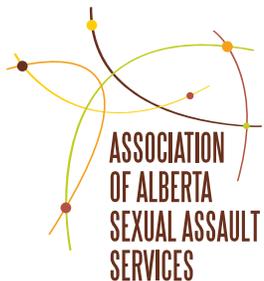


# Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services

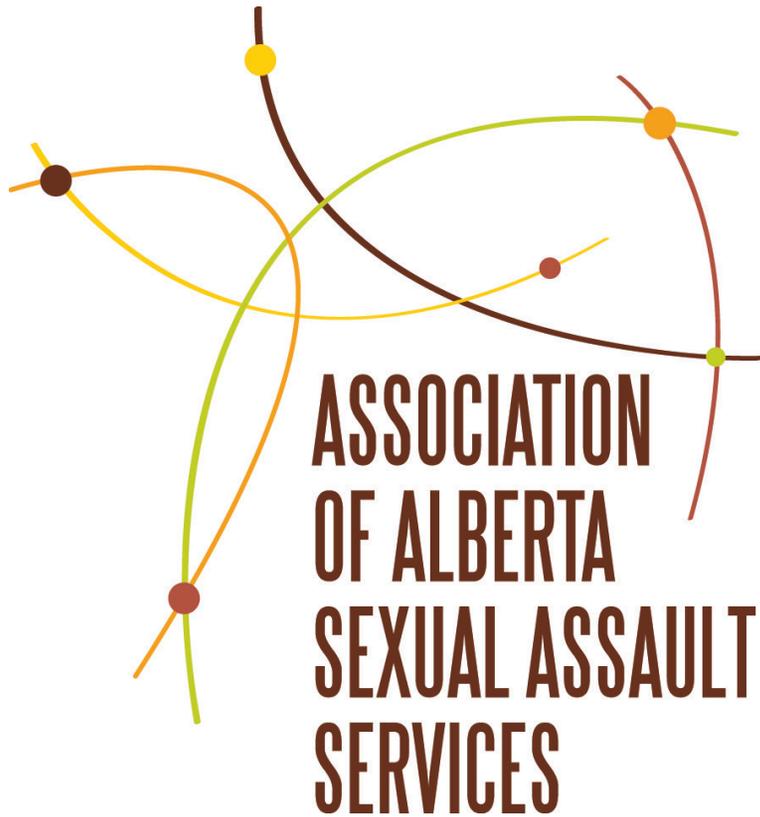
Working Together for an Alberta Free From Sexual Violence



#momentmatter



Annual Report 2021-2022



**ASSOCIATION  
OF ALBERTA  
SEXUAL ASSAULT  
SERVICES**

Northland Building  
Suite 650, 910 7 Avenue SW  
Calgary, AB T2P 3N8

403.237.6905 ext. 3  
mailbox@asas.ca  
asas.ca

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



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## 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.

