

# Information bulletin

Victim Services and Crime Prevention

October 2014

## 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 October 2014 Information Bulletin. This edition covers a variety of topics, from program announcements to pending legislative changes and training opportunities.

I'm pleased to announce that we'll be hosting a series of free online webinars this fall/winter. Please see page two for details.

This issue includes infor-

mation about the new Kelowna Domestic Violence Unit, the North Okanagan ICAT winning a Premier's Award, and domestic violence amendments to the *Child, Family and Community Service Act*.

This issue also contains a program spotlight on the Victim Court Support Program, which provides services in Vancouver, Surrey, Port Coquitlam, and at First Nations Court in New Westminster and North Vancouver, as well as an article on practice tips for providing court support.

Other articles include information about funding for Victims Week, the continued drop in the police-reported crime rate,

Restorative Justice Week, and free training opportunities.

As we transition towards a busy time this fall, I'd like to take the opportunity to thank you for your work with victims of crime and women and children impacted by violence. Together we can make a difference in helping to make B.C. a safer place for all.

Taryn Walsh  
Executive Director  
Victim Services and Crime Prevention  
Community Safety and Crime Prevention Branch  
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# New Domestic Violence Unit Opens in Kelowna

On July 10, 2014, Kelowna's new Domestic Violence Unit (DVU) opened its doors to support women, children and other community members impacted by domestic violence.

Kelowna's new DVU brings together an integrated team that includes an RCMP domestic violence officer, a Central Okanagan Elizabeth Fry Society community-based victim service worker, and a Ministry of Children and Family Development child protection worker. The team will work together so that incoming cases are triaged right away and safety planning is well-coordinated for victims.

In the highest risk cases of domestic violence, DVUs are widely recognized as a best practice for supporting victims and holding offenders accountable. Through a co-located service delivery model, DVUs support victims who are at the greatest risk of violence, ensure joint case coordination, and immediately connect women and children with resources to help ensure their safety.

In March of this year over \$90,000 in civil forfeiture grant funding was provided to support the development of the Kelowna DVU. The Kelowna RCMP



Photo left to right: Superintendent Nick Romanchuk; Attorney General and Minister of Justice Suzanne Anton; Deputy Mayor of Kelowna, Maxine DeHart; RCMP Constable Kris Clark; Michelle Novakowski, Executive Director of the Central Okanagan Elizabeth Fry Society; Superintendent Tim Head

received \$20,200 to help establish the DVU and the Central Okanagan Elizabeth Fry Society received \$70,000 for the provision of frontline victim services, training opportunities for DVU members and the development of protocols and procedures to guide the operational work of the DVU.

With the opening of Kelowna's new DVU, the number of operational DVUs in the province is now five including DVUs in Abbotsford, New Westminster, Vancouver, and Greater Victoria (the Capital Region), with two more in development in Nanaimo and Surrey.

## Free Webinars This Fall/Winter!

We will host free webinars this fall/winter for service providers on important topics related to victims of crime. Our first four webinars will focus on victim restitution, court support, human trafficking, and the new Victims Bill of Rights (Bill C-32).

These interactive webinars will allow participants to engage with presenters and have their questions answered on a variety of topics. As the sessions are



scheduled we will send out email notifications for registration. Stay-tuned!

# Training Opportunities

## Supporting Family Members of Missing and Murdered Persons

Upcoming sessions will be held in Dawson Creek, Terrace, Nanaimo, and Surrey. For more information and to register, please visit our [training page](#).

## 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

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](#).

## North Okanagan ICAT Honoured with Regional Premier's Award

On September 5, 2014 the North Okanagan Integrated Case Assessment Team (NOICAT) received a prestigious regional Premier's Award in the Partnership category. A pioneer in championing greater coordination and collaboration on highest risk domestic violence cases, the North Okanagan ICAT was originally conceived and developed by the Vernon Women's Transition House Society in partnership with the North Okanagan RCMP through a grant received from the Ministry in 2008/09.

A short video highlighting the work of the team is [available online](#).

Congratulations to all members of the NOICAT (past and present) for their dedication to supporting women, children



Photo: Members of the North Okanagan ICAT and families impacted by domestic violence.

For more information about ICATs, including resources and opportunities for local workshops, visit EVA BC's [Community Coordination for Women's Safety \(CCWS\) program website](#).

## Domestic Violence Amendments to the *Child, Family and Community Service Act*

The *Child, Family and Community Service Act* (CFCSA) was recently amended to bring a stronger focus to the issue of domestic violence and its often life-altering effect on women and children and bring it in line with child welfare legislation in most other jurisdictions across Canada.

Section 13 of the CFCSA lists a number of grounds under which a child may be found in need of protection. The amendments, which came into force on June 1, 2014, now include domestic violence as a potential s. 13 concern.

The purpose of the amendment is to clarify and articulate what many working in the field already know: that harm to a child may increase if the child is living in a situation where there is domestic violence by, or toward, a person with whom the child resides, even if the violence is not directed at the child.

