

Taking Action on Family Violence and Bullying

REPORT TO ALBERTANS 2008



Alberta

Family Violence

Family violence is the abuse of power within relationships of family, trust or dependency that endangers the survival, security or well-being of another person. It can take many forms including spouse abuse, senior abuse and neglect, child abuse and neglect, child sexual abuse, parent abuse, and witnessing abuse of others in the family. Family violence may include some or all of the following behaviours: physical abuse, psychological abuse, criminal harassment/stalking, verbal abuse, sexual abuse, financial abuse, and spiritual abuse.

Between 1999 and 2004, the highest reported rate of spousal assault of provinces in Canada was in Alberta (10 per cent women; 7 per cent men).¹

While only 28 per cent of victims contact police, this number increases when the abuse is severe or frequent, children witness the abuse, or the victim is female, young, Aboriginal or the victim turned to others for support.²

Bullying

Bullying is a conscious, wilful, deliberate and repeated hostile activity marked by an imbalance of power, intent to harm, and/or a threat of aggression. When bullying goes unchecked, it may lead to feelings of terror in the individual being bullied. Bullying may include, but is not limited to: physical intimidation or assault, extortion, verbal or written threats, teasing, putdowns, name calling, threatening looks, gestures or actions, cruel rumours, false accusation and social isolation.

36 per cent of Canadian youth say they are victims of bullying, 39 per cent say they are bullies, and 20 per cent say they are both bullies and victims.³



1 Measuring Violence Against Women: Statistical Trends 2006, 19. Commissioned by the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministries responsible for the Status of Women. Minister of Industry, 2006

2 Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile 2006, 6. Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada, 2006.

3 Boyce, W.F., King, M.A., & Roche, J. 2008. Healthy settings for young people in Canada. Health Canada.



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Taking Action on Family Violence and Bullying

Family violence and bullying have devastating social, health and economic consequences for families, communities and society. That is why the Government of Alberta continues to take strong action against it.

We made a commitment to Albertans in 1984 with the creation of the Interdepartmental Committee on Family Violence (ICFV) and renewed that commitment in 2004 with the Roundtable on Prevention of Family

Violence and Bullying. Over 3,500 Albertans participated in the Roundtable process and challenged us to work with them to put an end to family violence and bullying. This document highlights some of the major actions we are taking against family violence and bullying, to help all Albertans feel safe in their homes and communities.

Framework for Action

Social Change	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Invest in our society by changing public awareness, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours » Focus on prevention and education » Place a higher priority on early intervention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Expand mentoring and community leadership » Address stereotypes and racism involving Aboriginal peoples and communities
Provincial Leadership	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Establish enabling legislation » Maintain long-term sustainable commitment » Enhance cross-ministry approach » Maintain Children's and Youth Services as the cross-sector lead 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Address Aboriginal jurisdiction issues through Aboriginal, federal and provincial government cooperation
A Collaborative, Coordinated Community Response	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Establish a model and provide collaborative support » Establish long-term sustainable community solutions » Expand use of multi-disciplinary teams » Provide cross-sector training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Ensure essential information can be shared » Build Aboriginal community resources and capacity » Expand training for those working with Aboriginal communities
Services and Supports	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Ensure fair access to services with a single access point » Enable safe reporting » Ensure advocates are available for victims » Expand the availability of emergency/safe housing » Ensure adequate protection services and provide treatment, counselling, and transitional supports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Ensure services and supports respond to those affected by family violence and bullying » Ensure an effective justice response » Improve access and availability of services in Aboriginal communities, using a holistic approach that reflects Aboriginal culture and tradition
Accountability	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Support evidence-based practices and expand community-based research and evaluation, including expanded research in Aboriginal communities » Establish and track measurable outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Ensure clear outcomes reporting is achieved by all partners » Reinforce consequences for actions and individual accountability

Finding Solutions Together

The Roundtable provided a new framework for action, built on a foundation of effective practices already in place or being developed in Alberta to prevent and respond to family violence and bullying. This framework outlines five key areas for action along with specific strategies that Roundtable participants identified as critical to support children, youth and families impacted by family violence and bullying in Alberta.

Cross-Ministry Approach

The 2004 report, *Alberta Roundtable on Family Violence and Bullying Finding Solutions Together*, is the Government of Alberta's *Strategy for the Prevention of Family Violence and Bullying*. This strategy supports the Government of Alberta's priority to reduce crime and promote strong, safe and vibrant communities.

Nine partnering ministries are working together to provide a coordinated provincial response. Partnering ministries implement the *Strategy for the Prevention of Family Violence and Bullying* through shared strategies and priorities identified in individual ministry business plans. Children and Youth Services (CYS) is the coordination lead. Since 2005, joint spending across partnering ministries has increased to more than \$59 million.

Government of Alberta Prevention of Family Violence and Bullying Initiative Partnering Ministries

- » Children and Youth Services,
- » Aboriginal Relations,
- » Education,
- » Employment and Immigration,
- » Health and Wellness, including Alberta Health Services, AADAC and Alberta Health Services, Alberta Mental Health Board
- » Justice and Attorney General,
- » Housing and Urban Affairs,
- » Seniors and Community Supports; and
- » Solicitor General and Public Security.



