

# Information bulletin

Victim Services and Crime Prevention

April 2015

## We Want to Hear from You!

If you have feedback about this bulletin or would like to submit information about an innovative project to be featured in a future bulletin, please contact us at [victimservices@gov.bc.ca](mailto:victimservices@gov.bc.ca).

Please consider the environment before printing this e-bulletin.  
Thank you!



Victim Services and  
Crime Prevention  
Community Safety and  
Crime Prevention Branch  
Ministry of Justice



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## Message from the Executive Director



Welcome to the April 2015 Information Bulletin. This edition covers a variety of topics, from program information and resources, to grant funding and training opportunities.

The theme of this issue is addressing violence against women. Violence against women is a societal problem that has wide ranging impacts in our homes, our schools, and our communities.

This issue contains a program spotlight on the Surrey

Domestic Violence Unit (DVU), which was launched in February 2015. DVUs handle highest risk cases and provide an integrated approach to supporting victims.

This edition also includes information about A Vision for a Violence Free BC, the provincial government's recently launched strategy to address violence against women. To read the full strategy [click here](#).

In December 2014, we held our free webinar on the Crime Victim Assistance Program. We will be offering several more webinars in the coming months, including one on April 15, 2015 regarding the Draft Justice Framework to Address Violence Against Aboriginal Women and Girls. See page 6 for more details.

In this edition, we are pleased to launch a new feature called "Shining Star". Front-line

service providers have a challenging job and many workers go above and beyond in delivering quality services to people who have experienced violence and trauma. In order to provide some well-deserved recognition, we will be accepting nominations for front-line service providers to be featured in future editions of this bulletin as "Shining Stars". See page 6 for more details.

As always if you have thoughts or suggestions for this bulletin feel free to contact us at [victim-services@gov.bc.ca](mailto:victim-services@gov.bc.ca) or email me directly at [Taryn.Walsh@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Taryn.Walsh@gov.bc.ca).

Taryn Walsh  
Executive Director  
Victim Services and Crime  
Prevention

## Program Spotlight: Community Based Victim Services at the Surrey DVU

The Surrey Domestic Violence Unit (DVU) is a partnership between the Surrey RCMP, Surrey Women's Centre, the City of Surrey, the Ministry of Children and Family Development, and the Ministry of Justice. The Surrey DVU involves the co-location of police investigators, victim services, and a child protection worker within the Surrey RCMP detachment to assist highest risk victims of domestic violence.

"The Surrey DVU is responsible for providing an integrated police/support worker response to reduce incidents of domestic violence and repeat victimization to victims and family members who are at a high risk of physical harm," says Sergeant Holly Turton of the Surrey RCMP. "This is achieved through the engagement and mobilization of various community partner agencies and the management of offenders deemed by the Surrey DVU and community partners as Highest Risk Offenders."

"Collaboration is key because everybody is in a much better position to identify those women and children who are at the highest risk because we all have different pieces of information," says Sonya Boyce, Executive Director of Surrey Women's Centre. "The beauty of the DVU is that because we are all working together, that communication and that flow of critical information with respect to women's safety happens more quickly than it would otherwise."

In March 2014, Surrey RCMP and the Surrey Women's Centre Society received a civil forfeiture grant to help establish the newly integrated DVU, located within the Surrey RCMP detachment. Part of this funding allowed the Surrey Women's Centre to redefine its service delivery model in order to hire and train a community-based victim service worker to be co-located with the Surrey DVU.



**Photo:** Sonya Boyce speaking at announcement for the launch of the Surrey DVU and Violence Free BC on February 6, 2015

"With the recent addition of a community-based victim services worker, the Surrey DVU can now more effectively meet the needs of victims and family members and offer a wider range of support services," says Turton. This enhancement of services is crucial for connecting women to a network of supports.

"One of the key roles that the victim support worker plays in the DVU is to provide a really critical link between a woman and her children and every other system that she's going to come into contact with," says Boyce. "She has to make some pretty quick and critical decisions in a really short period of time. Our role is to help her navigate those systems and explore her options and support what she decides to do."

