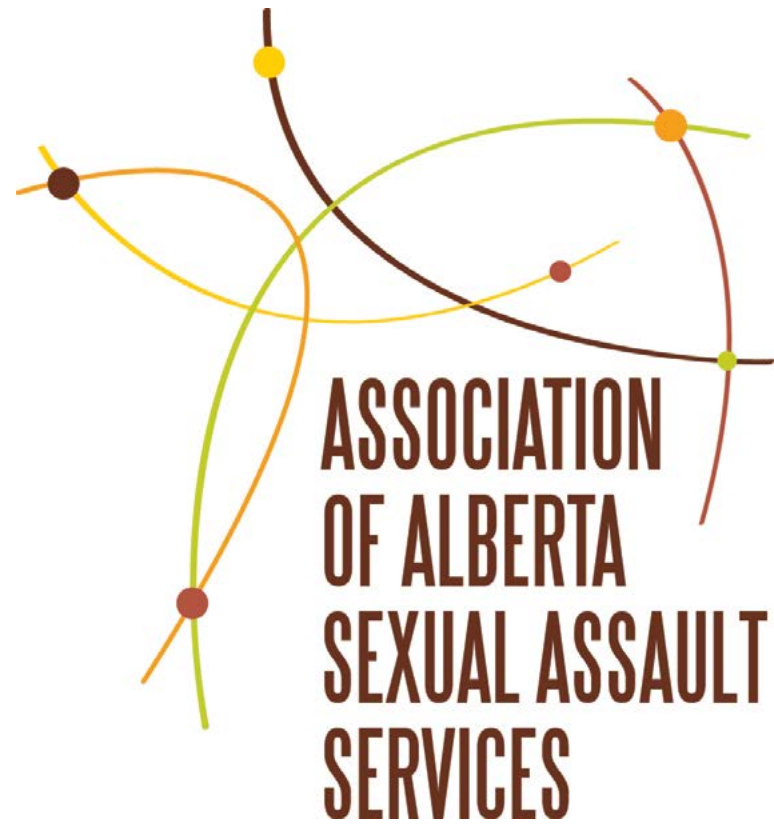




Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services

Working Together for an Alberta Free From Sexual Violence

Annual Report 2020-2021



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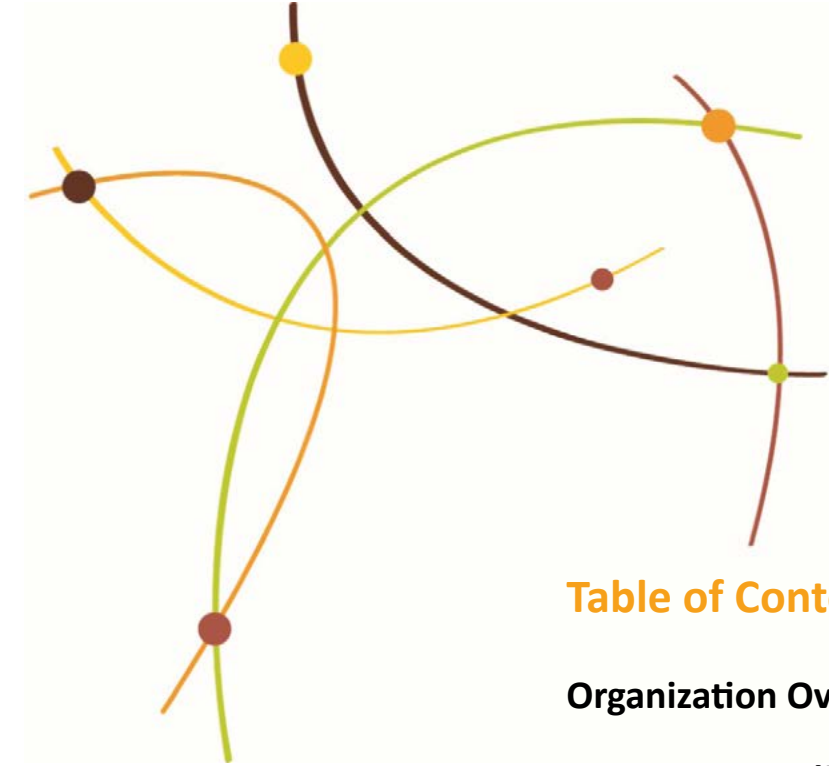


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Providing leadership, coordination, collaboration and a unified voice on issues of sexual abuse and sexual assault.

