

Taking Action on Family Violence



May 2004

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Taking Action on Family Violence

The Alberta Government is committed to preventing and responding to family violence issues in our province. Through its collaborative efforts with not-for-profit organizations, police services, women's shelters, sexual assault centres, multi-cultural organizations, corporations and local businesses and dedicated community groups and volunteers, the Alberta Government's goal is to have a province that is violence-free.

The Alberta Roundtable on Family Violence and Bullying will build on the effective practices currently in place to address these issues in Alberta. This document highlights some of the important steps your government has taken through its cross-ministry approach and partnerships with key stakeholders to develop strategies and share ideas for the future.



Taking Action on Family Violence

A Cross-Ministry Approach

In 1984 the Alberta Government established the Interdepartmental Committee on Family Violence (ICFV) to address family violence issues from a government-wide perspective. The ministries involved include Children's Services, Health and Wellness, Human Resources and Employment, Justice and Attorney General, Community Development, Solicitor General, Learning, Seniors, and Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. Each ministry is committed to preventing family violence whenever possible and helping Albertans deal with issues related to family violence.

The committee, which meets monthly, has identified five key areas of ongoing action: prevention, protection, intervention/treatment, education/co-ordination and policy.

A Framework for Action on Family Violence

In 1992, the Alberta Government endorsed the Framework for Action on Family Violence, developed by the Interdepartmental Committee on Family Violence. The framework was based on two principles:

1. All Albertans should have access to information about family violence and a range of service options to address their needs; and
2. Initiatives should be designed to promote an appropriate level of self-determination.

This document highlights ICFV the work that has been done in the past, and projects that are currently underway, on a ministry by ministry basis.

In 1992, the Alberta Government endorsed the Framework for Action on Family Violence, developed by the Interdepartmental Committee on Family Violence



Alberta Children's Services



Alberta Children's Services

In addition to the work of 10 Child and Family Services Authorities throughout Alberta that investigate reports of child abuse and neglect and intervene when necessary, Children's Services works with many government and non-government partners on initiatives or programs related to family violence.

Office for the Prevention of Family Violence

In 1984, the Alberta Government established the Office for the Prevention of Family Violence (OPFV) to provide support and leadership in developing an effective response to family violence. The first of its kind in Canada, the OPFV is responsible for distributing educational materials, developing government policies and funding emergency shelters and prevention projects.

Children's Services is home to the Office for Prevention of Family Violence. The first of its kind in Canada, the OPFV is responsible for distributing educational materials, developing government policies and funding emergency shelters and prevention projects

Some recent work the OPFV has been involved in includes:

- Participating in Family Violence Prevention Month activities. The OPFV distributes family violence prevention materials each year in advance of Family Violence Prevention Month in November, and works with community partners and the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters to raise public awareness about the issue.
- Working with Alberta Justice and Attorney General, the OPFV was part of the police and community level training to deliver the Protection Against Family Violence Act (PAFVA) information to police members, child welfare officials and community agencies in Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie, Edmonton, Calgary, Lethbridge, Drumheller, Red Deer and Lloydminster. As of April 1, 2004, participants in 12 identified sites have received this training, and by mid-2004, the goal is to have every RCMP member in the province receive the training. The OPFV also co-chaired a Police Training Working Group regarding the initial orientation of the PAFVA to all police members.



- Signing a Memorandum of Understanding between the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters, the Province of Alberta and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police "K" Division. The agreement was signed in July 2002 to establish terms of their relationship, objectives, roles, dispute resolution and security concerns related to family violence. In 2004, the Solicitor General became a signatory to the agreement.
- Providing the Solicitor General's annual training on family violence issues to the RCMP Investigators Training program every year since its inception in 1992.
- Participating on the Federal, Provincial, Territorial Working Group on Family Violence. The OPFV will host the next meeting of that group in Edmonton in September 2004.
- Working with the manager of Initiatives Development from Children's Services to develop and deliver information and training to all care providers of children under five on the impact of exposure to family violence on young children and to link these providers with community resources to identify and develop appropriate early responses.
- Chairing the Protection Against Family Violence Act (PAFVA) Evaluation committee. Evaluation of that legislation is underway.
- Operating the Alberta New Identities for Victims of Abuse (NIVA) program, designed to assist individuals who are escaping life-threatening domestic violence. The program provides individuals and their children (if necessary) with temporary protective measures until a threat assessment is made, after which varying levels of new identities may be provided.

Children's Services operates the New Identities for Victims of Abuse program





Child Welfare Program

The Child Welfare program's current initiatives in response to family violence issues in Alberta include:

- Providing ongoing support for the 24-hour child abuse hotline.
- Organizing the biennial Children's Forum, which provides an opportunity for a broad base of individuals and groups to share concerns and hopes for children and to agree on ways to improve their lives.
- Working with other ministries in the development of a Child Abuse Handbook. The handbook provides an overview of child abuse and describes indicators of abuse, reporting responsibilities, and the roles of the professionals who are involved in the investigation and management of these cases.
- Supporting the Youth Secretariat, which advises the minister on programs and services for youth. The objectives are to help keep youth strong and healthy and to reduce the risk of youth with multiple needs.
- Participating with other ministry partners in the Alberta Children and Youth Initiative (ACYI), an Alberta Government initiative developed to ensure children are safe, well cared for, successful at learning, and healthy.
- Protecting children from prostitution. A major program of the ACYI is the Protection of Children Involved in Prostitution program (PChIP). Based on PChIP legislation, where child prostitution is viewed as child abuse, child welfare workers may confine young people who have been prostituting for up to 72 hours in order to counsel and provide other services that are intended to help victims get off the streets.

