



HOMEFRONT
STOP IT WHERE IT STARTS

On the HomeFront

Spring 2007

Strengthened Partner Support Program provides timely services

Increased staffing and volunteers, including the ability to speak to clients in four languages other than English, have vastly improved the Partner Support Program based at HomeFront since spring 2006. The program maintains contact with victims of domestic violence whose partners are on probation.

“One of the struggles in the earlier program was that it simply didn’t have the human resources to address the volume of files and referrals coming from the domestic violence courts,” says Laura Woollard, interim program coordinator who is covering for Alicia Vande Sande on maternity leave. “Because we now have eight people working within the program, we’ve been able to address the backlog. We are at the point where we are contacting new referrals within two to four weeks after their last court date.”

Besides Laura, Partner Support has three well-qualified part-time staff, each working 20 hours a week, and five volunteers who donate three to four hours a week of their time. Staff joined the program last fall following a review that identified the need for more manpower.

Flexibility is built into the program with staff hours scheduled to meet client contact needs. “If Monday evening is the

best time to call, we can do that. If nine o’clock in the morning is best when the kids are off to school, we can do that, too,” Laura says. All contact is made by phone to a diverse client base. Children, or their guardians and elderly people are as affected by domestic abuse as a non-offending adult partner.



“The other thing that is wonderful about the program is that we can now serve people in Cantonese, Punjabi, Hindi and Bangladeshi because of our volunteers and staff. Not only has this increased our ability to serve people but we’ve been able to go back and pull

some of the older files and get some support for the people we weren’t able to serve before when our only language was English.”

A recent program evaluation captured feedback from some of the people who have benefited from the HomeFront contact. In 2006, the team completed 1000 client contacts offering everything from safety planning and domestic violence information and education to emotional support and referrals to community resources. For some, the priority was the program’s ability to provide ongoing risk assessment and safety planning. Overcoming isolation was something else that was appreciated. One client said, “Support was there if I needed it. I no longer felt alone.” Another commented that the follow-up calls ensured victims weren’t left hanging after the court experience was over, and a third said, “Having support and referrals helped provide direction” once the legal process ended.

Partner Support team members are committed to the belief that clients’ voices need to be heard. One client told them that finding someone to listen made all the difference. HF

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Hispanic professionals link compatriots to resources

Professional members and community representatives from Calgary's Hispanic community are banding together to provide resource information that will help some of their community's most vulnerable citizens. The group is called *Colaboracion de Servicios Comunitarios para la Comunidad Hispana (COSECO)* and includes representatives who work in counselling services, shelters, immigrant organizations, and religious organizations.

Ida Grainger, regional outreach program coordinator with Calgary Catholic Immigration Society, is a COSECO member who says the group was formed in response to concerns she and others were receiving from their community. "Grassroots people were concerned about those who were having difficulty adapting and integrating into life here because they didn't have access to resources," she says. "We also wanted to increase trust by talking to our communities about services and by promoting services. And the third reason our group was formed is to support initiatives coming from either service providers or grassroots people to increase the health and well being within the Hispanic community."

Many people from Central and South America call Calgary home. Statistics Canada census information from 2001 indicates a Hispanic population of more than 8,600 but that figure has grown. More recent information from the City of Calgary shows an influx of more than 740 people from South America, Mexico and Central America, Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic in 2005 alone. Ida says trends are showing increased numbers coming from Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia and Argentina. For the most part, members of the Hispanic community are well established here but some people are struggling.



In 2006, several individuals approached COSECO members seeking information and resources to help with family violence. COSECO organized its first workshop, a forum that included HomeFront, the Victim Assistance Unit from Calgary Police Services, Calgary Counselling Centre, the Calgary Coalition on Family Violence, the Action Committee Against Violence and Calgary Communities Against Sexual Abuse. Consultations and personal contact by COSECO members, and a printed handout called 'Educational Presentation on Family Issues and the Law in Canada' aroused enough interest that 48 people turned out on a Saturday morning to hear what the specialists had to say.

"The response was very good," Ida says. "Grassroots people were pleased that all these organizations would come out to talk to them on a Saturday. Several people actually booked appointments to go for counselling."

Based on that initial workshop COSECO's professionals identified additional needs for information. The group's members also emphasize the

importance of responding to issues the community brings to them. One result is that COSECO is currently working on a series of workshops designed to build trust and encourage health and wellness for people in their cultural communities.

"Grassroots people were concerned about those who were having difficulty adapting and integrating into life here because they didn't have access to resources."

"We are organizing two workshops this year," Ida says. "The 'Impact of Stress in Relationships' workshop will take place in July and 'Nurturing Yourself' is scheduled for October."

Improved outcomes are possible when the most vulnerable people have the knowledge they need to tap into the resources the larger community has available for them. HF

COSECO representatives are from:

- Catholic Family Services
- YWCA Sheriff King Home
- Centre for NewComers, Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish
- Canadian Hispanic Seniors
- Calgary Catholic Immigration Society
- 3 members-at-large serving the Latin American community

Where was *On the HomeFront* in February?