Boyce notes that the victim support worker uses a wrap-around approach to help a woman build a network of supports. The worker also identifies risk factors at play and works with the woman to develop a safety plan that mitigates those risks, prioritizing those that put her and her children at greatest risk.

"Trust and confidentiality are cornerstones of our work," says Boyce. "A lot of times, women will disclose things to us that they won't disclose to anybody else regarding the history and the nature

## Preventing Violence Against Women and Girls in the Name of Honour



In 2013, MOSAIC received funding from the Status of Canada to identify and examine the needs of women and girls impacted by violence committed against them in the name of honour. The two year project explores gaps in services that present barriers to women accessing help. In response to feedback from the project participants, key service providers, and the project steering committee, a multi-agency strategy was developed that includes a training module to deconstruct the concept of honour-based violence, as well as a video public service announcement, poster, informational placard and a website. For more information, please visit [www.honourforwomen.com](http://www.honourforwomen.com).

## Community Based Victim Services at the Surrey DVU (cont'd)

of the abuse itself. When we all can sit down and share that information with the woman's consent and make her a part of that process, then she's in a far better position to stay safe and we're in a far better position to support her than ever before.

"We really do have a critical window of opportunity after the assault. There's a period of time in which she's deciding whether she's going to stay or whether she's going to leave. What happens dur-

ing that time can influence her decision one way or another. Our role, of course, is to support whatever she wants, but at the end of the day, we want women and children to be safe. Whether she decides to stay or leave, there's that critical window in which we have the opportunity to make a huge impact on what happens with the rest of her life. The more we can work together, the safer women and children will be."

## Practice Tips: Risk Identification and Safety Planning

The following practice tips about risk identification and safety planning were adapted from *Safety Planning Across Culture & Community: A Guide for Front Line Violence Against Women Responders* (Ending Violence Association of BC). For more information, please see the [full guide](#).

### Safety Plans Must Consider All Aspects of Women's Circumstances

Effective risk identification and safety planning must take into account all the dimensions of a woman's life circumstances, including risk and protective factors related to the abuser; the status of their relationship; her own individual circumstances; and those arising from the systems that are responsible for responding. It is critical that the service provider understand and identify with the woman all the risk factors present in a given case in order to ensure that appropriate safety planning is undertaken and implemented.

### Critical Times for Risk Identification and Safety Planning

There are certain times in the course of what is happening in an abusive relationship where it is critical for the service provider to work with the woman to

assess her safety and risk factors and engage in active safety planning for her and her children. These are the most dangerous times when risk must be assessed or re-assessed and safety planning must take place or be updated:

- Immediately following disclosure of the abuse to someone outside her family
- Immediately after she has told him she is going to leave
- Immediately after she has left him
- When the accused is released by police
- During the charging process
- During plea discussion
- If a stay of proceedings is entered
- Upon application for peace bond or other protection order
- Upon application to vary protection order conditions
- When the accused is released on interim conditions
- When she initiates legal actions, such as divorce, issues related to children, or property settlement
- When any papers are served, such as protection orders, notification of divorce or separation proceedings, or when she enters another relationship

## Launch of Stop Family Violence Website



Stop Family Violence  
Arrêtons la violence familiale

In December 2014, the Public Health Agency of Canada launched Stop Family Violence, an online source of information and resources about family violence that replaces the National Clearinghouse on Family Violence. Stop Family Violence provides information for Canadians who are, or know someone affected by family violence, need help finding services, or want to learn about family violence in Canada. It also provides information and resources for service providers on how to help prevent or respond to family violence. For more information, please visit the [Stop Family Violence website](#).

## Risk Identification and Safety Planning (cont'd)

### The Safety Planning Process

Safety plans should be developed as soon as possible and in partnership with the woman. Before the service provider starts the safety planning process, they should discuss the purpose of risk identification and safety planning with her and share with her any concerns they have for her safety and the safety of the children. They should talk with her and ask her detailed questions about her current circumstances and the circumstances of her children, including potential risk factors, actions she has already taken, current safety measures in place, and services she is currently accessing.

