



Wanda McGinnis, CEO
Wheatland Crisis Society

Theme: Wrap-Around Supportive Responses for Women (and Men)

The Wheatland Crisis Society operates a seven-bedroom emergency shelter for women and men impacted by domestic violence (Strathmore shelter). The shelter is the only one providing accommodation for men and their children experiencing domestic violence. The Wheatland Society is a partner with Alberta Justice, and the RCMP in the Family Violence Prevention Project. The Family Violence Prevention Project, a partnership including the RCMP, Alberta Justice and the Wheatland Crisis Society, is a voluntary program that engages both victim and offender in their own safety planning through communication regarding risk factors, contact conditions, resolution proposals and future plans for the relationship. The program also offers support and information about the legal process and collaborates with community agencies to make services accessible.

Critical Elements

- Working with Sageesse to ensure that all forms are gender neutral in language as Wheatland Crisis Society also serves men
- Working on developing promising practices in the area of support to transgender individuals.
- Court support for individuals applying for EPOs, parenting orders, review dates for court orders.
- Safety Protocols for residential clients requires specific actions for varying levels of security risk.
- Wellness focus for residents in shelter. Wheatland Crisis Society has hired a yoga instructor who offers trauma informed yoga for both the adults and the children in the shelter.
- Outreach services: Clients are not seen in their homes – due to safety concerns for staff Clients are supported to meet with outreach workers in the shelter or a community agency- transportation and childcare are provided. Adopted the use of Outcome Star in the Outreach Program for use as pre/post evaluation and to guide case planning in a client directed way.
- Provision of service to women who are intoxicated but needing a safe place to stay. Wheatland Shelter does not turn away women who are intoxicated and who are at risk. These women are accommodated in one of the counselling rooms – where they are able to sleep on a couch. Clear boundaries are set with the woman- around use of alcohol or drugs on the shelter site. This harm reduction provision was put in place to minimize the barriers for women needing support.
- Wheatland shelter has hired two male crisis workers which has removed the gender lens and provides healthy male role models.
- Wheatland shelter takes in multi-general families as a unit. For example, grandma, mom and children and does not treat the grandma as a single. As much as possible the family unit is accommodated in one room.

- Wheatland shelter has adopted a “comforts of home” philosophy trying to minimize the institutional feel of a shelter. They provide a “breakfast bar” for the residents prepared by the overnight staff. Every morning the staff facilitates a house meeting and childcare is provided during this time. The house meeting provides an opportunity for staff to hear from residents about their needs.
- Community groups: provide childcare; offer dinner for outreach clients prior to group; groups are open so that women can join at anytime and operate on a peer support model
- Have begun to provide supervised visits for women in the shelter so they are able to have visits with their children when the children are in care.
- Key community partnerships are crucial and Wheatland Crisis Society asks other organizations in the community “how can we support you in your work”. Wheatland Crisis Society works to be visible in the community providing public education in the area of domestic abuse.