

**Making Amends:  
Supporting Survivors of Domestic Violence in Rural Alberta**

Final Report for Civil Forfeiture, Alberta Justice

December 5, 2012



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## Introduction

In 2010, the Government of Alberta's Ministry of Justice and Attorney General granted the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters \$150,000 of Civil Forfeiture funds for *Making Amends: Supporting Survivors of Domestic Violence in Rural Alberta*. The project purpose was:

*To help compensate victims of domestic violence and prevent crime through meeting immediate safety needs of domestic violence victims in rural shelters and equipping rural shelters with promising practice service tools.*

By increasing the availability of instrumental supports for women residing in rural shelters, the Making Amends project sought to increase shelter capacity to safeguard and support the creation of real positive change for women and children fleeing domestic abuse. In rural Alberta, there are no projects that exist to provide instrumental financial support for victims of domestic violence.

This report describes how the Civil Forfeiture funds helped meet immediate safety needs of victims in rural shelters, discusses gaps and barriers in service delivery in rural communities, and suggests processes that could be put in place to equip rural shelters with promising practice tools. Rural shelters in Alberta that were eligible to participate in the project are listed in Appendix A.

### *Alberta Council of Women's Shelters*

The Alberta Council of Women's Shelters (ACWS) is the unified voice of 43 member agencies whose primary purpose is to serve abused women and their children. As a province-wide voluntary organization, the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters supports their members and leverages collective knowledge to inform solutions to end domestic violence. The focus of ACWS is on issues of family violence and breaking the cycle of inter-generational violence. To this end ACWS:

- Serves as the unified voice of member organizations;
- Fosters networking and information sharing;
- Assists in acquiring adequate resources for member shelters and ACWS;
- Influences public policy and systems;
- Increases public awareness of issues related to family violence; and,
- Fosters professional development within Alberta's sheltering movement.

Most of the ACWS member organizations are registered charities. All member organizations receive funding from various levels of government, many for over 25 years. Shelter practice is informed by the ACWS Ethical Moral Framework and associated practice standards.



## Project Description

Among the provinces, Alberta often leads the country in domestic violence incidents, stalking and domestic violence homicides. We know that many of these deaths are preventable if women and their children have access to the programs and services they need. Shelter workers in all corners of Alberta do “whatever it takes” to help victims of domestic violence get to safety, but shelters have a finite amount of resources.

In particular, shelters operating outside major urban centres face unique challenges. These challenges include finding ways to safely transport women living in remote areas to the shelter, dealing with the lack of anonymity in smaller towns, and connecting women with many services they need to create new safe lives for themselves and their children. Additionally, rural shelters that exist outside of the main hubs of business and industry may lack the type of access to potential private and corporate donors of their urban counterparts. Prior to the *Making Amends* project, there were no projects that we know of in rural Alberta that help compensate victims of domestic violence and prevent crime through meeting their immediate safety needs.

By increasing the availability of instrumental supports for women resident in rural shelters, the *Making Amends: Supporting Survivors of Domestic Violence in Rural Alberta* project sought to increase shelter support to safeguard and assist women to create positive change for themselves and their children. This was achieved in two streams:

### **Stream A: Meeting immediate safety needs of victims in rural shelters**

Stream A provided financial support for women to get help where it was needed the most – the immediate safety needs as identified by the shelter at any given time. Core shelter funding does not cover or is insufficient to cover all of the security and basic needs that arise. For women and children staying at the shelter such needs may include transportation or medication costs. Due to the mandated 21 day limit on shelter stays, immediate safety needs often include costs related to obtaining stable housing once women and children leave the shelter.

### **Stream B: Equipping rural shelters with best practice service tools**

The second stream focused specifically on the dissemination among shelters of valid and reliable promising practice tools. Making Amends funds were used to deliver three workshops to shelter staff. The first workshop was offered in cooperation with Legal Aid Alberta on Legal Aid processes and procedures required to support women and children in shelters. Two other workshops were held to support integration of two assessment tools in shelter work - the Danger Assessment<sup>1</sup> tool (DA; see Appendix B for complete description) and the Domestic Violence Screening Assessment<sup>2</sup> (DVSA; see Appendix C for complete description). The activities in this stream augmented the Practical Frameworks for Change (PFC) project, funded by Status of Women Canada and the Canadian Women’s Foundation, which piloted a standardized set of shelter promising practices in the areas of safety, health and cultural sensitivity.

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<sup>1</sup> Campbell, J. (1995). The Danger Assessment Tool.

<sup>2</sup> Dienemann, J., Campbell, J., Curry, M., & Landenburger, K. (2002). Domestic Violence Survivor Assessment: A tool for counseling women in violent intimate partner relationships. *Patient Education and Counseling Journal*, 46(3), 221–228.

## Stream A: Meeting immediate safety needs of victims in rural shelters

### *Process*

ACWS formed an Ad-Hoc committee comprised of four Executive Directors, chosen at a meeting of all shelter directors. The Committee guided project implementation by:

- determining the specific Stream A allocation per shelter;
- developing applicant requirements and the evaluation framework; and
- creating tracking mechanisms to document the benefits of the project.

At the start of the project, shelter directors received background information and instructions to help them apply for Making Amends funds. The Making Amends application process involved two steps: 1) completing an application form and 2) submitting a background story describing the circumstances for the women and children which necessitated the financial support (see the section Making Amends Fund Distribution for stories illustrating those circumstances). The application requested the following information:

- what the funds were being requested for
- date when request for service was made
- date when support was provided
- description of service provided
- whether or not the service met the woman's needs
- what gaps were present in the community that required the funds
- how shelters exhausted all possible options to assist the woman and/or her children
- amount of dollars requested
- reasons why the fund was accessed

ACWS then reviewed applications and issued a cheque within two weeks of receiving the application.

### *Characteristics of Making Amends Applicants*

The typical woman who applied for Making Amends funds was a single, 34-year-old victim of abuse with at least one child. The typical applicant had a high school or post-secondary education but was unemployed and cited the Child Tax credit or Social Assistance as her only source of income. The typical applicant also often had either physical or mental health concerns and was on medication for health issues. Making Amends data supports previous research that has demonstrated the negative impact of domestic violence on victims' health.<sup>3</sup>

- **Presenting Concern:** Consistent with the mandate of rural shelters, of the 130 applicants for whom this information was documented, 86% were victims of abuse, 9% were in crisis and 5% were in need of housing.

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<sup>3</sup> Campbell, J. (2002). Health consequences of intimate partner violence. *The Lancet*, 359(9314), 1331-1336.



- **Age:** Of the 142 applicants for whom this information was available, 75% were under the age of 40, and they were, on average, 34 years of age.
- **Number of Children:** 58% of applicants were documented to have been admitted with children. Of the 91 applicants for whom this information was available, 67% had one or two children and the rest were admitted with 3 to 7 children.
- **Background:** Of the 120 applicants for whom background information was available, 58% self-identified as Aboriginal. This is likely to be an underestimate, as data collected from Alberta shelters over the past decade shows that over half of the shelter population is Aboriginal and that in rural shelters this proportion can reach as high as 80%.<sup>4</sup>
- **Marital Status:** Of the 130 applicants for whom this information was available, 19% were married, 22% were common-law and 45% reported they were single (not in a relationship).
- **Living Arrangements:** Of the 111 applicants for whom this information was available, 36% reported they were living with their abuser prior to being admitted to the shelter.
- **Education:** Of the 64 applicants for whom this information was available, 64% had completed either high school and/or post-secondary education.
- **Income and Employment:** Of the 120 applicants with reported employment status, over 75% were unemployed. Of the 116 women who identified their sources of income 20% had no source of income, while another 50% relied on Child Tax credit or Social Assistance as their main sources of income. Women’s self-reported financial situation was described as a “substantial problem”<sup>5</sup> by 37% of reported applicants (n=102).
- **Health:** Of the 117 applicants for whom this information was available, 37% reported that they had physical health concerns, 44% reported that they had mental health concerns and 52% were on medication. Of the applicants that reported on substance use or addictive behaviour (n=111), 19% said they were struggling with substance abuse or addictive behaviour, mainly including alcohol and illegal drugs. Women experiencing violence are more likely to seek support and identify themselves as having problems related to substance use and mental wellness. For many women, substance use is a means of coping with violence and the feelings that arise from those experiences and poor mental health is the outcome of such experiences.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Hoffart, I. & Cairns, K. 2012. Strength in numbers: A 10-year trend analysis of women’s shelters in Alberta. Report prepared for the Alberta Council of Women’s Shelter; Hoffart, I. 2011. Practical frameworks for change: Supporting women and children in Alberta emergency shelters. Report prepared for the Alberta Council of Women’s Shelters.

