly allocated among these issues; (Amended as of September 15, 2009)
- c) develop and approve operational policies; (Added as of September 22, 2008)
- d) hire senior staff to manage the operations of OCTEVAW, and provide direction to, and evaluate senior staff performance;
- e) enter into contracts on behalf of OCTEVAW for the provision of any goods or services deemed beneficial to the interests of the coalition and consistent with the mission of the coalition;
- f) maintain oversight of OCTEVAW's financial status, develop and approve operating budgets and account for the use of funds to members and stakeholders;
- g) oversee the provision of services to members, including information exchange and professional development activities;
- h) approve terms of reference, oversee and support the work of committees through allocation of resources among committees and other forms of assistance;
- i) represent OCTEVAW with stakeholders, media and members of the public;
- j) review OCTEVAW's performance, structures, programs and other initiatives to ensure objectives are met; propose changes where necessary;
- k) ensure appropriate systems are in place for the recruitment, orientation and election of Steering Committee members and for the orderly succession to new leadership of the coalition.

(Amended as of September 15, 2009)

X AMENDMENT OF CONSTITUTION

1. Authorization by Annual Meeting

The Constitution may be amended or repealed at the Annual General Meeting by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the accredited voters, the changes to take effect immediately following the meeting.

2. Source of Amendments

Amendments may be proposed by any voting member in good standing, and by the Steering Committee.

3. Notice

Notice of proposed amendments will be communicated in writing to the members and the Steering Committee at least 30 days prior to the AGM.

This constitution has been enacted by OCTEVAW members on 24 October 2007.