

April 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025

A Future Without Violence:

Strengthening Lives, Together



Land Acknowledgement:

In the spirit of respect and truth, we recognize that we live and work on the traditional territories of the Blackfoot Confederacy (Siksika, Kainai, Piikani), the Tsuut'ina, the Iyârhe Nakoda Nations, and the Otipemisiwak Métis Government of the Métis Nation within Alberta, Districts 4, 5, and 6.

We are committed to using our voices to foster respectful relationships with Indigenous communities and individuals. Please join us in amplifying Indigenous voices, celebrating the vibrancy of Indigenous culture, and supporting all people to thrive.

Inclusion statement:

We recognize that domestic violence affects people from all areas of life. We are committed to supporting everyone to heal and thrive, regardless of their age, ethnicity, culture, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or any other aspect of their identity.

Table of Contents

02. Introduction

03. Safety

07. Support

09. Stability

12. Hope

13. Conclusion

14. How to Help

ORGANIZATIONS CONTRIBUTING TO THIS REPORT

Big Hill Haven

Discovery House

FearIsNotLove

Heart Home Network

Maskan Family Association

Niitoyis Family Support Society

Radiance Family Society

Rowan House Society

True North Society

YW Calgary

YWCA Banff

Introduction

Domestic violence and abuse have far-reaching impacts on individuals, families, and communities. As a network of eleven dedicated organizations in Calgary and area, we are united in our commitment to address both the immediate effects and the root causes of this critical issue in our community.

This report, covering April 2024 to March 2025, highlights the impact of our shared efforts to support individuals and transform communities. We work every day to provide safety, support, and hope for those impacted by domestic violence, while also building long-term stability and fostering healthier relationships.

Our work focuses on six key areas:



Safety – Domestic violence is fundamentally about a lack of safety. Shelters respond to crisis, restore safety, and build skills that support healthy relationships.



Support – We strengthen access to both formal and informal supports, recognizing that connection is critical to healing and long-term well-being.



Stability – We help participants¹ address key challenges like housing, finances, and employment to support lasting independence.



Hope – Hope is a powerful part of healing. We empower individuals to envision and build a better future for themselves and their children.



Collaboration – Our strength lies in working together. Coordinated services and shared learning ensure we provide the best possible support and improve outcomes across the sector.



Innovation – We remain committed to pioneering bold, responsive practices that address evolving community needs.

As members of the Women's Shelter Directors' Network, we collaborate regularly to strengthen coordination, enhance services, and drive innovative programming. For this report, we focus primarily on adult outcomes, knowing that supporting parents creates positive ripple effects for children.

We hope you find insight in the impacts we have made this past year. Through our unwavering commitment to meaningful, lasting change, we affirm our dedication to help individuals and communities heal, grow, and thrive.

¹ In this report, participant refers to any individual who accessed a service offered by one of the partner organizations. This includes people supported through residential programs (such as emergency or second-stage shelter), outreach services, or educational and prevention programming.

Safety

Safety is Just the Beginning

Safety is at the core of everything we do. Domestic violence continues to be a significant issue in Calgary and surrounding areas, with three tragic femicides occurring in Calgary between January and July 2025. Calgary Police Services (CPS) reported there were 1,575 victims of violent domestic-related incidents in the first quarter of 2025, compared with 1,297 in the first quarter of 2024. The CPS also reported a 24% increase in domestic-related crimes in Calgary from 2022 to 2024. Shelters provide critical help to women and children who are fleeing violent partners or other family members. For example, in one of the shelters, FearsNotLove, 72% of shelter residents reported that they were at severe or extreme risk of homicide from their abusive partner, according to their scores on the Danger Assessment survey. Shelters provide immediate crisis support while empowering individuals with the skills to build safe, healthy relationships for the future.

Emergency Shelters

Emergency Shelters: Secure, short-term shelters specifically for survivors of domestic violence and abuse. Average duration can range from 30-90 days.

Second-Stage Shelters

Second-Stage Shelters: Longer-term housing, specifically for survivors of domestic violence and abuse. Average duration can range from 6 to 12 months.

"I feel heard and validated. I feel strong. Due to my 5-year abusive relationship, I have not had these feelings for a long time. I am very grateful for this program and for all the staff here who have helped me to evolve and move forward from a horrible situation wherein I had no hope."



