

AASAC

# Alberta Association of Sexual Assault Centres

**2009-2010 Annual Report**

AASAC

## Message from the Executive Director

It has been a busy year at AASAC! We moved forward on the work of our strategic plan, making progress on each of our strategic goals. There have been challenges along the way, with economic conditions limiting access to the additional dollars our members so desperately need to provide front line community services. Another challenge dealt with was the demise of our network's database (HOMES). We were able to find a short term solution that met AASAC's needs but not all of our members needs, so at the closing of the year, we were still in search of a solution that would suit everyone. We are looking forward to resolving these issues in the coming year so that our association can move forward on the important work of growing our outcome measurement and reporting capacity.

Successes to highlight this year revolve strongly around increasing partnerships and making progress on or our public awareness and professional training projects. Our efforts to build communication tools to raise public awareness continued through this year, setting the stage for several projects to be launched in the fall of 2010.

Consistent with our values related to collaboration, inclusiveness and openness, we began an assessment of our organizational structure, including membership options and provincial Board representation. This assessment and organizational development will continue in the coming year. We are excited about the potential for growth in numbers and strength of voice across the province.

We at AASAC greatly appreciate the financial support as well as the consistent messages of understanding and valuing of this work that we have received from all our funders. The Alberta Government through Children's Services, Family Violence and Bullying Division has provided core funding to AASAC in recent years, which has been fundamental to our ability to support our membership and move forward on our strategic goals. In addition, through the Solicitor General and Public Security, Victims of Crime Fund, we will provide Albertans with tools to challenge the myths surrounding sexual assault and to make decisions about reporting sexual assault. Finally, Status of Women Canada provided us support to increase capacity of professionals across the province to appropriately respond to sexual assault and sexual abuse. Ultimately, these funders as well as corporate and individual donors contribute to our organization's ultimate goal of "an Alberta free from sexual abuse and sexual assault".

In addition to our funders, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to the Board of Directors of AASAC for their time and dedication to the organization. Their leadership and commitment to the individuals, families and communities impacted by sexual abuse and sexual assault across the province is unwavering, as is their passion to change society's response to it. I would also like to express my gratitude for the incredible hard work, commitment and support the AASAC membership gives to the organization. It has been a pleasure and privilege to work with everyone. I look forward to our continued work together.

Sincerely,

Annemarie Tocher

## Organization Overview

### 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 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 centres in Alberta.
- We believe victims of sexual abuse and sexual assault are not to blame and perpetrators must be held accountable.
- We believe everyone has the capacity and resiliency to recover from sexual abuse and sexual assault.
- 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 in the need for treatment and for greater access to treatment for perpetrators of sexual abuse and sexual assault.
- We believe society minimizes the impact of sexual abuse and sexual assault on individuals and that minimization has devastating outcomes for survivors.

## Reporting on our Strategic Goals for 2009-2010

1. Elevate awareness and understanding of the issues of sexual abuse and sexual assault
2. Ensure the sustainability of sexual assault services
3. Ensure standards of excellence in service delivery

### **Elevating Awareness and Understanding**

1. Develop a communications/awareness strategy for AASAC

AASAC produced a communications and tactics plan this year, and began the work of rebranding the organization and increasing awareness across the province. The 'engaging men' campaign, focused on challenging men in particular to think about and get involved in the fight against sexual violence will include a provincial poster campaign and associated website content, and will be launched in September 2010. In addition, with the help of many dedicated experts who work in the criminal justice system on issues of sexual abuse and sexual assault, AASAC will release a video created for survivors of sexual assault to aid their decision making regarding reporting the crime. This video will be available throughout the province to victim services units, sexual assault services and other organizations that provide support to victims of this crime. This will greatly increase access to information for all Albertans and therefore raise awareness across the province on this topic.

The organization also embarked on a rebranding process that will continue into the summer of 2010 anticipating a new organization name, logo and website will be launched in the fall of 2010.

2. Build Strategic Partnerships to ensure the issues of sexual abuse and assault are highlighted and addressed across the province

Issues of sexual violence affect individuals in every community across the province, yet services are limited to a few communities. AASAC has begun the work of connecting with organizations that represent municipalities and counties, as well as community support services, to raise their awareness of this pervasive issue and its impacts on their citizens, with the intention of moving this issue to their agendas and increasing opportunities for partnership.