Throughout April and May 2014, the Ministry of Children and Family Development worked in partnership with stakeholder groups, the Ministry of Justice, and BC Housing to provide joint training to child protection workers and service providers from B.C.'s programs that serve women and children impacted by domestic violence. In total, 14 sessions were held across B.C. and 323 ministry staff and 341 anti-violence service providers received training.

Additional information on the CFCSA domestic violence amendments and the "duty to report" can be found in updated copies of the [BC Handbook for Action on Child Abuse and Neglect – For Service Providers](#) and [Responding to Child Welfare Concerns – Your Role in Knowing When and What to Report](#).

## Funding for Victims Week



Through the Department of Justice Canada Victims Fund, limited financial assistance (up to \$10,000 per organization) is available each year for projects that support the goals of Victims Week. The key goal of Victims Week is to raise awareness about the issues facing victims of crime and about the services, assistance and laws in place to help victims and their families. The deadline to submit applications for funding is Monday, October 6, 2014. For more information, please visit the [Victims Week website](#).

## Program Spotlight: Victim Court Support Program

Victim Services and Crime Prevention (VSCP) piloted a court-based victim service delivery model at the Port Coquitlam Provincial Court House in 2007. Those who work with victims of crime know that some victims never connect with victim services. Some victims do receive services but have discontinued contact before court. Others do not realize their need for court support until they arrive at court.

The court-based pilot aimed to improve access to victim services for victims and witnesses who attended the court house without support. Since 2007, the program has grown and is now operational at Surrey Provincial Court, Downtown Community Court, Vancouver Provincial Court, Port Coquitlam Provincial Court, and First Nations Courts in North Vancouver and New Westminster.

Victim Court Support Caseworkers are VSCP employees who work independently within the justice system, yet very closely with Crown counsel, other justice system personnel, and victim service programs. The location of the program in the court house allows victims and witnesses easy access to Victim Court Support Caseworkers.

"When Crown is setting up pre-trial interviews with victims and witnesses who are feeling overwhelmed, Crown will come to our offices or walk people over and say, 'We have someone who I think could really use your services,'" says Jenna Becker, Victim Court Support Caseworker, who works at Surrey Provincial Court. "We're uniquely situated in that our office is right here at the court house. It's really nice when people are testifying that they can have a place to debrief and not worry about running into the accused in the hallway."

Caseworkers receive referrals for court support from justice and community organizations such as Crown counsel,



other justice agencies, local victim service programs, as well as self-referrals from victims.

The program's Victim Court Support Caseworkers provide a range of services including information about the criminal justice system, liaison with Crown counsel, case specific updates, assistance completing Victim Impact Statements, court orientation and accompaniment, and referrals to community resources.

Caseworkers use their specialized knowledge of court processes to assist victims and work collaboratively with other victim service programs. This can include collaborating to ensure clients' needs are met at court and in the community, attending Crown interviews or court dates when another worker is unavailable, helping to strengthen relationships with Crown counsel, sharing knowledge of court processes, and facilitating access to information.

"Some needs that are not necessarily court-based can be the biggest needs for clients," says Bethany Estiverne, Victim Court Support Caseworker at the Surrey Provincial Courthouse. "There are often layers of things going on for them underneath. Our job is to try to identify underlying needs, to talk about them, and to problem solve. It makes sense to connect people with other supports and those who can develop a relationship and assist them long after the court process ends."

## Crime Rate Continues to Drop

Police-reported crime continues its steady decline according to Statistic's Canada's Police-reported crime statistics, 2013, which was released on July 23, 2014. The police-reported Crime Severity Index (CSI), which measures the volume and severity of crime, declined 9% in 2013 compared with 2012. This is the 10th consecutive decline in the index. The CSI was 36% lower than 10 years earlier. The traditional crime rate also declined in 2013 compared with 2012, falling 8%. It continued its long-term downward trend that began in the early 1990s, reaching its lowest level since 1969.

Most offences were down in 2013. The decline in the CSI was specifically attributable to declines in breaking and entering and robbery. In British Columbia, robberies were behind the decline in the CSI.

However, some offences were up in 2013. In particular, police services reported more incidents of extortion, child pornography, aggravated sexual assault (level 3), sexual violations against children, and identity fraud. For more information, please see the [Statistics Canada report](#).

## Victim Court Support Program (cont'd)

Jessica Hope, Victim Court Support Caseworker at Vancouver Provincial Court, says that providing court support requires a flexible approach that helps to address the unique needs of each victim.

"Once we are referred a client, we basically help them navigate the court process," says Jessica. "We help them with information and referrals and support—pretty much whatever they need throughout the process."

"One of the ways that I try to get at continuity of services for the victim is to engage other service providers so that the client is already building that network of support," Jessica says. "In that way, I can be a continuous support through the court process and then, eventually, I step back as the relationship with other service providers continues."

Although the work can be fast-based and unpredictable, Victim Court Support Caseworkers value the unique contribution of their role in assisting victims.

"We are approached constantly by Crown, victims, other victim support programs, or other government workers such as social workers," says Tanya Cacic, Victim Court Support Worker at Port Coquitlam. "We are very close to the actual proceedings and so can keep victims and others well informed."