Action Overview

Overview of Key Actions Taken Since the Alberta Roundtable on Family Violence and Bullying

Social Change	Provincial Leadership	Coordinated, Collaborative Community Response	Services and Supports	Accountability
<p>Family Violence Public Awareness Campaign Launched</p> <p>» <i>Children and Youth Services</i></p>	<p>Domestic Violence Policy Included in <i>Child, Youth, and Family Enhancement Act</i></p> <p>» <i>Children and Youth Services</i></p>	<p>Regional Family Violence and Bullying Coordinators Established Across the Province</p> <p>» <i>Children and Youth Services</i></p>	<p>Phased Implementation of the Provincial Family Violence Program:</p> <p>» Specialized crown and court supports; domestic violence courts (<i>Justice and Attorney General</i>)</p> <p>» Mandated Offender Treatment (<i>Health and Wellness, Alberta Health Services</i>)</p> <p>» Enforcement and Supervision of Court Orders (<i>Solicitor General and Public Security</i>)</p> <p>» Community Coordination and Victim Supports (<i>Children and Youth Services</i>)</p>	<p>Hosted 2005 World Conference on Prevention of Family Violence</p> <p>» <i>Children and Youth Services</i></p>
<p>Provincial Bullying Prevention Strategy Developed – Public Awareness Campaign</p> <p>» <i>Children and Youth Services</i></p> <p>» <i>Education</i></p>	<p>Aboriginal Advisory Committee Established</p> <p>» <i>Children and Youth Services</i></p>	<p>Training Provided for Front-Line Responders (Information Sharing and Protection Against Family Violence Act)</p> <p>» <i>Children and Youth Services</i></p>	<p>Implemented Alberta Relationship Threat Assessment and Management Initiative (ARTAMI)</p> <p>» <i>Justice and Attorney General</i></p> <p>» <i>Children and Youth Services</i></p> <p>» <i>Solicitor General and Public Security</i></p>	<p>Hosted 2006 International Policy Forum</p> <p>» <i>Children and Youth Services</i></p> <p>» International, National and Provincial Family Violence and Bullying Research Relationships</p>

Social Change	Provincial Leadership	Coordinated, Collaborative Community Response	Services and Supports	Accountability
Provincial Prevention of Bullying Youth Committee Established » <i>Children and Youth Services</i> » <i>Education</i>	Amendments to <i>Protection Against Family Violence Act (PAFVA)</i> » <i>Justice and Attorney General</i> » <i>Children and Youth Services</i>	Community Incentive Fund Program Implemented » <i>Children and Youth Services</i>	Established Community Corrections Domestic Violence Coordinators in the Edmonton Area » <i>Solicitor General and Public Security</i>	Held the Prevention of Bullying: Building an Alberta Research Agenda, 2006 » <i>Children and Youth Services</i>
“Taking Action on Bullying” Parent Link Sites Implemented » <i>Children and Youth Services</i>	Enhanced Provincial Leadership through the Interdepartmental Committee on Family Violence and Bullying » <i>Nine ministries (see page 5)</i>	New Funding for Collaborative Community Programs to Support Victims » <i>Children and Youth Services</i>	Safe Visitation Initiative Implemented » <i>Children and Youth Services</i> » <i>Justice and Attorney General</i>	Data Collection and Cross-Ministry Statistical Coordination » <i>Justice and Attorney General</i> » <i>Children and Youth Services</i> » <i>Solicitor General and Public Security</i> » <i>Health and Wellness</i> » <i>Education</i>
Roots of Empathy Program Implemented in Alberta » <i>Children and Youth Services</i>	Prevention of Family Violence and Bullying Division Created » <i>Children and Youth Services</i>	Developed Domestic Violence Handbook and Training for Police, Crown Prosecutors and Social Workers » <i>Justice and Attorney General</i> » <i>Solicitor General and Public Security</i>	Parenting After Separation for High Conflict Families » <i>Justice and Attorney General</i>	Performance Measurement and Reporting Implemented » <i>Nine Ministries (see page 5)</i>
		Family Violence Investigation Report (FVIR) Developed and Police Training Provided » <i>Solicitor General and Public Security</i>	Screening Aid for Family Violence (SAFV) Implemented » <i>Children and Youth Services</i>	

Social Change	Provincial Leadership	Coordinated, Collaborative Community Response	Services and Supports	Accountability
		Domestic Violence Police Protocol Developed » <i>Solicitor General and Public Security</i>	Policies Implemented to Provide Financial Supports to Albertans Fleeing Abuse » <i>Employment and Immigration</i>	
		Protocol Developed for Family Violence Screening in Emergency Departments » <i>Health and Wellness</i>	Provincial Funding for Housing » <i>Housing and Urban Affairs</i>	
		Memorandum of Understandings (MOUs) and Working Protocols Developed » <i>Children and Youth Services</i>	Increased Funding for Women's Emergency Shelters and Second Stage Housing » <i>Children and Youth Services</i>	
		Provincial Elder Abuse Policy Framework and Strategy (in development) » <i>Seniors and Community Supports</i>	New Funding for Sexual Assault Centres » <i>Children and Youth Services</i>	
		Ongoing Multidisciplinary Training for Police and Other Criminal Justice Personnel » <i>Solicitor General and Public Security</i>	Program Funding Provided for Older Adults Escaping Abusive Situations » <i>Seniors and Community Supports</i>	

Social Change

For far too long, family violence and bullying were seen as “private matters” – harmful to the people involved but “not my business.” Roundtable participants were loud and clear in their view that “family violence and bullying are everybody’s business.” We heard that supportive social attitudes and shared responsibility for positive change can help stop family violence and bullying.