<sup>5</sup> Insufficient income, no plan in place and one or more debts in collection

<sup>6</sup> Rebecca Haskell, 2010, Reducing Barriers To Support: Discussion Paper on Violence Against Women, Mental Wellness and Substance Use , BC Society of Transition Houses, Project Coordinator



*Summary of Stream A Fund Distribution*

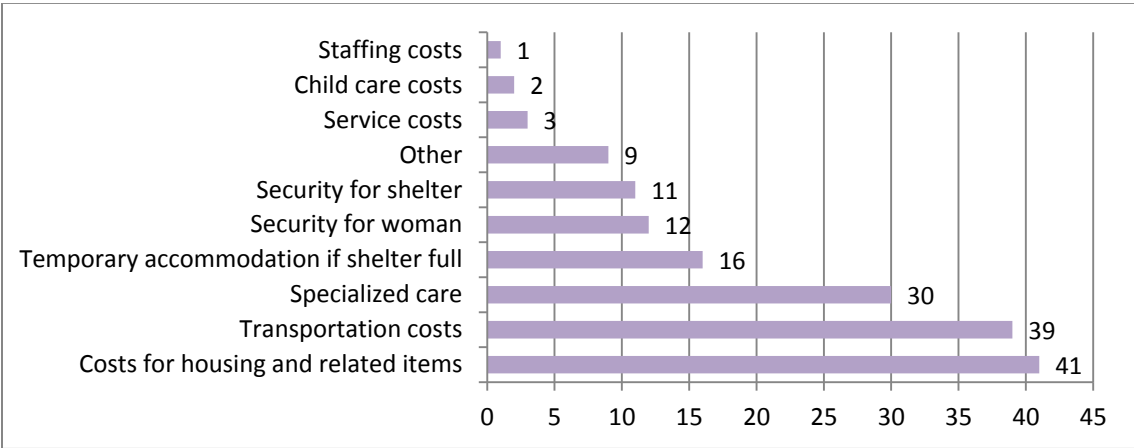
- A total of \$87,789.48 was distributed to shelters between January 2010 and April 2012.
- 17 shelters completed 157 applications, or an average of 9 applications per shelter.
- The amount of funds distributed per application ranged from \$10.00 to \$5901.21 with an average of \$559.17 per application.
- All shelter requests were met until the fund was exhausted.

The figures below summarize information from the Making Amends applications pertaining to the purpose for which funds were used, request amounts by type of request, and reasons for request from the perspective of service availability in the shelter or the community. The section Making Amends Funds Distribution describes in more detail the context of fund distribution through client stories and shelter feedback.

**Use of funds**

As shown in Figure 1 below, the majority of applications were for Costs for housing and related items (25%) and Transportation costs (24%). Specialized care (18%), which mainly included medication costs, was the next most common request, followed by Temporary accommodations if shelter full (10%), Security for woman (7%), Security for shelter (7%), Other (6%), Service costs (2%), Child care costs (1%), and Staffing costs (1%).

Figure 1. Number of applications received by type of use



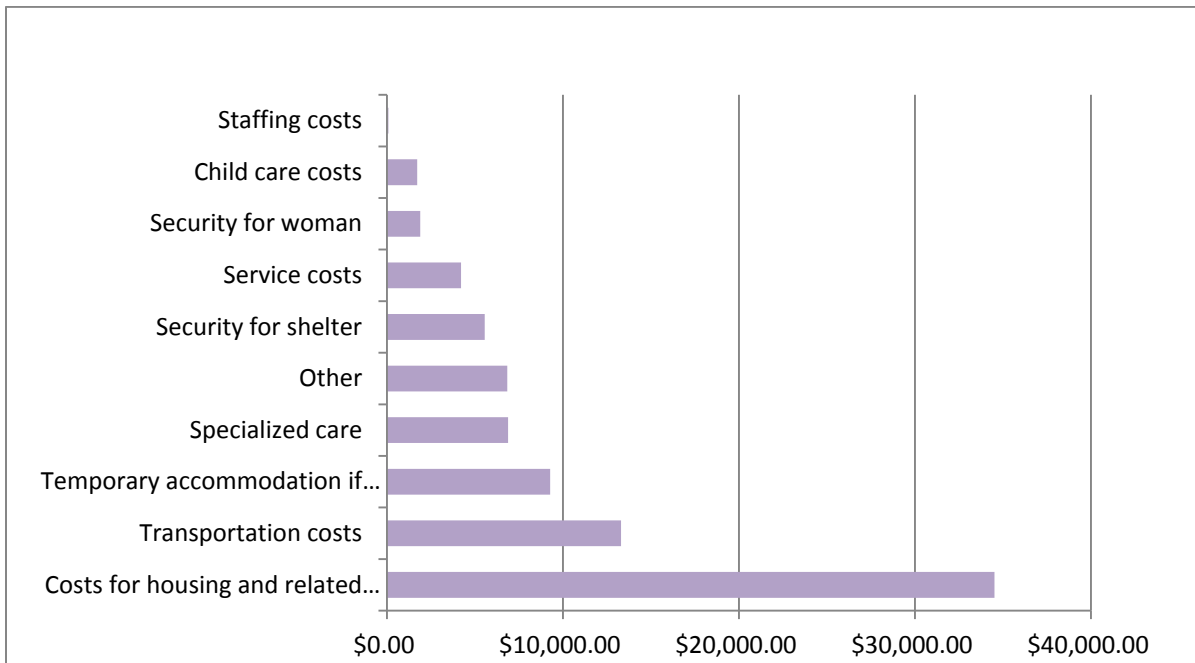
**Amount of funds**

As shown in Figure 2, of the \$87,789.48 distributed, the majority of funds were allocated towards Costs for housing and related items (41%). This was more than twice the amount of funds used for the next closest reimbursement amount which was Transportation costs (16%). The other categories included Temporary accommodation if shelter full (11%), Specialized care (8%), Other(8%), Security for Shelter (7%), Service Costs (5%), Security for Women(2%), Child Care Costs (\$1,714.91), and Staffing Costs(0.1%).