Children's Services provides operational funding for 26 women's emergency shelters and Rural Family Violence Prevention Centres, two second-stage housing projects and fee-for-service agreements with two First Nations women's emergency shelters

Women's Emergency Shelter Program

Children's Services provides operational funding for 26 women's emergency shelters and Rural Family Violence Prevention Centres, two second-stage housing projects as well as fee-for-service agreements with two First Nations women's emergency shelters.

Ongoing initiatives in this area include:

- Working with the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters (ACWS) to develop a curriculum and provide training to shelter workers on children exposed to family violence. The first Level One training was held in Edmonton. A second phase of this training will be held in June 7-11, 2004.



- Working with the ACWS and the Canadian Outcomes Institute to develop and implement an automated process to collect demographic data and report on service use from women's emergency shelters and second-stage housing projects.
- Working with the ACWS to review current women's shelter programs to reflect standards that will ensure consistent service delivery across the province.

Alberta's Family Violence Review Project

In June 2002 the Minister of Children's Services approved the establishment of a Family Violence Review Project team to review Alberta's current legislation and policy for prevention of family violence, and to ensure that services are comprehensive and of the highest standard.

Following the development of a working paper and community stakeholder information sessions, the final discussion paper – A Coherent and Principled Response to Family Violence in Alberta: Recommendations for Change and Action – was submitted to the minister on Nov. 1, 2003. The paper identifies a number of effective and innovative community-based programs and partnerships that are currently addressing family violence issues in Alberta through a collaborative and co-ordinated response.

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The Alberta Children and Youth Initiative

The Alberta Children and Youth Initiative (ACYI) brings together the eight government ministries and two partnering agencies (AADAC and the Alberta Mental Health Board) that deliver services for children and youth to address bullying and youth violence within the Framework for Action on Family Violence. These efforts include:

- Identifying current best practices in prevention and program initiatives to address the issue of bullying; and
- Identifying ways and means to co-ordinate and build on the effective programs and services across Alberta to prevent and respond to the issues surrounding bullying and youth violence.



The Provincial Task Force on Children at Risk

Following the 1999 shooting and killing of a student in a high school in Taber, Alberta, the Premier established a Task Force on Children at Risk. Chaired by the Minister of Children's Services, the Task Force's final report – Start Young Start Now – included a recommendation to “take steps to prevent and protect children and youth from abuse, violence, bullying and gang activities.” This recommendation addressed the need to co-ordinate and expand successful strategies for reducing bullying, violence and gang-related activities in schools and communities.

Chaired by the Minister of Children's Services, the Task Force's final report – Start Young Start Now – included a recommendation to “take steps to prevent and protect children and youth from abuse, violence, bullying and gang activities”

The Task Force on Children at Risk served as a catalyst for partnerships to develop community-based programs and services to prevent and address bullying. The Safe and Caring Schools initiative was established with a goal to emulate this philosophy in every school and community across Alberta. This comprehensive initiative recognizes that successful outcomes hinge on community ownership, parent involvement and youth driven approaches.

The momentum created by the Task Force is maintained through the Uniting For Children Forum held every two years. This forum engages a broad range of Albertans in efforts to support a better future for children and youth. Participants learn about effective and innovative approaches and recommend joint strategies that can make a difference for children and youth across Alberta.

A Youth Advisory Panel was also established to ensure youth viewpoints could find their way into the policies of government. This group of Alberta youth, led by the Youth Secretariat, works with Children's Services and the Children's Advocate to organize and facilitate regional forums to give a voice to youth issues and recommendations from across the province.



Alberta Health and Wellness



Alberta Health and Wellness

Alberta Health and Wellness contributes to family violence prevention and detection in the following ways:

- Delivering, via health authorities and individual practitioners, accessible, effective, quality health services to Albertans who are injured, ill or in need of diagnosis, treatment and support.
- Identifying situations of family violence and assisting affected individuals through the provision of community-based programs and health authority personnel.

One example, the Young Family Wellness Initiative, has recently enhanced services available for pregnant women and families with young children by providing increased opportunity to identify individuals who are at high risk for family violence. Programs such as community kitchens, pre-natal nutrition programs, Mom and Tot support groups, and home visitation services to high risk or vulnerable families provide a supportive environment that enables participants to disclose situations of violence and be appropriately referred to community agencies. Home Care workers are also in a position to identify when disabled or elderly persons are experiencing abuse and assist them to seek help.

The Young Family Wellness Initiative has recently enhanced services available for pregnant women and families with young children by providing increased opportunity to identify individuals who are at high risk for family violence

- Providing health promotion and protection programs, along with disease and injury prevention programs to address risks to health where knowledge or early intervention can make a difference. Alberta Health and Wellness provides annual funding to the Alberta Centre for Injury Control and Research, a leading multi-sector stakeholder in the development of a provincial strategy for intentional and unintentional injuries.
- Offering wellness programs by health authorities and community agencies and provincial initiatives such as the Healthy U information and education campaign help raise awareness of family violence, enable Albertans to make informed decisions about their health, and link them to other information and tools to help them prevent illness and lead healthier lives.
- Co-leading a cross-ministry committee to develop a Provincial Family Violence Treatment Program Framework. (Details are provided in the Alberta Mental Health Board section on page 12.)

The Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission and the Alberta Mental Health Board receive funding directly from Alberta Health and Wellness to deliver services.



Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission

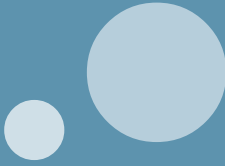
The Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission (AADAC) views family violence as a behaviour associated with, but not caused by, alcohol, substance use and gambling problems. Their programs help clients deal with family violence issues through referral to appropriate services and supports.

The Commission contributes to family violence programs and initiatives by:

- Participating on the Interdepartmental Committee on Family Violence. AADAC is also a member of the Provincial Family Violence Treatment Program Committee.
- Assisting with the implementation of the *Protection Against Family Violence Act*.
- Supporting Family Violence Prevention Month activities. In co-operation with the Office for the Prevention of Family Violence, the Commission distributes materials to its network of offices and funded agencies in more than 40 communities throughout the province.
- Participating in the Alberta Children and Youth Initiative and the provision of information, prevention and treatment programs directed to youth. AADAC works to provide assistance to those impacted by family violence and to break the cycle of violence. They also work closely with Alberta schools. New alcohol, drug and gambling problem school curriculum materials are available for Grades 4, 7, and 9, with Grade 11 materials under development.
- Participating on a number of other provincial and local committees and working groups where family violence and addiction issues are being addressed.

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Alberta Mental Health Board

The Alberta Mental Health Board (AMHB), a member of the Interdepartmental Committee on Family Violence, helps prevent and respond to family violence issues by:

- Assisting in the development of a Provincial Family Violence Treatment program. The program, which was developed in 2001, contributes to a co-ordinated government response and action plan for providing assessment and treatment services for those involved in an offence related to family violence. It was designed to establish a standard for quality of care and accountability for services provided under the program, and will be introduced in a phased-in approach over three years to increase access across the province.

In May 2003, the Mental Health and Justice Partnering Deputies Committee supported the review and revision to the Provincial Family Violence Treatment program by a new cross-ministerial committee. Pending approval, implementation of the program will involve community services, agencies, regional health authorities and child and family services authorities.

- Uninitiating a study in 2001 to obtain preliminary data on the experience of the Calgary Domestic Conflict Court (part of the HomeFront project) offender treatment services with the intent to develop a longer-term evaluation design. The progress and findings of treatment effectiveness are discussed in detail in reports from February 2002, March and October 2003 and April 2004.
- Continuing to fund assessment and treatment services with Alberta Justice and Attorney General, and Alberta Health and Wellness.

The Provincial Family Violence Treatment program contributes to a co-ordinated government response and action plan for providing assessment and treatment services for those involved in an offence related to family violence



Alberta Human Resources and Employment



Alberta Human Resources and Employment

Alberta Human Resources and Employment's (AHRE) works closely with the Office for the Prevention of Family Violence and the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters to provide co-ordinated services to individuals and families who are leaving abusive relationships. AHRE is committed to providing timely and responsive services to Albertans experiencing family violence. Through Alberta Works, AHRE offices in communities across the province partner with their local women's shelters to develop processes to best serve Albertans requiring Income Support (IS) benefits and services.

Alberta Works

AHRE is committed to providing timely and responsive services to Albertans experiencing family violence

Alberta Works co-ordinates Employment and Training Services, Income Support, Health Benefits and Child Support Services to better help Albertans. Income Support includes benefits specifically designed to provide immediate help to those escaping family violence and assistance with getting re-started.

Income Support

AHRE's Income Support program complements the Women's Emergency Shelter program by providing the cost of a reasonably priced hotel, motel or other shelter in accordance with emergency allowance policy when no shelter spaces are available or when community accommodations are not in place when a woman leaves a shelter. Income Support also provides emergency medical needs, prescription drugs, emergency dental, prescription formula, nutritional supplements, emergency childcare or emergency transportation to shelter residents who meet Income Support eligibility criteria, as well as on-going benefits to victims of family violence. This could include a damage deposit and/or moving costs within Alberta or Canada to ensure the safety of any member of a household unit fleeing an abusive situation.

In addition to the benefits above, AHRE now provides a \$1,000 Escaping Family Violence Benefit to Income Support clients who need to move because of abuse or violence by a spouse or partner. This benefit is intended to help individuals and families experiencing family violence set up a new home.

Income Support applicants or recipients who have recently left an abusive situation and require a period of adjustment are not expected to pursue employment or training for a period of about three months. During this period, they may receive a \$50 Employment Replacement Benefit. Extensions may be made on a case-by-case basis.



Income Support Contact Centre (Emergency Services)

Beginning April 1, 2004, general information and emergency after-hour, weekend and holiday services are now provided through the Income Support Contact Centre. Telephone stickers in hospitals and police stations give both the Income Support Contact Centre and the Child Abuse hotline numbers. During the transition, the Crisis Unit will refer any income support issues to the Income Support Contact Centre.