## AASAS Member Agencies/Services

**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

**Saffron Centre Ltd. (Sherwood Park)**

780.449.0900  
saffroncentre.com

**Central Alberta Sexual Assault Support Centre (Red Deer)**

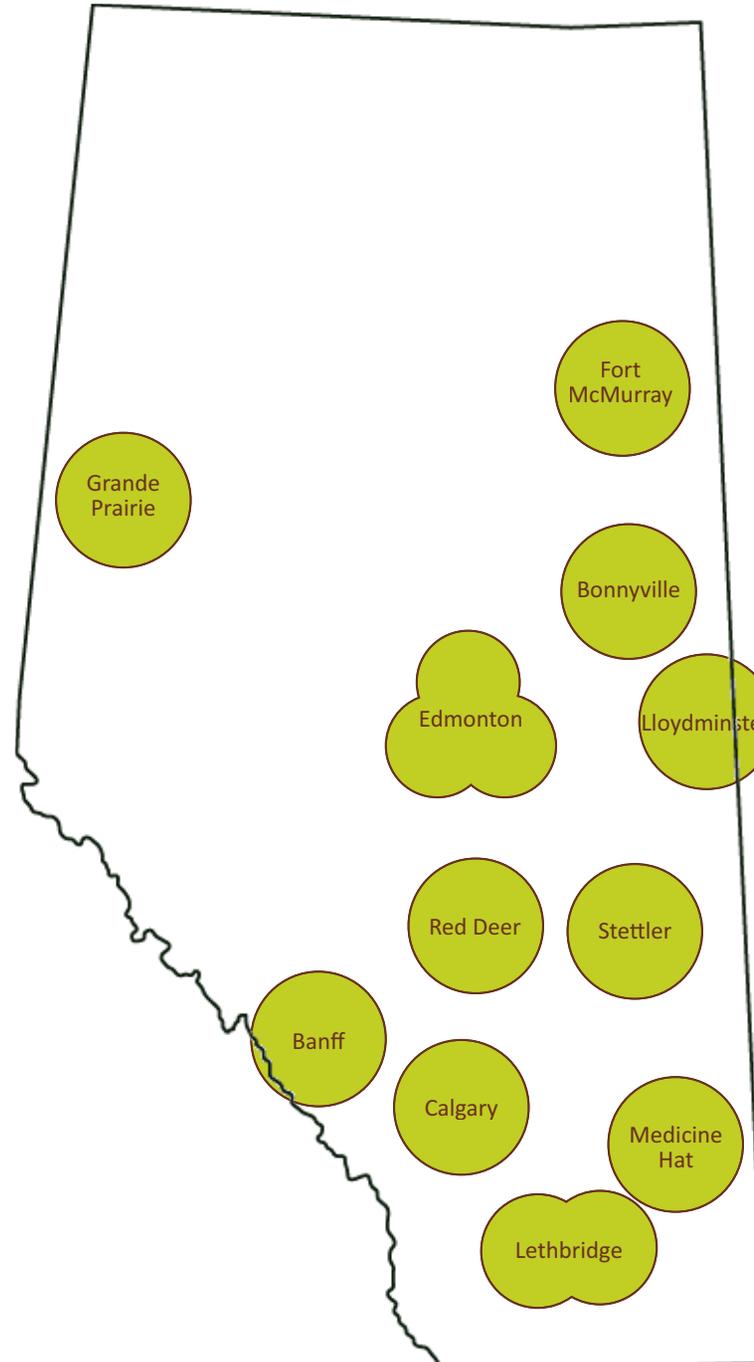
Toll Free: 1.866.956.1099  
24-Hour Text: 1.866.956.1099  
Business: 403.340.1124  
Web Chat: casasc.ca

**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



**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  
Toll Free: 1.866.300.HEAL(4325)  
thedragonflycentre.com

**Lloydminster Sexual Assault Services**

Business: 306.825.8255  
lsas.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

**Lethbridge Family Services**

Counselling, Outreach and Education  
Contact re: Sexual Violence Action Committee  
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

Alberta's sexual assault centres not only respond to Albertans affected by sexual violence but we also work to stop sexual violence before it starts. And how do we do that? – by shifting our culture away from one that is accepting of sexual assault and towards one that fosters respectful, caring, and equitable relationships. It's not a quick fix but I am confident we are moving in the right direction.

This year, through the #momentmatter campaign, AASAS sought out to prevent workplace sexual harassment by celebrating “leading by example in moments that matter”. We engaged nearly 70 employer partners across Alberta to promote positive workplace cultures one moment at a time. Because these moments, however small, can have lasting ripple effects, and they help stop sexual harassment.

A real culture shift is happening, right now– and we can see this, not just in our workplaces, but in our schools, our homes and in all our communities, both in-person and online. This shift in attitudes around sexual violence, linked to #MeToo and #IBelieveYou, means that survivors are reaching out to others more than ever.

