

Weyburn first-responders observe rise in family disputes

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File photo of Weyburn Police Chief Marlo Pritchard.

Aug. 17, 2016: Weyburn Police Service are almost always the first-responders to a domestic dispute. Chief Marlo Pritchard said since Christmas of 2015, local police have noticed and increase in these types of calls within our community.

"When people are in crisis, whatever that is, they will call for our assistance," he told Discover Weyburn.

Chief Pritchard said there are usually underlying conditions when it comes to family disputes. He stressed the importance of not painting issues with the same brush, but highlighted economic concerns and addictions as two major underlying factors for stressors in a family.

"Domestics are part of our social fabric. We have disagreements within our own families frequently. Unfortunately, some of them escalate to the point where someone involved reaches out for help and they typically call the police and we do the best to help," he said.

Chief Pritchard explained the term 'domestic' is unique to each case. He said it could be involving direct family members - such as a husband, wife, mother, father, son or daughter - or any relationship in which there is arguing, verbal aggressiveness and a concern of what could occur.

"And at that point in time, with our training and hopefully with a little bit of skill, we can at least mediate through the crisis period and get them some help," he said.

As a first-responder for more than 30 years, with more than four of them being spent in Weyburn, Chief Pritchard said the role of police is to first help individuals at an elevated risk, but could also involve putting the family in contact with counselling services.

"We will definitely try to hook them up with services (within the community) or at least give them the contact information so that they can then get some help should they desire to," he said.



Photo of Christa Daku, executive director for Envision Counselling and Services in Weyburn and surrounding area. (Photo courtesy Christa Daku)

Aug. 2, 2016: An economic downturn can have devastating impacts on members of a community, and Weyburn is no exception.

Domestic disputes have frequented recent reports from the Weyburn Police Service, and one local counselling services has noticed an increase in the need for support services.

"Our statistics are definitely on the rise," said Christa Daku, executive director of Envision Counselling and Support Centre in Weyburn. "... The interpersonal violence and abuse rates within our programming have definitely increased."

Daku added, that although the number of clients is typically lower in the summer months, counselling staff this year are nearly maxed out at Envision's four offices - Estevan, Weyburn, Carlyle and Oxbow.

According to [Statistics Canada](#), Saskatchewan had the highest police-reported family violence rates across Canada's 10 provinces in 2013.

Daku believes the rise in numbers has a relationship with the economic downturn.

"I would have to say that within the southeast, we definitely have - I'm not going to call it a crisis - but a rise in numbers in people seeking support, in people that are feeling more and more desperate because of financial situations and living accommodations," she said.

A recent rise in the amount of men using Envision's services has caused the organization to reevaluate its services.

"There is a real lack of services within the southeast for the male population," said Daku. "So, we wanted to be able to integrate them into our programming wherever we could."

You can see a list of services offered on Envision's [website](#).

Daku said an economic downturn impacts more than just men and women in a relationship; all members of a family are affected when stress of finances comes into play.

"We are definitely seeing hiccups within the families, that they hit roadblocks, she said.

"Kids that are used to hearing 'Yes' to everything they want, are suddenly hearing 'No,' ... The financial strain causes relationship issues with the parents, so then, that obviously overflows into the family situation as well."

Daku knows it's easy for people to "turn a blind eye," or ignore the situations happening around the community. However, the reality, she said, is when there are stresses - such as a slow economy - there is a correlation with more people seeking support.

"Typically, people that haven't been through this type of situation before will experience severe stresses within their family dynamics, and if they need help in coping they can definitely seek some support," she said.

Envision is rolling out a strategic plan this fall which will include a series of six workshops. Each month, one workshop will be held targeting the stresses that our economy is dealing with. Daku said these workshops will help people can gain skills, which they can use in their personal lives.

"So, conflict resolution, stresses before Christmas, all those types of things," Daku explained.

Envision has been offering counselling and support services for more than 20 years. Daku has been with Envision for almost a decade, and said the organization has grown to meet the demands of the southeast corner of the province.

"When I started here, it will be nine years in September, we had two counsellors and now we have nine," she said.

Over the years, Envision has also expanded to 'secondary survivors,' such as friends or relatives.

"It's so important for individuals who are supporters to be able to learn the skills to look after themselves as well, and set those boundaries so that they can have some self-care and be effective in supporting the survivor," said Daku.

Daku added that Envision has worked to build relationships with other provincial agencies and local police services to help better serve southeast Saskatchewan.

For those who are seeking support, Daku suggests contacting the Envision Centre closest to them.