

New Envision Campaign Focuses on the Impact of Sex Trafficking

The Envision Counselling and Support Centre is a campaign designed to bring awareness about the issue of sex trafficking.

The campaign is part of expanded programming that includes support for those seeking to exit prostitution. The program, named Into the Sunshine: Offering Hope to the Trafficked and Exploited, is a five-year initiative, funded by the Federal Ministry of Justice, that will be based primarily out of Envision's Carlyle office.

"These issues are not happening somewhere else. There's exploitation and trafficking happening in the southeast, and we're trying to shine a light on this dark side of our communities," said Christa Daku, executive director of Envision. She says exploitation happens in ways people don't normally associate with prostitution. "Understanding what exploitation looks like and how it impacts individuals living in rural communities is an important step in raising awareness," says Daku. The campaign cites four assumptions about sex trafficking: it involves a hooker or streetwalker; it is the person's chosen profession; it doesn't happen here; and it couldn't happen to someone. Realities, according to the campaign, are that sex or sexual acts are often offered for drugs and/or alcohol, rides or rent. Sex trafficking can also involve exploitation on the Internet, a person being shared by a partner, massage parlours, human trafficking, escort services or child pornography. The campaign also notes 10 to 15 per cent of those exploited are males. Working with community partners in the coming years, Envision will engage and support individuals who have been impacted by exploitation and trafficking. The goal is to provide trained counsellors who are able to reach out and connect with these individuals to provide hope and help. This is a long-term program that will involve counselling, legal or educational advocacy, training and family support. Envision has also created a poster to raise awareness, featuring a traditional image of prostitution countered with the reality of sex trafficking in the modern world. Envision will have a booth set up at the Estevan Showcase Business Expo on Sept. 23 to 25 to promote the new program.

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