Help seeking for sexual violence in Alberta is at an all time high and its more important than ever that the sexual assault centres are prepared to respond. This has been challenging for survivors; and for our sexual assault centres and their staff. Amidst these challenges however it was the moments in which we experienced connection and support that were the most memorable. Time and time again we were reminded of the value of our collective. Together we are stronger – together we can end sexual violence – one moment at a time.

## 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

Brad Cunningham, Vice-President

Thorna Lawrence, Treasurer

Linda McCracken, Secretary

John Ferguson, Director

Kellie Cummings, Director

Ruth Proulx, Director

## Highlights of 2021-2022

### Supporting Survivors Through the Pandemic

A health crises or natural disaster evokes stress and creates instability. This, added to the trauma experienced by sexual violence survivors, can be overwhelming. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, this past year, Alberta's sexual assault services continued to support survivors, their families and support networks with high quality, evidence-based services, both in-person and online.

In addition to helping Albertans process and heal from sexual assault trauma, sexual assault services found themselves providing support for survivor needs such as housing, food, finances, and job security. As a result, an increasing number of survivors required more sessions in counselling, which in turn impacted wait times for new survivors seeking service. Currently, wait times and help seeking at Alberta's sexual assault services are at an all- time high and AASAS anticipates this trend to continue upward for the next few years.

### 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 3,459 new counselling clients along with 2,822 continuing clients. The number of new clients accessing services this year represents an increase of approximately 12% over the same period in 2020-2021.

*A total of 6,281 new and continuing clients accessed counselling services.*

AASAS member agencies provided 32,229 counselling sessions - including individual and group sessions. Seventy percent of individuals served were adults, and 29% were children and youth (an increase of 21% from the previous year). While the majority of new counselling clients were women (83%), 13% were men, 1% were transgender, and 2% were non-binary.

***Wait times and help seeking at Alberta's sexual assault services are at an all-time high and AASAS anticipates this trend to continue upward for the next few years.***

## **Development of Standards of Practice for Online Counselling**

Since the onset of the pandemic, AASAS has been working in partnership with the therapists and clinicians at the sexual assault centres to develop and support a guideline for standards of practice for online sexual violence counselling. In the Fall of 2020, the AASAS clinical network members were surveyed about their practice of remote (virtual/telephone) sexual violence counselling services since COVID-19 protocols were put in place. Taking into consideration that this type of work is still in its infancy, a review of the literature on emerging or promising practices was also undertaken. This exploration was the foundation for AASAS Guidelines for Sexual Violence Remote Counselling: Wise Practices to Build On.

AASAS contractor, Kathleen Gorman, chose the title “wise practices” to represent the spirit of this guideline. The term wise practices has been widely used in Indigenous contexts. It supports broader ways of knowing and healing, moving beyond a western lens of treatment approaches. Within a wise practices context, no one format or approach can be prescribed or will fit all circumstances.

## **Children Involved in Harming Other Children: Environmental Scan and Service Needs Review**

During the past year, sexual assault centres across Alberta experienced an increase in requests for support and treatment from families where a child or youth is engaging in harmful sexualized behaviors against other children. Overall, there is a lack of information, understanding, and specialized treatment resources to adequately and ethically respond to this emerging need.

With special project funding from the Ministry of Community and Social Services, AASAS contracted with a researcher to conduct a literature review, an environmental scan, and a service needs review. Findings with recommendations will be disseminated in the Winter of 2022.

