

SUPPORTING ALL FAMILIES

TODAY

Family Violence Help Centre

ANNUAL REPORT 2013-2014

Today Centre

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MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Today Centre's collaborative work with over 130 Edmonton and area agencies, provided seamless support for referrals for our clients. This is one example of our alignment with our largest funding partners priorities and strategies to end family violence in Edmonton. The Provincial government's Family Violence Hurts Everyone: A Framework to End Family Violence in Alberta, City of Edmonton's The Way We Live Implementation Plan and United Way Alberta Capital Region Pathways Out of Poverty, are a few examples of the collective impact opportunities when you partner with Today Centre. Today Centre's Integrated Service Delivery model of support intentionally promotes values of working in partnership, diversity and inclusion, compassion, integrity, self-determination, knowledge and education which are some of the guiding principles in each of these plans and framework.

There is help...

The number of referrals to Today Centre and referrals made by Today Centre and partnership agreements (linking protocols) continue to grow with agencies who want to collaborate to ensure there is help which is safe, confidential, supportive and timely, often within 1 – 2 days. Today Centre welcomes a second City of Edmonton Community Builder staff, Margie Marvin to our co-located staff team and conversations continue with other partners who wish to co-locate.

Inclusive, client-centred support

A Client Survey was launched in August of 2013 and responses indicate that the caring, supportive and inclusive support provided by Today Centre staff make a difference in clients connecting to the resources they need in a timely way.

“(my worker) is a great counsellor. She helped me greatly in connecting to appropriate resources and agencies to support me and my daughter.”

Collaboration, consultation and shared responsibility

Today Centre staff understand it is a shared responsibility at times to ensure the client receives the support they need. In the middle of what has become known as one of Canada's harshest winters a woman received support from Today Centre within hours. After enduring years of physical violence from her partner, she was forced to flee her home without so much as a pair of shoes. With blistered, frost-bitten feet and seven children in tow, Today Centre staff provided winter clothing (hats, scarves and jackets) pajamas, socks, shoes, self-care items, toys for the children and a gift card to buy diapers. With the support of the Edmonton Foodbank (that provided a food hamper), United Way and our donors we were able to send all of these items to the family by taxi.

Thank you to the staff and board members who continue to ensure there is help for our clients. Clarece Mather who contributed to the original vision of Today Centre is one example of the passion and dedication of our Board and staff. We are reminded of the impact of Clarece's hard work and dedication as we say farewell and thank you.

“I would just like to say that by taking this big step forward has given me more self esteem to move forward in hopes of a better place to call home for myself and my children! Thank you!”

Today Centre has become the first call for frontline service providers who require support or need to consult on a client case in which a disclosure of family violence is made.

Today Centre delivers an E-Newsletter bi-monthly to over 1000 service providers to educate and provide resources on topics related to family violence. Family violence training offered by Today Centre is highly valued by our stakeholders and is in high demand. Whether it is our 3 hour introduction to Family Violence or our 2-day workshop called Family Violence Across the Lifespan, there is usually a wait list.

In 2014, with funding from Victims of Crime and Solicitor General, Today Centre was able to create an LGBTQ* program. All Today Centre staff received certification and sensitivity training through The Pride Centre of Edmonton. We ensured Today Centre is inclusive in all ways including our marketing materials, our language and our space. Our Advisory group champions this project by increasing awareness in the community of the specialized support we provide for LGBTQ* individuals who have been victimized by family violence. Being recognized as an LGBTQ* friendly agency provides new partnership opportunities and enhanced client support.

Our Integrated Service Delivery Managers consider opportunities to collaborate on funding new and innovative co-located programs to increase accessibility for clients to receive medium and long term supports at Today Centre. Thanks to the Stollery Charitable Foundation and Edmonton Community Foundation for supporting the creation of a Fund Development Plan in 2014. With this support, our dream of reducing trauma to clients and increasing support on-site at Today Centre may become a reality in the next 3 – 5 years.