Through the provision of after-hours services, individuals and families experiencing family violence may be provided with transportation to women's emergency shelters or with emergency accommodations when shelters are full. Other emergency benefits are also available after AHRE offices close. The Contact Centre can be reached toll-free at 1-866-644-5135 or 644-5135 in Edmonton.

Child Support Services (formerly Family Maintenance)

The Child Support Services program helps single parents and parents of blended families obtain financial support from the other parent of their children, including professional assistance with negotiating support agreements or consent orders and provision of legal resources, where necessary.

In cases where there is family violence, the Child Support Services program does not pursue matters that may put the family at risk, and refers these individuals to other appropriate resources when required.

Child Support Services are provided to Income Support, Adult Health Benefit, and Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped clients, and services may be continued when clients leave these programs. Child Support Services may also be provided to other low-income Albertans who meet the income eligibility criteria.

Alberta Child Health Benefit

The Alberta Child Health Benefit provides premium-free health benefits to children in low-income families/household units who are not receiving Income Support benefits. Coverage is available for prescription drugs, dental services, optical care, emergency ambulance service and essential diabetic supplies.

Individuals and families experiencing family violence may be provided with transportation to women's emergency shelters or with emergency accommodations when shelters are full



Alberta Adult Health Benefit

The Alberta Adult Health Benefit provides health benefits to families with children and single individuals who are not expected to work, who go off Income Support because of employment. Coverage is available for prescription drugs, dental services, optical care, emergency ambulance service and essential diabetic supplies.

Partnerships

AHRE is partnering with the Office for the Prevention of Family Violence to provide family violence training for AHRE staff

AHRE is a member of the Assistant Deputy Minister's Committee on Family Violence, the Interdepartmental Committee on Family Violence, the Partnering Ministers and Deputy Ministers Strategy for the Prevention of Family Violence in Alberta, the Alberta Children and Youth Initiative, the Unified Family Court Implementation Steering Committee and the Family Law Reform Project.

Family Violence Training

AHRE is partnering with the Office for the Prevention of Family Violence to provide family violence training for AHRE staff. All staff who work directly with clients are strongly encouraged to attend.



Alberta Community Development



Alberta Community Development

Human Rights and Citizenship

Alberta Community Development's Human Rights and Citizenship Branch works to reduce family violence and violence against women by:

- Co-chairing the Ethno-cultural Ad-Hoc Working Group for the Alberta Roundtable on Family Violence and Bullying, along with Alberta Children's Services, to help address family violence and bullying issues within the multicultural community. Chaired by a branch official and an official from Children's Services, the group includes service providers, government and other community representatives. The first meeting was held March 30, 2004 and work on this initiative will continue in 2004-05.
- Participating in the Federal/Provincial/Territorial (FPT) Status of Women Forum. The Minister of Alberta Community Development represents Alberta at the Status of Women table, and through this forum, Alberta contributes to joint FPT projects on eliminating violence against women. These projects have resulted in the publication of *Assessing Violence Against Women: A Statistical Profile* (December 2002), which provides indicators on violence against women. Other projects include the Lake Louise Declaration on Violence Against Women, the Iqaluit Declaration, and other materials and resources focusing on the issue of violence against women.
- Co-ordinating and preparing Alberta's reports to the United Nations on all relevant conventions, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, which includes sections on progress in eliminating violence against women and special United Nations reports, as needed, such as reports to the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women.

Granting funds through the Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Education Fund to community groups for educational projects related to family violence. Funding examples include the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters for a project on resolving barriers for native women accessing shelter services, and the *Protection Against Family Violence Act* initiative for diverse communities. This initiative provided more than \$110,000 in funding to 12 community groups to educate diverse communities on the Act.

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Alberta Justice and Attorney General and Alberta Solicitor General



Alberta Justice and Attorney General and Alberta Solicitor General

The ministries of Justice and Solicitor General share a strong commitment to family violence initiatives. Some of the work currently being done includes:

- Participating in the Family Violence Police Advisory Committee. The Public Security Division of Solicitor General chairs the committee, which is made up of representatives from the municipal police services, the RCMP, the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters and the Criminal Justice Division of Alberta Justice. The group meets on a regular basis, with a focus on protection issues and the criminal justice system.
- Introducing Police Guidelines. In October 1990, the Solicitor General introduced family violence policing initiatives after consultation with all Alberta police services and police commissions. The initiatives focus on early police intervention and increased public awareness of the criminal nature of family violence. Domestic assault where the female partner is the victim represents the majority of family violence cases handled in the criminal justice system so the policing initiatives focused on this offence. Program guidelines were then issued to all municipal police services and the RCMP to establish a uniform policy for the handling of family violence complaints.

Police statistics indicate that in a majority of spousal abuse incidents in Alberta (approximately 70 per cent or more) charges were laid

To get an accurate picture of the numbers of family violence calls and police response, police services started collecting data on all such calls in 1991. Quarterly reports are submitted to Solicitor General by all municipal police services and the RCMP. The quarterly report contains information regarding the use of weapons, alcohol, and drugs; relationship between victim and abuser; nature of injuries and charges laid, and police action taken, including arrests, referrals and transportation to community resources, etc.

Police statistics indicate that in a majority of spousal abuse incidents in Alberta (approximately 70 per cent or more) charges were laid. This charging rate steadily increased from 1992-2000.