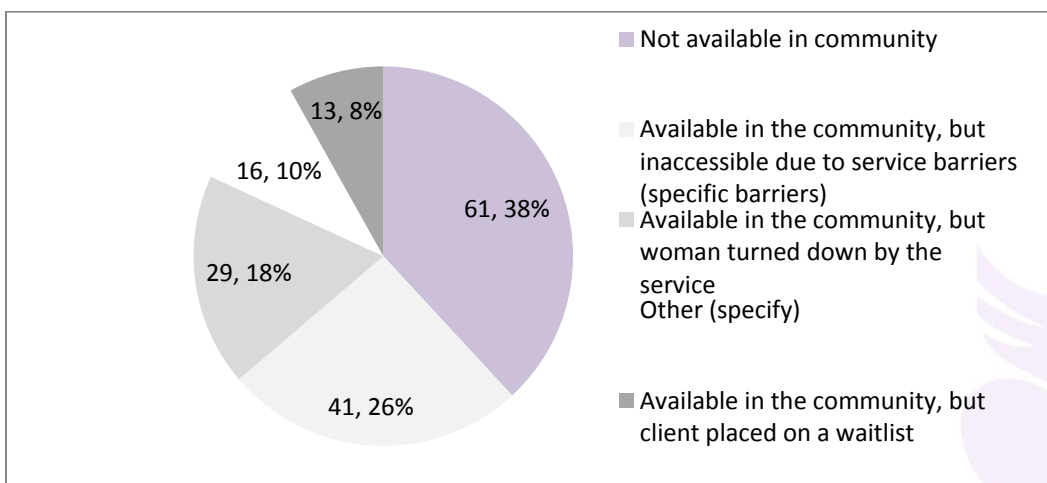
Figure 2. Amount of funds provided by type of use



### Reason for requesting funds

The majority of funds were requested because the service was not available in the community (38%), followed closely by services that were available in the community but inaccessible due to specific barriers (26%), services that were available in the community but that turned the women down (18%), other reasons (10%) and services that were available in the community but that placed the woman on a waitlist (8%).

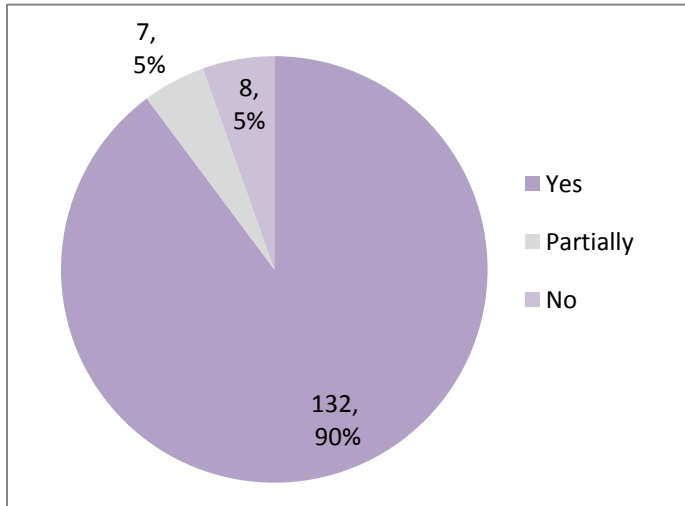
Figure 3. Number of applications received by reason for reimbursement



### Meeting women's needs

In almost all of the cases Making Amends funds fully met the women's needs (90%; see fig. 4). Women's needs were only partially met on seven occasions and not met in eight. In these instances, the women's circumstances required a much larger and longer-term investment than what was available through the Making Amends project.

Figure 4. Number of applications that met women's needs.



## *Making Amends Fund Distribution: Meeting the Unique Needs of Women and Children Fleeing Domestic Violence and Overcoming Barriers to Service*

When applying for Making Amends funds, shelters were asked to complete an application and provide background information describing the circumstances which led to the request for financial support. Analysis of the applications revealed how Making Amends funds helped meet the unique needs of women and children fleeing domestic violence and revealed the number and complexity of barriers faced by victims of domestic violence. Barriers included lack of immigration status, First Nations status, illiteracy, history of eviction, disabilities, pregnancy or dealing with unwanted pregnancies as a result of reproductive abuse, experiencing further victimization from landlords and support service workers, having homes burnt down or too toxic to live in, experiencing mental and physical health issues, experiencing death threats from their abuser, having children with special needs, having their children abducted by their abuser, and having to go to court to maintain or obtain custody of their children from their abuser. The greatest barrier for these families, however, was a lack of financial support.

As established in the analysis of applicants' demographic information, the majority of women have little or no income yet all of the steps needed to get them to a space where they can support themselves and their children, both emotionally and financially, require money. Making Amends provided much-needed financial support to help women take the first steps necessary to establish an independent, violence-free life for themselves and their children and end the cycle of domestic violence. In their feedback about project impact, shelter representatives reinforced the importance of financial support provided through Making Amends funds, as illustrated by the comment from one shelter director:

*“the project allowed [shelters] to access funds to help clients’ move forward toward healing and safety.”*

The two sections below describe, thematically, 1) the unique needs of domestic violence victims that were successfully met by Making Amends funds; and 2) existing barriers to financial support that were addressed by the Making Amends project.

### **Use of Funds: Meeting the Unique Needs of Women and Children**

#### ***Housing***

The largest proportion of Making Amends funds (41% of applications) was accessed to cover costs related to housing. Examples of such costs included damage deposits, rent, utility bills, groceries and moving expenses.

Although services to cover the cost of housing and related items were often available in the community, they were not accessible to women and children fleeing domestic violence. Some women were turned down or were ineligible for this type of support because they had already accessed these services in the past. Other women could only apply for housing support if they had rental agreements in place, which they were unable to obtain because they did not have money for a damage deposit. In one such case, a woman had found accommodation but would not have enough money to put down a damage deposit to secure the accommodations and move in, until her next paycheque:

*The landlady said she is absolutely not allowed to move in until the damage deposit is paid. If she waits until her next paycheque, that puts her stay in the shelter well beyond 3 weeks. She has child care set up, has her*

*daughter enrolled in preschool and has done everything Income Support instructed her to do but was still denied support.*

In another case, Making Amends funds were used to help a woman maintain her residence:

*Jane K had requested \$800 from Income Support to help her with her eviction notice but was denied. She was admitted into the psychiatric ward and was unable to work and collect a cheque for three weeks. Jane K stated that income support would not help her for the previous month as she had a job and income but they would help her for the benefits in March. This was leaving Jane K \$800 short on her rent and she was facing eviction. Jane K was stressed out stating that she was going to flee back to Ontario and go back to her violent situation if she couldn't get the support here. The shelter then made some phone calls and found that the client was indeed unable to obtain financial support from the community or from Income Support.*

Other housing costs paid for by Making Amends included basic utilities such as a telephone line. One shelter described the importance of having a phone for a client that had been without one for two months:

*As a victim of domestic violence, this was considered to be unsafe for the client and her child. In order to maintain a safe home for her and her daughter, the client has been looking to further her income by finding work. Having a means of communication is essential in the job market as well, the funds provided will not only ensure a sense of safety for the client and her child but will help empower the client as she searches for work within this community.*

### ***Transportation***

Transportation was the second most often requested category of support (16%). Women needed transportation to get to medical appointments, attend court, move to a new home, move to a second stage shelter or another emergency shelter and get to their place of employment or to job interviews. These are all crucial aspects to supporting victims in establishing a violence-free life. The majority of these applications highlighted a lack of transportation services available in rural communities as well as within shelters, which do not have the funding or mandate to provide free transportation for their clients. Without Making Amends the women would have to take part in a lengthy process of applying to Social Service for support, and in many instances, those applications would not be successful. In the following story, Making Amends funds were used to transport a woman and her child to safe accommodations:

*Jane L and her child were admitted to shelter for safety purposes, her abuser is extremely dangerous and has threatened to kill her if she ever left him. While in shelter a client was admitted who Jane L stated is related to her abuser and will most likely tell him where she is. For safety purposes the decision was made to transport her to [another rural] shelter as soon as possible. Jane L had no income and no access to immediate funds from any of her supports. Since there is no bus service from [rural town] to [rural town], the only way to quickly move her and her child to safety was by shelter van. Jane L stated she did not trust*

*any of her friends or relatives from her community to drive her, as she feared they may tell her abuser where she was transported to.*

### **Resolving Debt**

Many women fleeing domestic violence were left with their abuser's debt or have debt in their name as a result of the financial abuse they suffered. These debts were often not insurmountable (i.e. \$800 of parking tickets), but needed to be reconciled in order for the women to move forward. As illustrated in one of the applications to cover debts:

*Jane A would like nothing more than to move forward, however like many family violence victims, she is unable to do so until she deals with the past. With clearing these outstanding bills, Jane A will be able to get a land line, register a vehicle (there is no bussing in [the town]) and get to the college for school ... Jane A feels that with this help she will be able to manage and feels as though she may have a chance of breaking the cycle of abuse.*

There is currently no program in Alberta, that we are aware of, that can cover debts that women have incurred as a result of domestic violence.

