

**Royal Canadian Mounted Police
Red Deer City Detachment
Red Deer City Victim Services Unit**

**4602 – 51st Avenue
Red Deer, Alberta T4N 2N2
(403) 406-2345**

**Coordinator: Cst. Jody YOUNG
Admin. Assistant: Sue BONTJE**



Program Overview

Information for Prospective Volunteers

VICTIM SERVICES UNIT

The Red Deer City Victim Services Unit (RDCVSU) was established in the fall of 1990. The unit is managed by the Victim Services Coordinator, who is a Constable with the city detachment of the RCMP. An Administrative Assistant, employed by the City of Red Deer, provides support to the Coordinator and performs administrative and victim service functions. Civilian volunteers from Red Deer and the surrounding area make up the bulk of the unit, and perform all the duties related to victim services including referral to appropriate agencies, assistance in completing applications for financial compensation or restitution, court preparation and attendance.

The Advocates work in an office in the Red Deer City Detachment, located in downtown Red Deer at 4602 – 51st Avenue, and are required to cover three scheduled shifts daily, as follows:

9:00 a.m. - Noon	(09:00 – 12:00)
1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.	(13:00 – 16:00)
5:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.	(17:00 – 20:00)

Advocates are asked to complete four shifts each month (roughly twelve hours per month) and for 2 on-call shifts a month. In addition, there are monthly meetings which all advocates are expected to attend. Periodic in-service training sessions on a variety of topics are available to the Advocates. These sessions are facilitated by the RCMP RDCVSU Coordinator, and may include presentations by experts and professionals from the community and/or outside agencies.

Advocates take turns signing up to act as Crisis Call Dispatchers for 1 week periods and take home the “on-call” cell phone, so they can respond to requests for Victim Service Unit assistance. Their role is to contact the on-call Advocates. The On Call Advocates make themselves available for immediate response to crisis situations. These advocates respond to requests for assistance wherever the need exists, whether at the RCMP detachment or at the scene of an emergent situation. Training in Advocate Safety and protocol is provided (See “Crisis Response Teams”).

Annually, RDCVSU is in contact with approximately three thousand victims and over twenty thousand hours are volunteered by the Advocates.

Contact with victims is initiated through:

- ♥ Referral from a police officer.
- ♥ Self-referral by the victim, whether in person or by telephone.
- ♥ Police reports.
- ♥ Referral from another RCMP Detachment, Police Service, or other community organization.



ADVOCATES

PRE-REQUISITES

Basic qualifications to be an advocate are as follows:

- **18 years or older**
- **Canadian Citizen / Landed Immigrant (minimum of 10 years)**
- **Ability to get and maintain a Police Enhanced Security Clearance**
- **Successful completion of Alberta Solicitor General On-Line Training**

BACKGROUND / SCREENING / TRAINING

Due to the nature of the work and the information to which Advocates have access, a security and background investigation is necessary. This process involves an introductory interview; a basic Criminal Record and police indices check; completion of several security clearance forms; a more in-depth background investigation; a security clearance structured interview; application and issue of a building access card; and the completion of the Voluntary Contribution Agreement (Confidentiality/Ethics).

Advocates must complete the Solicitor General of Alberta's on-line "E"-Learning. Once an applicant passes the initial preliminary security checks they may be registered for the on-line training and can complete this training while awaiting the completion of their security clearance. All advocates receive additional hands on training which will enable the Advocates to deal with each victim in the appropriate manner. All instruction is given by qualified personnel, which include police members and professionals from the community. On-going and periodic training sessions are held to ensure the highest level of service delivery possible.

Examples of the training are:

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| ♥ Sudden death and bereavement | ♥ Spousal assault |
| ♥ Suicide intervention | ♥ Sexual assault |
| ♥ Police policy and procedures | ♥ Property offences and home security checks |
| ♥ Report writing | ♥ Mental health |
| ♥ Criminal Justice System | ♥ Completing Requests for Restitution |
| ♥ Victim Impact Statements | ♥ Financial Benefits for violent crime victims |

Upon completion of their training, the new Advocate's work is closely monitored and evaluated by the Coordinator and Administrative Assistant, to ensure professional standards are maintained. If the Advocate is experiencing difficulty performing their duties, they will receive further assistance and direction from the Coordinator and/or Administrative Assistant, and may be paired with a more experienced volunteer during their shifts to assist them in enhancing their performance.

