

## Local Authorities See Increase in Domestic Violence Incidents

Incidents of domestic violence have been on the rise lately. The Estevan Police Service's records indicate there has been a 37 per cent increase in domestic occurrences, comparing the period of time from January to September in 2014 to the same period in 2015.

Envision Counselling and Support Centre's statistics indicate that domestic violence statistics have increased 10 per cent in July and 14 per cent in August. Envision has also seen a 30 per cent increase in the number of counselling sessions it held in July, and a 32 per cent increase in August.

"We're certainly noticing that the number of calls that were being reported for domestic violence have been rising. It seems more than the norm," said Estevan police Chief Paul Ladouceur.

Envision executive director Christa Daku said Envision's Interpersonal Violence and Abuse program in particular, has seen a significant rise in referrals.

"It's definitely been on the rise in the last six months, for sure," said Daku. "We're very busy."

Envision works very closely with Victim Services, the Estevan Police and the RCMP to provide as much support for victims of domestic violence as possible.

"There's definitely a cycle involved in domestic violence situations. Typically, when someone starts out in an abusive pattern there's a honeymoon phase, followed by controlling behaviour," said Daku. "Then isolation starts, along with the survivor often experiencing abuse in a blow-up in the situation."

Daku noted that abuse need not be physical to count, noting that 80 per cent of situations are based on emotional abuse. Because of this, the cycle of abuse can often be hidden in a relationship.

Daku encouraged anyone experiencing domestic violence to come forward. Ladouceur was on the same page, saying one of the biggest problems facing organizations that deal with domestic violence is the fact that many incidents still go unreported.

"They go unreported for fear of a lot of things. Sometimes it's financial stability, worry for what'll happen to the kids, fear of having to move, fears about what kind of support will be available," said Ladouceur. "It's not like 20 or 30 years ago – there's much more support for those suffering domestic violence now, than there was back then."

While the number of people seeking counselling sought for domestic violence situations and the amount of domestic occurrences police deal with correlate, that doesn't mean every case of domestic violence is reported.

"The first step is reaching out. We have resources and experts that can provide the required supports," said Ladouceur. "If someone doesn't feel comfortable contacting the police about this,

at least reach out to somebody.”

While it works closely in correlation with Envision, the Estevan Police Service also employs an in-house victim services coordinator to help in domestic violence situations.

Daku noted the counselling Envision offers is client-directed and strength based, and that its services don't involve telling people what to do or think.

She said, “It's about us supporting people in their decisions, so they can be who they want to be and get to where they want to be in life.”

The economy's downturn has also been a stressing factor in the increase in domestic violence. Ladouceur noted a pattern exists where pressures in a relationship build during an economic slump. People are at home more on account of layoffs, and dealing with the financial stress which can make a volatile situation worse.

“We've seen an influx of transient people, here with their partner, who found employment, and ended up here in an isolated situation, lacking support,” said Daku. “We're seeing individuals who may have been able to tolerate the relationship when one of them was away at work all the time and now they're cohabiting, and stressors and violence seem to be escalating where there's the potential for an abusive situation, to begin with.”

Daku said if a person is questioning whether they're in an abusive situation, one of the most important questions to ask is: Is this behaviour being used to control?

“If the answer to that question is yes, the chance it's abusive is very high,” said Daku. “I encourage people to use our website, because there are all sorts of resources, and they can contact a counsellor through our website.”

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