Organization Overview

The Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services (AASAS) is a non-profit, registered charitable organization that began operations in 1993. As a provincial umbrella organization, AASAS provides leadership, coordination and a unified voice on issues of sexual assault and sexual abuse while increasing recognition, support for and access to sexual assault services in Alberta.

Land Acknowledgement

In the spirit of respect and truth, AASAS would like to take a step towards reconciliation by acknowledging the land on which we do our work. Not as a token, or a box to check, but out of a genuine desire to acknowledge the traditional territories and travelling corridors of the people of the Treaty 4, 6, 7, 8 and 10 regions and Metis regions 1 through 6 in Alberta.

We would also like to acknowledge the pervasive, and intergenerational effects of colonization; colonization, that included sexual violence as a way to harm Indigenous peoples, a weapon that is still used here on Turtle Island to harm others. Violence did exist before the arrival of settlers, but not in the ways that it is present in today's society. AASAS' commitment to reconciliation includes education, increased access to services, and truth telling.

Our Vision

An Alberta free from sexual violence.

Our Mission

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

The Role of AASAS

The AASAS Member Agencies/Services are responsible for day-to-day, front line delivery of services within their local communities and regional areas. As a provincial support organization, AASAS focuses its efforts in these key areas:

AWARENESS: AASAS works to increase public and government awareness of issues involving sexual abuse and sexual assault and the impacts they have on all Albertans.

ACCESS: AASAS strives to ensure that all Albertans affected by sexual abuse and sexual assault have access to healing and recovery programs, services and supports.

AASAS 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 crime of sexual abuse and sexual assault on individuals and that minimization has devastating outcomes for survivors.
- We believe services addressing sexual abuse and sexual assault need to be delivered in an inclusive, respectful and equitable manner regardless of ethnicity, religion, gender identity, 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 the 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 greater access to treatment for perpetrators of sexual abuse and sexual assault.

Pace Community Support, Sexual Assault & Trauma Centre (Grande Prairie)
 Support & Intake: 780.539.6692
 pacecentre.com

Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton
 Support & Info (9am-9pm daily):
 780.423.4121
 Business: 780.423.4102
 sace.ca