Collaborative Response:

1294 referrals to partner agencies

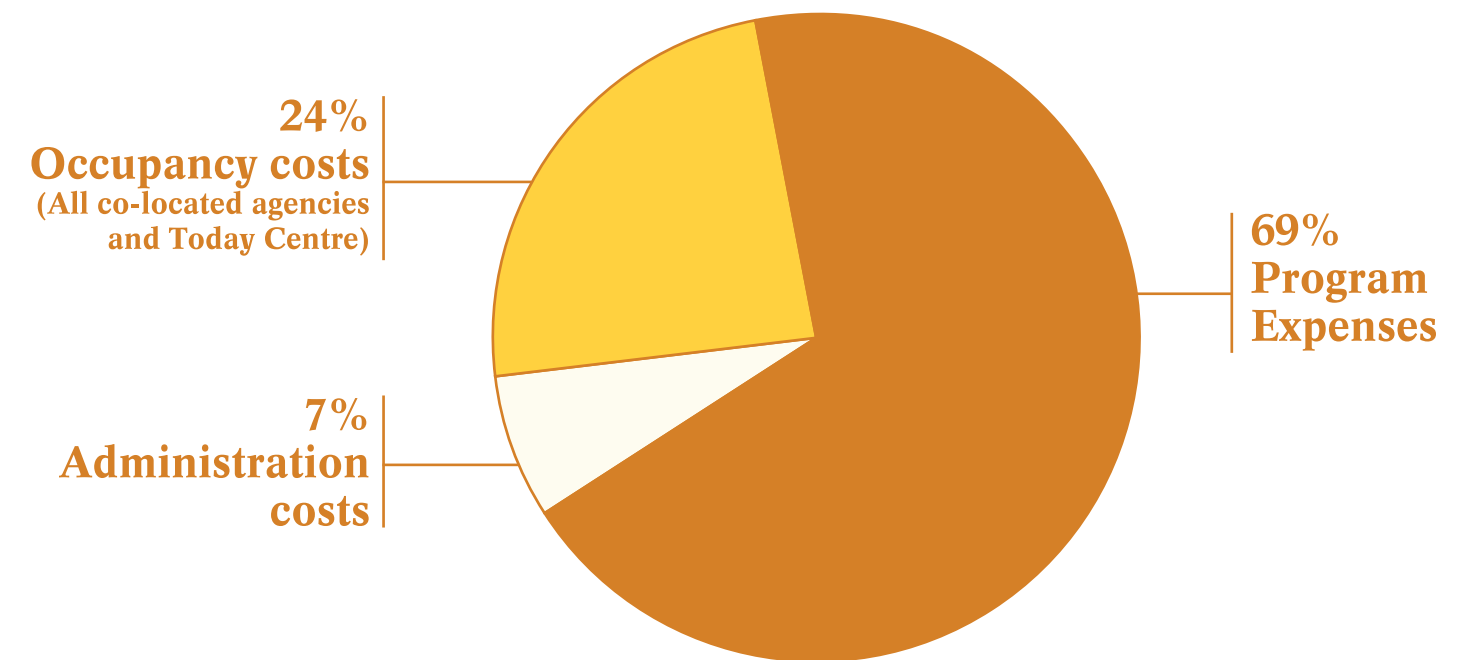
130 agency partners

41.5% were supported referrals* by staff

**We strive to provide a supported referral for clients, in other words we assess the client's capacity to advocate and access services on their own behalf, and when it is required we will provide additional support to the client to access other services.*

19 Family Violence Presentations were delivered, increasing awareness to almost 300 service providers.

WHERE OUR FUNDING GOES



“The staff welcomed me with a smile and open mind.”

THROUGH THE EYES OF A CLIENT



My name is Lina* and I am 62 years old. I am also a victim of domestic violence. I went to the Today Family Violence Help Centre after my ex-partner smashed the door of my apartment and assaulted me. Before I contacted the Today Centre, I used to live in fear all the time. I lived alone in the basement of my building, my windows were not secured, and I was broken into on several occasions. On top of this, my abusive ex-partner was harassing me all the time. He would lurk around my suite and knock on my windows at any time of the day. Sometimes, he would find his way into the building and access my suite. That day he broke my door down, he started yelling at me saying horrible things. He hit me and said he was going to kill me.