In 2024-2025:

- The seven emergency shelters in this report provided immediate physical safety for over 800 adults and nearly 1,000 children (defined as anyone under 18 years old). What is often surprising to many is that children make up the largest group of people supported by domestic violence shelters in our region. For example, of the children who stayed in 3 of the shelters the majority were under the age of 12, including 33 infants under one year old.
- Compared to last year, the total number of people served in shelters decreased slightly by 5%. This decline does not necessarily reflect a reduced need for shelter. Instead, it may be connected to the longer stays families are experiencing due to a lack of safe and affordable housing options in the community, which limits shelter turnover and reduces the number of new people who can be admitted.
- The eleven organizations in this report collectively answered over 22,000 calls (an average of 63 calls per day) providing urgent safety planning and connecting individuals to additional supports. Of these calls, about 70% were answered through the centralized ShelterLink line², jointly hosted by FearIsNotLove and YW Calgary. This shared service ensures that callers are quickly connected to the right resources across both organizations.
- Four second-stage shelters offered longer-term safety to over 130 adults and 200 children. While these numbers are significantly smaller than the 800 adults and 1,000 children supported in emergency shelters, this gap reflects the limited capacity of second-stage housing, rather than a reduced need. Many families who leave emergency shelter continue to face challenges securing safe and affordable housing. While some are able to move into second-stage programs, others transition into rental housing, return to their home, or unfortunately face unstable housing situations such as couch surfing or temporary stays in hotels.
- Outreach programs at six shelters supported more than 1,700 adults and 400 children in their efforts to stay safe in their communities. Outreach workers support clients with safety planning in the community, and help them to access domestic violence- specific resources such as legal, financial, employment, educational, housing, and counselling supports.
- Shelter organizations also focus on building safety skills to support healthy relationships. This year three organizations delivered domestic violence prevention programming to over 3,800 participants, including over 2,000 youth who may be at risk for future domestic violence. Domestic violence prevention programming may include helping the abusive partner to stop the abusive behaviour; providing educational programs about domestic violence and healthy relationships to youth and adults; and helping bystanders to recognize, respond and refer when supporting someone who is experiencing domestic violence. These programs equip individuals with tools to foster safer and healthier relationships.

² In 2023, YW Calgary and FearIsNotLove united their crisis lines into a single, streamlined service. With a shared intake process, accessing support has never been easier: one phone call connects individuals to the right resources from both organizations, ensuring they get the help they need swiftly and efficiently.

The **ShelterLink App** is a groundbreaking tool that shares real-time bed availability for emergency and second-stage shelters with more than twenty partner service providers, including Calgary Police Service and Calgary Counselling Centre. This makes it far easier for individuals and families experiencing domestic violence to find safety, compared to the past when they would need to call multiple shelters to learn what spaces were available.

Impact

Our shelters continue to have a measurable impact on the lives of those we support. After accessing emergency shelters, second-stage shelters, and outreach programs, individuals experienced positive change:

85%

of surveyed participants across eight organizations³ reported feeling safer.

93%

of participants across six organizations said they were more able to keep themselves safe because of the supports they received.

Collaboration & Innovation

Innovative Partnerships to Protect Those at Highest Risk

YW Calgary and FearIsNotLove are united in their commitment to protect individuals facing imminent risk from domestic violence. Both organizations prioritize emergency shelter admissions for those at highest risk. Unfortunately shelter space is not always available across the Calgary region, particularly for single women as there are significantly more shelter bed spaces for families than for single women. When shelter space is unavailable, FearIsNotLove provides alternative short-term crisis accommodations to ensure urgent safety needs are met. In 2024, both organizations launched Rapid Outreach initiatives, with fundraised dollars, to support individuals at imminent risk who cannot access shelter. These programs provide immediate safety, support, and stabilization, while connecting survivors to longer-term services that help them rebuild their lives. In addition to the imminent risk program, every effort is made to provide all who are experiencing domestic violence with the support and resources they need to be safe.

Recognizing the challenges with, and importance of, accurately assessing imminent risk, YW Calgary has partnered with the Alliance Against Violence and Adversity (AVA) and Dr. Nicole Letourneau to conduct a review of existing research. This involves examining tools and frameworks for assessing imminent risk and lethality in domestic and intimate partner violence

contexts. Many existing risk assessment instruments aim to forecast lethality and repeat violence, with each having strengths and limitations. By reviewing and synthesizing findings across different studies, this project will develop a clearer picture of how risk assessment can be strengthened and integrated into our frontline services. This will create a stronger, evidence-based approach to identifying and responding to risk. Ultimately, this research lays the groundwork for saving lives and improving safety for families across Calgary and area.

