

# YELLOW BRICK HOUSE



**Shelter  
Counselling  
Education**

*20th Anniversary  
1979-1999*

## *Information Manual*



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# YELLOW BRICK HOUSE

## *Information Manual*



Text written by: Filomena Williams, S.S.W.

Edited by: Helen Claire Catalano, B.A.



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# *Every Person's Bill of Rights*

*To* be treated with respect

*To* have and to express feelings and opinions

*To* be listened to and taken seriously

*To* set one's own priorities

*To* say no without feeling guilty

*To* ask for what you want

*To* get what you pay for

*To* ask for and receive information from professionals

*To* make mistakes

*To* choose when to and when not to be assertive



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# *Mission Statement*

*Y*ellow Brick House is a non-profit organization in York Region committed to providing the culturally diverse community with:

- \* safe shelter and support services for women and their children in crisis as a result of abuse or loss of housing
- \* ongoing counselling for women and their children
- \* information and education about the effects of abuse on women, their families and the community

*We*, supported by a caring community, assist women to live abuse-free lives and to reach their full potential.



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# *Preface*

*R*ecent studies estimate that one million women in Canada are abused. Historically violence was an accepted and approved method for controlling and “disciplining” one’s wife and children. In contemporary society this attitude is no longer accepted and violence against women is recognized as a social problem.

*I*ncreased public awareness has contributed to establishing the need for a network of community services (medical, legal, police, clergy, social) to effectively respond to abused women.

*T*he purpose of this manual is to provide basic and accessible information for social service agencies and law enforcement professionals assisting families experiencing abuse.

*I*n addition to increasing the level of awareness of Yellow Brick House services, the objective of this manual is to establish Yellow Brick House as a resource base for information relating to woman abuse.





# *History of Project Hostel o/a Yellow Brick House*

*P*roject Hostel Inc. o/a Yellow Brick House first opened its doors to women and their children in crisis on May 9<sup>th</sup>, 1979.

*P*roject Hostel Inc. o/a Yellow Brick House operates an Emergency Shelter, Counselling and Legal Support Services, and Reta's Place.

## *Funding*

*Y*ellow Brick House has an annual operating budget in excess of \$1.5 million and funding is received from:

- \* fundraising events and donations
- \* investments
- \* grants & foundations
- \* Ontario Ministry of Community & Social Services
- \* Canada Mortgage & Housing Corporation
- \* United Way
- \* Reta's Place rent



# *Philosophy*

*Every human has the right to live without fear of physical or emotional abuse.*

*All people have the right to decide for themselves the direction of their lives according to their own values and needs.*

*No one deserves or provokes violence.*

*No one likes being physically hurt or emotionally degraded.*

*All community members have a responsibility to intervene when violence is perpetrated upon another individual, regardless of where that violence is taking place.*



## *Role Within the Community*

*To* provide a safe and secure refuge for women who have been physically or emotionally abused, threatened or assaulted.

*This* refuge is to include temporary accommodation, food and other necessities on an emergency basis, and is to be provided to women, with or without children.

*To* offer crisis counselling so that a woman may gain a perspective on her situation and consider alternatives and options.

*To* offer court support to women going through the legal system.

*To* offer practical help and information so that she may make realistic plans about her life.

*To* provide information and education for community and professional groups on the problems of abused women, their needs, and the needs of their families.

*To* contribute to the community's understanding of the issues of violence against women and to assist with public efforts to prevent and reduce violence against women.

*To* provide appropriate referrals and establish contact with community agencies and resources.

*To* provide all of the above with a non-political, non-proselytizing philosophy.



# *Project Hostel o/a Yellow Brick House – Programs*

- \* Emergency Shelter located in Aurora
- \* Yellow Brick House Counselling & Legal Support Services located in Thornhill
- \* Reta's Place located in Aurora
- \* public education
- \* fundraising





*Program*

# *Yellow Brick House Emergency Shelter*

*Y*ellow Brick House operates an emergency shelter on a twenty-four hour basis. The objectives are:

- \* to serve women and children in crisis in York Region by providing shelter and/or support services
- \* to see that each individual receives help in accordance with her specific needs
- \* to strengthen the co-ordination of existing services for women and children
- \* to keep an accurate and confidential statistical record of women and children served

## *i) Criteria for Admission*

*C*lients requesting admission to the shelter must be in crisis. It is the responsibility of the intake worker to determine whether or not a client is in crisis and requires emergency housing. Priority is given to:

- \* women experiencing abuse (with or without children)
- \* women with children from York Region experiencing a housing crisis
- \* single women from York Region
- \* women with children from other regions

*S*ingle women who are not abused can stay at yellow brick house if space permits; however, they should be made aware of the priority system and the possibility that they may be asked to leave within twenty-four hours if space is needed. Staff will help the woman relocate.



## ii) Criteria for Non-Admission

*W*ith women and children already in the facility, it is considered too disruptive and unsafe to accept women who have alcohol, drug, psychiatric or serious health problems. Women who are intoxicated, undergoing alcohol or drug withdrawal, or considered to be violent are not accepted. Eligibility is determined by staff after an in-depth interview.

*W*omen with male children over the age of fourteen years will be requested to make alternative arrangements for them.

## iii) Capacity/Length of Stay

*Y*ellow Brick House can accommodate twenty-one women and children.

*A* woman and her children can stay a maximum of six weeks.

*I*f the house is full, arrangements for a motel or a referral to another shelter is handled by the staff on duty.



#### iv) How Do Women Contact the Shelter

*Y*ellow Brick House's services within the community include twenty-four hour crisis telephone lines providing crisis counselling for non-residents and ex-residents. The telephone lines include toll free numbers (1-800-263-2231 or 1-800-263-3247).

*A* woman may also come directly to the shelter for in-person counselling. Social service agencies, doctors, police officers and friends can refer women to Yellow Brick House.

*W*hen appropriate, Yellow Brick House will provide transportation funds so that women may access the shelter at any time of day and night.

#### v) Settling Into the Shelter

*U*pon arrival at Yellow Brick House, a woman is met by a trained counsellor who will provide crisis counselling and support. As part of the "settling in" process women are assured of their confidentiality. Clients are informed that their stay is confidential, except if family and children's services intervention is required. Confidentiality is an absolute! It ensures the client's safety and respects her right to privacy.

*I*n addition to crisis counselling, clients are supplied with an information handbook about the house. This handbook includes some important rules about food preparation, cleaning, responsibility for children and security. Most rules relate to co-operative living. These rules explain the fact that there is no liquor, drugs, or violence allowed on the premises. For security purposes, residents do not answer the telephone or doors. All visitors are screened before admission and male visitors are discouraged.



## vi) Basic Needs

*Y*ellow Brick House provides women and their children with:

- \* shelter
- \* food
- \* clothing\*
- \* transportation money
- \* coverage of non-prescription drugs
- \* toiletries

*\* Access to a clothing depot is provided to those in need in the community.*





## Emergency Shelter Programs

### i) Crisis Counselling

Supportive informal counselling is provided to residents.

### ii) Children's Program

This program is co-ordinated by trained childcare workers. The childcare team is an important and vital part of the service as approximately half of the residents are children. The team:

- \* provides recreational and emotional support
- \* helps women understand and deal with the crisis their children are experiencing
- \* helps children cope with the separation and the effects of the violence they have witnessed

Childcare staff also spend time with the women, individually and in groups, assisting them in:

- \* developing positive parenting skills
- \* understanding the effects of violence and separation on children's emotions and behaviours
- \* exploring non-violent disciplining techniques and effective communication skills

Weekly parenting groups encourage the women to share concerns about their parenting and their new roles as single mothers.