MEETINGS

Monthly meetings are held to ensure that all Advocates are kept up to date on recent developments, and to provide an opportunity to address problem areas which may arise. Whenever possible, meeting agendas are provided to all Advocates in advance of the meeting date, and their input is solicited in establishing the agenda.

PERSONAL SUPPORT

Support is provided through home visits, telephone contact and court accompaniment. Advocates normally make initial contact with the victim by telephone, offering assistance, comfort and support, and referrals to other agencies where appropriate. Crime prevention techniques and programs are explained and information packages focusing on prevention of further victimization are offered.



FOLLOW UP ASSISTANCE

Victim Services will endeavor to maintain contact with victims in order to determine how they are coping. If the victim declines further assistance or follow-up contact, their RDCVSU file is concluded. Particularly in cases where charges are laid and court appearance becomes necessary, RDCVSU contact will continue until the conclusion of court proceedings, or until no further assistance is required. In addition, victims who have additional information regarding their case may contact the Victim Services Unit, who forward the information to the investigating member through the Coordinator. All victim contact is documented.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FOLLOW-UP

Advocates contact domestic violence victims to offer support and appropriate community referrals. For the Advocates safety, home visits are not conducted and the victim is encouraged to attend the office.

COURT INFORMATION

The RDCVSU provides information to victims regarding the Criminal Justice System, and the status of their particular case, court proceedings and court dispositions.

COURT PREPARATION / ACCOMPANIMENT

Court preparation and accompaniment are offered to victims to help them through the court process. This can include providing an explanation of the court process, assisting with completion of forms, or being present in court with a victim during a trial.

VICTIM IMPACT STATEMENTS / FINANCIAL BENEFITS / RESTITUTION

RDCVSU assists victims in preparing documents for court, which will be considered by the Judge in determining an appropriate sentence, or whether the victim should receive financial compensation for loss or injury. A Judge **MUST** ensure that a victim is given the opportunity to provide a Victim Impact Statement, and **MUST** consider it where one is provided.

DEATH NOTIFICATION TO NEXT OF KIN

Advocates are trained in bereavement counseling and police procedures related to fatalities. They are available to assist police members in death notifications, and can remain "on scene" assisting and comforting next-of-kin.

REFERRALS

Victims are given referral information to appropriate community and government agencies for additional or long-term support and assistance. Some of the agencies that referral information is given include: Central Alberta Sexual Assault Centre; Central Alberta Women's Outreach; Central Alberta Women's Emergency Shelter; Alberta Mental Health; Canadian Mental Health; and Social Services.



CRISIS RESPONSE TEAMS

Advocates volunteer to be on call a minimum of two shifts a month. The Advocates make themselves available over a 12 hour shift to assist police members in dealing with victims of crime or tragedy who are suffering severe trauma or stress, particularly where there is no support base of family or friends available. Crisis Response Teams, consisting of two or more trained advocates, may be utilized in cases of:

- ♥ Homicide
- ♥ Sudden infant death
- ♥ Suicide
- ♥ Sexual assault/child abuse
- ♥ Robbery
- ♥ Domestic violence
- ♥ Sudden death
- ♥ Break and Enter



Red Deer City Victim Services also assists the RCMP in non-criminal incidents where people suffer emotional trauma, such as motor vehicle fatalities, industrial accidents, and major situations such as the Pine Lake tornado in 2000 and the Red Deer train derailment of 2001. RDCVSU Advocates may be called upon to attend the scene of such incidents to offer assistance, but only after all efforts have been undertaken to ensure their safety.

OUR COMMITMENT

Red Deer City Victim Services has a history of providing a high level of personal assistance to victims in a professional and caring manner. There is great demand for the work performed by our Advocates, and we are committed to maintaining this standard of service to those in need.

If you are interested in learning more about the Red Deer City Victim Services Unit, or would like to apply to be a volunteer Advocate, then [please contact Red Deer City VSU, at 403-406-2341 or 403-406-2346](tel:403-406-2341).