Our goal is to prevent family violence and bullying by changing public attitudes and focusing on early intervention. Here is what we are doing to achieve this goal:

Public Awareness and Education

We believe that public awareness and education are key to preventing family violence and bullying. That means we need to understand how attitudes allow family violence and bullying to continue. And we all need to know what we can do to help stop it.

In response to recommendations from Roundtable participants, we developed a multi-year public awareness and education initiative to change attitudes and behaviors and increase knowledge related to family violence.

» **Public Perceptions Survey** – In 2005, we surveyed 803 Albertans to measure their knowledge and attitudes about family violence and bullying. These baseline measures helped shape policies, programs, services and initiatives and let us measure the impact of the Strategy for the Prevention of Family Violence and Bullying over time. A similar survey was repeated in 2008 with 1,571 Albertans. Results show us that we are on the right track but we need to continue to encourage people to help others who are harmed by family violence and bullying. We also need to continue to reach specific groups, such as young Albertans, with information and education campaigns.

Albertans’ Perceptions of Family Violence and Bullying (2005 and 2008)	% of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed		
	Family Violence		Bullying
Statement	2005	2008	2008 ⁴
I have a personal responsibility to reduce this in my community.	–	90	89
Preventing this should be a priority for my community.	78	94	91
Preventing this should be a priority for the provincial government.	84	90	83

4 The 2005 Albertans’ Perceptions of Family Violence and Bullying did not include these statements for bullying.



5 Promoting Relationships and Eliminating Violence, *PREVNet's perspective on myths, facts, and solutions*, PREVNet, <http://prevnet.ca/Bullying/FactsandMyths/tabid/121/Default.aspx>

6 System Improvement Group (2007). *Prevention of Bullying Strategy: Stage 4 summative evaluation – Baseline data*. Edmonton: Alberta Education.

» Based on the 2005 Public Perceptions Survey, we launched a **public awareness campaign** in 2006 to encourage people to speak up against family violence. An award winning television public service announcement, “Fight Circle,” is effective in raising the issue and making people aware of their own perceptions of family violence. The public service announcement can be viewed at www.familyviolence.alberta.ca and following the “Materials and Resources” link. A toll-free, 24-hour **Family Violence Info (Information) Line**, 310-1818, was created to support Albertans impacted by family violence. The Info Line has received over 2,000 calls since its launch.

» Awareness is not enough. People need information and supports to take effective action. We have developed a number of **print resources**, including a series of fact sheets that provide information about supports and services available to victims, families and concerned others. Print resources are available online at www.familyviolence.alberta.ca or can be mailed to people on request. In the last two years, 293,000 requests for print resources on family violence were received, and over 500,000 visits were made to the family violence website.

» We have provided **training** and orientation sessions on family violence to community stakeholders across Alberta, including Judges, Justices of the Peace, police, social workers and community agency staff. This training has raised awareness of family violence –including awareness of legislation to protect victims of family violence – and equipped local responders with the knowledge and tools they need to assist people who are impacted by family violence.

Family Violence Info Line: 310-1818
Website: www.familyviolence.alberta.ca

Provincial Bullying Prevention Strategy

The connection between family violence and bullying was clearly established during the Roundtable. Research and practice show that many of the risk factors and behaviors associated with family violence are the same as those seen in bullying.⁵ With the development of its Provincial Prevention of Bullying Strategy, the Government of Alberta broke new ground in violence prevention by taking action to address this serious social problem.

» **School-based bullying prevention strategies** across the province have contributed to significant changes in awareness, reporting by children and adults, and bullying incidents. In surveyed classrooms and households, almost all children (97 per cent) and most adults (89 per cent) say they are aware of effective strategies they can use when they see bullying taking place.⁶ In particular, those schools with Taking Action on Bullying “Peace Coordinators” have seen decreases in bullying incidents. These positions are jointly administered by Children and Youth Services and Education. Their job is to raise awareness and change attitudes towards teasing and bullying, help students develop approaches, skills, and strategies to deal with and reduce bullying, create a fun, friendly, and safe school community, and enhance partnerships between Parent Link Centres and schools.

» A cross-ministry Prevention of Bullying working group, led by Children and Youth Services and Education, worked together to implement a **three-year campaign to raise awareness and change public attitudes about bullying**. Three separate **interactive websites** and a variety of **print resources**, including fact sheets, posters and comic books, provide targeted information and support to children, youth and adults. Many of the print resources are available in both English and French.

The three websites have been very successful, with the website for children receiving over 3 million requests, the youth website receiving over 350,000 requests and the adult website receiving over 420,000 requests. A toll-free, 24-hour **Bullying Helpline** was launched in May 2006 to provide resources and supports to victims, families and others impacted by bullying, and has received nearly 1000 calls since it was launched. A cross-ministry evaluation team was created to measure the impact of the awareness campaign. Early results show the campaign is making a difference in raising awareness and helping to change public attitudes.

- » To get youth more involved in bullying prevention, we created a **Provincial Prevention of Bullying Youth Committee**. The committee challenges and supports youth to become leaders in their communities – today and as they move into adulthood. Youth members make presentations to provincial and municipal levels of government and at national conferences, and work with the media to communicate their work to Albertans. They also talk to youth in their own communities to deliver a strong peer-to-peer message on bullying and its connection to family violence.
- » Children and Youth Services provides grant funding to six **Taking Action on Bullying Parent Link sites** across the province. These sites work with parents and schools to help identify bullying and give children the skills to deal with it. Results indicate that identification and reporting of bullying incidents by adults working in the partner schools has increased, even though the number of students referred to the office for problem behaviors has decreased. These results suggest adults are better able to recognize and report bullying.