### **Maintaining or Obtaining Child Custody**

Making Amends funds were also used to help women attend court to maintain or obtain custody of their children - one of the most significant challenges faced by women fleeing domestic violence. Making Amends helped women in these circumstances by covering the cost of transportation to court, accommodation while attending court in a different jurisdiction, and legal representation when representation from government programs was inadequate or unavailable. Some women are forced to flee without their children, and, as a result they have to go to court to obtain custody of their children from their abuser. The following excerpt tells the story of a woman in such a circumstance:

*Jane B's husband had hired a lawyer and served her with an application for custody of the children when he found out she was planning to leave him due to his abusive and controlling behavior toward her. She was served on a Friday, and the situation escalated [and]...she called RCMP Sunday for assistance because he threatened to kill her. When RCMP arrived, her husband (and father-in-law) were calm and told RCMP there was a custody application in process. Jane B was hysterical and begged police to let her take her 3-year-old and 1-year-old with her. RCMP left the children with her abuser and abuser's father, and brought her to our shelter.*

*She was approved for legal aid, however, when we finally got hold of the legal aid lawyer (who was on holidays for the first week Jane B was in shelter), her lawyer recommended she "go back to her husband" to get her children because no judge would award Jane B custody given she has no resources and is residing in a women's shelter. The lawyer also stated that she would not be able to appear in court with Jane B for the first hearing and recommended that Jane B go in alone and request an adjournment. Family court is only heard once a month [in northern Alberta town].... Given that Jane B was not prepared to return to abuser, but needed a lawyer to represent her and fight for her rights in court, the shelter found her a lawyer on a private retainer.*

*Without these funds, this woman would have been forced to work with a legal aid lawyer who recommended she go home to her abusive husband rather than affirming her right to be protected and represented in court. The lawyer who was hired did indeed perform a miracle at the first court hearing and had the judge order that in the interim, children are to be with mom 50% of the time (every other week) at the shelter. Jane B is very grateful that she has someone who understands the nature of the relationship she has been in and who believes her and advocated for her in the family court system.*

In the majority of Making Amends applications for court-related costs, women were seeking funds to pay for travel and accommodation to attend court in other jurisdictions. In one such case, a woman applied for funds to pay for safe accommodations while attending court in another jurisdiction. All resources were exhausted, as the woman was denied financial help for accommodations and all shelters close to the court location were full. The woman was told by her lawyer that “if she did not attend the court hearing, her daughter would be taken from her permanently”.

Another Making Amends application covered the travel costs for a mother from northern Alberta to attend court in central Alberta three times, in order to appeal an ex-parte guardianship order obtained by her abuser’s mother for her twin infants. The following story exemplifies the challenges women fleeing domestic violence have to face in order to maintain custody of their children and illustrates the incredibly important impact Making Amends funds had on the life of this woman and her children:

*The day after Jane C was admitted to our shelter, the RCMP arrived at our door to enforce an ex parte guardianship order which had been obtained in [central Alberta municipality] by the mother of Jane C’s abusive ex-partner. Jane C had lived for four years in [central Alberta municipality] with this abuser and had come to northern Alberta to keep herself and her children safe.*

*Since this was a valid court order, we were obliged to allow the police to take the woman’s [children] and hand them over to their grandmother. As you can imagine, Jane C was extremely distraught...She stated that not only had her ex-partner subjected her to severe physical, mental, sexual and financial abuse, he was also an alcoholic, a cocaine addict and a regular consumer of child pornography. She said she was certain that his mother would allow him free access to the children if she had them in her care.*

*Jane C was served papers requiring her to appear in court in [central Alberta municipality] ... if she wished to challenge the guardianship order. [At the hearing] the presiding judge, who was the same judge who had granted the guardianship order in the first place, stated that he had decided to reverse the order and turn the children back over to their mother on the basis of my testimony. However, the grandmother was not prepared to drop the case, and another hearing was scheduled in [central Alberta municipality]. When we arrived for the hearing... we found out that the grandmother had suddenly decided to apply for a postponement of the hearing. The judge granted a postponement, even though Jane C and I had travelled with her young children all the way from northern Alberta for this hearing.*

*The lawyer for Jane C sought a long postponement so that [she] would be able to prove over an extended period of time that she was able to provide*

*appropriate care for her children. A mediation hearing...and additional hearing for a court order were set.*

*At the mediation hearing, the judge stated that the judge who had granted the ex-parte guardianship order had made an error in law. He stated that that order should never have been granted because the grandmother was not a legal guardian of the children. He stated that it was up to the mother to decide whether or not the grandmother could have access the children. He also threw out the grandmother's request to have the children for one week every month.*

### **Medication**

Making Amends applications that were submitted under the category of specialized care were almost entirely for medication. One of the main barriers in obtaining medication was the issue of immediate access - many women and children needed medication immediately and could not wait to apply for funding from other sources. There were also many instances where women tried to access financial support immediately but the organizations were closed at that hour, as illustrated in the story below:

*Jane D needed to acquire medications for her day to day functioning. She could not access supports, such as Neighbour Aid prior to filling the prescription because it was a weekend. In order to best support this woman, we filled the prescription for her. Upon being presented with the **receipt for this medication, Neighbour Aid refused to reimburse the shelter.***

Not only were Making Amends funds accessed for payment of medication, but they were also accessed to meet other immediate and basic needs that women were unable to meet due to the cost of medication and medical-related services that they needed. For example, one shelter accessed Making Amends funds to pay a power bill for a woman who could not afford to cover it due to her medication costs:

*Jane E has been in shelter for over six weeks. She is battling major mental health issues and efforts are being made to get her on AISH. Her medications alone cost her \$1,200 per month. She cannot live independently without this power bill from 2007 being covered.*

In another circumstance, the shelter accessed Making Amends funds to cover outstanding rent and utility bills, traffic tickets, ID replacement, school fees and an overdraft on bank account. This woman also could not cover these bills due to the high costs of her health care. This woman's health problems were exacerbated by stress, which was reduced as a result of access she had to Making Amends funds:

*Jane F suffers from seizures and is on medication for depression...[and] has had to often choose between paying her [health related costs] or food...She has been taken to hospital several times by ambulance because of her seizures which are partially brought on by stress. Jane F needs to have her extended health care plan paid and up to date...[as it] provides 80% coverage of her prescriptions and 100% of her ambulance costs... She is in the process of applying for long term disability, [and] has had to repeatedly pay for forms from her doctor to fill out and had her disability funds suspended while waiting*

*for [her insurance company] to [determine her eligibility for long term disability]. I have been working with Jane F since May and see the weekly struggles that she is trying to deal with. The financial support would help relieve some of the stressors in Jane F's situation.*

This high demand for immediate access to medication among women and children fleeing domestic violence is consistent with findings in other research demonstrating the significant, negative impact that domestic violence has on women and children's health<sup>7</sup>.