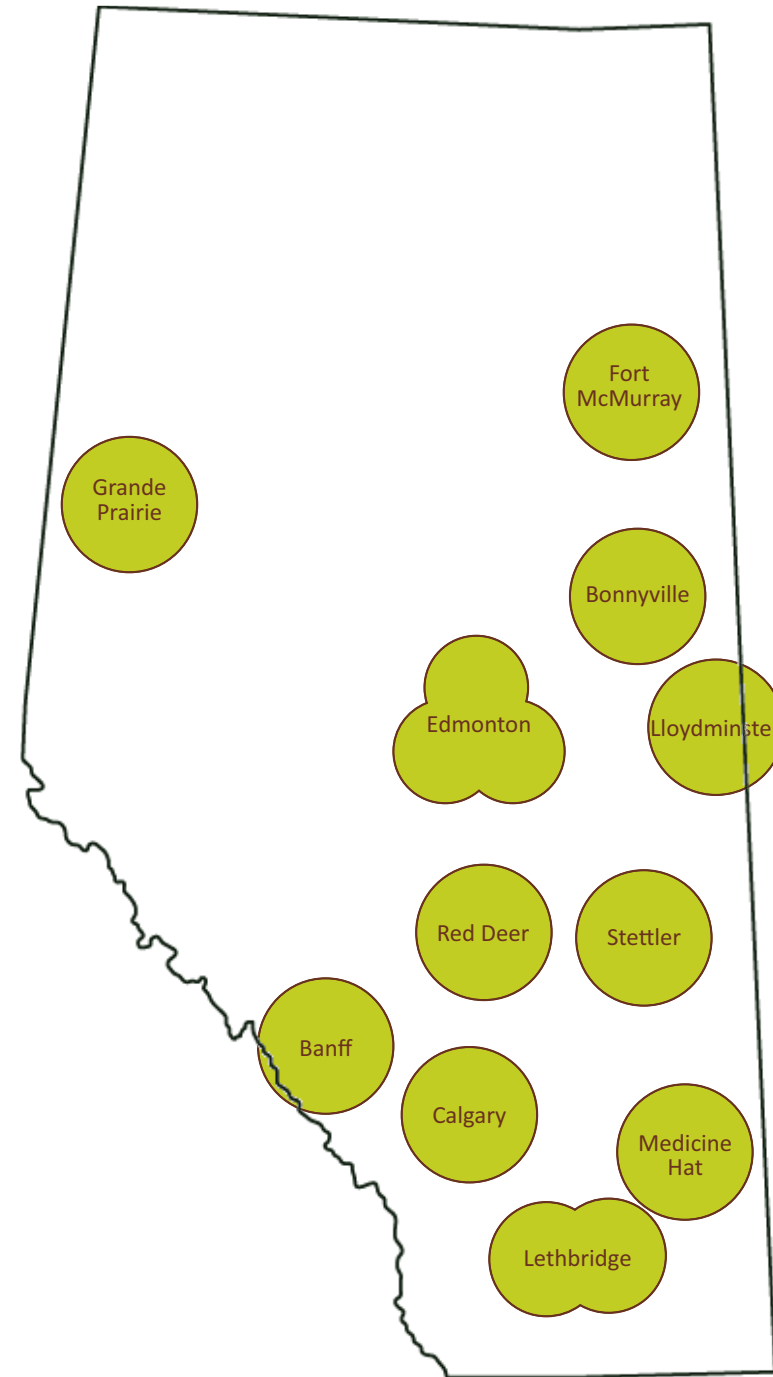
University of Alberta Sexual Assault Centre
 780.492.9771
 uab.ca/SACentre

Central Alberta Sexual Assault Support Centre (Red Deer)
 Toll Free: 1.866.956.1099
 24-Hour Text: 1.866.956.1099
 Business: 403.340.1124
 Web Chat: casasc.ca

Calgary Communities Against Sexual Abuse
 Toll Free: 1.877.237.5888
 Business: 403.237.6905
 calgarycasa.com

Harmony Project - Sexual Violence Prevention & Response (Banff)
 24 hour crisis line: 403.760.3200
 YWCA programs & services:
 403.762.3560 Option 1
 harmonyproject.ca

AASAS Member Agencies/Services



Waypoints Sexual Assault Healing Centre (Ft. McMurray)
 Crisis Line: 780.791.6708
 Business: 780.743.4691 Ext. 232
 waypointswb.ca

Dragonfly Centre: Sexual Assault Services (Bonnyville)
 780.812.3174
 thedragonflycentre.com

Lloydminster Sexual Assault Services
 Business: 306.825.8255
 lsas.com

Saffron Centre Ltd. (Sherwood Park)
 780.449.0900
 saffroncentre.com

Association of Communities Against Abuse (Stettler)
 Toll Free: 1.866.807.3558
 Business: 403.742.3558
 acaahelps.ca

Sanare Centre (Medicine Hat)
 Business: 403.548.2717
 sanarecentre.ca

Sexual Violence Action Committee (Lethbridge)
 c/o Lethbridge Family Services
 Business: 403.327.5724
 lfsfamily.ca
 svaclethbridge.com

Chinook Sexual Assault Centre (Lethbridge)
 Toll Free: 1.844.576.2512
 Business: 403.694.1094
 csacleth.ca

Message from the Leadership

The most significant achievement of this year was how Alberta’s sexual assault services rallied together to continue to support survivors throughout the global COVID-19 pandemic. AASAS member agencies from all corners of the province demonstrated amazing creativity, collaboration, resiliency, and determination as they adeptly transitioned to online delivery of services without compromising quality of services.

All of Alberta was hit hard by this pandemic but for us most notably were the survivors of sexual violence and the front-line workers who unfailingly continued to provide essential supports. You will see from this report that despite COVID, Alberta’s sexual violence sector continued to thrive; and, because of COVID, we learned some new things – not the least of which was that counselling, support, and education can be provided effectively online.