SUCCESS STORY!

A mother's letter to a Peace Coordinator

This is something I have wanted to discuss with you...pretty much since I met you. Growing up, there was not one grade that I was not bullied. It would usually take me an hour or more to come home from school (hiding and running down side streets, going through yards, or doing whatever it took to get home safe). My sister would be home in 10 to 15 minutes after school let out. In those days, there was no initiative (to prevent bullying). It was blamed on me because I was a "crybaby." I would like to know if there is anything I can do to help out. I would be willing to do pretty much anything, especially if it keeps even one child from being where I was...

"Graduate"

Taking Action on Bullying – Parent Education Program

- » Children and Youth Services funds the **Roots of Empathy** program in Alberta schools. Roots of Empathy is a community-based anti-violence program that works to build empathy in students by providing regular contact with an infant over the course of the school year. The program has reached more than 29,000 children in over 1,000 classrooms across the province.
- » In addition to the specific initiatives described above, at least half of the projects funded by the **Community Incentive Fund Program** (see page 14) have focused on community-based bullying prevention initiatives.

Bullying Helpline: 1-888-456-2323

Website for children: www.teamheroes.ca

Website for youth: www.b-free.ca

Website for adults: www.bullyfreealberta.ca

SUCCESS STORY!

Peace in the classroom

A teacher was having problems with a particular girl in her class who was being aggressive towards other girls (making fun of clothes, gossiping, excluding others and spreading rumours). The Peace Coordinator at the Taking Action on Bullying site went into the girl's classroom and gave a presentation on bullying, talking about the different types of bullying and their effects. The Peace Coordinator later asked the teacher if she thought a "girl's group" would help the girl with her bullying behavior. The teacher was happy to tell the Peace Coordinator that since her presentation the girl had stopped bullying others and greatly improved her behaviour.

Provincial Leadership

The Government of Alberta remains committed to preventing family violence and bullying. The original Interdepartmental Committee on Family Violence (ICFV) and the Office for the Prevention of Family Violence (OPFV) were established in 1984 to coordinate work being done by several government ministries and numerous communities across the province to address family violence. However, Roundtable participants said these mechanisms needed to be enhanced to provide more comprehensive leadership and coordinated action across the province. We also heard that enhanced legislation was needed to enable more effective action on family violence and bullying.

Our goal is to provide provincial leadership in addressing family violence and bullying, through appropriate legislation, policy and supports. Here are some of the ways we are providing that leadership:

Provincial Coordination

- » The former Office for the **Prevention of Family Violence is now the Prevention of Family Violence and Bullying Division** within Alberta Children and Youth Services. Its budget was increased substantially, from \$17 million in 2003-2004 to over \$37 million in 2008-2009. Most of those dollars are invested in the community through grants and program funding.
- » The **ICFV** has expanded its mandate and membership. The **Interdepartmental Committee on Family Violence and Bullying (ICFVB)** is now made up of nine ministries (see page 5, Cross-Ministry Approach for list of ministries). The committee oversees the ongoing implementation of the Strategy for the Prevention of Family Violence and Bullying and coordinates and implements new initiatives.
- » Aboriginal Relations participates in the ICFVB, as both an advisor and funder, to address the specific **needs of Aboriginal people and communities**. In particular, Aboriginal Relations reviews proposed programs and considers the implications and potential impact on Aboriginal people and communities. The ministry also provides additional funding to enhance and extend the reach of other partner programs. For example, as a partner with the Canadian Red Cross Society, Aboriginal Relations supported "Walking the Prevention Circle," a series of workshops with the urban Aboriginal community in Lethbridge. This program explores the historic roots of Aboriginal violence and increases the ability of participants to address abuse, violence and bullying in their communities.

Legislation

» The 2004 *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* included **domestic violence policies that identify the impact on children exposed to family violence**. Exposure to family violence is the second most common form of child maltreatment, accounting for 23 per cent of all confirmed cases in Alberta.⁷

» In November 2006, **Alberta's *Protection Against Family Violence Act (PAFVA)* was amended** to improve protection for victims of family violence. Many of the amendments were based on recommendations made by William Hurlburt and Walder White in their 2003 report, *A Coherent and Principled Response to Family Violence in Alberta, Recommendations and Action for Change*. Many of these recommendations were echoed by Roundtable participants.

- Specific amendments included the addition of “stalking” to the definition of family violence, recognition of the impact on children exposed to family violence, expansion of the definition of family member to include relatives regardless of whether they live with the victim, protection of vulnerable seniors, and greater clarification on the use of Emergency Protection Orders (EPO). The amendments also included a new preamble that emphasized the Government of Alberta's interest in protecting individuals, families and children from family violence and holding perpetrators accountable.

- Information sheets on the *Protection Against Family Violence Act* are available at www.familyviolence.alberta.ca under “Materials and Resources”.

» A 2005 review by RESOLVE Alberta* found that most people were not aware of the *Protection Against Family Violence Act* – including professionals working with victims of family violence. **Comprehensive training on the Act's new provisions** was provided to over 2,000 Children and Youth Services staff, police and community service providers, along with orientation for Judges and Justices of the Peace. As a result of this training and the availability of application forms online, more professionals were able to help people apply for Emergency Protection Orders and the number of these orders requested by the public increased. Since the amendments, over 3,000 applications for EPOs have been filed across the province.

Emergency Protection Order application form online: www.albertacourts.ab.ca.