- Introducing Crown Prosecutor Guidelines. In support of the Policing Guidelines issued to police services in 1990, the Criminal Justice Division issued guidelines to all Chief Crown Prosecutors in March 1991, re-emphasizing the spousal assault guidelines first issued in 1985.
- Issuing Agents Manual Guideline #44 in April 1995. It reaffirmed that Justice's position is that spousal assaults are serious criminal offences and are to be prosecuted accordingly. It consolidates key points on judicial interim release and sentencing.

Research and Evaluation

- Providing ongoing research into family violence initiatives, and analysis with regard to the statistical information reported by police services to Solicitor General quarterly. A number of reports are generated in this exercise, and the results shared with all members of the Family Violence Advisory Committee, all municipal chiefs of police and the Commanding Officer of "K" Division RCMP.
- Reviewing bail procedures in serious domestic violence cases. New prosecutor guidelines were announced in 1999 to improve bail notification and protection to victims of serious domestic violence. Under the new guidelines, police and Crown prosecutors across the province will identify cases where the victims are considered to be at risk and notify victims of offenders being released on bail.
- Issuing a Final Report of the Ad Hoc Federal-Provincial-Territorial Work Group Reviewing Policies and Legislation in 2003. The Report on Spousal Abuse Policies and Legislation acknowledged that many gaps remain in understanding the causes of spousal abuse, the impact of the justice system response to this form of violence and the effectiveness of the various programs and services for victims and offenders. The Report recommends, among other things, that jurisdictions support research to address these information gaps in order to provide a foundation for building a more effective response to domestic violence.

Police and Crown prosecutors across the province will identify cases where the victims are considered to be at risk and notify victims of offenders being released on bail





Protection Against Family Violence Act

In July 1997, the Alberta Government initiated a public consultation process led by MLA Jocelyn Burgener, Calgary-Currie on family violence protection issues. This process led to recommendations for new legislation.

The Protection Against Family Violence Act was introduced in the Legislature on March 2, 1998. The Act came into force on June 1, 1999 and an evaluation was completed in September of 2000.

The Protection Against Family Violence Act protects all family members – seniors, women, men and children – from family violence

The Protection Against Family Violence Act protects all family members – seniors, women, men and children – from family violence in three ways.

1. An emergency protection order, which can be obtained by police on behalf of a victim, is available 24-hours a day. With it, an abusive family member can be ordered to temporarily leave the home and prohibited from contacting the victim.
2. A Queen's Bench protection order provides long-term protection and can remain in effect for up to one year.
3. A warrant permitting entry allows police to enter a home to make sure a family member is safe. Police can help that family member leave the home, if he or she consents.

As part of implementation, training materials were developed for police to help them understand the Act. A Police Training Working Group was established to devise a plan to train all police members in the province. As a result, a Train-the-Trainers course was held at the Justice Staff College for police, Crown prosecutors and correctional staff in October 1998. Training materials were sent to all police services in Alberta in May 1999, including a training video, handbook, lesson plans and sample Police Service Directive for issuance to all police members. Children's Services, Solicitor General and Justice are providing follow-up Protection Against Family Violence Act training.



Training

- Overseeing eight of the annual Criminal Justice Family Violence Training Courses which have now been held at the Alberta Justice Staff College, expanding the interdisciplinary focus started with the 1993 course to now include all three components of the criminal justice system – police, prosecutors and correctional staff. More than 350 criminal justice system workers have received the training, including police trainers, Crown prosecutors, and correctional institution and community corrections staff.
- Providing ongoing Crown training. Designated family violence prosecutors in each Crown office receive and disseminate the most recent case law, articles and other written material relating to family violence to the Crown prosecutors. Family violence topics have also been discussed at the bi-annual Crown Attorneys Conferences.

Victims' Assistance Program Co-ordinators and police have received training on victims' needs since 1992. This training has now been expanded to include Crown prosecutors, Court Services personnel and Correctional Services personnel.

The Chief Crown Prosecutors – Family Violence Training Sub-Committee meets as needed to assess developments in the family violence area and consider alternatives adopted in criminal justice systems in other jurisdictions.

- Providing ongoing Correctional Services Training. Family violence awareness has been incorporated into all basic training programs offered for Correctional Services staff.

Existing written information was compiled to form a Family Violence Resource Manual for Correctional Workers. A publication titled Family Violence: A Guide for Correctional Staff was developed and distributed to all staff.

Staff throughout the province are active in promoting Family Violence Prevention Month. Many correctional centres and community offices enhanced existing offender programs and implemented innovative long-term programs, and several staff have become involved in inter-agency committees addressing family violence and community initiatives, including public education.

Designated family violence prosecutors in each Crown office receive and disseminate the most recent case law, articles and other written material relating to family violence to the Crown prosecutors



Other

- Creating a Family Violence Advisory Sub-Committee, which was established by the Chair of the Unified Family Court Implementation Steering Committee. The mandate of this sub-committee is to advise on how best to meet the needs of those impacted by family violence who may come into contact with the Unified Family Court and what programs and services may be needed.

Following the introduction of the *Family Law Act*, during the spring 2003 sitting of the Legislature, Albertans were asked for their input on many important issues, including parenting orders (formerly custody and access). The act included a provision to take into account the existence of family violence as one of the circumstances a court must consider in determining what is in the best interest of a child when making orders that impact the child. The act was passed during the fall 2003 sitting of the Legislature and is awaiting proclamation.

