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Medicine Hat Safe Families Intervention Team (SFIT)

Theme: Cross-Sectoral Collaboration

The Safe Families Intervention Team (SFIT) is a partnership that was formed between the Medicine Hat Police Service and the Medicine Hat Women's Shelter Society (MHWSS). This newly formed unit is housed in the Medicine Hat Police Service building and consists of one MHPS Constable and two MHWSS outreach workers. The mission of this unit is to provide a collaborative, timely and effective team response in partnership with support agencies to assist families in dealing with incidents of family violence.

Critical Elements

- A designated police officer and two outreach workers from the shelter work together to support victims of domestic violence.
- Family violence calls are screened by the police officer, and the outreach workers connect with the victim immediately upon referral.
- The outreach staff have police clearance, are situated in the police station, and have full clearance access to all case information – this supports information sharing and capacity-building of all staff.
- This is not an investigative unit, it focuses on connecting families with supports.
- The project works with the victims as well as those who wish to change their abusive behaviour. This is not offender treatment, but is primarily a crisis support and referral service.
- SFIT works with the whole family, including extended family and any children who are involved.
- The workers may connect with the families over the phone, a sizeable number come to the police station for the face to face meetings, and there are a few community visits and appointments.
- The team works closely with the local Victims Assistance unit which supports SFIT clients in court.
- Safety plans constitute the core of the work with victims includes. These safety plans were specifically developed to reflect many possible situations that victims may find themselves in.
- One of the most recent changes for SFIT has been increase in male victims (20% are male victims).