7 MacLaurin, B., Trocmé, N., Fallon, B., McCormack, M., Pitman, L., Forest, N., et al (2005). *Alberta incidence study of reported child abuse and neglect, AIS-2003: Major Findings*, University of Calgary: Calgary.

* RESOLVE Alberta is a research network that coordinates and supports research aimed at ending violence, particularly against women and children.



SUCCESS STORY!

Community Action Takes Flight

Thanks to enhanced funding, support and encouragement since the Roundtable, many communities in Alberta have launched their own community initiatives for the prevention of family violence and bullying. For example, in Fort McMurray, the Prevention of Family Violence and Bullying Coordinating Council was created in 2005 with funding from the Community Incentive Fund to address local key areas of action. The Council completed a community scan to identify community resources and then used this information to create a directory for service providers that is widely used in the community. In 2006, the Council unveiled its own local public awareness and education campaign that included television, radio and newspaper advertising, coasters and bank card protectors, all promoting local and provincial help phone numbers. The Council is now developing a website to provide local information on family violence and bullying, and is responding to the training needs of service providers in Fort McMurray.

Within Central Alberta, many communities have established Prevention of Family Violence and Bullying Committees to enhance services and make supports available and accessible to Albertans. In Didsbury, outreach services have been developed to assist victims of family violence. Several community partners in Rocky Mountain House are working together to assist those impacted by family violence. Educating community members about the issue of family violence and resources available has been the focus of the committee's work in Stettler and Drumheller. A working group representing several organizations has also been working with the Domestic Violence Court in Red Deer to ensure community services and supports meet the needs of victims and perpetrators.

Collaborative, Coordinated Community Response

Roundtable participants told us that the most important actions on family violence and bullying must take place at the community level. Government's role is to be a facilitator, funder, advisor and supporter that can help communities develop local capacity for leadership, organization and service delivery.

We need to consider the unique needs of each community and enable service providers to work together to find local solutions.

Our goal is to support a collaborative, coordinated community response in addressing family violence and bullying.

We support this community-level response in the following ways:

Community Engagement Framework

» In March 2005, Children and Youth Services developed a *Community Engagement Framework: A Strategic Framework and Guide* to create a common view of community engagement initiatives and help increase community capacity for action on family violence and bullying. The strategic framework and action guides, available online, are key resources for creating a coordinated collaborative response to family violence and bullying within communities.

Community Engagement Framework and Guides online: www.child.alberta.ca

Community Planning Modules online: www.familyviolence.alberta.ca

Funding

» The **Community Incentive Fund (CIF)** was created in 2004 and has provided \$15.1 million dollars to 405 community projects in its first four years. The program, administered by Children and Youth Services, funds projects to support communities across Alberta in taking action against family violence and bullying. To receive funding, projects must be part of a coordinated community response that involves two or more partners.

Information and Training

- » In 2005, a three-year province-wide information sharing initiative was implemented to support families better by allowing effective information sharing between front-line staff and key stakeholders who respond to family violence and bullying. Training in effective information sharing was provided to 4,000 individuals in 300 training sessions.
- » The **Domestic Violence Handbook for Police and Crown Prosecutors in Alberta** was created by Justice and Attorney General and Solicitor General and Public Security for police, Crown Prosecutors, social workers and other front line providers who investigate and prosecute family violence cases. The handbook also provides detailed information on related topics, such as children exposed to violence, the experience of victims, and risk factors for homicide. A printed copy of the handbook was widely distributed in 2005 and an updated electronic version is now available online.
- » Using the Domestic Violence Handbook as a resource, Solicitor General and Public Security coordinates **training for police, Crown Prosecutors and other criminal justice personnel** to respond effectively to individuals and families impacted by family violence. This multidisciplinary training uses the expertise of partner ministries to highlight the unique nature of family violence and the need for a collaborative and coordinated response. Since 2004, over 1,000 front-line responders have taken the training and are able to say, "I now know what to do."

Domestic Violence Handbook – online at <http://www.justice.gov.ab.ca/publications/default.aspx?display=topic#67>

SUCCESS STORY!

Learning Together, Working Together

The Region 5 East Central Child and Family Services Authority Family Violence and Bullying Prevention Committee hosted a January 2008 symposium on Senior Abuse and an April 2008 symposium on Bullying Prevention. The purpose of both symposia was to come to a better understanding of how senior abuse and bullying affect people in their local communities, and to begin to develop local solutions.

- » Solicitor General and Public Security works closely with police supervisors and front-line officers to provide ongoing training in how to identify and intervene earlier in family violence situations. The ministry chairs a Police Advisory Committee, with representatives from RCMP, municipal and First Nations policing services, Alberta Council of Women's Shelters, Justice and Attorney General, and Children and Youth Services who meet regularly to discuss issues of family violence and victim protection in the criminal justice system. The committee developed a Family Violence Investigation Report (FVIR) to assist front-line police officers in conducting family-violence related investigations.
- » Building on the Family Violence Investigation Report (FVIR) developed for police services, Children and Youth services developed a Screening Aid for Family Violence (SAFV) for use by child intervention caseworkers. The SAFV is currently being used in pilot sites across the province. By coordinating risk assessment strategies across ministries through tools like the FVIR and SAFV, we are better able to identify and intervene earlier in family violence situations.