The Family Law Act was passed during the fall 2003 sitting of the Legislature and is awaiting proclamation

- Creating Spousal Violence Follow-Up Teams. In 1992 the Edmonton Mayor's Task Force on Safer Cities recommended teaming police officers and social workers to follow up on incidents where the police have responded to spousal violence. Recognizing the cycle of violence must stop, the strength of the follow-up teams is in helping victims by connecting them to community resources, providing advice on the legal system and, when necessary, advocating on their behalf. Teams also connect perpetrators who want to change their behaviour to community resources.

Key areas of focus for the follow-up teams are victim safety, self-esteem and courage. The teams offer victims information and advice, and help them understand the legal system to arrive at the decisions they need to make.

Evaluations show that complainants supported by the teams showed up for their trials almost 100 per cent of the time. Similar teams have been established by the Calgary Police Service and the RCMP in the County of Flagstaff. The Edmonton and Calgary Police Services have also established Children at Risk Response Teams which respond to child abuse complaints using the same multi-disciplinary approach.

- Designating a family violence prosecutor in each Crown Prosecutors' Office to serve as a contact person for enforcement and social service agencies dealing with family violence matters across the province. That prosecutor also disseminates educational, legal and training material on family violence issues to other Crown prosecutors in the office.



- Working with the Calgary Justice Working Project to improve the links between the justice system and community services for domestic violence victims and offenders.


In October 1999, Calgary became the site of a four-year \$5 million Calgary Justice Working Project (HomeFront). The project, developed by the Calgary Justice Working Committee and Calgary's Action Committee Against Violence, will create and implement a co-ordinated, structurally linked system that is cohesive, specialized and integrated with community services. It recognizes community awareness and public education as key success factors in the prevention and reduction of family violence, and is the first initiative in Canada of this scope for addressing the broad service issues related to domestic violence. The project was developed with extensive community consultation to improve the co-ordination between law enforcement, criminal justice and the social service system.

Homefront recognizes community awareness and public education as key success factors in the prevention and reduction of family violence, and is the first initiative in Canada of this scope for addressing the broad service issues related to domestic violence

Key components of the Justice Working Project include:

- a dedicated first appearance court with two dedicated judges for domestic violence cases;
- a specialized victim advocacy unit;
- fast-tracking of offenders into expanded treatment services;
- expansion of services to children who witness domestic violence;
- formation of a specialized probation unit to supervise domestic violence offenders;
- expansion of the Calgary Police Service's Domestic Conflict Unit;
- allocation of dedicated Crown prosecutors in the first appearance court; and
- comprehensive training of criminal justice system members and community groups.

Two evaluations of HomeFront are currently underway. The Alberta Mental Health Board is conducting an evaluation of treatment, and a private company is conducting a project evaluation. Results of these evaluations are anticipated in the fall 2004.



The Domestic Violence Docket Court operates every Tuesday afternoon with a specialized Crown prosecutor and a team from the Lethbridge Police Service and Community Corrections in the courtroom to assist victims and perpetrators of domestic violence

- Helping establish the Domestic Violence Action Team in the City of Lethbridge to provide a consistent, educated, effective community-based response to violence and abuse in the family. Meetings with the leaders of community agencies began a process that led to a series of protocols documenting mandates of the agencies involved in domestic violence interventions, and establishing links between the agencies.

On March 2, 2004, the Lethbridge Domestic Violence Docket Courtroom heard its first matters. The Domestic Violence Docket Court operates every Tuesday afternoon with a specialized Crown prosecutor and a team from the Lethbridge Police Service and Community Corrections in the courtroom to assist victims and perpetrators of domestic violence. In cases where the accused persons plead not guilty to domestic violence related charges, their case is returned to the regular trial courtroom.

- Working with community corrections staff across Alberta who have an interest in domestic violence and who carry caseloads of family violence perpetrators. These staff members work closely with both the offender and the victim, linking them to community programs which best suit their needs. With the opening of the Domestic Violence Court in Calgary, probation officers provide the necessary link between the justice system, offenders and victims of domestic violence.
- Working with each correctional centre and the larger community corrections offices to ensure that a family violence co-ordinator is designated to act as the contact person for any family violence-related issue. Family violence co-ordinators are also used as a means of co-ordinating the flow of information/education family violence material, and the co-ordination and development of family violence initiatives in their areas.
- Participating in the Domestic Violence Registry Project. The various court orders designed to protect victims from further abuse, such as restraining orders, peace bonds and conditions of bail are more effective if they are readily accessible to police called upon to intervene in domestic violence incidents. As of December 31, 1994, all police services (municipal and the RCMP) in Alberta have established restraining order registries on the Canadian Police Information Centre. Ready access to such information assists police by enabling them to better protect both themselves when responding to such incidents as well as the victims and their families.
- Developing restraining order programs. A program was established in Calgary in April 1995 as a joint initiative of YWCA Family Violence Prevention Programs, Calgary Legal Guidance and the Calgary Police Service Victims Assistance Unit to assist victims of family violence. The Calgary program offers a wide range of services, including legal information and assistance, counselling and support, advocacy and referral, stand-alone restraining orders, court accompaniment and child care.