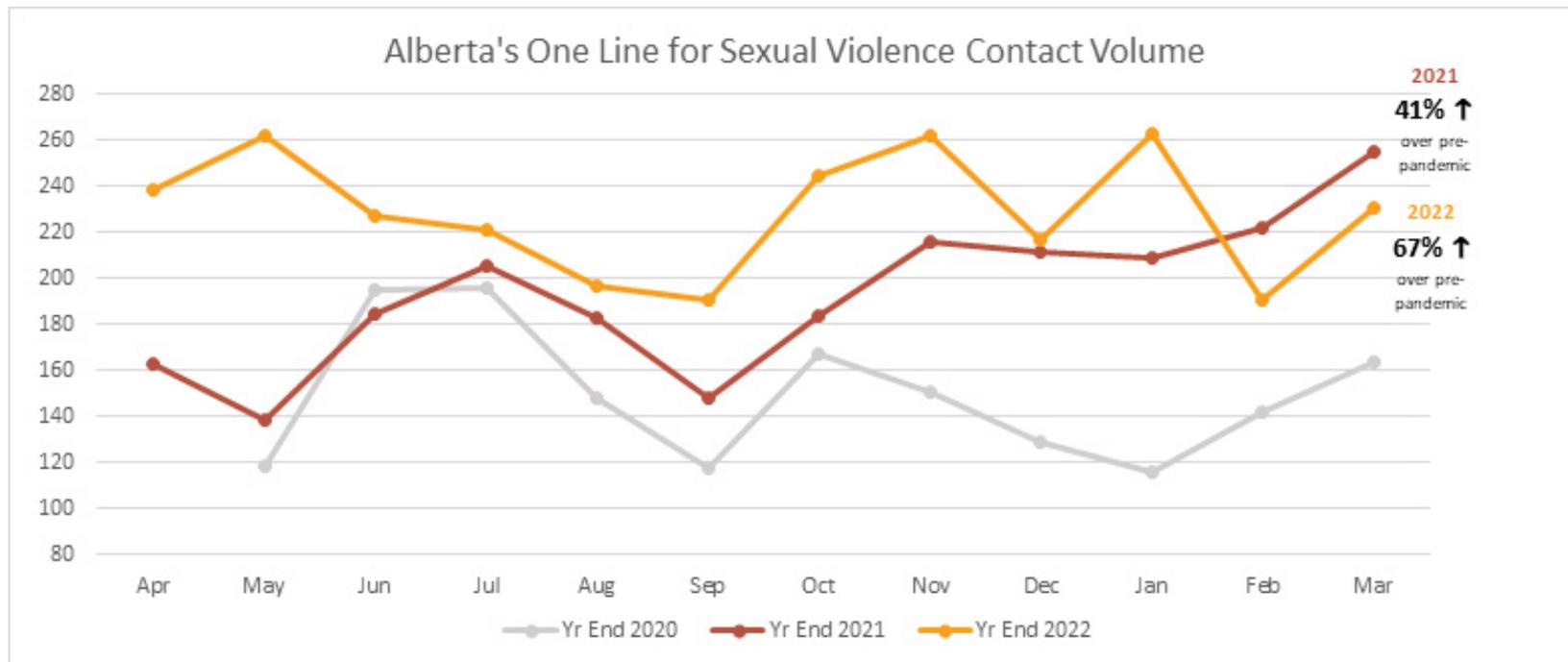
## Alberta's One Line for Sexual Violence

May 2021, marked two years of operation for Alberta's One Line for Sexual Violence – providing specialized sexual violence information, support, and referrals via toll-free phone, text, and/or online chat.

As of March 31, 2022, Alberta's One Line has been contacted 6,735 times from 86 different communities across the province by those seeking to access support. This specialized service is possible thanks to support from the Ministry of Community and Social Services, Ministry of Status of Women Alberta and AASAS member agencies: Calgary Communities Against Sexual Abuse (CCASA) and the Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton (SACE), as well as the University of Alberta Sexual Assault Centre (UASAC) and the Central Alberta Sexual Assault Support Centre (CASASC).

*Since launching in May 2019, Alberta's One Line has been contacted 6,735 times from 86 different communities.*

Alberta's One Line for Sexual Violence experienced a record-high number of contacts throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Overall, help-seeking increased by 41% (yr. end 2021) and 67% (yr. end 2022) over pre-pandemic volumes.



