

HOMEFRONT

STOP IT WHERE IT STARTS

Domestic Violence In Calgary

Research in 1995 estimated the partial **economic cost of violence** against women was \$4.2 billion. The economic costs do not include the pain and suffering of the victims.

Children who witness or experience domestic abuse are at an increased risk to use abusive behaviors in their own relationships and to engage in other criminal acts.

Children were / are living in the home in about **half** the cases of spousal assault heard in the specialized court.

In 2002, the Calgary Police Service responded to approximately **11,000 domestic violence-related calls** for service.

Domestic violence is still not considered as serious an issue compared with other criminal acts. A recent survey conducted by the Calgary Police Service revealed that 49 per cent of Calgarians who had been victimized by a criminal act ranked break-and-enters as one of the top three policing concerns in their neighborhoods. Only two per cent of respondents placed domestic violence in the top three. What people perceive to be problems in their neighborhoods differ from the reality. In fact, domestic violence incidents are among the most frequently reported incidents received by the Calgary Police Service.

Over 80% of the cases heard in court involve charges of common assault and /or assault with a weapon.



Fact Sheet

HomeFront's mission is to reduce domestic violence in Calgary through coordinated community action.

The project is a four-year national demonstration project focused on domestic violence in Calgary. The **project operates as a coordinated response** of law enforcement, criminal justice, and more than 60 community social service agencies. The combination of legal sanctions and treatment is designed to break the cycle of abuse.

HomeFront was known as the Calgary Justice Working Project until April 2001, when the organization's new name was unveiled.

Federal, provincial and municipal levels of government provide financial support. HomeFront benefits from donations received through the United Way as well as generous donations from corporations, foundations and individuals.

HomeFront was established in 1999. The concept for HomeFront was initiated at a forum on the impact of violence in the home on victims and survivors. Aided by the Action Committee Against Violence and supported by the Alberta Department of Justice and the National Crime Prevention Centre, a group of leading Calgarians initiated the project, which became reality with the opening of a **specialized domestic violence court** in May 2000.

HomeFront provides for treatment of offenders who have been judged guilty through the criminal justice system and have been mandated into domestic violence treatment. In this way, the cycle of violence might be broken (legal sanctions on their own do little to change abusive behavior). Provision of treatment in conjunction with legal sanctions makes the Calgary project unique in Canada.

In the 3 years after the specialized court opened, there has been a substantial increase in the number of charges laid, probation orders and mandated treatment.

Project partners work collaboratively to develop a seamless system that focuses on domestic violence and is integrated with community services. HomeFront is driven by beliefs that:

- Domestic violence is a crime;
- Offenders must be held accountable for their actions;

- Victims require and deserve support;
- The rights of the accused must be respected and protected;
- Domestic violence is a learned behavior; and that
- The cycle of violence can be broken.

Testimonies of Success

Words from Abusers (indication of behavior change)

a) On April 8th 2000, I assaulted my wife, she was hospitalized.... My rage and anger on that night allowed me to viciously beat her. The following week I sought help... I learned ... to take ownership for my behaviour My self and my wife are very grateful that programs like this exist.¹

b) I saw all different types of people with all different kinds of problems. I realized I was one of them. It helped me to see my own problems and my own violence. The group made me realize ... that I make myself up set.²

c) If it just stops one act of family abuse, the individuals will be forever in your debt. ... Your program is benefiting so many ... in Calgary, I do not think you can possibly ... measure ...[the] benefits.³

Words from Victims

“The case worker was my biggest asset. She put me at ease and walked me through the entire court process. I did not feel alone and was not left to fend for myself. She was not judgmental of my situation and didn’t tell me what to do, she just gave me options I never knew I had.”

“I don’t know what you did with the man I lived with for the last 25 years– I don’t want him back. Since he was charged and entered the treatment programs the court told him to, he has changed. I saw him smile for the first time in memory.”

^{1&3} Adapted with permission from Sheriff King Family Violence Prevention Center

² Adapted with permission from Calgary Counselling Center