### ***Temporary accommodation when shelters are full***

Lack of temporary accommodation is particularly problematic in rural communities. Eleven percent of Making Amends funds were used for temporary accommodation for women and children seeking to access shelters that were full, or women and children that were seeking access to shelters but posed a safety threat to current shelter residents. In all of these instances, the financial support was used to provide temporary accommodations in motels as there are no other temporary accommodations available to these women and children in rural communities. Making Amends funds, therefore, exclusively addressed a significant service gap in rural communities. Without the Making Amends funds, women and children trying to flee domestic violence would have been turned away from the shelter and many would have had to return to the abuser. The following story exemplifies a case where Making Amends funds were necessary for temporary accommodations, in order to provide safe accommodations to current shelter residents while still providing accommodations to children that posed a safety threat:

*Our shelter accepted a family of 6 into the residential program. Within a very short time it became apparent this family was in need of other services. One of the children's behaviour presented a danger to other children in shelter. Children's Services requested we keep this family of 6 in shelter for the time being, while Children's Services made further arrangements. Due to the safety issue to other children in shelter, we found it necessary to remove the other two families to a safe place. We were able to transport one family to another shelter for safety. The other family in shelter needed to stay in [the current town] because the child attended school here, and it would have been too disruptive to move them to another town at this time in their lives (a time of crisis). We decided to put them in a Motel in St. Paul for two days until the family of 6 was discharged under the care of Children's Services.*

### ***Personal identification documents***

Women in shelters often needed new identification (ID) documents (10 applications were submitted for identification-related costs). In many instances, their abuser had destroyed their ID or they were forced to flee their abuser without any ID. In one such instance, a shelter describes a Making Amends applicant that fled her physically abusive partner with her infant daughter:

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<sup>7</sup> Campbell, J. (2002). Health consequences of intimate partner violence. *The Lancet*, 359(9314), 1331-1336.



*Her partner destroyed all her identification so a birth certificate was required as an initial step towards obtaining other identification and a bank account.*

Without ID for themselves and their children, women are unable to obtain a bank account or apply for employment, housing, or financial support services. For example, women are required to present three pieces of government-issued ID in order to apply for support from Alberta Employment and Immigration (AEI), however AEI does not provide any initial financial support to obtain that ID. Making Amends program addressed this situation by providing financial support to cover the costs of obtaining new drivers' licences or birth certificates for women and children.

### ***Relocation***

Some applications for Making Amends funds helped women and children relocate to different communities. Women fleeing domestic violence in rural areas must sometimes move to a different shelter or community for safety and confidentiality reasons. For these women, there are limited supports in rural communities to help with moving, transportation, or other costs associated with relocation. In the following story, Making Amends funds were used to transport a woman and her child from a rural shelter to an urban shelter where they were safe from the abuser:

*Jane J and her child needed to relocate to Edmonton for safety reasons. Jane J's ex-partner is extremely dangerous and was stalking her. She didn't feel safe in [the rural town] because he knew where she was because she has come to shelter in the past. She contacted [an urban shelter] where her and her daughter were accepted for intake.*

*She currently receives financial assistance from A.I.S.H. but had no money because her ex-partner took it all. She contacted Alberta Employment and Immigration for financial assistance for bus fare to [the city] but they refused because she is on A.I.S.H. She contacted some family members but they were unable to help her. She stated she could not take a chance and wait for her next A.I.S.H. cheque because she knew he would find them, she was afraid, she felt she needed to leave [the rural town] immediately.*

*We provided bus fare for her and her daughter, drove her to the bus depot, and stayed with them until we were sure they got on the bus safely. She contacted us to let us know they were safe at [the urban shelter].*

## **Reasons Why Funds Were Accessed: Overcoming Barriers and Gaps in Service**

### ***Lack of services***

Over one third of applications (38%) for Making Amends were submitted for services that were not available in the community. A complete absence of temporary accommodations exists in rural communities. Making Amends successfully filled this gap in service by providing financial support for shelters to house women and children in local hotels. Over half of the applications for transportation services were submitted because transportation services such as busses were not available in the community.

### ***Lack of immediate access to services and supports***

The most common barrier to service that Making Amends addressed was the opportunity for immediate access to services and supports. Women and children fleeing domestic violence have very little time in which to transition into the community and they must, therefore, have immediate access to the services and supports that they require.

Access to financial support is particularly important however, organizations that provide this support are only open during conventional business hours despite the reality that women and children require 24-hour access to financial support. Furthermore, many shelter representatives report that women who are able to apply for financial support services often have to wait a long period of time before they actually receive money. As a result, many of these women give up and return to their partner.

Supporting women to establish a violence-free life is a time-sensitive endeavour. Having the ability to address women and children's needs immediately improves their health and well-being and reduces the chance that they will have to return to their abuser for support.

### ***Narrow eligibility criteria of government support***

Another barrier Making Amends addressed was the narrow eligibility criteria for government financial supports, which deem many women ineligible. For example, many women in shelters were turned down for government support because they had already accessed the service in the past, they didn't have immigration status, they were already receiving other financial support (such as AISH or student loans), they relocated or because they were not considered financially 'in need'. Unfortunately many women in shelters are not able to support themselves without full government assistance. The story below demonstrates how a woman working full time was deemed ineligible for support yet her income was not enough to sustain her family:

*Jane I is requesting assistance from [the shelter] as she has been turned down by Alberta Employment and Immigration for any assistance as they say she earns too much money. Jane I earned \$1,600 month from employment, \$500 month from Child Tax Benefit and \$100 from universal Child Care Benefit for a total income of \$2200 a month. Her expenses are \$775 month for rent, \$1100 month for child care, \$50 month for utilities for total of \$1925 monthly expenses; leaving \$275 month for groceries for her and her two children. Jane I has cancelled her land phone and cable in an attempt to meet expenses but her child care costs will go up for July and August as her seven-year-old son is now out of school for the summer. She is on a wait list for Child Care through [her local] Child Care Society.*

The Making Amends broad eligibility criteria made it possible for the shelters to address the needs of women who were ineligible for government and other support.

### ***Lack of financial support for basic needs***

The goal of Making Amends was to help compensate victims and prevent crime through meeting the immediate safety needs of victims in rural shelters. Some services such as ID replacement and transportation that are not always seen as basic needs are, in fact, essential for victims of domestic violence to effectively transition from the shelter into the community. Without such provisions many women and children return to an unsafe situation with their partner. For many shelters, Making Amends was the only funding the shelter could access to assist women to pay for the daily necessities of life.

### ***Unique barriers to service for Immigrant and Aboriginal women***

Aboriginal and immigrant women made up 70% of shelter residents in 2010 in Alberta<sup>8</sup>. These populations face unique barriers to service and there are limited services available to them in the community. For example, nine of the 157 Making Amends applications were for newcomer women who did not have immigration status. These women were all sponsored to come to Canada by their abuser. Once they left their abusers, however, their abuser withdrew sponsorship and the women faced deportation. Most women had been in Canada for years and all had at least one child. One application explained that:

*Jane D has lived, married in Canada for almost five years. If she is forced to leave Canada, she is fearful that she will be separated from her sons who both have Canadian citizenship. Jane D has no hope for her marriage and is asking for assistance.*

Newcomer women whose sponsorship have been revoked by their abuser are ineligible for Income Support and other major government sources of financial support such as the Child Tax Benefit. The Child Tax Benefit, in particular, is one of the main sources of income for women fleeing domestic violence, as established in the Making Amends demographic information. Newcomers also face other risk factors such as illiteracy, a lack of familial and community support and an inability to work because they do not have formal immigration status.

All nine women with revoked sponsorship had applied for immigration status based on Humanitarian and Compassionate grounds—a process that can take years<sup>9</sup>. Unfortunately, immigrant women fleeing domestic violence are not prioritized for immigration status and applications can take even longer in cases where the family situation is complicated by unresolved divorce or child custody decisions - both common situations for newcomer women fleeing domestic violence<sup>10</sup>.