Preventing Domestic Violence in Rural Communities

Organizations in rural communities are collaborating to prevent domestic violence, disrupting harmful patterns and building safer, more resilient communities. The “Made in Alberta Rural and Small-Town Primary Prevention Collaborative” is sharing data and insights from shelters, law enforcement, governments, industry, and community leaders - developing targeted strategies for each community. The following six recommendations were made: Expand local data, support male focused prevention, adopt a whole school prevention approach, engage grassroots and faith-based groups, launch positive public awareness campaigns and collaborate with First Nations in parallel efforts. For example, in Cochrane, the research helped to support the need for an outreach program to engage men and connect them with local information, support and resources (leveraging the [Men & digital strategy](#)).

Members of this collaborative include Big Hill Haven, Rowan House Society, YWCA Banff, and Shift: The Project to End Domestic Violence at the University of Calgary.



Support

Expanding access to supportive resources in the community remains central to the work of shelters and outreach programs. For those rebuilding and healing after domestic violence, support can take many forms. It can mean crisis intervention, or connection to legal services, housing programs, counselling, or other community resources. Informal supports, such as family, friends, neighbours, and cultural or faith communities are just as vital, though these networks have often been strained by experiences of abuse. For example, sometimes the abusive person has deliberately targeted and/or threatened family and friends, as a means of trying to isolate the victim. The abusive person may also have used other tactics to try to increase the victim's isolation, such as being abusive whenever she contacted her support network, or threatening to harm her if she maintained contact with supporters.

Shelters help individuals strengthen both formal and informal networks by providing information about community services and resources, and by providing safety from the abusive person so that victims can begin to re-establish relationships with friends and family. As victims begin to experience safety from the abusive person, and as they make significant life changes, their needs for support evolve. For example, a client will often need to obtain legal, financial, housing, safety, educational and emotional supports in order to live independently and safely on her own. While this work is complex, participant experiences this year highlight a consistent truth: when survivors feel supported, respected, and connected, they are more equipped to navigate challenges, build stronger networks, and move toward long-term safety and healing.

*"If I did not have the support,
I would not have gotten out of
the cycle of abuse."*



ACCESS TO FORMAL SUPPORTS.

Nearly 88% of participants across three emergency shelters and one second-stage shelter reported increased knowledge of, or access to community resources beyond the program they were utilizing. Many participants left with a clearer understanding of available supports and how to access them.

REBUILDING INFORMAL SUPPORTS.

Approximately 83% of participants across two emergency shelters and one second-stage shelter reported stronger informal support networks, including more stable relationships and more people they could rely on. Many shared that their ability to connect with friends, family, and community improved during and after their shelter stay. This increased ability to access support networks occurs most often because participants are safer from the abusive person and from his attempts to control and isolate them. Shelter clients are free to connect again with friends and family and to access the support they need. For some survivors, the stigma and isolation caused by domestic violence can make rebuilding informal networks challenging. A participant from Radiance shared how she worked with Community Transition Support to identify local faith communities and other social and emotional supports for herself and her children. She described taking pride in making her own choices, and in involving her children in the liberating experience of choice.

COLLABORATION & INNOVATION

Connection to Cultural Supports

Shelters prioritize connecting individuals to culturally supportive services that foster healing, belonging, and empowerment. These services recognize the importance of cultural identity in recovery and help individuals rebuild their lives in ways that honour their values and traditions.

- At Discovery House, the Cultural Liaison role builds stronger ties between Indigenous, immigrant-serving, and domestic violence sectors—creating space for cross-cultural storytelling, learning, and support.
- At True North, newcomers to Canada are connected to language and cultural supports that reduce isolation and foster meaningful community connections.
- Niitoyis Family Support Society offers multiple programs grounded in Indigenous values, cultures, traditions, and practices. These supports help individuals impacted by abuse heal through connection to traditional teachings and cultural wisdom.
- At FearsNotLove, cultural supports are offered to clients, such as sweat lodges and cultural craft activities. A prayer room with a variety of spiritual resources provides clients opportunities to pray and worship in their own faith. Every effort is made to also meet the food requirements of clients with diverse backgrounds.
- At Radiance, it is recognized that healing and growth are most effective when clients feel seen, heard, and understood within the context of their own cultural identities. Their work integrates cultural supports by building bridges to community resources and practices that respect diverse traditions and lived experiences. They collaborate with clients to ensure services are inclusive, trauma-informed, and responsive to their cultural values, creating a safe space where families can thrive while maintaining meaningful connections to their heritage and community.

