Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services

Strategic Plan
2014-2017

Working Together for an Alberta Free from Sexual Abuse and Sexual Assault
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We define sexual violence as any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed against a person’s sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting including but not limited to home and work. Sexual violence may be referred to as sexual assault and sexual abuse interchangeably.

Sexual violence occurs throughout the world and Alberta is no exception. When asked by Statistics Canada, 677,000 Canadians reported having experienced sexual violence in the past five years (McInturff, 2013). As widespread as these crimes are the acceptance and discussion of sexual violence continues to be plagued with tremendous societal stigma which results in continued silence, inadequate resources for prevention and intervention, and low levels of reporting. Sexual violence is the most under reported crime in Canada.

It was the intent of the founding members that AASAS would act as an umbrella organization for members engaged in various forms of service delivery throughout the province. Rather than deliver front-line services AASAS would act as an intermediary focused on improving the effectiveness of the sexual violence sector and facilitating its further development.

Since the late 1980’s, representatives from the sexual assault centres in Alberta increasingly recognized the need for a provincial body to support a more collaborative, coordinated approach to sexual violence service delivery in Alberta.

Fragmented services, rural and urban inequities and lack of sustainable funding for programs highlighted the need for a more unified provincial effort. In 1993, the Alberta Association of Sexual Assault Centres (AASAC) was incorporated as a registered charity with a view to addressing this need. In 2010, the organization underwent a name change to the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services (AASAS) to reflect the fact that some communities do not have independent infrastructures of sexual assault centres but are delivering a range of sexual violence services to their communities.

AASAS acts as an intermediary focused on improving the effectiveness of the sexual violence sector and facilitating its further development.
IMPACT OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

What we have learned about sexual violence is that the impact of this crime is not linear, but rather deeply rooted as the contributing factor of many other societal struggles. Significant areas of research literature shows that trauma from sexual violence, in all its forms, can result in a myriad of effects and reactions that can be emotionally, physically, sexually, intellectually and spiritually damaging and further result in many other social issues and ills. There are strong correlations linking sexual violence to social issues such as alcohol and drug addictions, homelessness, mental illness, involvement in the sex trade, depression, anxiety, over achieving, under achieving, job instability, trust issues, eating disorders, low self-esteem and suicide to name only a small few.

All of these issues carry with them a significant financial cost to society. When one considers the prevalence of sexual violence in Canada and its link to a number of health and social issues, the conservative financial cost of this type of violence is easily calculated in the millions of dollars each year, if not, billions (Mclnturff, 2013). The systems most impacted by sexual violence are health, social services/human services and justice; and the costs to society are significant.

In realizing (and accepting) the full impact of sexual violence on individuals, families and communities, it is critical that a paradigm shift occurs in naming sexual violence as a root cause of many societal problems. This shift must result in the availability of services and funding that will effectively address both intervention and prevention of sexual violence.

ALBERTA CONTEXT

Data on the exact prevalence and incidence of sexual violence in the province is difficult to obtain. Canada’s Violence Against Women study (Statistics Canada, 1993) found that 39% of Canadian women had experienced at least one incident of sexual violence since the age of 16. What is available in terms of sexual violence in Alberta indicates that in 2005, the province’s sexual violence rate declined by approximately 10 per cent, falling below the Canadian average for the first time in close to 10 years (Boyle & District Rural Crime Watch, 2011). This corresponds to police-reported data for 2007, which showed that rates of sexual offenses for Alberta were lower than the national average (Brennan & Taylor-Butts, 2008). According to Calgary Police reports, there were 765 police-reported sex offenses in 2011, which was down almost 9 per cent from the previous year (Calgary Police Service, 2011). There are differences between rates of sexual assaults reported in Alberta urban centres versus those reported in rural centres. Data indicates that almost two-thirds (56%) of sexual assaults were committed outside the major cities of Edmonton and Calgary (Boyle & District Rural Crime Watch, 2011).

However, research also suggests that approximately 92 per cent of sexual assaults go unreported (Alberta Health Services, 2011). The reality however, with any discussion or presentation of sexual violence prevalence and incidence is that so many questions are left unanswered. How many Albertans have experienced sexual violence in their lifetime? Are the numbers increasing or decreasing? What are the accurate numbers of male versus female survivors?