"I am excited by helping victims be seen and have a voice in a system that hasn't been designed to provide a space for them," says Jessica Hope. "I like the variety in our day and that our job requires us to be highly flexible and think 'on the fly'. I am excited by working with others with similar passions to further supports and services for individual clients and victims in general."

The Victim Court Support Program also assists in providing support for major or complex cases. Working with other



victim service programs is important to the success of these initiatives. Freda Ens, Victim Court Support Caseworker involved in major cases and special projects, says that local victim services played an important role in the meetings between Crown counsel and affected workers and family members following the sawmill explosions in Burns Lake and Prince George in 2012. At these meetings, Crown counsel communicated the decision not to lay charges against the owners of the mill.

"When you're dealing with traumatic information like that, whether it's the injured workers or the families of the deceased, it's going to bring everything back," says Freda. "The local programs had been there when the explosions happened. They had been there in the hospitals directing and helping people. Victim service workers had been involved and so when the decision came down from Crown, it was important to have the local victim service programs there. People remembered them. People were really appreciative. It was really good for families and others to have somebody familiar."

In addition to the work described above, the Victim Court Support Program also participates in First Nations Court in New Westminster and North Vancouver. The program ensures that Aboriginal victims of crime are provided support in a manner that is sensitive to and respectful of the traditions and culture of Aboriginal peoples.

"When I get the referral for a victim, I

## Restorative Justice Week and Resource



Restorative Justice Week will be held from November 16 through 23, 2014. The week is an opportunity to celebrate and share experiences and practices in delivering restorative justice based services. For more information about Restorative Justice Week, please visit the [Correctional Service of Canada website](#).

Correction Service of Canada's (CSC) Restorative Opportunities Program provides opportunities to help address the harms caused by the offender's actions. To learn more, please see their [online fact sheet](#).

## Victim Court Support Program (cont'd)

contact them to see where they are, how they feel, if they want to be involved in the process of First Nations Court,” says Corrine Hunt, Aboriginal Victim Court Support Caseworker. In First Nations Court, the victim has the option to be involved in the development of the offender’s healing plan, which can include the offender’s participation in programs such as addiction recovery, anger management, or cultural programs.

“Building on the First Nations concept of the Medicine Wheel, we all work together to develop this healing plan,” says Corrine. “We get feedback from the victim and talk to Crown, duty counsel, and the judge. I have an opportunity to stand up and put forward the victim’s perspectives when they aren’t able to be there. This is one of the things that makes First Nations Court unique.”

Steve Ford, Director of Justice and Safety Programs is pleased to see how the Victim Court Support Program has evolved. The responsiveness of the program to the needs of victims and the close ties with Crown counsel, victim service programs, and other service providers helps to make the program the success it is today.

“Although the core services of the Victim Court Support Program are the same, caseworkers tailor their services in response to the particular needs and issues arising at that court house,” he says. “I am very proud of the expertise that court-based workers have developed and the way they collaborate with their justice and victim service partners.”

For more information about the Victim Court Support Program, please visit [our website](#).

## Practice Tips: Practical Tips for Court Support

Effective court support brings together your knowledge of the criminal justice system, understanding of the dynamics of victimization, support skills, and partnerships with Crown counsel and other courthouse staff to reduce trauma and increase victim participation in the criminal justice process. The following tips will assist you when working with victims in a court setting.

### During Court Appearances...

Ensure Crown counsel is aware of who you are, who you are working with and, when appropriate, what types of information and services you are providing. Don’t be afraid to ask Crown counsel for an explanation if you don’t understand something that takes place in court. It is always better to ask than to guess and potentially give out wrong information.



### At Trial or Sentencing...

1. Prepare clients to hear sensitive information. Crown counsel may be able to let you know ahead of time what evidence will be presented on particular days. Victims and families may wish to know what evidence will be presented ahead of time and choose to remain or leave a courtroom.

## Courts Services Online



Court Services Online provides updated court status information for many Provincial and Supreme Court criminal cases. Court Services Online is a free service operated by Court Services Branch of the Ministry of Justice and can be [accessed online](#).

## Practical Tips for Court Support (cont'd)

2. Know the geography of your courthouse and plan for physical and emotional safety concerns in advance. Victims and families may need to plan where to wait and where to sit in the court room to avoid contact with the accused and how to enter or exit the courthouse to avoid media attention. Sheriffs and other court house staff may be able to assist you.

### During and After Trial or Sentencing...

Ensure there is private space and time to debrief during and after trial and sentencing. While it is inappropriate to discuss evidence before and during trials, victims should have the opportunity to debrief how they feel throughout the process.

### Ministry of Justice Resources

- [Victim Travel Fund and Crime Victim Assistance Program](#)
- [Victim Safety Unit](#)

### Court Services Online Resources

- [Daily Court Lists](#)
- [JUSTIN Online](#)
- [JUSTIN Codes and Explanations](#)
- [Court Preparation Resources](#)

### Media Awareness Resources

- [Media Guide](#)
- [If the Media Calls](#)
- [Media and the Criminal Justice System](#)



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