



**Ministry of Community and Social Services’
Response to the
Family Violence Death Review Committee
First Case Review Public Report**

May 2017

Table of Contents

Background	3
Specific Responses to the Recommendations	4
Conclusion	6

Background

The Family Violence Death Review Committee (FVDRC) is a multi-disciplinary, expert body, composed of individuals who have extensive knowledge or experience in the area of family violence. The FVDRC was established under the *Protection Against Family Violence Act* (PAFVA). Under section 16 of PAFVA, its role is to:

- (a) review incidents of family violence resulting in deaths; and
- (b) provide advice and recommendations to the Minister respecting the prevention and reduction of family violence.

The FVDRC released its first public case review on November 2, 2015.

The FVDRC carefully reviewed a 2011 family violence incident that resulted in a single homicide case of an adult female.

Leading up to the victim's death, there was reluctance on the part of the victim and the offender to involve intervention systems, supports and services as their relationship worsened.

During the escalation of incidents in the couple's relationship, the FVDRC noted when the system was engaged, there were several best practices that occurred in this case:

- Referral for offender to an employee assistance program for psychological and legal assistance.
- Attempts to ban the offender from the victim's place of employment.
- Police assistance in de-escalating the situation by having the couple limit their contact with each other.

To arrive at the FVDRC's recommendations to strengthen the response system, three main themes in this case were comprehensively examined:

- the role of culture;
- services available to assist the family (who are relatively new Canadians); and
- the role of the workplace in identifying high-risk behaviours in cases of family violence.

Responses to the Recommendations

Recommendation 1: The Alberta Government amends the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* and Code to recognize and include family violence as a workplace hazard. Family violence is to be defined as it is in the PAFVA and must include: direct family violence (where the family violence is at the workplace) and indirect family violence (where the family violence is outside of the workplace) and it directly affects the workplace through employee's performance or by creating an unsafe work environment. When family violence as a workplace hazard occurs, policies, procedures, monitoring and accountability mechanisms must be implemented. Collaboration with police services is recommended when these mechanisms are being developed and implemented.

Ministry Response: The Ministry of Community and Social Services (CSS) has shared this recommendation with Alberta Labour, which leads the implementation of this recommendation.

Alberta Labour is considering this recommendation as part of the government's commitment to ensuring labour laws are fair and family-friendly and reflect today's workplaces.

Recommendation 1a: The Alberta government, in consultation with key stakeholders, will develop training, educational and public awareness materials for employers, employees and the general public that addresses family violence as a workplace hazard.

Ministry Response: CSS accepts this recommendation.

Training sessions on family violence in the workplace are being delivered to government of Alberta employees. In addition, CSS is working with multiple community partners to deliver training across Alberta that will assist employers in recognizing, responding, reporting and referring employees impacted by family violence.

Recommendation 2: The Alberta government develop and include a family violence training component into their mandatory Alberta Basic Security Course, offered through Justice and Solicitor General (JSG), to ensure all security workers being licensed within the province of Alberta have this background. In addition, it is recommended that all existing licensees and individuals renewing a license be required to complete this mandatory training.

Ministry Response: CSS has shared this recommendation with the Ministry of JSG, which leads the implementation of this recommendation.

An information bulletin on family violence was shared with all existing security workers in Alberta. When funding is available for a curriculum review, JSG will include family violence training in the Alberta Basic Security Training course.

Recommendation 2a: The Alberta government, work with post-secondary institutions to develop and include family violence response and reporting components into their diploma and certificate programs related to security and investigations.

Ministry Response: CSS has shared this recommendation with the Ministry of Advanced Education, which leads the implementation of this recommendation.

As per the *Post-Secondary Learning Act*, post-secondary institutions have the autonomy to develop and include curriculum within their programs of study. As a result, government cannot directly implement this recommendation. However, the recommendation will be shared with post-secondary institutions for their consideration.

Recommendation 3: The Alberta government distribute family violence materials at key points of public contact:

- Alberta registries at the time of application for marriage licenses, birth certificates, driver's license applications and renewals, vehicle registration renewals and replacement documentation requests, including links to family violence materials in cases of online applications and renewals;
- Through all Alberta Family Justice Programs and Mediation/Dispute programs targeted towards familial matters and dissolution of intimate partner relationships (married and common law) and to all individuals applying for protection orders;
- For any individuals attending court-ordered treatment for mental health and/or addictions treatment;
- Through Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services programs (e.g. primary care networks);
- To all social-serving agencies, especially Immigrant-serving agencies, which partner with the Government of Alberta to provide social programs and services.

Ministry Response: CSS accepts this recommendation for the family violence materials it is responsible for, and has shared this recommendation with JSG, Service Alberta, Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services.

As part of a publication review, CSS is assessing what is currently being distributed and how to enhance circulation. Materials will be revised and distributed for target audiences in consultation with impacted ministries and stakeholders. CSS will also work with Service Alberta and Health to equip Alberta Registries (225 privately owned businesses) and Primary Care Networks with information on family violence via television screens in waiting rooms and/or hardcopy materials.

Recommendation 4: The Alberta government, in collaboration with immigrant-serving agencies and community partners, work to identify and enhance existing family violence strategies and education materials specifically targeted towards new Canadians and newcomer populations in order to address key obstacles (such as language barrier, isolation, stigma and cultural differences) that prevent new Canadians from seeking assistance with family violence issues.

Ministry Response: CSS accepts this recommendation.

The ministry has provided funding through the Family and Community Safety program to support ethno-cultural communities. Planning is underway to bring immigrant-serving agencies together to discuss gaps and opportunities to enhance education materials and inform strategies to engage new Canadians.

Conclusion

The Ministry of CSS thanks the FVDRC for this review and their recommendations, which will enhance effective family violence intervention and prevention strategies. The collaborative cross-government effort to implement these recommendations includes the ministries of CSS, Labour, Justice and Solicitor General, Advanced Education, Service Alberta, Health and also includes Alberta Health Services.