We missed getting out the first issue of *On the HomeFront* for 2007. Unfortunately, a combination of fewer human and financial resources, and lack of time to prepare the quarterly newsletter forced the cancellation. Our subsequent efforts to enlist the support of several communication student volunteers fizzled because most were busy with exams during preparation for the spring issue. Special thanks to Lorrie Gainor, *On the HomeFront's* editor and senior writer for donating much of her time to make sure we met our May deadline.

Some good news: just as we were putting the finishing touches on this issue we received a welcoming phone call. Third-year Mount Royal College journalism student Daniel Douglas has just volunteered to conduct interviews and write stories for the summer 2007 issue. Depending on our story lineup for this issue, he may be giving you a call. HF

Selinger Golf Tournament in September



Mark your calendars for Mon., Sept. 17 and sign up for the annual Selinger Golf Tournament to be held again at the Earl Grey Golf Course. The tournament is a annual fund raiser for HomeFront. Register online at www.selingertrust.ca and contact Isabel Piggott at 403-206-2100, ext. 222 if you or your organization can either sponsor the event or donate a prize. You can also reach Isabel at isabel@homefront.com. HF

HomeFront is funded by

Alberta Children's Services, Alberta Mental Health Board, The Calgary Foundation, City of Calgary Crime Prevention Investment Fund, Community Incentive Fund, Jerry P. Selinger Memorial Fund, The Prairieaction Foundation, United Way of Calgary and Area, Victims of Crime Fund and, an Anonymous Donor.

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PLEASE HELP HomeFront in its work to improve the lives of those affected by domestic violence.

Because Calgary is growing so rapidly, HomeFront needs your help to keep up with increasing demands for its services. People from all cultures and all walks of life depend on HomeFront's support as they cope with domestic abuse when they come into contact with the criminal justice system.

Your contribution can make a difference to someone who is suffering—a child, a youth, a parent, a senior. Gifts of any amount are welcome and appreciated. You can choose which of our programs you would like your donation to reach by placing a check mark beside that program on the reverse side of the form. You can also direct your contribution to 'Wherever it is needed most'.

Coordinated Justice/Domestic Court Program

HomeFront's domestic court caseworkers provide direct support to victims and ensure that each victim's interests are considered in the decisions made in court. The specialized domestic violence docket and trial courts, and HomeFront's efforts are reducing repeat offences, offering new hope to both victims and offenders, and significantly improving the rate of victim involvement in court proceedings.

Early Intervention and Outreach Program

This program is a crime prevention initiative HomeFront has undertaken in partnership with Calgary Police Service and Calgary and Area Child and Family Services. The program is designed to intervene in cases where police have been called to the home because of domestic disturbance but no charges have been laid.

Partner Support Program

When a domestic abuse offender is placed on probation, HomeFront's Partner Support team is there to provide support to the offender's partner. A team of part-time staff and volunteers ensures that victims receive the information they need to link to whatever community resources are necessary and have someone to talk to while their partners are on probation.



PAFVA strengthened— amendments clarify, broaden meanings

Amendments to the 1999 Protection Against Family Violence Act (PAFVA) are intended to provide greater support for victims, their children and elderly family members living with victims, and include new provisions for court-ordered counselling. A Queen’s Bench protection order can send a respondent to counselling and authorize counselling for other family members.

Since the amended Act came into effect Nov. 1, 2006, Renee Van Dijk, family violence and contracts specialist with Alberta Children’s Services, has conducted training sessions about the changes to frontline department staff throughout the Calgary area. HomeFront’s Court Team Supervisor, Laura Ducharme, accompanied Rene on some of the training sessions to bring participants up

to date on HomeFront’s protocols.

“The new Act allows for greater safety for victims, including other family members,” Laura says. “Children’s Services can respond better now that the Act has been strengthened. Emergency protection orders can be granted to protect the claimant and other family members who reside with that person.”

Amendments include:

- a changed definition of a family member: relatives no longer have to live together to be considered as family members;
- adding ‘stalking’ to the definition of family violence and explaining what stalking means;
- removing the need to prove the purpose of the violence;
- increasing the number of issues for

consideration available to judges and justices of the peace in determining the need for emergency protection orders. (e.g. whether the family violence is repetitive or escalating, the effect of exposure to family violence on children, the existence of immediate danger).

- increasing the time frame for reviews of emergency protection orders to nine days from seven days.

A formal evaluation of the original Act was completed by RESOLVE Alberta family violence researchers in 2005. They conducted interviews with those on the frontlines of domestic abuse in various regions of the province. The input they received, reviews and feedback from the public led to the 2006 amendments. HF

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For credit card donations you may phone 403-206-2100, ext. 221 or fax your form to HomeFront at 403-206-2106.