On Jan. 2, 1996, Alberta Justice stopped charging the \$200 commencement fee for stand-alone restraining orders. In addition, no filing fee is paid when filing an application for a Court of Queen’s Bench protection order under the *Prevention Against Family Violence Act*. This ensures that filing fees will not be an impediment to those at risk who need an order but do not have sufficient financial resources to pay the fee.

Legal representation is available to assist claimants in the review of emergency protection orders under the *Protection Against Family Violence Act*. In Edmonton, this is made available through the Family Law Office of Legal Aid. In the Calgary area, Calgary Legal Guidance provides this service. Legal Aid provides duty counsel for these reviews in those places not serviced by the Family Law Office or Calgary Legal Guidance.

Victim Support

- Addressing recommendations for the family violence policing guidelines, including securing medical treatment for victims, arranging or providing transportation to a shelter or safe place, and providing the victim with information on community resources. The Victims of Crime Programs Committee has provided support to a number of family violence or victim service projects throughout the province. As a result of such funding support, a network of police-based victim assistance programs have been established throughout Alberta.
- Designing Alberta Violence Referral Cards for police services in order to provide a source of local information about legal sources, emergency numbers and community agencies. The card also provides for the police file and badge number of the attending officer so the victim can access information about any charges laid. Legal information regarding protection orders, restraining orders, and peace bonds is also contained on the card.
- Producing and distributing publications titled Victims of Family Violence - Information and Rights to shelters, police services, community organizations, medical clinics and other helping agencies in Alberta. The booklet contains information about the incidence of family violence, kinds of abuse, the cycle of violence, impact on children, what to expect with police intervention, the court process and other legal remedies. A revised issue includes detailed information on the *Protection Against Family Violence Act*.

As a result of funding support, a network of police-based victim assistance programs have been established throughout Alberta



With an increase in court mandated treatment, staff refer a large number of victims and offenders to local agencies specializing in domestic violence programs

Intervention/Treatment

- Developing group programs for male batterers. In correctional centres, offenders charged with domestic violence offences are referred to treatment and educational programs offered at the various centres. Individual counselling services are available upon request by the centre psychologist. Follow-up programs in the community are also provided through the development of release plans for victims and offenders of domestic violence. Educational programs related to family violence are also offered through the Attendance Centres in Edmonton and Calgary, and through select community corrections offices.
- Ensuring that psychological services, including assessments, counselling and educational programs in the area of domestic issues, are available to female offenders in adult and young offender centres. Community release centres also provide female group counselling in the area of family violence. Programs in Calgary and Edmonton are facilitated by either the John Howard Society or the Elizabeth Fry Society.
- Ensuring Community Corrections staff liaise closely with domestic violence units associated with local police agencies as well as social service agencies, offering support and information where required. With an increase in court mandated treatment, staff refer a large number of victims and offenders to local agencies specializing in domestic violence programs, such as Forensic Assessment and Counselling Services at Edmonton, and Forensic Assessment and Outpatient Services in Calgary. Other highly used agencies include the Elizabeth Fry Society, the John Howard Society, programs offered through F.C.S.S., women's shelters, the Pastoral Institute, Sheriff King Family Support Program, Catholic Social Services, Salvation Army, YMCA and YWCA, and aboriginal support programs in local areas. Private therapists are also used in some instances.
- Using the Justice Online Information Network (JOIN) to track criminal cases through the court system. Since 1994, police services have been flagging spousal abuse cases prior to entry into the system. This produces an indicator, which allows spousal abuse cases to be tracked through JOIN. The system is updated regularly.

Alberta Learning



Alberta Learning

Alberta Learning is committed to assisting Albertans in issues related to family violence, including bullying in schools. Some work the ministry is doing in this area includes:

- Co-chairing the cross-ministry Information Sharing Committee of the Alberta Children and Youth Initiative (ACYI) with Alberta Solicitor General. The purpose of the committee is to examine barriers to information sharing among government ministries and agencies regarding children and youth, including those who are at risk or who pose a risk. Membership includes representatives from partnering ministries, boards and agencies with input from the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

A guideline, overview document and training plan were developed to articulate the Alberta Government's support of sharing needed information to better serve children, youth and their families. Information and documents developed by the committee were reviewed and approved by the ACYI partnering deputy ministers, and meet the requirements under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FOIP) and *Health Information Act* (HIA).

- Presenting cross-ministry training sessions to assist ministry management and program staff to have an understanding and awareness of the process and documents prior to the training sessions for front-line staff who serve children, youth and their families. Staff had an opportunity to view a Powerpoint presentation and ask questions related to information-sharing across sectors.

Cross-sector training sessions occurred in nine locations around Alberta and were conducted in the fall of 2003. Additional training sessions were held for school FOIP co-ordinators, health co-ordinators, participants at the Children's Forum, FOIP conference delegates, the Southern Alberta Child and Youth Network and a number of cross-sectoral groups.

Cross-sector training sessions occurred in nine locations around Alberta and were conducted in the fall of 2003





Safe and Caring Schools

- Continuing to work on the Safe and Caring Schools (SACS) Initiative. It has been seven years since Alberta Learning launched the provincial SACS Initiative to promote safe and caring schools and communities. The goals are to identify effective practices, programs and policies to prevent and correct any behaviour that is disruptive to the learning and teaching environment and to ensure all schools are safe and caring.