## **Rural Response to Sexual Violence**

Each rural sexual assault centre provides programming to multiple rural and remote communities throughout Alberta. As an ongoing support, AASAS coordinates the Rural Response to Sexual Violence Network which provides a supportive and informative forum for rural service providers to strengthen their capacity to respond to and overcome the unique challenges of rural service delivery. In total this year, Alberta's rural sexual assault services reported reaching 115 rural and remote Alberta communities.

The goal of outreach in these areas is to increase access to specialized sexual assault services and often involves meeting community members by hosting conversations in locations such as local farmer's markets, community, school and resource fairs as well as other community events. This type of relationship building plants the seeds for future service provision.

Unfortunately, there still remain many communities in Alberta that are without specialized sexual violence services and when resources permit, AASAS supports the development of new services in these areas. Over the past year, planning and preparations have taken place and in the upcoming year, with support from the Government of Alberta, access to sexual violence services will be enhanced in the communities of Edson, Hinton, and Jasper and expanded into Wabasca and Athabasca.

***In total this year, Alberta's rural sexual assault services reported reaching 115 rural and remote Alberta communities.***

## **Sexual Assault Rural Health Care Provider Consultation Line**

AASAS was invited to advise on the development of a Sexual Assault Rural Health Care Providers Consultation Line. This Alberta Health Services initiative launched in March 2022 and is available to rural nurses and physicians in Northern Alberta with future plans to expand across the province. The line allows rural physicians to connect with experienced Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners who will guide them through conducting a sexual assault exam over the phone, making it possible for survivors to receive comprehensive medical care as well as forensic evidence collection in or near their home community.

## Specialized Police and Court Support

Undergoing a police investigation, charges, a preliminary hearing and potentially, a long trial process means that survivors are repeatedly subjected to re-living their initial trauma. With the support of the Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General, sexual assault services provide Specialized Police and Court Support to survivors who wish to engage with the criminal legal system. The crime of sexual violence, unlike other violent crimes, where rates have decreased over the past 15 years, has remained stable. Sexual violence also has the lowest police reporting rate (6%) of any crime. Because of these unique needs, support to survivors who are seeking justice must be specialized.

*2,737 Albertans received support from Specialized Police and Court Support programming.*

Each sexual assault centre designs their Specialized Police and Court Support program to meet the needs of their specific community. One representative from each service agency is a member of 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 to engage with for problem solving.

This past year, 2,737 Albertans received support from Specialized Police and Court Support programs across the province. Program staff at AASAS member agencies delivered 12,994 client sessions, conducted 8,090 hours of direct client work, as well as 6,338 hours of consultation, case management, and advocacy work on behalf of clients.

## Collaborative Justice Response

While the Specialized Police and Court Support program assists individuals to access justice, this program also aims to improve the criminal justice response to sexual assault at a systemic level.

This past year, AASAS participated 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.

RCMP K-Division approached AASAS to partner on the development of a provincial protocol for Third Party Reporting to RCMP 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.

## **Allying with Indigenous Communities**

This past year, AASAS, the Alberta Native Friendship Centres Association, and the Alberta Council of Women’s Shelters embarked on a 24-month journey towards building meaningful and authentic relationships between our three provincial agencies with the aim of increasing support for Indigenous women in Alberta who have experienced violence. This journey was deeply inspired by the opening chapter in Reclaiming Power and Place: the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls which was titled Centring Relationships to End Violence. As partners, we have adopted its guiding approach, which states:

***“Relationships are key to both understanding the causes of violence and to making changes to end violence in the lives of Indigenous women” (p. 95)***

Our three provincial organizations are committed to continuing this work on a provincial level and are now ready to begin inviting some of our member agencies to join us. With support from the federal government Ministry, Women and Gender Equality, along with Canadian Women’s Foundation we named this initiative Centring Relationships to End Violence.