Throughout this year we were reminded time and time again, the value of our collective. We met weekly with our member agencies so that they could share innovative approaches to addressing the impacts of the pandemic on their services and so that they could provide support to each other. There were tears and there was laughter – and many, many, reminders of “You are on mute.” But most importantly of all, reminders that we were not alone.

And that is why AASAS was formed in 1993 by the sexual assault services in Alberta – because together we are stronger – we are better – and together we can end sexual violence.

Staff

Deb Tomlinson, Chief Executive Officer
 Cheryl Wallach, Communications Specialist
 Corinne Ofstie, Director of Strategic Initiatives
 Cyndi Jardine, First Responder Training Administrator
 Haley Scott, Director of Operations
 Heather Turner, Collaborative Community Response Coordinator
 Katie Robertson, Continuing Education Coordinator
 Lisa Oracheski, Collaborative Community Response Coordinator
 Pradnya Yadav, Executive Assistant
 Tiffany Goebel, Community Development Associate

Board of Directors

Brenda Murdoch, President
 Bill Walker/Brad Cunningham, Vice-President
 Diane MacIntyre/Thorna Lawrence, Treasurer
 Bill Kaye, Secretary
 John Ferguson, Director
 Kellie Cummings, Director
 Linda McCracken, Director
 Ruth Proulx, Director

Highlights of 2020-2021

Supporting Survivors of Sexual Violence Throughout the Pandemic

Research indicates that rates of sexual violence increase during health crises and natural disasters and this year as COVID-19 ran its course through our province, we experienced steadily increasing demands for services as well as higher than ever call volumes to Alberta's One Line for Sexual Violence. Despite the challenges and barriers that the pandemic presented, sexual assault services continued to support survivors and both the Federal and Provincial governments provided support to help ensure that survivors could continue to access services.

In order to comply with recommendations from Alberta's Chief Medical Officer, and with the support of the Ministry of Community and Social Services, AASAS provided personal protective equipment to the 14 sexual assault services. Sexual assault services developed the protocols and infrastructure to offer individual and group counselling services via videoconferencing. At times when the infection risk waned, some in-person counselling resumed, however it soon became apparent that online sexual violence counselling models is an option of service delivery that is here to stay.

Sexual violence educators worked diligently to successfully transfer prevention education materials to an online format and specialized police and court support workers continued to meet with survivors online or via phone. Through AASAS, sexual assault services continue to explore best practices, innovation, resources, and training to support standards of excellence in on line service delivery.

Partnership and Laptops Increase Access to Specialized Sexual Violence Services

At the onset of the pandemic, nearly all specialized sexual violence services in Alberta moved from in-person to online or phone, including: counselling, crisis intervention, police and court supports, system navigation, education, and outreach efforts. While this increased access for many, there were a number of survivors – especially in rural and remote communities – who didn't have access to technology, stable internet connection, and/or a private and safe space from which to access online counselling.

To address this barrier, and with support from Women and Gender Equality Canada, AASAS purchased twenty-two laptops for sexual assault centres to use in partnership with agencies in rural, remote, and underserved communities. Partner agencies included local Family Community Support Services, Indigenous and 2SLGBTQ+ serving agencies, among others. The partners offered a private, safe office space with a stable internet connection and AASAS member agencies provided specialized sexual violence counselling services via these laptops. In a time where physical distancing is necessary for safety, offering technology-based services is more important than ever.

Despite the challenges the pandemic presented, sexual assault services continued to support survivors.

Regional Service Expansion

With people coming forward to disclose sexual violence now more than ever, it is important for AASAS to continue to expand services into the large parts of Alberta in which survivors struggle to access specialized sexual violence supports. Some must travel great distances, some rely on non-specialized supports, and some, unfortunately, go without supports entirely. With the support of the Ministry of Community and Social Services, regions where AASAS focussed on service expansion included:

- North West – High Level, High Prairie (Peavine), Rainbow Lake, Fort Vermillion
- North East – Fort Chipewyan, Fort McKay, Janvier
- North Central – Wabasca, Slave Lake, Athabasca
- Central West – Hinton, Edson, Jasper
- Central East – Bonnyville, Cold Lake, St. Paul, Lac La Biche
- Bow Valley – Canmore, Banff, Lake Louise
- South West – Lethbridge, Cardston, Taber, Pincher Creek

