

# HOMEFRONT

UNITED IN BREAKING THE CYCLE  
OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

## **BACKGROUND & HISTORY**

HomeFront is an internationally recognized, research validated, leading edge coordinated community-justice response addressing the issue of domestic violence.

HomeFront completed its project status and established itself as an independent agency in March 2004. HomeFront's success is attributed to ongoing collaboration and partnerships within the criminal justice system and numerous community agencies. With the implementation of the HomeFront model, a specialized domestic violence docket (first appearance) court was established in Calgary in May 2000. HomeFront's Domestic Court Caseworkers support victims while their case is handled by the justice system by providing safety planning, help in understanding the court process, referrals to community and legal resources, counselling and treatment needs as well as immigration status updates. The Caseworkers also liaise with other professionals involved with the family including lawyers, Child Welfare, the Crown, police, probation and treatment services.

HomeFront and the dedicated domestic violence court have had a profound impact on domestic violence recidivism (re-assault rates) in Calgary. Rigorous, independent research performed since HomeFront's inception has demonstrated that our coordinated community-justice response to domestic violence has reduced recidivism from 34% prior to May 2000 to 12.2% post-May 2000. (Synergy Research, 2004)

This result translates into hundreds of thousands of dollars of savings to the local police service, the court system, the corrections system, the health system and, of course is immeasurable when it comes to the savings related to human suffering.

The quality of the research in relation to its tracking of nine hundred (900) variables across different and complex components of the justice system and the rigorous independent analysis has caught the attention of many other jurisdictions outside of Calgary and as far away as France and Australia. It is a true testament to the Alberta Government's leadership in addressing this pervasive social problem and it underlies the importance of pressing forward with new initiatives in strategic partnership between government and local communities.

The HomeFront model is built upon a solid foundation of effective communication and collaboration. The resulting opportunities for early case resolution and innovative sentencing options (such as the frequent use of peace bonds) are, in turn, built upon the concept that critical information must be available to a domestic violence court to ensure that the interests of all parties may be taken into account. While we certainly agree that an accused's right to due process must always be protected, we also believe that for too long victim safety and victim involvement in the judicial process had been ignored by traditional justice responses to domestic violence.

## What is Domestic Abuse/Violence?

- Physical Abuse is any slapping, punching, kicking, choking, etc.. It is being slammed against a wall or being injured with a weapon or object. Brutal beatings can result in bruising, lacerations, broken bones or death. 60% of the victims of female homicide died at the hands of their partner (Statistics Canada).
- Psychological Abuse describes living with the constant fear of threats of violence against a woman, her children or her friends and relatives. It includes being harassed at work by phone calls or visits, the destruction of prized possessions and even suicide threats on the part of the victimizer. The intent is to control the behaviour of the woman. Threats of violence are illegal under the terms of Canada's Criminal Code.
- Emotional Abuse is never-ending experience of criticism, name-calling, and put downs alone or in front of friends and relatives. It includes unjust blaming, false accusations about loyalties and controls on time, activities and actions. Women who are emotionally abused find it also impossible to seek employment or a promotion, keep friends or join groups outside the home.
- Sexual Abuse or Marital Rape is being forced against your will to perform sexual acts or also have pain and injury inflicted during the intercourse. A 1983 Canadian law has addressed the issue of sexual assault within marriage, making it a crime for a man to sexually assault his wife or partner.
- Financial Abuse means having no access to the family's money. The woman may live in a comfortable house, wear good clothing, have children who are well-equipped with toys and luxuries, but she has no control over what is spent or saved, over what moneys come into the family, over any decisions about what will be bought. She is allowed no money for personal use. Remember that the law now says that, in cases of divorce, the woman has a right to 50% of the family's assets.

**In Canada, domestic violence is against the law.  
All people have the right to live with dignity and in safety.**

## What is HomeFront?

HomeFront is the coordinated community-justice response to domestic violence in Calgary. Our three programs are outlined below and the primary focus of each is on victim safety and offender accountability.

### ***Early Intervention & Outreach (EI&O) Program:***

- Voluntary resiliency-based program offered to families experiencing domestic conflict who have had police involvement but no charges have been laid.

### ***Specialized Domestic Court Program:***

- Provides support and information to victims while they go through the court system for matters of domestic violence. Pre-court case conferencing with representation from HomeFront Caseworkers, Crown Prosecutors' Office, Calgary Police Service, Community Corrections (Probation) and the Defense ensures that the victim's safety needs and concerns are made known to the judge.

### ***Partner Support Program (PSP):***

- Bridges and supports services available to victims of domestic violence, picking up where existing victims' services end.



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### Breaking the Cycle of Violence 2006 Summary Statistics

#### **Recidivism**

Benchmark recidivism rates for other specialized responses to domestic violence run at 30% (Tolman, R.M. and Weisz, A., 1995). HomeFront’s baseline recidivism rate was 34% as compared to 12% in 2004 and now, 9% in 2006.

#### **Docket Court Stats**

70% of all matters concluded at docket court  
30% Pled Not Guilty, 28% Accepted Peace Bonds; 30% Entered Guilty Pleas (17% of whom were sentenced to some period of incarceration)

#### **Conditions applied at Docket Court**

66% domestic violence counselling; 36% substance use prohibition; 31% substance abuse counselling

#### **Trial Court Stats**

724 matters went to trial in 2006

13% received peace bonds, 35% plead guilty and 4% were found guilty; 2% were found not guilty

Of those matters receiving a disposition in trial court, 18% received jail time, 23% received a peace bond; 46% received probation; 10% were fined; 2% received a conditional sentence order

#### **Conditions Applied at Trial Court**

37% Domestic violence treatment; 25% substance abuse treatment; 18% substance use prohibition

#### **HomeFront Domestic Court Caseworkers**

Docket court caseworkers successfully contacted 74% of all victims

Four (4) docket court caseworkers made 22,632 collateral contacts

Trial court caseworkers successfully contacted 70% of all trial case victims

82% of victims who attended trials had prior contact with a caseworker

#### **HOMEFRONT’S COMPARITIVE STATISTICS:**

	2004 Evaluation	2006 Review
Recidivism	12%	9%
% concluded at Docket	59%	70%
Peace bond issued	35%	28%
Guilty Plea	24%	30%
Not Guilty Plea	36%	30%

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