## **Racial Equity Organizational Change Process**

AASAS is committed to ensuring that all team members feel valued and respected and to creating an equitable workplace in which everyone experiences a sense of belonging and connection. With these goals in mind, over the next couple of years the AASAS Board of Directors and staff will be working with consultant Cynthia Okafor through a racial equity organizational change process. This year, we moved through the first phase of this process which involved education on racism and racial equity organizational change as well as a Racial Equity Assessment of the organization. AASAS intends to move forward with an audit of organizational culture, policies, and procedures, which will inform the development of a Racial Equity Action Plan for the organization.

## First Responder to Sexual Assault and Abuse Training™

A positive response to a disclosure of sexual violence increases the chances that survivors will reach out for help and consider their options for seeking justice. Over the past year and in response to the pandemic, AASAS developed both a five-week and a two-day online First Responder to Sexual Assault and Abuse Training (FRT). This new training modality made it easier for participants from all across the province and country to attend.

*99% of participants would recommend First Responder Training to others.*

AASAS delivered 36 First Responder Trainings this year with 440 participants in attendance.

A Train-the-Facilitator workshop was held in November 2021. There are now 18 new facilitators in training undergoing mentorship. Once their training is complete, they will join the other 49 certified FRT facilitators to deliver this training all across the province.

***“This was the most beneficial and impactful training I have ever completed. I feel really hopeful about the future because of the great content that was taught. I feel way more equipped to advocate for and support people who have been subjected to sexual abuse/assault, and I believe that I will be able to have a positive impact on others because of the learnings I have taken from this course.” – workshop participant***

## Learning to Counsel Survivors Healing from the Trauma of Sexual Violence

Counselling Adult Survivors of Sexual Violence is an 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.

Two rounds of this 12-week course were facilitated during this year with a total of 43 counselling professionals participating.

AASAS recognizes that access to Black and Indigenous therapists who have expertise in treating sexual violence trauma is important to Black and Indigenous survivors. One of the steps that AASAS took to support Black and Indigenous therapists as well as to build capacity within community, was to offer participation in this course at no cost. This year AASAS opened up twelve spots at no charge.

## Enhanced Emergency Sexual Assault Services Training

The Enhanced Emergency Sexual Assault Services (EESAS) training program is offered by Forensiceducation.ca and Dr. Cathy Carter Snell, in collaboration with AASAS. This program is designed for professionals in the criminal justice system who are responding and providing service to people who have been recently sexually assaulted (e.g. healthcare, counselling, and law enforcement professionals).

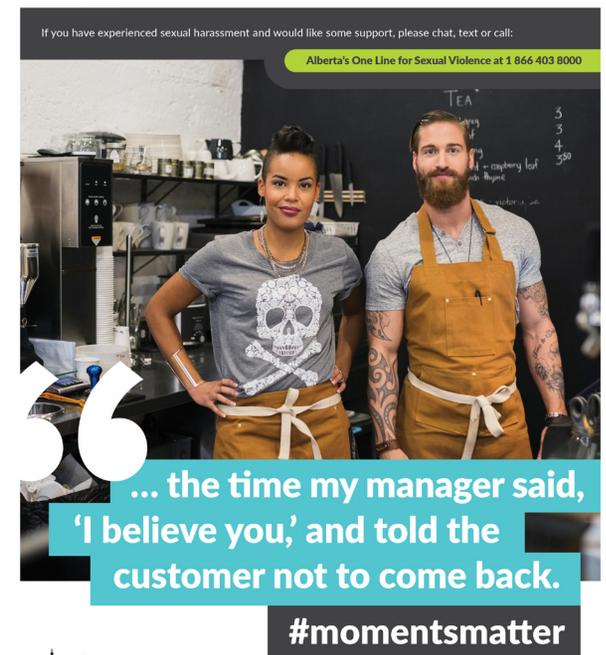
This year, AASAS supported Dragonfly Counseling and Support Centre in coordinating two live online EESAS trainings. As a result of this collaboration, 118 professionals from 25 communities across the province increased their capacity to respond to the needs of recent survivors of sexual assault.