In order to support the regional service expansion efforts of our members in these areas, AASAS established the Rural Response to Sexual Violence Community of Practice where sexual assault service leaders worked together to overcome the unique challenges of rural service delivery. Increasing momentum in two of these regions this year, resulted in new funding from the Ministry of Community and Social Services to develop and implement specialized sexual violence services. As a result, Athabasca, Wabasca, Slave Lake and Hinton, Edson, Jasper will see the development of new specialized sexual violence services in the coming year.

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Specialized Police and Court Support

Thanks to support from the Ministry of Justice and the Victims of Crime Fund, the sexual assault services in Alberta are able to provide individualized and specialized support service to survivors who choose to access their right to justice. Each member agency designs their Specialized Police and Court Support program to meet the needs of their specific community, and this has resulted in a variety of models across the province. One representative from each service agency is a member of the AASAS Specialized Police and Court Support Network, a community of practice group that meets regularly to share best practices, discuss program development, and build a collaborative network for problem solving.

Accessing justice for sexual assault survivors can be a complicated, emotionally challenging and lengthy endeavor and this year, survivors were presented with additional challenges. Due to COVID-19, survivors coped with the on-going back and forth restriction and then resumption of court services. Changing regulations led to increased numbers of adjournments, which resulted in increased levels of stress, anxiety, and uncertainty for clients.

In 2020-2021, 2,047 Albertans received support from Specialized Police and Court Support programming. Program staff delivered 8,638 client sessions, conducted 5,184 hours of direct client work, and 6,100 hours of consultation, case management, and advocacy work on behalf of clients.

2,047 Albertans received support from Specialized Police and Court Support programming.

Collaborative Justice Response

While the Specialized Police and Court Support program assists individuals to access justice, this program aims to improve the criminal justice response to sexual assault at a systemic level. Sexual assault has the lowest police reporting rate (3 – 5%) of any crime in Canada. Working collaboratively with the RCMP K-Division to address low police reporting rates has resulted in a number of significant advancements this year.

RCMP K-Division coordinated their first ‘not cleared by charge’ case review in Alberta in August 2020. Representatives from five AASAS member agencies were screened and trained to review RCMP files with a view to providing feedback to the RCMP on trauma informed practice. The first meeting of the Sexual Assault Investigation Review Committee was held over three days at K-Division headquarters in Edmonton, and the feedback from AASAS member agencies was very positive.

In addition, RCMP K-Division approached AASAS to partner on the development of a provincial protocol for Third Party Reporting in Alberta. A working group was formed including RCMP, AASAS, Edmonton Police Service, Alberta Crown Prosecution Services, and AASAS member agency Saffron Centre. The group has been working on the procedures to file a Third Party Report, as well as training for those who will be accepting these reports. This new protocol will be piloted with an AASAS member agency to receive reports once it has been finalized.

RCMP K-Division also focused on expanding access to Supportive Reporting. With Supportive Reporting survivors are able to meet with non-uniformed officers in the sexual assault agency space to discuss reporting options, ask questions about reporting or investigations, and have a sexual assault worker present to provide additional support. The pilot for Supportive Reporting in Alberta took place in Red Deer and is a partnership between the Red Deer RCMP detachment and the Central Alberta Sexual Assault Support Centre. This coordinated effort to support survivors from the very start of their engagement with the justice system helps provide support, promote safety and informed choices, and research indicates it leads to continued engagement with criminal justice processes.

This past year, AASAS also participated actively on the Government of Alberta Sexual Violence Police Advisory Committee as well as contributed to Justice and Solicitor General consultations on the development of the New Victims Assistance Program for Alberta and potential changes to the Police Act.

Allying with Indigenous Communities

As part of our ongoing journey towards truth and reconciliation, AASAS staff team continued our efforts to learn about and understand the effects of colonialism and racism on Indigenous survivors of sexual violence.