Stability

Emergency and second-stage shelters offer more than immediate safety—they provide a foundation for long-term stability. Lasting independence requires support beyond physical safety, including access to affordable housing, sustainable employment, mental health support, legal advocacy, and community connection.

Safe, affordable housing is an urgent and growing need, especially in Calgary's costly housing and rental market. Many women feel trapped with the abusive partner simply because they feel they cannot financially afford to leave. Economic barriers compound this with many shelter residents earning below the Low-Income Cut-Off⁴, putting independent housing out of reach.

While the housing crisis and related challenges extend beyond our direct control, we remain deeply committed to helping survivors build lasting stability through responsive, collaborative, and empowering services.

"They helped me a lot when I was looking to rent. They provided housing resources, which was really helpful since I didn't know much. Their support guided me to find the place where we're living now."



Shelter staff provide comprehensive support to help participants work toward long-term stability, including:

- Support with housing applications and documentation.
- Referrals to connect participants with appropriate services, such as Alberta Works, Calgary Immigrant Women's Association (CIWA), CUPS, and the Women in Need Society (WINS).
- Coordination with community agencies and landlords for housing and support.
- Assistance in accessing financial support such as government benefits.
- Collaboration with employment services, job training, and education programs.
- Assistance with legal orders, such as Emergency Protection Orders and Parenting Orders, to help provide safety and stability
- Skill-building workshops that promote financial empowerment and independence.

Outreach staff also support individuals and families transitioning from the shelter to living in the community, helping them maintain or secure stable housing and access resources that promote safety and stability.

Promising Practices - Innovative Approaches

Pet-Friendly Shelters

Shelters including Big Hill Haven, FearsNotLove, Radiance Family Society, Rowan House Society, YW Calgary, and YWCA Banff are proudly pet friendly. Pets provide comfort and emotional support during times of trauma, helping ease the transition into shelter. Concern for their pets is a key reason many survivors delay leaving abusive situations, so allowing pets to come to a shelter makes it more likely that victims can escape the domestic violence. For example, research has reported that over half of women in shelters delayed leaving the abusive partner because they were not able to bring their pets with them. We also know from research that there is a significant relationship between domestic violence and animal abuse, and that there are high rates of animal abuse in households where there is intimate partner violence

Collaborating for Financial Empowerment

Many people served by shelters are needing financial support, knowledge, and skills in order to live independently. This past year, YW Calgary's Economic Prosperity team partnered with Heart to Home Network to deliver financial education workshops. Alongside this, Heart to Home Network offers life, relationship, and essential skill-building workshops, while

⁴ The Low-Income Cut-Off (LICO) is a threshold set by Statistics Canada to identify households that are likely to spend a much larger share of their income on necessities like food, shelter, and clothing than the average household. For a one-person household this cut off is currently at \$31,264.

Case Managers and Counsellors provide practical support helping residents secure financial assistance, pursue education or employment, and connect with community resources. These collaborative efforts recognize economic security as a cornerstone of safety and independence, ensuring that survivors have the knowledge and tools to build stronger futures.

Impact

66%

This year, 66% of participants across seven organizations transitioned into stable or secure housing upon leaving the shelter, a meaningful step toward housing stability.

Additional highlights from the past year include:

- One shelter reported a 30% increase in average monthly income from intake to discharge, reflecting meaningful economic progress.
- Two shelters shared that 35% of participants gained at least one source of income during their stay, a key step toward financial independence.
- Another organization found that 79% of surveyed participants felt more confident in navigating and improving their housing situation after receiving support.
- Results from three second-stage shelters showed that:
 - 60% of participants made positive progress towards their employment and education goals
 - 56% made progress in their money management skills
 - 50% improved their housing skills and stability

It is important to note that research has suggested that survivors who lack financial independence are significantly more likely to return to an abusive partner. Many survivors cite a lack of income, employment opportunities, or financial resources as primary reasons for returning. Without economic stability and a safe place to go, leaving can seem unsustainable, forcing some survivors to choose to return.