## Promoting Safer and Healthier Alberta Workplaces

With support from the Department of Justice Canada, in year three of this four-year campaign, AASAS worked with Cause and Effect Marketing Firm to develop campaign materials and officially launch the #momentmatter campaign in the fall of 2021. AASAS also worked with Dr. Kiara Mikita to develop a meaningful “not your average” online workplace sexual harassment training curriculum which will launch in the fall of 2022. An advisory committee, made up of representatives from Alberta’s sexual assault centres helped ensure that all materials accurately reflected their day-to-day experience responding to survivors.

This initiative is designed to help Albertans understand how positive and respectful workplace cultures can help stop sexual harassment and to provide innovative and interactive training for Alberta employers and employees.

*#momentmatter celebrates leaders who are keeping Alberta workers healthy and safe—one moment at a time.*



Department of Justice Canada / Ministère de la Justice Canada

Respected and effective leaders build cultures of trust that help stop sexual harassment.

Learn more at [momentmatter.info](https://momentmatter.info)



Sixty-eight employers signed up as campaign partners and 200 individuals attended campaign information sessions. When surveyed, 97% of campaign participants reported having intentionally modeled respectful workplace behaviours since partnering with #momentsmatter. Calls about sexual harassment to Alberta’s One Line for Sexual Violence increased by 12% during the campaign. Three education pilot sessions with a total of 60 participants were also provided this year.

## Collaboration is Key

AASAS is committed to supporting standards of excellence in service delivery and to ensuring that our membership is connected, supported, and collaborative. One of the many ways we work towards these goals is by facilitating a number of province wide communities of practice.

- The Senior Leadership Committee
- The Clinical Network
- The Specialized Police and Court Support Network
- The Rural Response to Sexual Violence Community of Practice

Thirty-seven representatives from sexual assault centres across the province participate in these communities of practice. These networks provide a venue for the sharing of best practices and are an invaluable source of insight into the needs of survivors which informs and guides our work at AASAS.

## Feedback from our Members

This past year AASAS worked with an evaluations consultant to develop an updated logic model reflective of the work AASAS does to provide leadership, coordination, and a unified voice towards an Alberta free from sexual violence. To enhance our ability to demonstrate the impact AASAS is making, we implemented two new data collection tools – an AASAS Member Survey and an AASAS Network Survey.

The AASAS Member Survey collected input from Senior Leadership Committee members on the value of participating in the AASAS network as well as their assessment of the impact that AASAS is making towards our strategic goals.

- 80% of our members strongly agreed, and 20% agreed, that they see value for themselves and their organizations in participating as a member of AASAS.

The AASAS Network Survey collected input from the members of our Clinical Network, Specialized Police and Court Support Network, and the Rural Response the Sexual Violence Community of Practice. This survey collected information on the value of the communities of practice that AASAS chairs.

- 63% of network members strongly agreed, and 37% agreed that participating in an AASAS network is a valuable use of their time.

## Stay Tuned: AASAS Website and Logo Refresh is on Its Way

In May 2021, AASAS began planning a website refresh. The current site content was reviewed and updated and a new website structure was created. AASAS engaged Strut Creative, a design and digital company, to create new wireframes and designs for the site on an updated platform that will increase usability for both the organization and visitors. Through the website design process, it was decided to also refresh the AASAS logo. The website and logo will be launched in the summer of 2022.

## 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



With funding from the federal government Ministry, Women and Gender Equality and the Canadian Women's Foundation, AASAS is partnering with the Alberta Native Friendship Centres Association and the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters on an initiative aimed at increasing support for Indigenous women in Alberta who have experienced violence.



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, 2021 to March 31, 2022) are available by request from the office of the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services.  
[mailbox@aasas.ca](mailto:mailbox@aasas.ca)*