AASAS staff attended Cultural Solutions 101 and 201 training with Elder Reg Crowshoe and completed the self-directed study guide developed by Alberta Council of Women’s Shelters called Stepping Into the Circle. AASAS also coordinated and hosted a webinar presentation by PhD student and Indigenous scholar, Nathalie St. Denis: “Indigenous Women Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse: Ramifications of Gendered Colonial Violence on Trauma and Healing”.

Leaders from AASAS, Alberta Native Friendship Centres Association, and Alberta Council of Women’s Shelters met several times to explore potential partnership with the aim of increasing access to domestic and sexual violence services for Indigenous survivors.

AASAS staff continued efforts to learn about and understand the effects of colonialism and racism on Indigenous survivors of sexual violence.

Working collaboratively with the RCMP K-Division has resulted in a number of significant advancements this year.

Alberta's One Line for Sexual Violence

May 2020 marked the one year anniversary of Alberta's One Line for Sexual Violence, a single point of entry for all Albertans to obtain specialized sexual violence information, support, and referrals by means of toll-free phone, text, and/or online chat.

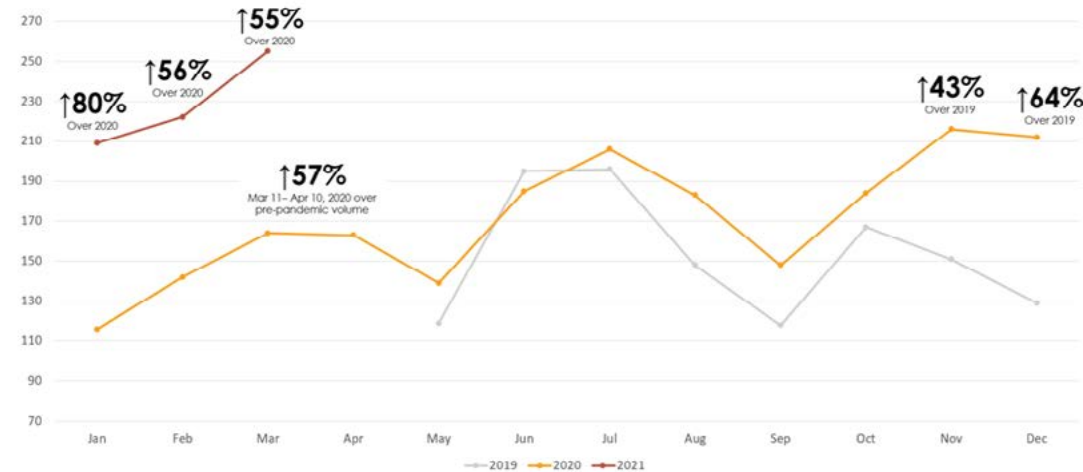
As awareness about the One Line increased, the volume of calls, texts, and chats received also increased. As of March 31, 2021, Albertans contacted the One Line over 4,000 times from more than 72 different communities across the province to access specialized sexual violence support.

While COVID-19 has presented us with many challenges, with support from the Ministry of Community and Social Services, AASAS member agencies, Calgary Communities Against Sexual Abuse (CCASA) and Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton (SACE) worked diligently to ensure that Alberta's One Line continued to operate at full capacity throughout the pandemic with invaluable support from University of Alberta Sexual Assault Centre (UASAC) and Central Alberta Sexual Assault Support Centre (CASASC),

In the month following the COVID-19 outbreak in Alberta, the One Line saw a 57% increase in volume and an overall average of 31% increase in requests for support as compared to the previous year.

In the month following the COVID-19 outbreak in Alberta, the One Line saw a 57% increase in volume.

Alberta's One Line for Sexual Violence
Monthly Volume 2019 - 2021



First Responder to Sexual Assault and Abuse Training™

The AASAS program area hit hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic was our First Responder to Sexual Assault and Abuse Training (FRT). In the interest of public safety, throughout this year several two day in-person First Responder Trainings had to be cancelled.

The greatest unintended benefit of the COVID-19 pandemic however, was an opportunity to transfer the First Responders Training curriculum online. During the fall and winter, the new format was piloted and facilitators were trained in the online method of delivery. By the end of the year, nine five-week online trainings were completed and an additional two initiated, resulting in 112 people trained. Early evaluations were positive with 100% of respondents indicating that they would recommend this training to others.