Phase I of the SACS Initiative used a multi-disciplinary approach to develop strategies, programs, and resources for prevention, intervention, response and continuous evaluation.

Phase 2 began in the 2001/2002 school year to assist education partners and stakeholders to effectively work with all children, including those with challenging behaviours, by implementing an Effective Behaviour Support (EBS) process in pilot schools. EBS is a carefully designed approach that:

- promotes pro-social behaviours while reducing the incidence and prevalence of problem behaviours in schools;
- is individualized to meet the unique needs of school communities;
- is entirely focused on the identification of problem behaviours, carrying out strategies; and
- works to prevent identified behaviours of concern by incorporating social skills training, specific interventions, and academic and curricular restructuring to address challenging student behaviours.

The goals of Safe and Caring Schools are to identify effective practices, programs and policies to prevent and correct any behaviour that is disruptive to the learning and teaching environment and to ensure all schools are safe and caring





Safe and caring schools objectives, activities, and strategies that have been identified in published safe and caring resources are being infused into Alberta Learning's *Programs of Study and Teacher Guides to Implementation*

Phase 3 began in the 2002/2003 school-year. Safe and caring schools objectives, activities, and strategies that have been identified in published safe and caring resources are being infused into Alberta Learning's *Programs of Study and Teacher Guides to Implementation*.

During Phase 3, work will continue to enhance successful implementation of the provincial EBS process and to develop supporting materials.



Alberta Seniors



Alberta Seniors

Some of the projects Alberta Seniors participates in to help prevent and respond to family violence issues includes:

- Chairing the Seniors Fraud Awareness Committee, a partnership initiative among government and community services and agencies responsible for the provincial consumer awareness campaign – If in Doubt, Check it Out. The purpose of the campaign is to educate and inform seniors and caregivers about potential fraud situations and resources that can help.
- Assisting in the review and analysis of the social and economic costs of the abuse of older adults. The safety and security working group of the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers responsible for Seniors conducted an environmental scan of abuse and neglect of older adults in Canada in 2003 and is undertaking a review and analysis of the social and economic costs of the abuse of older adults.
- Funding emergency shelter and support programs for homeless women and families in major urban cities. Some of these shelters provide spaces for victims of family violence.
- Providing annual funding, through the Provincial Homeless Initiative, to locally-based strategies in partnership with the federal government and municipalities towards the provision of emergency shelter and transitional housing for women and children in need of shelter.

Alberta Seniors funds emergency shelter and support programs for homeless women and families in major urban cities



Alberta Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development



Alberta Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development

Alberta Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development (AAND) promotes and facilitates initiatives to improve the participation of Aboriginal people in Alberta's social and economic opportunities and to advance the development of Northern Alberta.

Strengthening Relationships, the Government of Alberta's Aboriginal Policy Framework (APF), outlines government policy and guides Alberta's relations with Aboriginal people. Within the APF, the Government of Alberta commits to work with Aboriginal people, other governments, industry and other interested parties toward individual and community well-being and self-reliance.

AAND supports efforts that will reduce violence and bullying through partnerships with other ministries in areas such as education, skill development, child, health and urban initiatives by:

AAND facilitates provincial government participation in local urban community partnerships, by providing funding for various local community-determined needs and by working with the federal and municipal governments, including the City of Edmonton and the City of Calgary, to facilitate local community partnerships

- Co-leading Aboriginal mentoring pilot-programs currently being implemented in four locations. Mentoring helps keep children in school, prevents drug abuse and promotes the overall health and well-being of children.
- Leading the co-ordination of the Alberta Government's involvement in developing strategies to address the needs of Aboriginal persons living in urban areas. AAND facilitates provincial government participation in local urban community partnerships, by providing funding for various local community-determined needs and by working with the federal and municipal governments, including the City of Edmonton and the City of Calgary, to facilitate local community partnerships.
- Co-leading an Aboriginal Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy, which includes pilot initiatives in three Aboriginal communities in Alberta.
- Funding and participating in initiatives to reduce fetal alcohol syndrome and fetal alcohol spectrum disorder.
- Working with Children's Services and the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters to create fee-for-service agreements with two First Nations women's emergency shelters.
- Working with the Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Education Fund and community groups to secure funding for the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters project on resolving barriers for native women accessing shelter services, and the *Protection Against Family Violence Act* initiative for diverse communities, which provided more than \$110,000 in funding to 12 community groups.
- Promoting a holistic healing approach and the importance of engaging families, communities, service providers, governments and abusers in the solutions and healing process.

Towards the Future

Alberta has made significant advances in legislation and has established a wide range of programs and services for victims and offenders. However, family violence and bullying continue to be serious problems. The recent tragic deaths in Alberta that have resulted from family violence and bullying have given rise to a renewed commitment by provincial and municipal governments along with community service providers and Alberta citizens to take action to ensure these tragic events are not repeated.

Recommendations from the 2004 Alberta Roundtable on Family Violence and Bullying will be used to develop further strategies for the prevention of family violence and bullying in our province. There is no one program or service that will prevent violence or bullying completely or help every Albertan, but by sharing information and working together, we can continue to strive toward our goal - a province that is violence-free.



Taking Action on Family Violence