

News Release

New Alberta-wide sexual violence action plan led by front-line agencies

Edmonton, AB – May 11, 2017. Today the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services (AASAS) will launch a collaborative approach to end sexual violence in Alberta. The Sexual Violence Action Plan (the plan) is the first for Alberta – and one with a grassroots approach.

Not only is the plan a first for Alberta, it is the first of its kind in Western Canada. And this plan is the only one developed and led by the community of front line service providers—the network of sexual assault centres across Alberta.

The plan is supported across government ministries and community-based agencies. The plan includes initiatives related to prevention, intervention, outreach, community leadership, and joint accountability.

“The AASAS plan is the result of our unique front line experience, research, and best practices for addressing sexual violence,” says Debra Tomlinson, Chief Executive Officer of the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services. “The plan was developed by the AASAS network, but it belongs to all Albertans. We are all responsible for creating an Alberta free of sexual violence,” says Tomlinson.

Sexual violence is a complex issue with no easy solutions. Important changes, such as those outlined in the plan will take time, commitment and resources from all stakeholders, including government. Some strategies will be dependent on the fiscal realities of the economic climate.

“Working with community agencies to provide a coordinated, multidisciplinary response to sexual violence is a priority of the Government of Alberta,” says Stephanie McLean, Alberta’s Minister of Status of Women. “It will ensure that every Albertan can access a full range of services and supports to help them heal and recover.”

The Sexual Violence Action Plan is designed to act as a blueprint for a spectrum of service providers and policy makers to help them address the problem of sexual violence in Alberta that affects 25 out of 1000 Albertans every year.

The Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services (AASAS) is the provincial umbrella association for sexual assault centres in Alberta. AASAS’ mandate is to increase awareness of the issue of sexual violence and to increase access to sexual assault services for Albertans.

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The AASAS Sexual Violence Action Plan at a glance:

1. Enhanced intervention

- *Crisis intervention*: for those who do reach out, ensure an immediate, identifiable, non-blaming and specialized response.
- *Counselling*: with access to affordable, specialized counselling and support, most survivors of sexual violence are able to live healthy and productive lives.
- *Police and court support*: create systems and services that help navigate victim/witness progression through the criminal justice system. With adequate intervention support, victims of sexual assault can proceed effectively and efficiently through the criminal justice process and recover from the effects of trauma.
- *Volunteer support*: involve individuals and communities in addressing sexual violence, in particular engage volunteers in efforts to create awareness about the best response.
- *Offender services*: the justice system is responsible for providing sanctions as a deterrent to committing the crime of sexual assault, and provides the supports necessary to ensure that the offender does not re-offend upon release into the community.

2. Effective prevention strategies

- *A comprehensive education strategy*: apply sexual assault prevention education across all ages and in all communities to eliminate sexual violence in Alberta.
- *Changing societal attitudes and norms*: a shift in the public perceptions surrounding this crime is necessary to support an end to sexual violence in Alberta.

3. Strong leadership and accountability

- *A cross ministerial response to sexual violence*: action and input across government ministries through a collaborative, coordinated approach necessary to address sexual violence and ensure that the political, social and economic issues related to sexual violence are included in all key government policies, practices and legislative frameworks.
- *Leadership in coordination, collaboration and excellence across the province*: build a coordinated multidisciplinary approach to ensure that every Albertan is able to access a full continuum of responsive, effective sexual violence services and supports across their life span. Resource specialized and identifiable sexual violence services to meet the current demand, making them sustainable over the long term. Continuously evaluate programs and services and maintain ongoing sexual violence research to ensure that current practice is always best practice.

4. Effective outreach strategies

- Ensure prevention, intervention and treatment services are made available to all Albertans.

To read the full plan visit: <https://aasas.ca/initiatives/sexual-violence-action-plan/>.

AASAS Sexual Violence Action Plan

Sexual violence is preventable:

everyone is responsible for
being part of the solution



Government



Justice



Education



Health



Social
Services



Communities



Four
strategic
priorities



"Survivors of
sexual violence
are never to
blame!"



Education is **key**
to changing
attitudes and
behaviours



Best practice



Equal
access to
services
for **all**
Albertans