The greatest unintended benefit of the COVID-19 pandemic was an opportunity to transfer the First Responders Training curriculum online.

Learning to Counsel Survivors Healing from Trauma of Sexual Violence

Counselling Adult Survivors of Sexual Violence is a 12-week online integrative course that is designed for counselors, therapists, and other mental health practitioners who may wish to work with survivors of sexual violence, or who may be already working with survivors and would like to more deeply inform their counselling practice.

Three rounds of this 12-week Counselling Course were facilitated in part or whole during this year and 64 counselling professionals were trained.

This course, like AASAS FRT, is accredited with the Alberta College of Social Workers (ACE), for 20 Category A continuing education credits.

64 counselling professionals were trained to provide specialized support to survivors of sexual violence.

Hope and Healing: Sexual Violence Counselling in Alberta

With support from the Ministries of Health and Community and Social Services, this year, Alberta's sexual assault services supported 3,082 new counselling clients along with 4,967 continuing clients. The number of new clients accessing services this year represents a decrease of approximately 24% from the same period in 2019-2020. The primary decrease in new client demand was demonstrated at the beginning of the pandemic, with new intakes increasing back to normal or above normal levels near the end of the year.

AASAS member agencies provided 28,769 counselling sessions - including individual and group sessions. Seventy-eight percent of individuals served were adults, and 22% were children and youth. While the majority of counselling clients were women (84%), 14% were men, 1% identified as transgender, and 1% non-binary.

Alberta's sexual assault services supported 3,082 new counselling clients along with 4,967 continuing clients.

Promoting Healthier and Safer Alberta Workplaces

With the support of the Department of Justice Canada, AASAS was awarded a four year project addressing workplace sexual harassment entitled Healthier and Safer Alberta Workplaces. This strategic initiative, which started January 2020 and runs through to March 31, 2024, involves two interconnected pillars of activity: a public awareness campaign and a workplace training curriculum.

To prepare for the campaign and the training, AASAS conducted research including a literature review, qualitative interviews with Senior Executives, a Leger survey of over 1,000 Albertans, and an environmental scan. We learned, despite efforts, sexual harassment remains a problem in Canadian workplaces. In Alberta, 1 in 5 workers were sexually harassed in the last year. We also learned that a caring and inclusive workplace culture is an important primary defence against sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is less likely to occur in a positive and respectful workplace environment.

And so our creative team began work on #momentsmatter, a three year, province-wide campaign that celebrates Alberta leaders who are taking a personal role in building positive and respectful workplace cultures that promote health and safety – and help stop sexual harassment. Both the public awareness campaign and the training will launch next year.

We learned that a caring and inclusive workplace culture is an important primary defence against sexual harassment.

Thank You



The funding from the Government of Alberta supports AASAS efforts to increase awareness of issues of sexual abuse and assault and to ensure all Albertans affected by sexual violence have access to programs, supports, and services.



Women and Gender
Equality Canada

Femmes et Égalité
des genres Canada

Through the Emergency funding for Gender Based Violence made available through the Government of Canada, AASAS gratefully received a one-time grant to purchase laptops, leverage partnerships, and reduce barriers to accessing counselling during COVID-19.

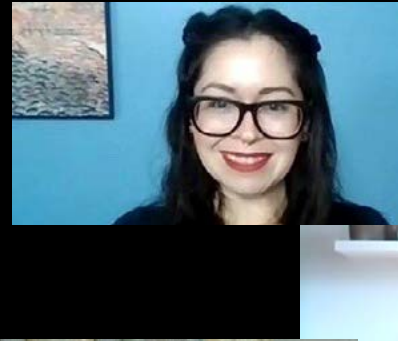


Department of Justice
Canada

Ministère de la Justice
Canada

Funding made available from Department of Justice Canada supports AASAS to launch a four year public awareness campaign and training curriculum to address sexual harassment in the workplace.

***Audited financial statements for the year (April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021) are available by request from the office of the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services.
mailbox@asas.ca***



Mute
 Stop Video
 Security
 Participants 1
 Chat
 Share Screen
 Record
 Live Transcript
 Reactions
 More
 End