Although there are agencies in some jurisdictions that provide legal support for women to obtain immigration status, there are no known services that bridge the financial gap for accommodation, food, clothing and other basic needs for women and children without immigration status fleeing domestic violence. These women are therefore stuck and without any services available to support them, feel they have no choice but to return to their abusers.

The following story is exemplary of the complexity of the experiences and the cumulative risk factors that newcomer women and their children fleeing domestic violence face:

*Jane D reports she has suffered verbal, reproductive, physical, emotional, and financial abuse from her husband and his brother and that “male privilege” was very much the norm in the family home where, after working 8-12 hours a day, Jane D was expected to perform all chores for the family including cooking, cleaning and laundry as well as taking care of the kids while her husband watched TV and demanded his meals. After the birth of their fifth child, Jane*

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<sup>8</sup> Hoffart, I. 2012. Strength in numbers: A 10-year trend analysis of women’s shelters in Alberta. Report prepared for the Alberta Council of Women’s Shelters.

<sup>9</sup> Source: <http://canadianimmigrant.ca/immigrate/how-long-does-it-take-to-process-my-immigration-application-2>

<sup>10</sup> Source: <http://canadianimmigrant.ca/immigrate/how-long-does-it-take-to-process-my-immigration-application-2>

*D's husband abandoned the family and resides in a Homeless Shelter. Jane D has heard that he is dying from hepatitis.*

*Jane D, who is currently on maternity leave, is making a fraction of her salary and getting farther and farther behind in bills incurred in both their names. At present Jane D is still on maternity leave but it is doubtful that she will be able to return to work; finding a skilled caregiver for her may be impossible as four of her five children are thought to have high needs autism (2 are already diagnosed and 2 are in the process of being diagnosed).*

*Jane D and her husband own their home but due to her financial circumstances Jane D has not been able to pay her mortgage and the bank has turned her down for refinancing/renewing the mortgage. The home is now being foreclosed. One of the biggest barriers Jane D has been facing is the fact that her home has been infected with cockroaches, mice and bed bugs, which are biting the family as well as multiplying rapidly and getting into the food supply (shelter since provided storage bins for food). Social Services was approached to help with the extermination but turned the family down because the family was not going to be staying in the family home (due to foreclosure). This was a huge issue because when the family finds a rental unit to move into, they do not want to bring the infestation with them.*

*Jane D requires [financial support in order to] obtain utilities at the new location (she had received creditors letters demanding payment or the utilities would be shut off) as well as to paying an amount that was owing at Social Services so that when her EI is finished she will be able to receive services from them without having the past debt needing to be paid.*

*Jane D's case is very complex as she has multiple barriers (many kinds of abuse, illiteracy, no transportation, house being foreclosed, 4 of 5 kids with high needs disabilities, no hope of child support/alimony, and her abuser's debt that is preventing her from maintaining housing utilities). The funding she will receive from Making Amends will allow Jane D and her children to have a clean, pest free residence while they make plans to move into their new rental home (after their foreclosure) and enable them to move to their new location without bringing the infestation with them. Helping to pay Jane D's past due bills will allow her to move her utilities accounts without a huge past/present debt over her head helping to give her and her children a fresh start. We have also utilized a community, collaborative team approach to help this family in the future by providing education on cleanliness and sanitation as well as debt counselling and budgeting services.*

The issues for Aboriginal women applying for Making Amends funds are somewhat different than the issues for immigrant women. Aboriginal women are sometimes deemed ineligible for provincial support due to their First Nations status, while at the same time their Band does not provide support, as illustrated in the story excerpt below:

*A child became ill and needed immediate medication. The child's mother had no money so she requested financial assistance to pay for the medication from the Alberta government and the municipality. Both refused to support her, telling her she needed to ask her Band office. When she called the Band*

*office however, nobody answered the phone. She left several messages on the answering machine but no one returned her calls. For this woman and her child, Making Amends bridged the gap between the two central agencies that should have, but neglected to provide support for her family.*

### ***Lack of jurisdictional coordination of services***

Lack of jurisdictional coordination of services presents another complication for women in rural areas who relocate elsewhere. Some women who applied for Making Amends funds were forced to travel to their prior jurisdiction in order to access services such as medical appointments and income support. These women had attempted to access these services in their new jurisdiction but they were either told it wasn't possible or they would have to re-apply for supports in their new jurisdiction. Ultimately, women were not able to easily access services in their new community and yet there were no transportation supports to help them access the services in their old communities. Making Amends addressed this gap by paying travel costs to access supports in their prior jurisdiction while enabling the women to stay in their new, safer communities, as illustrated in the story below:

*Shelter staff transported Jane G with our shelter van to [northern Alberta town] for her appointment with Mental Health to allow Jane G to access the service there. Alberta Health Services – Mental Health would not transfer her file to [Jane G's new town] to allow Jane G to access the service here. Jane G suffers from extreme anxiety and exhibits post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms, to the point of non-functioning. Immediately before accessing shelter she had attempted suicide via overdosing on prescription drugs, therefore making it more difficult to get her prescription refilled from a doctor in [her new town]. Jane G did not qualify for any financial assistance from Alberta Income Support for transportation costs to go to [her prior town]. Since there is no greyhound bus service running in or out of [Jane G's new town], the decision was made to transport her there ourselves.*

In another circumstance, a woman was forced to reapply for government support when she moved to an urban second stage shelter. This story also exemplifies how access to immediate financial support can prevent women from returning to their abuser:

*Jane H fled from abuse with her four children aged 9, 5, 3 and 4 months old. This was her first time fleeing from her abuser and her first stay in a shelter. Jane H had never received Income Support from Alberta Government and was unfamiliar with the process. [Subsequently, Jane H was accepted by an urban second stage shelter].*

*Jane H dropped off her rent report to Alberta Works ... and more than a week later there was no response. Jane H felt frustrated and worried that she would not receive funding so decided to leave the Shelter. The Family Support Worker called Jane H to offer her support and to assure her that she was welcome to come back to the [second stage] shelter if she decided to leave her abuser again. Jane H stated that she wanted to come back. The Family Support Worker called [urban Alberta second stage shelter] and the shelter offered to keep her place as long as she had her first month rent and the damage deposit.*

*Jane H called Alberta Works to inquire about her application and they said that she would need to reapply for funding in [urban Alberta municipality] since she had left [rural Alberta municipality] and would be moving to [urban Alberta municipality]. The [emergency shelter] agreed to pay for Jane H's first month's rent and damage deposit for a total of \$1292.00. It was paid through the Making Amends project. This was justified due to Jane H's desire and need to leave her community and abuser so that she may start a new life for her family. Also, if Jane H did not provide her rent and damage deposit to [urban second stage shelter] her place would not be saved. It is ideal for Jane H and her family to be supported in second stage housing [which is where she now resides].*

### **Shelter Feedback on Making Amends**

A questionnaire was administered to participating shelter representatives to assess process, effectiveness, impact and overall satisfaction with the Making Amends fund distribution. The questionnaire was comprised of eight closed and open-ended questions. Responses from 13 participating shelters are summarized below.

#### **Process**

Shelters were asked about their experience with the application process for Making Amends, including the amount of time it took to complete applications and the amount of information they had to provide. 85% of shelters found the process easy or very easy. Shelters that found the process difficult cited the amount of time it took to show they had exhausted all other possible options to assist the applicant, a prerequisite for applying.

77% of the shelters applied for less funding than they could have. In most of these instances shelters were unclear about the limitations of the fund, for example, they were reluctant to take too much money from the fund, they were unsure of the eligibility criteria and whether the application would be successful, or they felt that applying for the additional funds did not warrant the time that they had to put into completing the application.