39% of Canadian women have experienced at least one incident of sexual violence since the age of 16.
AASAS MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

Fort McMurray Family Crisis Society: Sexual Assault Program
PACE Sexual Assault Centre, Grande Prairie
Lloydminster Sexual Assault & Information Centre
University of Alberta Sexual Assault Centre (Edmonton)
Saffron Centre, Sherwood Park
Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton
Central Alberta Sexual Assault Support Centre (Red Deer)
Association of Communities Against Abuse (Stettler)
Calgary Communities Against Sexual Abuse
Medicine Hat Sexual Assault Response Committee
Effectively preventing, intervening, and responding to sexual violence consists of relationship-building, engagement in collaborative projects, and facilitating cross-training opportunities to develop coordinated and collaborative service delivery in the following key Core Service areas:

- **Crisis**: 24-hour access to compassionate client-centered support, resources, and information for people in sexual abuse/assault-related crises.

- **Counselling**: Immediate, short, and long term client centered counseling and access to individual, family, and/or group counseling and/or therapy.

- **Education**: Sexual violence-related education and/or curricula for the general public and professionals prone to disclosures.

- **Police and Court Support**: Accompaniment of and information and resources for, people involved in the criminal justice process.

- **Outreach**: Information and access to resources for all people, and in particular, to diverse, rural, and previously unserved or underserved Alberta communities.

- **Coordination and Collaboration**: Relationship building, engagement in collaborative projects, and facilitating cross-training opportunities to develop coordinated and collaborative service delivery.

- **Volunteer Support**: Support for, and recruitment, training, and supervision of, AASAS member volunteers.

- **Offender Services**: Resources, information, and access to rehabilitative services for sexual offenders.
AASAS RESPONSE TO ADDRESSING SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN OUR PROVINCE

MAKING SERVICES MORE ACCESSIBLE TO ALBERTANS

Government of Alberta Partnered with AASAS to Expand Sexual Abuse/Assault Counselling throughout Alberta

In 2012 Alberta Health and AASAS, forged a three year partnership aimed at addressing the negative health and psycho-social after effects of sexual assault/abuse in our province. Across the province AASAS and its member agencies worked together to expand sexual assault/abuse treatment services in five Ministry of Health zones of Alberta. The increase in these essential health services has been made possible through an Alberta Health grant totaling three million dollars over three years.

Developed and Delivered First Responder to Sexual Assault and Sexual Abuse Education and Training

AASAS created the First Responder to Sexual Assault and Sexual Abuse Education Training program designed to train helping professionals and volunteers throughout Alberta to assess and respond effectively to disclosures of sexual assault and sexual abuse. With the funding support of Status of Women Canada and more recently Alberta Human Services, AASAS and its member agencies have delivered the program to hundreds of professionals, para-professionals and volunteers throughout Alberta.

Increased Access to Sexual Assault/Abuse Counselling Services in East Region 7

Following the AASAS project “Framework of Service Delivery for Sexual Assault Survivors Living in Rural, Remote and Northern Communities” it was identified that Region 7 - a massive area of north central Alberta with boundaries spanning east and west to the BC and Saskatchewan borders, had a need for sexual violence services but did not have the funding means, nor qualified professionals to develop the necessary specialized services and supports.

With ongoing mentorship and sponsorship from AASAS member Lloydminster Sexual Assault and Information Centre (LSAIC) and funding support from Alberta Health, community stakeholders began to develop their own hub of sexual violence service delivery within Region 7. Two full time counsellors were hired to work throughout the North East Zone, addressing referrals from both the Victim Services Unit in Cold Lake and Bonnyville and service agencies in the Zone. Lloydminster continues to work with Region 7 community stakeholders and the government of Alberta to grow and develop these much needed sexual violence services in Region 7.

Reporting Sexual Assault: It’s Your Decision Video

With funding support from Alberta Justice and Solicitor General, AASAS developed an informational video for victims of sexual violence about the criminal justice system including the sexual assault laws, the roles of each of the professionals they will encounter in the system, issues around reporting and investigation, and court processes.

PROMOTING EXCELLENCE IN SEXUAL VIOLENCE SERVICE DELIVERY

Measuring Our Successes

AASAS developed original logic models, measurements instruments, survey questions and demographic reporting components for eight of the AASAS core sexual violence services.
Using Vistashare’s Outcome Tracker, AASAS established a provincial measurement and reporting database for member agencies to use to track important statistical information and best practice reporting.

**Promoting Evidence-based Best Practice**

In order to ensure that AASAS members have access to the most recent best practice research to inform their program development and delivery, AASAS authored the following research and position papers:

- Position paper advocating for sexual assault nurse examiners as sources for expert medical evidence in the criminal justice system;
- Research paper comparing and contrasting the service delivery needs of clients of women’s shelters with clients of sexual assault centres;
- Review of the literature on the risk and protective factors for child sexual abuse;
- International literature review of best practice in sexual violence primary prevention;
- Research around and the development of a framework of service delivery for sexual violence survivors living in rural, remote and northern communities of Alberta; and
- Review of the literature around clinical models and outcome measurements for core service delivery.

**RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT SEXUAL VIOLENCE**

**No Is the Line Public Awareness Campaign**

The public awareness campaign, funded by the Solicitor General, targeted young adult males aged 18-34 years to empower men to speak out against sexual violence, and to have them think about their expectations and behaviours towards women.

A poster campaign with images illustrating the fine line between obtaining clear consent to sexual activity and sexual assault, ran for a 4 week period beginning September 27, 2010. Newad, a marketing and advertising company, was hired to evaluate the campaign’s success. Their valuation of the poster and newspaper advertisement along with the noistheline.ca website, was estimated of having a viewership of just under 1,500,000 people.

**Don’t Be That Guy Campaign**

AASAS members expressed interest in wanting to host the Don’t Be That Guy poster campaign as created by the Sexual Assault Voices of Edmonton. This campaign raised awareness of alcohol facilitated sexual violence by challenging people to rethink how they look at responsibility and prevention and shift the onus off of the victims and onto the people who are responsible for committing sexual violence in the first place. AASAS will helped fund and support member agencies/services to be able to bring this message to their communities throughout the province.

AASAS developed original logic models, measurements instruments, survey questions and demographic reporting components for eight of the AASAS core sexual violence services.
RESPONDING TO OUR CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

In order to ensure that we continue to be an effective umbrella group that works to address these issues and ensure effective and coordinated services, we must be prepared to change and adapt to changing social and environmental conditions. Alberta is a vibrant, dynamic and ever changing province, and we must be ahead of the curve on issues and responding to these changes as they occur. Below are a few of the key issues that we must be aware of and responding to in order to achieve our mandate.

- Population growth in Alberta means that there are increasing challenges and complexities that impact people and impact levels of violence
- Recognition of diverse communities and the need to address the issue of sexual violence within a cultural context
- Growing demand for services in rural and remote areas of the province
- Increased use of technology (especially the internet) by sexual offenders
- Sexual violence and sexual harassment (often misunderstood as bullying) are beginning to be understood as key root causes to issues of poverty, homelessness, addictions and mental and physical health challenges
- As awareness increases, there is increased demand for services
- Awareness of the need to engage more men in joining women as allies in the fight against sexual violence
- Awareness of the need for specialized services to address male survivors of sexual violence
- Recognition of strength in collaboration and need to continue working with Government Ministries to address sexual violence and impact across the province

Alberta is a vibrant, dynamic and ever changing province, and we must be ahead of the curve on issues and responding to these changes as they occur.
STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Vision
An Alberta free from sexual abuse and sexual assault

Mission
To provide leadership, coordination, collaboration, and a unified voice on issues of sexual abuse and sexual assault.

Core Beliefs
We believe anyone can be a victim of sexual abuse and sexual assault.

We believe anyone affected by sexual abuse and sexual assault has the right to access effective, affordable, and timely services that are distinct and specialized.

We believe everyone has the capacity and resiliency to recover from sexual abuse and sexual assault.

We believe victims of sexual abuse and sexual assault are not to blame and perpetrators must be held accountable.

We believe society minimizes the impact of sexual abuse and sexual assault on individuals and that minimization has devastating outcomes for survivors.

We believe society minimizes the crime of sexual abuse and sexual assault, and this must change in order to effectively address and prevent issues of violence.

We believe services addressing sexual abuse and sexual assault need to be delivered in an inclusive, respectful, and equitable manner regardless of ethnicity, religion, sex, gender, sexual orientation, or ability.

We believe there is a need for increased recognition and support for existing and emerging sexual assault services in Alberta.

We believe education and awareness initiatives need to be targeted at everyone.

We believe prevention initiatives are not to be targeted to survivors or potential survivors but towards perpetrators and potential perpetrators as well as those who can intervene.

We believe that treatment is a form of prevention because healthy individuals and healthy communities break the cycle of abuse.

We believe in the need for treatment and for greater access to treatment for perpetrators of sexual abuse and sexual assault.
Guiding Principles:

Collaboration
We work openly and in a coordinated manner with ourselves and others (internally and externally).

Community Support
We are committed to understanding the diverse needs of the community and supporting them.

Common Voice
We are dedicated to providing a unified voice for eradicating sexual abuse and sexual assault.

Integrity
We are honest, dependable and ethical (openness, transparency, accountability).

Making a Difference
We build on existing strengths while emphasizing innovative approaches to promote and facilitate healing, transformation and justice.