8 Dr. J. Campbell's Presentation on Intimate Partner Violence, For a PowerPoint presentation on the assessment of "dangerousness in the field of intimate partner violence: what practitioners need to know," Slide 63, website: http://www.co.bergen.nj.us/ADV/Risk%20Assessment%20for%20Batterers%20praxis%20notes_files/frame.htm

Protocols and Frameworks

- » Solicitor General and Public Security developed a Domestic Violence Police Protocol that is distributed to front-line responders across the province. The protocol helps to improve consistency in how we address family violence situations across the province.
- » Studies show that the health system is an initial point of contact for victims of family violence (for example, Dr. J. Campbell's work on intimate partner violence).⁸ The Calgary Health Region has had guidelines for universal screening for domestic violence in its emergency departments since 2003. In 2005, David Thompson Health Region began to train emergency room staff to screen patients for family violence, followed by Palliser Health Region implementing universal screening in 2006 for all emergency room patients. More recently, East Central Health, in cooperation with the Region 5 Family Violence and Bullying Prevention Committee, developed a protocol to identify family violence in emergency room patients. Other health regions are at various stages of implementing family violence screening in emergency departments.
- » Children and Youth Services and its partners have improved their ability to work together through the use of Memorandum of Understandings (MOUs) and working protocols. MOUs are signed by leaders in partner organizations and allow information-sharing and collaboration that will provide the best community response to meet the needs of families impacted by family violence. Working together guidelines, such as that between Alberta Council of Women's Shelters (ACWS) and

Child and Family Services Authorities (CFSA), describe how organizations will work together to support children and families. The RCMP, ACWS, Children and Youth Services, and Solicitor General and Public Security have a provincial MOU that is used to develop local working agreements to support coordinated and collaborative family violence responses across Alberta.

- » Alberta Seniors and Community Supports has begun to develop a Provincial Elder Abuse Policy Framework and Strategy. The framework and strategy will define the various responsibilities and roles of government, communities, service providers and others in addressing this issue. Specific strategies will outline short-term and longer-term actions to address elder abuse.

Services and Supports

Our vision is an Alberta where children and families are free from family violence and bullying and can live safely in their homes and communities. This is an ideal future and one we should all strive toward – but we must remember that it takes time and sustained commitment. Right now, there are many people impacted by family violence and bullying and they need our help. Roundtable participants told us that people need timely access to supports and services. Those fleeing family violence need safe havens. Those impacted – victims and abusers – need effective treatment. Children and youth who witness family violence need help to recover from these traumatic experiences. And those at risk for becoming bullies or abusers need to be stopped in order to end the cycle of violence.

Our goal is to improve access to the necessary services and supports. Here are some of the ways we and our many community partners are working together to provide a range of effective services and supports for those impacted by family violence and bullying:

Safety

» The **Alberta Relationship Threat Assessment and Management Initiative (ARTAMI)** is the first of its kind in Canada to coordinate the efforts of a multi-disciplinary team of experts. ARTAMI helps to reduce and prevent the fear, suffering, violence and deaths that occur in high-risk relationship violence and stalking cases. The ARTAMI team came together in November 2007 and includes police, prosecutor, child intervention specialist, family law specialist and a safety consultant. The team develops risk reduction management strategies and assists with effective safety planning, by bringing together and building on the skills and expertise of team members and sharing its knowledge with community partners who are responsible for the security and protection of those at risk. Solicitor General and Public Security coordinates ARTAMI through the Alberta Law Enforcement Response Team (ALERT), and is supported by Children and Youth Services and Justice and Attorney General. To date, ARTAMI has provided assistance in over 100 family violence cases. ARTAMI also provides provincial training on family violence, stalking, high-risk and threat assessments and team members did over 50 presentations in their first year.

SUCCESS STORY!

Improving Safety, Enhancing Families

A family is referred to the Safe Visitation Initiative when there is a high risk for violence between adults. Sometimes this risk is due to poor parenting skills on the part of one or both parents. The non-custodial father in one Alberta family had a poor relationship with his children and showed little interest in spending time with them. He was granted supervised access by the courts and, with reservations, participated in the Safe Visitation Initiative. Over time, he began to attend support groups and parenting courses that he learned about through the initiative. He became more interested in his children and their visits. The father now has unsupervised, weekly visits with his children and the mother no longer questions her safety or the safety of her children.

- » Since 2004, government **funding for women's emergency shelters** has increased from \$15 million to over \$25 million in 2008/09. Children and Youth Services currently funds operations in 29 shelters, programming in two second stage housing projects and has fee for service agreements with three First Nations women's emergency shelters. An additional \$1.76 million was provided in 2008/09 to fund 79 new shelter beds. Funding was also provided in 2007/08 for staff training and the Women Shelter Leadership Bursary, which supports professional development for senior staff.
- » Children and Youth Services provides \$1.6 million annual **funding to ten sexual assault centres** across the province, to help support people who have been victims of sexualized violence.

SUCCESS STORY!

Making a difference on the HomeFront

Here is just a sample of comments from people who have been served by Calgary's HomeFront agency and domestic violence court:

"Both my spouse and I were charged with domestic violence. The HomeFront caseworkers were very polite and caring. You could see that they were sincere and genuine in what they were saying. That was really important."

"My HomeFront caseworker was kind and very professional. After talking with her I trusted her and felt everything would be all right....I have never had support like that before – unconditional."

"I can't imagine what the experience would have been like if it wasn't for the HomeFront team. You're already victimized and ashamed and the abuser...seems to be in control again. Having HomeFront involved keeps you informed and feeling like you have some control in the situation. They (abusers) are not winning again."