#### **Effectiveness**

Shelters were asked to rate the effectiveness of Making Amends project in addressing gaps in or barriers to service. Although shelter representatives described the funds as effective in addressing all emerging needs, they thought that Making Amends was most effective in addressing gaps or barriers to service for Transportation costs (83% said it was effective), Security for women (82%), Costs for housing and related items (78%), and Specialized care (73%). Shelter representatives also commented that Making Amends “really helped to bridge gaps in our program” and gave shelters “the opportunity to apply for dollars that have huge impacts in the lives of victims of domestic violence”.

#### **Impact**

Shelters were asked to rate the impact Making Amends had on shelter operations, shelter staff, and the women and children who accessed funds. All shelters said Making Amends had a positive impact on shelter operations and shelter staff. One shelter director stated that “our staff were amazed that we could access funds for needs that were previously left unmet” while another said that Making Amends “had a positive effect on staff who have been working with multi-barriered clients and would have been helpless to assist the clients without access to this fund.”

All shelters also indicated that Making Amends had a positive impact on the women and children who received funding. One shelter respondent noted that Making Amends was “the only funding we have been able to access to assist clients to pay for daily necessities of life”.

Overall, all shelters indicated they were satisfied with the Making Amends Project and would like the project to continue. Shelter representatives thought that the project “met so many needs for the women and children and gave the shelter workers such a huge sense of being able to help in desperate situations”. From the perspective of one of the shelters, the project allows “another avenue to access financial resources when all other avenues are exhausted; and for the clients this project allows [women] to move away from [their] abusive partner and start a new life for her and her children”.

### **Suggestions for Improving Making Amends**

Shelter representatives also provided recommendations for improving the Making Amends project if it were to continue. Some of these suggestions included a less time-consuming application process, automatic approvals for certain expenditures, and establishing a maximum amount of funds available to each shelter to make distribution more equitable. Shelter representatives also thought that Making Amends should be renewed annually to make it possible for shelters to provide consistent support to clients from year to year. Lastly, shelters recommended that the Making Amends project be expanded to urban shelters to allow women and children fleeing domestic violence in urban areas to access this funding as well.



## Stream B: Equipping rural shelters with best practice service tools

In Stream B of this project, three training sessions were provided to better equip rural shelters to meet the needs of victims of domestic violence.

### *Session One: Legal Aid Training*

This full day session which took place on April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2011 was facilitated by Legal Aid Alberta staff (Dawn Nelson, Wendy Hinz and Tunis de Jonj). It was designed to provide front line counsellors with an understanding of the legal issues women experiencing domestic violence face and the legal support available to women in the province, particularly through Legal Aid. The session built on the outcomes of the Practical Frameworks for Change Project, one of which was a partnership between Legal Aid Alberta and ACWS. The partnership supported the implementation of a dedicated Law Line operational between 2009 and 2011, which provided critical legal information to women accessing nine Alberta shelters during this time period. Thirty shelter workers from twenty one rural shelters left the training session with enhanced understanding of how they could better advocate for the women they serve.

### *Session Two: Danger Assessment Training*

The second session, a Danger Assessment (DA; see appendix b for a complete description of tool) Train the Trainer workshop took place on May 4, 2012. Danger Assessment calendar and the 20 item questionnaire provide women with information about the level of risk associated with the violence they and their children are exposed to. Used together, the calendar and questionnaire support staff in their safety planning work with women in shelters.

Thirteen shelter workers from ten rural shelters across the province participated in the training, led by certified ACWS DA trainers. Participants were provided with detailed information about the DA, the background research as well as information about the process of administering the DA. Participants were given the opportunity to practice the procedures involved in the administration of the tool. As a result of the workshop the participants are now certified to offer DA training to other staff in their shelters or to individuals and groups within their communities. Session evaluations were completed by participants immediately after the training. On a 5-point scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree, all participants agreed or strongly agreed that

- the goals of the training were met;
- they had enough information to begin working with women and children; and,
- they were generally satisfied with all aspects of the training.





### *Session Three: Domestic Violence Survivor Assessment*

Domestic Violence Survivor Assessment (DVSA; see appendix c for complete description of tool) Training took place on May 3, 2012. The DVSA is used to help shelter staff understand where a woman is at in her change process. The staff are then better able to gear their interventions to the woman's level of readiness for change. In doing this, women are provided with services that are based on their individual needs.

Seventeen shelter workers from eleven rural shelters participated in the training, led by an ACWS contracted trainer. The session outlined the research behind the development of the tool and provided the opportunity to learn about use of the tool in emergency and second stage shelters. Session evaluations were completed by participants immediately after the training. On a 5-point scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree, all participants agreed or strongly agreed that:

- the goals of the training were met;
- they had enough information to begin working with women and children; and
- they were generally satisfied with all aspects of the training.



## Conclusion

Making Amends successfully bridged many gaps in services that currently exist in rural Alberta for victims of domestic violence. The project helped identify and address numerous barriers that women fleeing domestic violence face.

Making Amends provided the initial financial support that is necessary for women to take the first steps towards establishing a new, violence-free life for themselves and their children. In addition to many other complex challenges, the majority of these women have limited or no income—a situation that is often exacerbated by the abuse they experienced.

Without Making Amends funding, many women fleeing domestic violence are stuck in a situation where they have left their abuser but cannot establish an independent life free from their abuser, as they cannot access the initial financial support needed to meet basic needs such as ID replacement, medication, food, transportation and stable housing.

These immediate needs are the foundation from which women build their new lives. Without addressing these needs, women cannot obtain employment, safe homes, bank accounts or fulfill any other aspects of an independent self-sustained life; they cannot begin to establish themselves and weave the safety netting that will sustain them in the future.

Along with establishing a safe and independent life, meeting basic needs allows women to start to heal from their abuse and establish healthy relationships with their children. This theme is confirmed in two projects currently piloted in Alberta shelters (The Children's Project and Helping Hands). These projects have found that mothers in shelters cannot engage in therapy with their children and benefit from related services until their basic needs are met. For many women and children fleeing domestic violence in rural Alberta, Making Amends funding supported the crucial first steps towards safety and healing.



## Recommendations for Future Initiatives

The following are short and long-term recommendations for future initiatives based on the information gathered in the course of the Making Amends project.

### *Short Term*

- 1. Renew funding to the Making Amends project to meet the immediate safety needs of women and children fleeing domestic violence in rural Alberta on continuous basis.**

Without Making Amends, there exists a significant lack of financial support for this population as a whole and an even greater lack of support for the most vulnerable women and children in this population- immigrant, Aboriginal, and those with disabilities or who are ill.

- 2. Dedicate civil forfeiture funds.**

Dedicate civil forfeiture funds to this type of support on an ongoing basis are needed, as abused women and their children are unable to access other Victims Funds given that most of these crimes are not reported to the police.

- 3. Include On Reserve shelters in the eligibility for the fund.**

Although rural shelters experience unique challenges related to service access, gaps and barriers these are often magnified in shelters that operate on First Nations reserves. When this fund began, provincial funding criteria did not allow for funding on reserve. We suggest that the funding criteria be expanded to include women who are receiving services from on reserve shelters.

- 4. Ensure that eligibility criteria for the fund remain flexible.**

The circumstances of women for whom the funds were accessed for were complex and varied. Having essentially no barriers to access was likely one of the primary contributors to the success of the project. Future initiatives should ensure such flexibility in order to effectively address existing gaps and barriers to service.