Hope

Hope is a Pathway to Healing

At the heart of our work is the belief that hope is essential to healing. When individuals and families face crisis, violence, or homelessness, healing often begins by restoring safety, dignity, and possibility. Through collaboration, we ensure that participants are not only supported in the moment but also empowered to build a better future.

Hope in Shelters

During the 2024–2025 year,

- Over 80% of residents in five emergency shelters reported feeling either more hopeful or generally more positive about their future.
- In two second-stage shelters, 98% of residents expressed increased hope and positivity about their lives.
- As one emergency shelter resident shared, “I am leaving here feeling hopeful, positive that I can do this. I got this.”

Domestic Violence Outreach Ensures Hope Remains Steady

Hope doesn’t start or end at the shelters. We work daily to build hope throughout a participant’s journey. Outreach services play a vital role, providing personalized, trauma-informed support that helps survivors stay connected, build resilience, and move forward with confidence.

Conclusion

Domestic violence and abuse continue to deeply impact individuals, families, and communities in Calgary and area, particularly since our region has seen tremendous growth in our population in recent years. The population of Calgary has increased by 15% since 2021, with rural areas also experiencing population increases⁵.

As a network of eleven dedicated organizations, we remain united in our mission to provide shelter, safety, and support for those impacted, while also focusing our efforts on prevention. This year has featured many collaborative partnerships with one another, as well as with other partners such as the Calgary Police Service and the University of Calgary's Shift – as we work together to stop domestic violence in our communities.

But shelters cannot do this work alone. While it is critical to support survivors in every way possible, survivors should not have to bear the responsibility and burden of staying safe. The ultimate responsibility **must** lie with those causing harm, and it is also critical to strengthen the systems designed to intervene before tragedy occurs.

This year, thousands of individuals and families turned to us in moments of crisis. They left with safety plans, new connections, strengthened skills, and renewed hope. We are proud of what we have accomplished together and of the innovation and collaboration that defines our sector. Every day, we save and rebuild lives and remain committed to a future where everyone is safe, supported, and free from violence.

Thank you for standing with us in this work.



"I became more confident, I have a plan how to change this situation and be a good mum for my little baby."

⁵ For example, Cochrane's population increased 14% between 2021 and 2024.

How you can help

SUPPORT SURVIVORS

- Listen without judgment and believe their experiences.
- Learn [the signs of abuse](#) and [how to respond safely and positively](#).
- Share crisis lines, shelter, and outreach resources with others who may need them. See page #15 for a list of the crisis lines and contact information for the shelters in this report.

RAISE AWARENESS

- Talk openly about domestic violence to reduce stigma. We know that most victims of violence will seek support from family and friends, rather than professionals, and that if they receive a positive social response they are more likely to continue seeking help rather than keeping the violence “behind closed doors”. For guidance on how to start safe, supportive conversations, explore FearIsNotLove’s [Take A Stand toolkit](#), a resource that educates and empowers community members to effectively support victims of domestic violence and abuse.
- Share survivor stories and trusted statistics to foster understanding.
- Use social media to promote local campaigns and events.

DONATE OR FUNDRAISE

- Contribute financially to shelters and outreach programs.
- Work with your local shelter to organize fundraisers in your community or workplace.
- Donate essentials like basic needs items, school supplies, or gift cards. (Please check with the shelter first to make sure they can use the items you want to donate).

ADVOCATE FOR CHANGE

- Support policies that protect survivors and fund prevention efforts.
- Contact elected officials to advocate for more programs and services to address domestic violence.
- Promote domestic violence education and cultural awareness in schools and workplaces.

Who are we?



bighillhaven.com

Crisis line: 403-796-6564.



radiancesociety.ca

Crisis line: 403-266-HELP (4357)



discoveryhouse.ca

Crisis line: 403-266-HELP (4357)



rowanhouse.ca

Crisis line: 1-403-652-3311



fearisnotlove.ca

Crisis line: 403-234-7233



truenorthab.com

Crisis line: 403-934-6634



hearthomenetwork.ca

Crisis line: 403-266-HELP (4357)



ywcabanff.ca

Crisis line: 1-403-760-3200



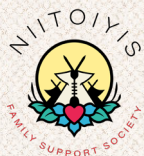
maskanfamily.com

Crisis line: 1-800-471-3789



ywcalgary.ca

Crisis line: 403-266-0707



niitoyis.com

Crisis line: 403-531-1972