

Big financial boost for SASS to help sexual assault survivors

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File photo of Christa Daku.

Sexual Assault Services of Saskatchewan were just given \$395,000 from the federal government to fund a three year project to research and develop ways to improve access to supports and services for sexual assault survivors.

A multi-sectorial advisory committee including representatives from the Ministry of Justice, Victim Services, RCMP, Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region, Legal Aboriginal Women's Group and community based service providers has already been formed and will draft an action plan based on all of the research collected.

The goal is to help sexual assault survivors that live in smaller communities to receive proper treatment and support within their community, as opposed to the current situation where they have to travel all the way to Regina or Saskatoon.

The committee will then help implement the plan beyond the three year project period by advocating for a social policy to the provincial government. The committee will make recommendations on things such as the allocation of funds for services. Saskatchewan is the only province without a sexual violence action plan, so they hope this project will change that.

"What we're trying to do is, we're shaking up the whole system," said Patience Umereweneza, Project Coordinator for the Saskatchewan Sexual Violence Action Plan. "We're saying that there has to be a way to review every system in place, so that we can all have the same language when we're dealing with someone who goes through this, and that we can have the same way of dealing with it."

For people living in Weyburn and the surrounding areas there are great services already available. The main problem is that they don't have enough funding or staff to be able to handle the volume of people that are in need of help.

"I would say that it starts with funding," said Christa Daku, Executive Director for Envision Counseling and Support Centre in Weyburn. "More funding would equal more prevention, education and awareness around all of the subjects that we deal with. That's definitely where we have been lacking since the inception of Envision for sure. If we were able to get into the communities and provide education and awareness around the risk factors in all types of abuse, I think there would be a significant change."

In total, there will be \$18 million in federal funding given to 50 different organizations across Canada to help with women's equality.

Each of the 50 projects will focus on three goals: Increasing women's economic security and prosperity, encouraging women and girls in leadership and decision-making roles and ending violence against women and girls.

Additionally, the Canadian Women's Foundation will create a network of 150 women leaders from across the country, chosen for their local efforts to advance gender equality for women, girls and gender non-conforming people.

If you are an assault survivor living in Southeast Saskatchewan, please contact one of the following:

ASSEnvision Counseling and Support Centre

For Weyburn call: 306-842-8821

For Estevan call: 306-637-4004

For Carlyle call: 306-453-2405

For Oxbow call: 306-483-5555

24-Hour Abuse/Sexual Assault Support Line: 1-800-214-7083

Or call the **Weyburn Police Service Victim Services** at: 306-842-4797

You can also contact the **Weyburn Canadian Mental Health Association** at: 306-842-7959