Partnerships in the east zone of Region 7 have increased and resulted in criminal justice system protocol development in four communities and the piloting of crisis counselling services in two communities as well as group model development in another. These partnerships led to an invitation to present at the Native Counselling Service Association of Alberta's annual conference in June of 2010 and at the North East Victim Services Conference in October, 2010.

A potential partnership with ACWS regarding a database option is being explored at the closing of this year. This as well as our strong involvement in the Provincial consultation on the Family Violence Client Centred Supports Model, and the linkages of our membership to family violence organizations in their communities has moved us forward on our agenda to enhance our partnerships with family violence serving organizations.

AASAC also began a review of our organizational structure and membership this year. We recognize there may be some agencies in the province that provide one or two specialized sexual assault services to their communities, or there may be current or future community collaborative efforts to develop services in rural and remote areas that we want to ensure have a voice at our table. This work should expand accessibility to AASAC membership and broaden our connection to communities through our Board of Directors. This developmental work will continue in the coming year.

### **Ensure the Sustainability of Sexual Assault Services**

1. Continue to work with Children's Services to increase ongoing funding for core program areas across the province

Although this has been a difficult year economically across the province, with many service providers and government departments sustaining cuts to their budgets, our work and our relationship with Children's Services representatives resulted in our funding having sustained no cuts. The significance of this is important. Going forward, we will continue to develop our relationships and look for opportunities to increase our members' access to funding and to partner with government to increase access to services throughout the province.

2. Identify other potential funders for this work and build relationships that engage them on the issues and the work of AASAC and its members

Arguably, three of the most relevant government departments to this issue are Alberta Health Services, Justice, and Solicitor General and Public Safety. Each of these departments have been dealing with budget cuts or the tail end of significant reorganization in recent times. AASAC was successful in obtaining funding from the Solicitor General and Public Safety, Victims of Crime Fund and will continue to apply to that fund in the future. AASAC is building a strong relationship with Justice through our representation on the Justice Policy Advisory Committee, the SCOPE committee and the Aboriginal Sexual Assault Committee. We have been told there is no money to be had through Justice however we see potential in the Safe Communities Innovation Fund. Alberta Health Services is now settling after complete reorganization and amalgamation of other departments. A relationship with this department is key to the development of more accessible and varied service access for survivors across the province; this will be pursued in the coming year.

### **Ensure Standards of Excellence in Service Delivery**

1. Continue to demonstrate the impact of AASAC and member agencies

AASAC worked with the Medicine Hat Sexual Assault Response Committee to begin to address service provision and data collection needs related to services in that Region. As a result of that work, additional services began to use the crisis intervention core data tool and the committee moved forward on a service mapping project.

Although impacted by the database crisis this year, which has taken much of our dedicated resources to address, we will move forward with the use of outcome measurement tools in the coming year once we have addressed the membership database needs.

2. Work with strategic partners to develop provincial standards for sexual assault services.

This work will move forward in the coming year. To date some research has been done to collect standards from other organizations in Canada.

3. Continue to ensure that all Albertans have access to sexual assault services and supports

Expansion of funding for service development has not occurred as discussed earlier which has impacted the ability of member agencies to increase services to their regions. AASAC continued to work with Region 7, particularly the East zone, resulting in criminal justice system protocols for the area and a pilot project for specialized crisis counselling to 2 communities and group counselling model development in another. AASAC will support a SCIF funding application for counselling services and coordination in the area in the coming year.

4. Engage in research and best practice development

Related to the action of advocating for a national study on child sexual abuse incidence rates and impacts, discussions were had with Senator Grant Mitchell regarding AASAC testifying at the Committee on the Sexual Exploitation of Children. This was to be set up in early 2010 however Parliament was prorogued and this opportunity was lost at that time. This and similar opportunities will be looked for in the coming year.

We continue to be involved with the Alberta Government Justice committee to implement the recommendations from the Chief Crown Prosecutor's Report on Sexual Assault. At the close of this year, resources were provided to Justice to develop a Sexual Assault Handbook for Crown Prosecutors and other dealing with sexual assault cases. AASAC and some of its members will be involved with the development of the impact and support services piece.

#### **Audited Financial Statements for 2009-2010**

This document is available from AASAC

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