Respect
We are dedicated to the practice and promotion of equality, dignity and appreciation of all.

Evidence Based Practice
We are committed to providing services that are research based and proven effective.

Strategic Goals:

1. Ensure the inclusion of sexual violence in government policy and legislative frameworks

2. Ensure that all Albertans have access to safe, effective, coordinated and identifiable services

3. Ensure standards of excellence in service delivery

4. Elevate awareness and understanding of the issues of sexual violence
Anticipated Outcomes:

By building a coordinated and integrated network of services in all regions of Alberta and sharing promising practices with all providers of sexual violence services in Alberta we anticipate:

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<th>Immediate</th>
<th>Medium Term</th>
<th>Long Term</th>
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<td>♦ AASAS’ Sexual Violence Action Plan is widely adopted by key stakeholder groups.</td>
<td>♦ AASAS’s Sexual Violence Action Plan informs strategies across government, public and non-profit sectors.</td>
<td>♦ Sexual violence is recognized as a serious public health issue across the provincial government of Alberta.</td>
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<td>♦ A comprehensive sexual violence framework, informed by AASAS’s Sexual Violence Action Plan, is adopted by the Provincial Government.</td>
<td>♦ A comprehensive sexual violence plan is being implemented across the government.</td>
<td>♦ All Albertans have access to specialized sexual violence services that incorporate evidenced based models of clinical practices.</td>
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<td>♦ Effective specialized sexual violence services are available and standardized across the province.</td>
<td>♦ There is increased coordination between relevant government ministries and sexual violence services.</td>
<td>♦ AASAS and AASAS members are actively supporting and equipping government and communities to more effectively address the issue of sexual violence.</td>
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<td>♦ There is increased understanding that AASAS is an effective resource for best practice and evidence based services and expertise in the area of sexual violence.</td>
<td>♦ There is increased coordination between police, justice, health and education agencies in response to sexual violence.</td>
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<td>♦ There is increased awareness of sexual violence issues.</td>
<td>♦ Effective specialized sexual violence services are available and standardized across the province.</td>
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<td>♦ First responder training is offered across the province.</td>
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<td>♦ There is adequate funding to support a network of effective, identifiable and accessible sexual violence services.</td>
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<td>♦ AASAS is seen as the go-to organization for best practices and evidence based services and expertise in the area of sexual violence.</td>
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<td>♦ Increased understanding of sexual violence issues is leading to increased action to address these issues.</td>
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GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Goal 1 – Ensure the inclusion of sexual violence in government policy and legislative frameworks

   - Draft Sexual Violence Action Plan and submit it to the AASAS Board of Directors for review by March 2014
   - Finalize Sexual Violence Action Plan and present it to the provincial government by June 2014
   - Align the Sexual Violence Action Plan with AASAS strategic plan.
   - Promote and disseminate Sexual Violence Action Plan to key stakeholders

Strategy 2 – Work in Partnership with the Government of Alberta to develop and implement Alberta’s Sexual Violence Framework.
   - To provide leadership and expertise to help build the content and develop the provincial framework
   - To assist the government to prioritize actions for implementation
   - To work in partnership with the government to implement the plan

Strategy 3 – Provide coordinated input into the development and/or review of provincial government legislative frameworks and policies to ensure they are inclusive to sexual violence.
   - Participate as a member of Human Services Family Violence Death Review Committee
   - Participate in government led community consultations
   - Participate as a member of Human Services Workforce Alliance Committee
   - Identify and respond to relevant legislative and social policy changes

Strategy 4 – Work with Justice and Solicitor General to increase access to the criminal Justice System for survivors of sexual violence.
   - Participate in Justice and Solicitor General sexual violence committee
   - Research existing coordinated justice response models to sexual violence models i.e. specialized sexual violence courts.
   - Develop a position paper outlining a proposed model for Alberta
   - Promote and disseminate findings

Goal 2 - Ensure that all Albertans have access to safe, effective, coordinated and identifiable services

Strategy 1 – Continue to work with government and other funders to ensure there are adequate resources to meet the service needs across the province.
   - Determine the level of service requirement across the province.
   - Build the case for adequate resources to meet service needs across the province
   - Finalize and disseminate the Core Services Pathways to Change document
Strategy 2 – Work with member agencies to train professionals and paraprofessionals to respond to disclosures of sexual violence.

- Develop and implement a First Responder to Sexual Abuse and Assault Train the Trainer curriculum
- Develop a certification process for First Responder to Sexual Abuse and Assault facilitators
- Develop an organizational infrastructure to expand the program across the province

Strategy 3 – Develop a standardized multidisciplinary crisis response to recent sexual assault survivors across the province.