Once the service provider has consulted with the woman, the next step is (with her permission) to gather information from as many other sources as possible. If the service provider is coordinating

the safety planning process and has the woman's consent, it is essential that they ensure risk-related information is shared among all those who need to know in order to help keep the woman and her children safe. If the service provider is not the coordinator of the safety planning process for that woman, it is important that they share all risk-related information with the agency that is coordinating the process or, when applicable, with the members of their interagency case assessment team so that appropriate and collaborative safety planning can be done.

### Additional Safety Planning Resources

- [Creating a Safety Plan Booklet](#)
- [Personalized Safety Planning Template](#)
- [Factors to Consider When Domestic Violence Safety Planning](#)

## A Vision for a Violence Free BC

On February 6, 2015, the provincial government released [A Vision for a Violence Free BC \(VFBC\)](#), a strategy and commitment to end violence against women. VFBC combines immediate actions with a long-term vision, identifying five key priorities for ending violence against women in our province:

1. Challenging beliefs and behaviours
2. Ensuring services are responsive, innovative and co-ordinated
3. Supporting women to rebuild their lives
4. Addressing violence against Aboriginal women
5. Fostering strong relationships and new partnerships

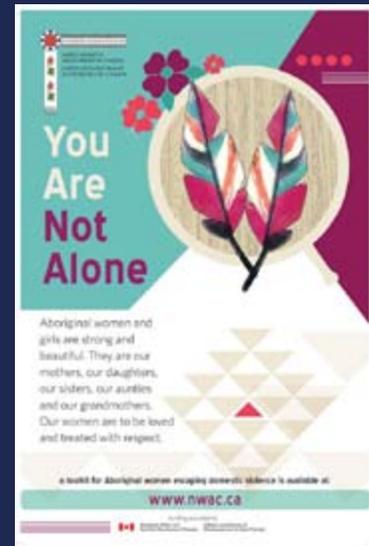
VFBC reflects invaluable input and insights provided by organizations within the anti-violence sector, and builds on significant work in this area that has been undertaken to-date, including: the three-year Provincial Domestic Violence Plan; the signing of a Memorandum of

Understanding between the Province and Aboriginal leadership to address violence against Aboriginal women; the opening of new Domestic Violence Units in Kelowna and Surrey, for a total of six units across B.C.; and, continuing work on the recommendations of the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry.

This year, the Ministry of Justice will be supporting actions of VFBC by providing [\\$5 million in civil forfeiture grant funding](#) for anti-violence and prevention initiatives, with a priority focus on violence against women. Moving forward, government will continue to dedicate a portion of civil forfeiture funds to support the VFBC strategy.

To support the VFBC priority of challenging beliefs and behaviours, the Province launched the Say Something campaign aimed at ending the silence on domestic violence. For more information, please visit the website, [saysomethingbc.ca](http://saysomethingbc.ca).

## New Resource for Aboriginal Women Impacted by Violence



The Native Women's Association of Canada has created a new resource for Aboriginal women escaping domestic violence. This new toolkit, *You Are Not Alone: A Toolkit for Aboriginal Women Escaping Domestic Violence*, provides Aboriginal women with community safety planning resources to address domestic violence. The toolkit also includes a Who's Who: Domestic Violence Resource Guide of services available to Aboriginal women in every province and territory. Hard copies of the toolkit and additional promotional items can be ordered free-of-charge while supplies last to raise awareness about domestic violence in communities. For more information, please visit [www.nwac.ca](http://www.nwac.ca).

# Victim Safety Unit Answers the 'Top Five'

The Victim Safety Unit (VSU) is part of our Community Safety and Crime Prevention Branch in the Ministry of Justice. The VSU provides notification and case updates to victims (or family members of deceased victims) and victim service workers as an accused/offender moves through the court and correctional systems. Victims receive information about changes in bail and custody status as well as after-hours notification of releases or escapes from custody which are important considerations in safety planning. Victims must register with the VSU in order to receive these services.