- 5. Develop a similar pilot for shelters in Edmonton and Calgary.**

Challenges related to service access, gaps and barriers also exist in Alberta's two big cities. It would be helpful to gain a picture of these gaps and barriers in comparison to those in rural areas. A separate pilot is recommended to get a good understanding of the costs required; given these are two very large population centres which turn women away from shelter on a daily basis due to capacity issues.

- 6. A series of regional and specific topic forums be held with ACWS, member shelters, government and band leadership to address the barriers to financial support identified in this report and begin a solution-based response to these barriers for abused women and their children.**

There were many barriers identified in this report, from supports being unavailable in the community to lack of jurisdictional coordination of services. In addition, there are barriers related to immigration status and First Nations Status that require a differential approach.

**7. Fund shelters so that they are able to provide transportation that is necessary to meet immediate and basic needs of women and children fleeing domestic violence.**

While transportation dollars are provided to provincially contracted agencies, these dollars are rarely sufficient and shelters must fundraise and create partnerships with other organizations to partially meet these needs. In February, 2007, the Government of Alberta accepted the recommendation from the Women's Shelter Program Review to *assess transportation options to meet specific shelter service needs in urban, rural and remote communities including the transportation needs of clients attempting to access shelters*. However, funding for transportation is not only needed to access shelter services, but also to address legal, relocation and other issues.

**8. Continue funding so that ACWS is able to provide specialized training to shelters on the DVSA, Danger Assessment and Legal Issues.**

Ongoing training will support shelter service delivery in meeting the needs of abused women and children no matter where they reside in the province.

### *Long Term*

**1. Provide specialized funding to shelters so that they are able to provide a continuum of services as it relates to meeting women's housing needs.**

With the reorganization of government departments, the opportunity exists to fund shelters in different ways so that abused women's housing needs can be better met, whether through second stage housing, temporary accommodation when shelters are full, or support for newcomer women and their families.

**2. Continue to advocate for newcomer women who are fleeing domestic violence to be prioritized in the application process under Humanitarian and Compassionate grounds.**

Immigrant women accessing shelters were facing deportation as a result of their abuser withdrawing sponsorship. Once sponsorship has been withdrawn, these women have no access to financial support or employment and therefore have no means to establish an independent life. Not only is lack of sponsorship a barrier these women face once they have left their abuser, it is likely preventing immigrant women from actually leaving their abuser. If immigrant women fleeing domestic violence were prioritized for immigration status, it would significantly help these women establish independent, violence-free lives and encourage immigrant women experiencing domestic violence to leave their abuser.

## Appendix A: Rural Alberta Shelters

Shelter Name	Location	Making Amends Participant
A Safe Place	Sherwood Park	yes
Brigantia Place	Camrose	yes
Brooks & District	Brooks	Yes
Central Alberta Women's Emergency Shelter	Red Deer	yes
Columbus House of Hope	St. Paul	yes
Community Crisis Society	Strathmore	yes
Crossroads	Fairview	yes
Dolmar Manor (Second Stage, Lloydminster)	Lloydminster	yes
Dr. Margaret Savage Crisis Society	Cold Lake	yes
Grande Cache Transition House	Grande Cache	yes
Hope Haven	Lac La Biche	yes
Interval Home	Lloydminster	yes
Mountain Rose Women's Emergency Shelter	Rocky Mountain House	yes
Musasa House	Medicine Hat	yes
Northern Haven Support Society	Slave Lake	yes
Odyssey House	Grande Prairie	no
Peace River Women's Regional	Peace River	yes
Phoenix House	Medicine Hat	yes
Pincher Creek Women's Emergency Shelter	Pincher Creek	yes
Rowan House Emergency Shelter	Black Diamond	yes
Safe Haven	Taber	yes
Safe Home	High Level	yes
Unity House	Fort McMurray	yes
Wellspring	Whitecourt	yes
Yellowhead Emergency Shelter	Hinton	yes
YWCA Banff	Banff	no
YWCA Harbour House	Lethbridge	no



## Appendix B: The Danger Assessment (DA)

The Danger Assessment Tool<sup>11</sup> was selected as the preferred risk measurement tool for Alberta's shelters. The Danger Assessment questionnaire (DA) is a 20-item test with weighted item scoring, designed to assess the likelihood of lethality or near lethality occurring in a case of intimate partner violence (IPV)<sup>12</sup>. The predictive validity of the instrument was established in a controlled, 11-city study of 310 intimate partner femicide cases in the United States. Other tests of the Danger Assessment's psychometric properties have also shown positive results and support the use of the instrument.

In addition to the 20-item test, the full Danger Assessment process requires completion of a Danger Assessment Calendar. The usual procedure is to ask the woman to first place in the Calendar all of the special events that are important in her family, such as family birthdays, anniversaries, and celebrations of other kinds (e.g. Christmas, New Year's, Easter, Thanksgiving and so on). She is then prompted by the staff member to think about what incidents of abuse had occurred in proximity to these events. Other abuse types and frequencies were then entered as the woman and the staff member discuss presence and types of violence incidents each month.

A standard protocol and a manual were developed to guide the use of the tool. In brief, there are three key elements in the DA administration protocol:

- Women complete the DA questionnaire with shelter staff within the first 48 to 72 hours of shelter admission;
- the DA calendar is completed first; and,
- staff are certified in DA administration.



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<sup>11</sup> Campbell, J. (1995). The Danger Assessment Tool.

<sup>12</sup> Campbell, J., Webster, D., & Glass, N. (2008). The danger assessment: Validation of a lethality risk assessment instrument for intimate partner femicide. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence Online*.

## Appendix C: The Domestic Violence Survivor Assessment (DVSA)

The Domestic Violence Survivor Assessment was developed by Dr. J. Dienemann in consultation with Dr. J. Campbell in 1995 and in collaboration with three community-based domestic violence service agencies. It was then tested in three hospital-based programs that had screening, referral, and counseling programs and shown to have high internal consistency and construct validity<sup>13</sup>

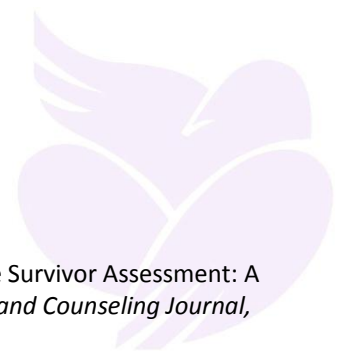
DVSA is based on the Transtheoretical Model of Change (TM) first developed by Prochaska<sup>14</sup>. TM refers to how the model integrates observations of daily human experiences with theories of psychotherapy as they apply to changing human behavior. The focus of the TM model is on helping people through a process of intentionally changing their behavior. It recognizes that (1) change is a process that must be maintained over time, not simply an event; and (2) the process is often a spiral with relapses and regressions as well as progression.

The TM model identifies five stages of change, but does not describe behavior in these stages as linear. These stages include pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action and maintenance. The value of this model for Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is that it focuses on individuals and their strengths, recognizes the non-linear path of behavior change and the complexity of the process, and does not dictate specific behaviors. The DVSA examines the stage of change for 13 personal and relationship issues commonly faced by survivors of IPV.

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<sup>13</sup> Dienemann, J., Campbell, J., Curry, M., & Landenburger, K. (2002). Domestic Violence Survivor Assessment: A tool for counseling women in violent intimate partner relationships. *Patient Education and Counseling Journal*, 46(3), 221–228.

<sup>14</sup> Prochaska, J., DiClemente, C., Norcross, J. (1992). In search of how people change. Applications to addictive behaviors. *American Psychological Association*, 47(9), 1102–14.



**Contact:**

**Alberta Council of Women's Shelters**

320, 10310 Jasper Avenue

Edmonton, AB T5J 2W4

T. 780.456.7000 F. 780.456.7001

[voice@acws.ca](mailto:voice@acws.ca)

[www.acws.ca](http://www.acws.ca)