



**Minister's Response to the
Family Violence Death Review Committee's
Second Case Review Report**

March 2018

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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 second FVDRC case review was of a 2013 incident that resulted in the homicide of a female adult and the suicide of a male adult. The couple were married for about nine years, but had been separated at the time of their deaths. They had one child. Both individuals had challenges with mental health issues, drug and alcohol use, as well as criminal behaviours.

Both sought and received help for their difficulties through the health system and counselling services.

In this case:

- Mental health recognized the victim's need for added supports and counselling specific to family violence and made the appropriate referrals to Outreach Services through the women's shelter.
- Outreach Services, through a women's shelter, provided a thorough approach to supporting a client who clearly was a victim of family violence through education, awareness, self-care, assessment and safety planning.

Since the incident occurred, the local police services have implemented new processes and staffing models related to family violence situations by making greater connections with intersecting systems, such as women's shelters.

In order to frame their recommendations, the FVDRC examined three main themes in this case:

- Lack of communication between intersecting systems;
- Minimal use of intersecting systems to better assess risk and escalation of abuse patterns;
- High rate of recurring interactions with systems and the inability of the systems to meet the needs of the victim.

Response to the recommendations

Family violence devastates communities. Our thoughts are with the family and loved ones who continue to mourn this tragic loss. We are grateful to the Committee for their work and remain committed to addressing the systemic causes and preventing the heartbreaking effects of family violence on Albertans across our province, with the ultimate goal of ending family violence.

The ministry values these important recommendations. We will explore policy changes and evaluate PAFVA to address concerns and identify opportunities to strengthen coordination and communication among service providers who support individuals and families affected by family violence. As part of the evaluation, the Committee's recommendation to expand the powers of PAFVA will be considered in consultation with key stakeholders. We will continue to work with our community partners across Alberta to end family violence and create a safer province for all Albertans.

Conclusion

The Ministry of Community and Social Services thanks the FVDRC for this review and their recommendations, which will enhance effective family violence intervention and prevention strategies.