

# Backgrounder Document d'information



Ministry of the  
Attorney General

Ministère du  
Procureur général

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## VICTIM SERVICES IN ONTARIO

Ontario funds a broad range of victim services. These services support victims in the immediate aftermath of crime, throughout the criminal justice process and as they work to rebuild their lives.

### **Victim Crisis Assistance and Referral Services**

This community response program provides immediate on-site service to victims of crime, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It operates in 48 communities across Ontario and served more than 48,000 victims last year.

### **Sexual Assault/Rape Crisis Centres**

Ontario's 38 Sexual Assault/Rape Crisis Centres offer counselling, information and support services to victims and survivors of sexual abuse.

### **Victim Quick Response Program**

Three new services for victims of violent crime were introduced in 2007:

- Emergency Expenses in the immediate aftermath of violent crime – to ensure eligible victims are able to secure premises for victim safety, provide emergency accommodation and meals, care for dependents, transportation costs or specialized crime scene cleanup
- Funeral Expenses – to assist eligible families of homicide victims
- Counselling – to provide short-term, early intervention counselling to help victims of serious crimes recover from their experience.

### **Community Grants Program**

This program provided more than \$15 million over three years, including \$6 million in 2007-08, for 107 locally-based projects that enhance services for victims of crime.

### **Victim/Witness Assistance Program**

A cornerstone of services provided to victims of crime, this program helped more than 66,000 Ontarians last year. It provides information, assistance, referrals and support to victims and witnesses of crime, throughout the criminal court process, in all 54 court districts across the province. Program staff maintain close contact with local community agencies to ensure victims can access the full range of supports they need.

### **Domestic Violence Court Program**

This program provides victims of domestic violence with support from specially trained service providers, such as: Crown prosecutors, Victim/Witness Assistance Program staff, police, and language interpreters. It operates in all 54 Ontario court districts and is the most comprehensive program of its kind in Canada.

### **Child Victim/Witness Centres**

In four Ontario communities, government-funded Child Victim/Witness Centres offer court assistance to children who are victims or witnesses of violent crime. Starting in 2008, the program will be expanded to four additional communities to bring these valuable services to all regions of the province.

### **Guns & Gangs Task Force**

Twelve victim/witness staff provide support on guns and gangs prosecutions. These staff work with victims and witnesses from the earliest stages of a case to determine their potential needs and coordinate with police, Crown prosecutors and community agencies to ensure these needs are met.

### **Bail Safety Project**

In 10 locations across the province, the Bail Safety Project provides trained teams of Crown prosecutors, victim services staff and police to conduct in-depth interviews with victims of domestic violence at the bail stage. This is a time of high risk for victims. The Bail Safety Project helps identify high-risk situations, allowing Crown prosecutors to make better recommendations at bail hearings to help stop the cycle of violence.

### **Victim Support Line**

The Victim Support Line is a free province-wide information line providing services in English and French. Services provided by the support line include: referrals to community agencies, information on the criminal justice system and information to registered clients about the status and scheduled release date of provincially incarcerated offenders. The telephone numbers are 1-888-579-2888 throughout Ontario and 416-314-2447 in Toronto.

### **Combating Internet Child Pornography and Luring**

This program combats Internet child pornography and supports victims. It includes:

- An undercover team of municipal police officers working online to identify suspects and victims and prevent further victimization
- Dedicated Crown prosecutors to ensure a uniform level of excellence with respect to victim support and prosecution
- Victim support to ensure that identified victims are connected with the specialized services they need.

### **Hate Crimes Community Working Group**

Established in 2005, the Hate Crimes Community Working Group provided more than 80 recommendations to the government to improve services to victims of hate crimes and prevent further victimization. The government has established a Review and Implementation Project Committee to prioritize the recommendations that fall within provincial jurisdiction for further action.

### **Community Hate Crimes Response Grants Program**

This project responds to several recommendations of the Hate Crimes Community Working Group. Four kinds of community-based initiatives will be funded under this program:

- Projects to enhance community resources and/or address gaps in services to victims of hate crimes
- A hate crime forum to strengthen networks and share information among victims groups, educators and members of the criminal justice system
- A website for victims containing province-wide information about hate crimes and victim services
- Templates for community-based victim impact statements for use in court.

### **Nishnawbe Aski Nation**

The Nishnawbe Aski Nation provides services to male victims of sexual abuse in northern Aboriginal communities. This is a three-year, provincially-funded program.

### **Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic**

The clinic is a multi-service agency for female victims of violence in Toronto. The Ministry of the Attorney General provides annual funding for a specialized legal service for assaulted women.

### **SupportLink Program**

Victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking in 20 Ontario locations can get help planning for their safety and 911-programmed cell phones.

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