- » The Alberta Government's **Safe Visitation Initiative** helps protect children and families when there is a high risk of violence between parents. Safe visitation lets children visit with non-custodial parents in a safe and secure environment. Safe visitation sites are offered in neutral community settings and staffed by trained personnel. In 2007, five pilot sites were set up in communities with domestic violence courts – Calgary, Edmonton, Grande Prairie, Lethbridge and Red Deer. Results of the pilot will help to determine if the initiative may be expanded to other areas of the province. Since services began, 29 families, considered at high risk for continued violence, used Safe Visitation.

- » **Parenting After Separation for High Conflict** is a three-hour seminar provided through Family Justice Services, Justice and Attorney General. This course helps parents understand the emotional and legal process of separation and the effect of on-going, unresolved conflict on children. Parents learn to develop "parallel parenting plans" that minimize contact and reduce conflict, as well as options to deal with safety issues. In addition to the seminar, Family Justice Services offers a range of other programs and services to help individuals resolve their family law issues.

The Provincial Family Violence Program – Justice, Counselling and Victim Supports

- » **Specialized Court Supports/Domestic Violence Courts** are in eight communities across Alberta, including Airdrie, Calgary, Edmonton, Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat and Red Deer. These specialized courts are designed to speed up the court process and get offenders into counseling quickly. Most of these courts are served by multi-disciplinary teams of police, social workers, probation officers and Alberta Health Services (AADAC/Alberta Mental Health Board), who work together to design the best plan for each offender. In Calgary, a community agency called HomeFront supports the court by bringing together social service agencies, law enforcement and the criminal justice system to provide a coordinated, timely response to those involved in domestic violence. A recent evaluation by HomeFront followed 1,790 offenders who appeared in the Calgary domestic violence court in 2006. Results showed a recidivism rate of just nine per cent, compared to 22 per cent before the court was implemented.

» **Counselling for Mandated Offenders**

provides assessment, counselling, rehabilitation and follow-up to perpetrators of family violence who have been ordered by the courts to take counselling. Alberta Health and Wellness provides funding to the Alberta Mental Health Board, now Alberta Health Services, to deliver the program in Calgary, Edmonton, Medicine Hat, Lethbridge and Red Deer. Working with AADAC (also part of Alberta Health Services), health providers and community agencies, Alberta Health Services developed provincial standards for counselling services, which improved coordination of counselling programs to meet the unique needs of each community. Barriers to sharing personal information are also being addressed by the partners. Alberta's new Safe Communities Secretariat has provided additional funding to increase and expand counselling services, recognizing that family violence is both a crime and a root cause of other crime. Timely and effective counselling for offenders can help break the cycle of violence.

» **Enforcement and Supervision of Court Orders**

– Solicitor General and Public Security supervises individuals, bound by a variety of court orders, who require close monitoring to make sure they comply with the conditions imposed by the Court.

» **Community Coordination and Victim Supports**

– In 2007, we allocated an **additional \$2 million in grant funding**, as part of the **Provincial Family Violence Program**, to provide longer-term, sustainable funding to community programs that support victims.

SUCCESS STORY!

Providing safety and support in a crisis

The After Hours Crisis line at the Alberta Works Income Support Contact Centre received a frantic phone call from a woman who said her common law spouse threatened to kill her and her two children. Her spouse was banging on the door and threatening her while she was on the phone to the Crisis line. The agent called the RCMP for assistance, as the caller was clearly in danger. The RCMP arrived at the residence and took the woman and her children to a women's shelter. With support from the women's shelter and benefits through Alberta Works, this Alberta mother can now plan a new life for herself and her children.

These grants have enabled communities to enhance their coordinated and collaborative response to families impacted by family violence and to have measurable outcomes. So far, 10 communities have received funding to provide victim supports – Calgary, Camrose, County of Flagstaff, Edmonton, Ft. McMurray, Grande Prairie, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Red Deer, and Whitecourt.



Housing and Social Supports

- » In 2004, Employment and Immigration introduced **financial benefits through Alberta Works to support Albertans fleeing abuse** and has incrementally enhanced these benefits each year. These benefits help individuals and families get to safety, set up a household and start a new life. First level benefits include emergency transportation to shelter, an allowance to cover incidental expenses while in shelter, emergency health coverage for costs such as prescription drugs, dental or optical services, childcare, and relocation costs, if necessary. Second level benefits include an allowance to help set up a new home, damage deposit, a telephone and transportation allowance and financial assistance for food, clothing, shelter and other basic needs. An additional monthly benefit is available until urgent personal and family issues have been dealt with and it is possible for the individual to return to work. In 2007/08, over \$3.6 million in support was provided to over 4,400 clients, which does not include the costs of ongoing Income Support for these families.
- » Employment and Immigration has also developed training on understanding family violence for all staff that have direct contact with clients who may be affected by family violence, to help and support them.
- » Increased **provincial funding for housing** has directly assisted many individuals and families fleeing from family violence. Housing and Urban Affairs provides block funding to municipalities, who in turn support community-based agencies and organizations to meet housing needs in their own communities. Many of these organizations have a specific mandate to assist individuals and families impacted by family violence. The provincial government has also increased funding for emergency shelters and transitional housing, many of which support women and families in crisis situations, and has provided \$16 million over two years for an Outreach Initiative Pilot Project that provides transitional support.



» Through the **Affordable Housing Partnership Initiative**, Housing and Urban Affairs provided capital grants for housing projects (renovation or new construction) that created 3,700 affordable housing units across the province. The Musasa House in Medicine Hat is a second-stage housing project, which was specifically developed for women and children fleeing family violence.