- Identify participating communities and conduct needs assessment
- Formulate an implementation strategy unique to each community
- Identify, develop and deliver training materials
- Evaluate impact of the initiative and disseminate project outcomes

Strategy 4 - Ensure that all rural communities across the province have services to address sexual violence.

- Continue to support Region 7 in all aspects of service delivery development
- Assess readiness of west and central zone of Region 7 to initiate service delivery development
- Obtain resources to initiate service development activities in west and central zone of Region 7.

Goal 3 – Ensure standards of excellence in service delivery

Strategy 1 – Continue to demonstrate the impact of AASAS and member agencies.

- Refine data collection and reporting across members
- Promote and disseminate measures of success

Strategy 2 – Advance research excellence in the area of sexual violence.

- Engage in a comprehensive incidence study in order to be able to provide accurate information on the scope and scale of sexual violence in Alberta
- Build the case for adequate support of services
- Identify and disseminate emerging research excellence in the area of sexual violence

Strategy 3 – Identify and promote evidence based best practices in the area of sexual violence.

- Develop standardized training around the most effective evidence based models of clinical practice
- Implement and evaluate training
Goal 4 - Elevate awareness and understanding of the issues of sexual violence

**Strategy 1** – Develop awareness campaign to engage men and boys in changing the conversation around sexual violence.

- Reach out to informal supports to enhance their ability to give a caring and compassionate response to disclosures of sexual assault and abuse
- Focus communication strategies on changing attitudes, beliefs and behaviours to prevent sexual violence before it occurs (primary prevention), immediate responses after a recent assault (secondary prevention) and responses that deal with the long-term impact of sexual violence (tertiary prevention)

**Strategy 2** – Build social media presence of AASAS and AASAS member agencies.

- Use Facebook as a vehicle to high light relevant news stories, AASAS accomplishments and emerging research
- Use Twitter to build relationships with key stakeholders
- Launch monthly electronic AASAS and Member Agencies/Services news update to distribute to internal and external stakeholders.

**Strategy 3** – Government Relationship Building

- Develop key messages and package of information around the AASAS Sexual Violence Action Plan
- Coach AASAS members to visit politicians and community leaders to get their support

**Strategy 4** - Continue to build strategic relationships on local, regional, provincial and national levels

- Create info graphic on AASAS Sexual Violence Action Plan that members can take to government and community leaders
- Coordinate monthly communications and updates to AASAS membership, key stakeholders and the general public
PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Successful implementation of the goals and strategies will be demonstrated through the following performance indicators:

Ensure the inclusion of sexual violence in government policy and legislative frameworks:

- Key government ministries (Health, Justice and Human Services) have a strong working relationship with AASAS
- AASAS has a relationship with Justice and is working with them to address issues in the court system
- Government and key stakeholders refer to and incorporate the AASAS Sexual Violence Action Plan into public policy decisions

Ensure that all Albertans have access to safe, effective, coordinated and identifiable services:

- AASAS members have increased capacity to deliver safe, effective, coordinated and identifiable services
- First responders in Alberta have enhanced capacity to identify, respond and refer people who experience sexual violence to formal supports
- Albertans living in rural and remote communities have access to safe, effective, coordinated and identifiable sexual violence services

Ensure standards of excellence in service delivery:

- AASAS has enhanced capacity to report on the impact of sexual violence services
- Through AASAS collaboration, emerging research excellence in the area of sexual violence is available and accessible
- Evidence based clinical models of practice is available to sexual violence professionals and paraprofessionals

Elevate awareness and understanding of the issues of sexual violence:

- Government, non-profit, public and private stakeholders have an enhanced understanding of sexual violence
- AASAS is recognized as the go-to organization for issues related to sexual violence
- AASAS has strategic partnerships with other provincial organizations working on similar issues
- AASAS has developed working relationships with stakeholders in rural and First Nation and Metis communities
AASAS Board of Directors

- Ultimate authority for AASAS
- Set strategic direction and policies and procedures
- Oversee funding
- Responsible for development and reporting of AASAS outcomes
- Oversee special projects
- Oversee work of sub-committees

Senior Leadership Committee

- Information sharing
- Input into strategic direction and priorities
- Responsible for developing and reporting on service outcomes
- Advise on collaborations and all major projects
- Advise on funding and other issues
- Reports to the Board of Directors

Collaborative Communications Committee

- Oversee the development of the communication strategy
- Responsible for developing a plan for government relations and identifying audiences and targets
- Ensuring that AASAS has increased awareness with both government and the community at large
- Reports to the Board of Directors