

## Check Against Delivery

### **Alberta Safe and Caring Schools Forum May 12, 2014, Calgary Honourable Sandra Jansen, Associate Minister of Family and Community Safety, Human Services**

Today's forum is an opportunity to listen and learn from each other's experiences about how to build healthy relationships and prevent bullying.

I would like to acknowledge and thank the powerful speakers who are here to share their stories.

Their passion and dedication to creating a safer, more caring and inclusive community for all of us is inspiring.

I look forward to hearing all they have to say.

I also want to thank the Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities and the Canadian Safe School Network for inviting me to this important event.

You do tremendous work supporting welcoming, caring, respectful, safe and inclusive places for all Albertans and in particular, children and youth.

I'm pleased to be a part of this event and to serve as the Honorary Chair of the Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities.

I look forward to continuing to work closely with Safe and Caring, and with all of you, in my role as Associate Minister of Family and Community Safety.

My mandate was created to bring a renewed focus on the prevention of family violence, bullying and sexual exploitation in Alberta.

As a government, we believe that every Albertan deserves to be treated fairly, equally, with respect and dignity... that violence and discrimination of any kind, and in any circumstance, is unacceptable.

Our government recognizes the devastating toll bullying takes on children, youth and families and in our communities.

This is why we are investing an additional \$1 million this year to continue to address this important societal issue.

Right now, government is working on a renewed strategy to promote healthy relationships and prevent bullying behaviours at any time of life and in any setting.

We are not doing this alone; Alberta's Bullying Prevention Youth Committee, a fantastic group of motivated and compassionate young people, who continues to provide to us advice along the way.

They also act as leaders in their communities by raising awareness and educating Albertans about bullying and healthy relationships.

They are innovative in finding their audience too!

In fact, one of their venues was the half time show at the Edmonton Rush lacrosse game.

The Government of Alberta annually recognizes National Bullying Awareness Week — November 16-22 this year — with a variety of activities.

In the past two years we've hosted webcasts on Cyberbullying and Promoting Healthy Relationships to Prevent Bullying.

These webcast can be viewed on the [BullyFreeAlberta.ca](http://BullyFreeAlberta.ca) website.

We also have a 24 hour toll free Bullying Helpline (1-888-456-2323) available 365 days a year to provide support and information in more than 170 languages.

Alberta is the first province to provide resources to raise awareness and prevent homophobic and transphobic bullying.

We have developed specific websites that address bullying.

[B-free.ca](http://B-free.ca) is designed by youth for youth.

There you will find information sheets and tips on bullying in sports, cyberbullying, homophobic and transphobic bullying and recognizing bullying behaviour.

Internet Savvy helps parents keep their children stay safe online. You can find it online at [humanservices.alberta.ca/internetsafety](http://humanservices.alberta.ca/internetsafety).

The government also supports six “Taking Action on Bullying” projects that partner community-based Parent Link Centres with local schools to teach children, youth and adults strategies to address bullying.

We are looking at ways we can expand these successful partnerships.

We also have 37 Mental Health Capacity Building projects in 143 schools throughout Alberta. These projects bring schools, health professionals, parents and community agencies to work together to deliver mental health prevention and promotion programs.

We've also made legislative changes:

Alberta's new *Education Act* (coming into force in 2015) also contains important elements to address bullying.

It includes a code of conduct that identifies the responsibility of students to not tolerate bullying behaviour and to report it if they see it.

We must all work together, in schools, at work and where we live to address this complex issue.

For those of us lucky enough to have a mentor in our lives...we know the value of that relationship.

I know many of you are leaders in mentoring already, but if you aren't, please consider it. Mentoring has incredible benefits for our children, mentors, and society and it makes the mentor feel pretty good too!

Children who are mentored do better in school, have higher self-esteem and are less likely to be get into trouble.

Alberta Mentoring Partnership ([Albertamentors.ca](http://Albertamentors.ca)) has all the information and connections you need to become a mentor.

When we speak out against bullying, and model kindness, compassion and respect to our diverse communities, we foster the kind of province that reminds our children regardless of race, gender or sexual orientation, that they are in a safe place and that they are valued and appreciated.

I look forward to hearing and learning from today's speakers.

Thank you.