The VSU has approximately 1700 active client files. Steve Ford (Director, Justice and Safety Programs) has provided answers to the 'top five' questions the VSU receives:

### 1. How do victims register for notification?

The victim can register by telephone or by completing a [Victim Safety Unit notification form](#) and returning it to the Victim Safety Unit by mail, email or fax. A victim service worker can assist the victim by calling to register the victim or by completing the form with the victim. The victim's signature is required to complete the registration.

### 2. Are there different kinds of registrations?

Victims can apply for all updates (court and BC Corrections) or just BC Corrections movements to avoid any duplication of service. They can also name an agent to receive updates on their behalf (a victim service worker or trusted friend or family member). Victim service workers can request double notification of court and/or BC Corrections movements as well (when not accessible to the victim service worker through Court Services Online or JUSTIN). Court updates include provincial and supreme criminal court and the BC Court of Appeal. BC Corrections movements

include changes to custody, bail, or probation status, after hours notification of custody release or escape and parole application information, as well as admits to and releases from provincial custody on matters unrelated to the applicant.

### 3. Does the VSU get automatic notice of police releases and breaches of bail or probation?

No. If an accused is given a Promise to Appear or Undertaking to Appear by the police, the VSU is not automatically notified even if you/your client is registered. The VSU does not have access to police arrest records and is generally not aware of police releases until we are asked to check JUSTIN. The same applies to breaches of bail or probation. We suggest that you/your client advise the VSU of any arrests or breaches even if you think they are unrelated to your client, so that we can check for any changes on the related files (e.g., application to revoke bail, new related charges, etc.).

### 4. Does the VSU have access to information for both federal and provincial offenders?

The VSU has access to BC Corrections information but does not have access to Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) information. For that reason, when an offender is sentenced to a jail term of two years or more, we forward the contact information for the registered victim/victim service worker to CSC Victim Services (CSC VS) who will then provide updates about the offender once they are registered. CSC VS have their own eligibility criteria that must be met, as does the Parole Board of Canada (PBC). Once registered, CSC VS will forward the registration information to the PBC when needed. In the case of a provincial sentence, the VSU will advise the victim of any parole applications and will forward the registration information to PBC as needed.

# Federal Call for Proposals to Combat Family Violence



On February 20, 2015, Minister of Health Rona Ambrose announced a call for proposals for community-based projects that support victims of domestic violence and child abuse and those at risk of these forms of violence. The funding seeks to develop, enhance, or expand integration across community services for victims of domestic violence and child abuse, with emphasis on collaborative models to help connect the health sector to the social, justice, and law enforcement sectors. For more information about the funding, please visit the [Public Health Agency of Canada website](#).

## Victim Safety Unit Answers the 'Top Five' (cont'd)

5. Can we still use the old VSU registration forms that we have in our office? Our registration form was updated last year and a current copy is [available online](#). Please include your name and contact information on the registration form when registering your client. We can then refer them back to you for additional emotional support and safety planning when needed. If you want to receive double notification, please tick both Victim and Victim Service Worker in the "Contact Person" line on the form and indicate what type of updates you

want (e.g., court updates and/or BC Corrections).

NOTE: Please discard any old forms that you may have.

If you have additional questions about the Victim Safety Unit, please contact us Monday to Friday, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at 604-660-0316 or toll-free in B.C. at 1-877-315-8822, email [vsusg@gov.bc.ca](mailto:vsusg@gov.bc.ca), or visit our [website](#)

## E-resource for Victims of Mentally Ill Offenders

The Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime has developed a new online resource for persons victimized by someone who is mentally ill. The resource is intended to help victims and victim service providers better understand when and how a mentally ill offender is diverted into the forensic mental health system and becomes a patient who is treated by nurses, social workers and psychiatrists. Victims of such crimes have identified that one of the biggest hurdles in their understanding of the process is that while the accused physically committed the



crime, he or she is not held accountable in the way that other offenders are in the criminal justice system. This e-resource is [available online](#).