» The **Provincial Homelessness Initiative**, which provides funding to community-based organizations in seven major municipalities to address homelessness, has also assisted in the development of additional housing spaces for abused women and children. One example is the Discovery House in Calgary, which also received funding over two years through the Outreach Initiative Pilot Project for two additional in-home support workers to help families develop life skills to maintain their housing.

» Seniors and Community Supports provides program **funding to two shelters in Edmonton and Calgary that support older adults escaping abusive situations**. These programs offer counseling, advocacy and support services.





Accountability

Just as family violence and bullying cannot be solved by one government, one ministry or one intervention, all of us are accountable to those impacted by family violence and bullying. It is not enough to say “family violence and bullying is everyone’s business.” We have to take real action that will have a real impact on the lives of individuals and families hurt by family violence and bullying. That means we must use the best available evidence to guide our planning and decision-making. We must support research on family violence and bullying to build our understanding. We must develop appropriate measures and evaluate our solutions to make sure they are making a difference. Above all, we must use our resources well and wisely.

Our goal is to ensure clear accountability for improved outcomes for individuals, families and communities impacted by family violence and bullying. Here are some of the major activities we have undertaken to improve these outcomes:

- » Family violence is not unique to Alberta. It is a world-wide issue that affects millions of people. The Government of Alberta has taken a lead role in setting a global agenda to address family violence. In 2005, the Alberta Government hosted the **World Conference on Prevention of Family Violence**. It was the first international conference to focus specifically on the prevention of family violence in a social and legal context. The conference was organized by Alberta Children and Youth Services in partnership with the World Health Organization, Pan American Health Organization, Government of Canada and Child Welfare League of Canada and was endorsed by 17 provincial, national and international organizations.

World Conference and International Policy Forum: <http://www.wcpfv2005.ca>

It brought together over 1,200 delegates, presenters, observers and volunteers from 30 countries on six continents who came to share promising practices in family violence prevention, intervention, support and follow-up.

To maintain the momentum created by the World Conference on Prevention of Family Violence and to build on its recommendations, the Government of Alberta and the Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research hosted a follow-up International Policy Forum, in 2006. The purpose was “to create a common framework for action that could be used by governments, non-government organizations and communities around the globe to respond to the needs of individuals, families and communities affected by family violence.” Participants included policy experts, researchers and practitioners who were selected for their expertise in one or more areas relevant to family violence prevention.

Both the World Conference and the International Policy Forum helped to establish partnerships, identify best practices for policies and services, and establish a foundation for meaningful action on family violence in Alberta.

- » In 2006, the Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research hosted a research seminar called **The Prevention of Bullying: Building an Alberta Research Agenda**. The purpose of the seminar was to prioritize an Alberta bullying research agenda and linkages to national research partners. These partnerships have brought together governments and researchers across Canada to work together to address bullying in children and youth.

Alberta is seen as a leader in taking action in bullying prevention and government staff and members of the provincial youth committee have been invited to international and national conferences to present on Alberta’s Prevention of Bullying strategy and to share best practices.

- » Many of the partnering ministries are working to develop new measures and **new ways to collect data on family violence and bullying** in Alberta. For example, Solicitor General and Public Security is creating a new form that will make reporting on family violence incidents easier and more consistent across the province. This will allow us to track the incidence, compare across communities and assess the difference we are making through a comprehensive approach. Children and Youth Services will be including family violence information as part of a new case management system to better support families and children impacted by family violence.



You can help end the silence and stop the violence

If you hear or see something that you feel is not quite right with family members, friends, co-workers, neighbors or youth in your life, or you suspect someone you know is experiencing family violence or bullying, call our 24 hour/7 day week info lines to find out how you can help:

Family Violence Info line: 310-1818

Bullying helpline: 1-888-456-2323

9 Family Violence in Canada:
A Statistical Profile 2006, 12.
Canadian Centre for Justice
Statistics, Statistics Canada, 2006.

Towards a Violence-free Future

No one should have to live in fear of violence and abuse. No child should grow up exposed to family violence or bullying. No senior or disabled adult should feel afraid or coerced by a family member. Our work helps to ensure all Albertans feel safe in their homes and communities.

The 2004 Roundtable on Family Violence and Bullying was an important milestone in the Province of Alberta's journey towards a violence-free future. It gave us a chance to pause and take stock of what we were already doing to address family violence and bullying, and to draw a new map that would take us forward. We aren't there yet...but we're on the right road.

This report shows that we listened to Albertans and the experts. We are taking action toward positive change. We have amended legislation and established mechanisms for provincial coordination.

Communities are being supported to take a coordinated and collaborative response to family violence and bullying at a local level. Individuals and families impacted by family violence and bullying have increased access to services and supports. And we are committed to listening and learning from others – in Alberta, Canada and around the world. But there is still much work to be done.

Alberta continues to have the highest reported rate of spousal assault in Canada. Only 28 per cent of victims of spousal assault turn to the police for help.⁹ Some turn to family or friends; others don't turn to anyone at all. In many of these cases, a family member, friend, neighbor or co-worker feels that something is not quite right but they don't know how to help. We plan to focus our efforts on providing supports and resources that will help Albertans reach out to those experiencing family violence. And we will continue to work with our family violence and bullying prevention partners to enhance support for all victims of family violence and bullying – including Aboriginal and immigrant families.

Safe and secure communities are built and sustained by people who care about each other. A violence-free Alberta will take all of us – government, communities, businesses, families and individuals – working together to prevent violence. We are proud of the action Albertans are already taking to prevent family violence and bullying and are confident that together we will achieve our vision of a violence free Alberta.