After this horrible incident, I started experiencing huge anxiety. I felt hopeless because there was nothing I could do to stop him from coming after me; he knew of my whereabouts. I was very scared because of the insecurity of my place too. I was all by myself, agitated just by the thought that he could show up any time. I had a hard time sleeping and concentrating. My family and friends helped as much as they could to keep me safe, as I stayed a few times at a friend's and my daughter helped me find new places. However, I still felt isolated; I definitely needed more support. Even though the police were involved a few times, I was constantly concerned about my physical and emotional safety.

The Today Centre gave me hope and made me feel I had control over my life. I learned how to keep myself safe and I did not feel lonely anymore. I did not know I could have accessed so many resources if it was not for the Today Centre. Gradually, I became more confident and realized I could make my own decisions. With the help of the Today Centre, I was able to find a new place and move on with my new life: a life without fears. I now live on the third floor of a safe family friendly building. I am also closer to my daughter who helps and supports me, and this makes me very happy.

“I feel totally comfortable now. You guys and the Today Centre have been the best! It is very nice to be right on the ball with everything again, and that I was able to find a place. Thank you very much for your support and for being with me all the time. Good job!

**Name and details have been changed to protect the identity of the client*

“I really appreciate all the support I've received and was very grateful how fast I was able to get in for counselling”

THROUGH THE EYES OF A WORKER



As a Resource Worker, a large part of my day is listening to individuals from all walks of life, list and explain their basic needs as they seek out the support they require in order to find safety from an abusive partner. Such needs range from: finding housing, accessing financial support, understanding the legal system and seeking immigration status. Many times while I hear the stories of these brave and dynamic clients I think “I can’t solve all these problems!” This is likely a thought that my clients have as well, and it’s these challenges they face on a daily basis!

The fact is, many of these challenges feel insurmountable and this is because family violence impacts all aspects of our life. When looking for personal safety from an abuser our lives turn to chaos as we navigate complex social systems to regain control and a sense of personal independence from dominating forces that keeps victims in abusive relationships long-term. When we need help, we cannot do it alone and this is where my role allows me to bring a smile to the face of the weary, or a moment of relief to the overwhelmed; because the Today Centre team exists to help victims navigate these systems and provide information and emotional support so they are not alone.

Being a support to those with so many needs is not a static role, many times our team is out in the community learning about new resources, calling services to advocate for clients who require immediate support, or meeting privately with colleagues to collaborate and consult on difficult cases. All this work is worth it because the biggest reward of my job is hearing clients say “I better understand what I can do,” or “this sounds easier.”

So when a client lists all of their pressing needs and looks at me frazzled, I remind them and myself that change doesn’t need to be big or dramatic, it can be as simple as taking a pamphlet or thinking about tomorrow. Everyone deserves safety and everyone deserves an understanding and emphatic person in their life willing to respect and believe their story.

“Thank you for being my SAFE PLACE to come and get help.”

We continue to maintain strong partnerships with numerous agencies as well as strive to develop new ones in order to better serve our clients.

Co-located partners:

Catholic Social Services (CSS): Elder Abuse Resources and Supports (EARS)
CSS, VON and City of Edmonton: Elder Abuse Intervention Team (EAIT)
City of Edmonton: Family Violence, public education and community builder
Responding to Family Violence in the Chinese Community

Integrated Service Providers:

Islamic Family and Social Services Association
Catholic Social Services
City of Edmonton

Linking Protocols:

The Support Network/Distress Line
Edmonton Police Service – Victims Services Teams
Victims Serving Agencies Involved in the Criminal/Court Process
YWCA

LGBTQ* Advisory Group:

Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services (ISMSS)
The Pride Centre of Edmonton
Edmonton John Howard Society – Family Violence Prevention Centre
Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton (SACE)
Edmonton Police Service
United Way
City of Edmonton



Board Members

Rhonda Holloway (Chair)
Michelle Furlong (Vice-Chair)
Gord Sawatzky (Treasurer)
Tracy Clark
Mary Fiakpui

Judy Mackay (to March 2014)
Clarece Mather
Karen Reynolds
Debbie Clark (Executive Director)



VISION

A healthy community safe and free of family violence

MISSION

To provide inclusive integrated community-wide services for those impacted by family violence

It Starts Today...join us in collectively ending family violence in Edmonton. Buy a membership, make a donation, provide a silent auction item, purchase tickets for our fundraisers, invest... together we hold the key.