## Free Webinars for Service Providers

We held our free webinar on the Crime Victim Assistance Program (CVAP) in December 2014. More than 80 people registered for this interactive session with Grant McKellar (Director, CVAP). Grant answered attendees' questions and clarified information on important aspects of the application process. The complete webinar is [available online](#).

Our next free webinar will be held on April 15, 2015 on the Draft Justice Framework to Address Violence Against

Aboriginal Women and Girls. Our hosts will be Sherri Lee and Emily Arthur of the Ministry of Justice. If you're interested in registering for the April 15 webinar, please email us at [victimservices@gov.bc.ca](mailto:victimservices@gov.bc.ca).

Webinars will also be coming up on court support (May 13) and human trafficking (June 24). If you have ideas for future webinars please contact us at [victimservices@gov.bc.ca](mailto:victimservices@gov.bc.ca).

## Call for Shining Stars



Front line workers have a rewarding but challenging job. We would like to recognize service providers who have a positive impact on clients, families and co-workers, so we are creating a new regular feature in this bulletin called "Shining Star". Is there somebody in your program who goes above and beyond to assist your clients? We'd like to hear about it and profile them as a Shining Star in our Information Bulletin. We just need their name, job title, your program name, photo (optional), and a brief description of why you think they're a Shining Star. Please send your submission by May 29 to [victimservices@gov.bc.ca](mailto:victimservices@gov.bc.ca).

## Awareness Weeks This Spring

Prevention of Violence Against Women Week (April 12 to 18) and Victims of Crime Awareness Week (April 19 to 25) are coming up and we will be developing event calendars to post on our website. If you would like your event included in our calendar for either of these two weeks, please contact us at [victimservices@gov.bc.ca](mailto:victimservices@gov.bc.ca).

Stop the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth Awareness Week took place on March 9 through 15, 2015. Events were held across B.C. to commemorate the week and help raise awareness about sexual exploitation. For more information, see our [events calendar](#).

## Branch Staffing Updates

We are very pleased to announce that Cheryl Meyers has joined the Branch as Manager of the Victim Court Support Program. While Cheryl is new to the provincial government, she has extensive experience in the victim services field. Cheryl has been the Manager of the New Westminster Police Victim Services program as well as the Director of Emergency Social Services for the past 24 years.

Sandra Stemmler has joined the victim court support team providing services at Surrey Court and Sophie's Place Child Advocacy Centre. Sandra has lots of experience in victim services and worked as a community-based victim services worker with Tri-City Transitions Society in Port Coquitlam. Prior to that, she worked for the Alberta government as a child protection worker.

## Justice Victim Network Webinar on Bill C-32

The Victim Justice Network will host a webinar on Bill C-32, the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights, on Wednesday, April 22 at 2 p.m. EDT. The key presenter in this webinar is Ms Pamela Arnott, the Director and Senior Counsel of the Policy Centre for Victims Issues, Department of Justice Canada.

The webinar is hosted by the Victim Justice Network, a national non-profit

organization whose mission is to establish an online-based network to better serve and support victims of crime. One of its objectives is to promote public awareness and public education on issues of importance to victims of crime.

Spaces are limited, so please register early. To register for this webinar, please visit the Victim Justice Network [registration page](#).

### We want to hear from you!

If you have feedback about this bulletin or would like to submit information about an innovative project to be featured in a future bulletin, please contact us at [victimservices@gov.bc.ca](mailto:victimservices@gov.bc.ca).



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[www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/victimservices](http://www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/victimservices)  
[victimservices@gov.bc.ca](mailto:victimservices@gov.bc.ca)

## Online Training



**Domestic Violence Safety Planning Online Training**  
Seats for staff and volunteers with our Branch-funded programs are still available for the Domestic Violence Safety Planning Online Training. For more information about the training, please visit our [training page](#).

**Understanding and Responding to Elder Abuse E-book and Video**  
These resources are designed for workers in B.C. who work with older adults who have been abused and neglected. For more information, please visit our [training page](#).

**Human Trafficking: Canada is Not Immune**  
The training provides information about the indicators of human trafficking and ways to meet the unique needs of trafficked persons. For more information about the training, please visit the [OCTIP training webpage](#).