

## Domestic Violence And Homelessness: What is the link?

I was an abused woman. I didn't look like it.

During my journey through abuse I lost everything. My house, my job, my car, my life savings, my sense of direction and my connection with everyone who was important to me. I became homeless.

Being homeless was painful. Being homeless was a continuation of the abuse I experienced while with the man who promised to love me, 'til death do us part, and he took the "death" part way too seriously. He promised everything but there was always a catch. In the end, my home was gone, my belongings lost, my children moved to their father's house, and I was alone with my abuser. Without a home, without a place to call my own. Worrying about where to sleep that night, worrying about basic safety.

Becoming homeless is like standing on the tracks while a speeding train comes barreling towards you. You are frozen in place and cannot move. You no longer know up from down, right from wrong, truth from lies. Courage escapes you. You live in constant crisis that never stops. By the end of the domestic violence and trip into homelessness I had lost my relationship with my daughters, my family and my friends. I had lost my emotional health, my belongings, my job and my financial security. I was rootless and groundless; constantly fearing what was coming next. I wanted to die.

By a miracle the police came one day and arrested my abuser on other charges and I was free. I began the journey back to health and happiness. Today I have reclaimed my life. I have a home. I have restored my relationship with my daughters and those I love. I am free from domestic violence and the homelessness that went with it.



"Becoming homeless is like standing on the tracks while a speeding train comes barreling towards you"

## Who Are The Homeless?

### 1. Sheltered Homeless

People living temporarily in social service shelters, women's shelters, hospitals, police services, emergency social services, etc.

### 2. Street/Unsheltered Homeless

People "sleeping rough" in places not intended for human shelter, including the downtown core, other commercial and residential areas, inner city parks, remote parks and river pathways, and prostitution strolls.

### 3. Hidden Homeless

People that don't have a permanent residence but may be "couch surfing", sleeping in vehicles or abandoned buildings where not seen, camping in heavily wooded areas difficult to search, or outside the "homeless count" area.

## Homelessness And Woman Abuse In Calgary

For some abused women, leaving becomes a path to homelessness. In fact, some shelters are considering a woman as "homeless" the minute she leaves an abusive partner. Women are more likely to be homeless because of eviction, interpersonal conflict, or no-one being willing or able to assist them. Many women would rather turn to the streets than face victimization by their partners. However, some women gradually slip into homelessness as a result of poverty and the lack of affordable housing

Fear of becoming homeless is an important part of abused women's decisions to remain with or return to an abusive partner. For some women, escape means long durations of unacceptable living conditions or homelessness as the wait for subsidized housing is anywhere from three weeks to five years. A lot of women will stay in abusive relationships because they are afraid that they cannot access decent housing. Also, they may even be denied rental units if landlords become aware that they are fleeing partner abuse.

If they do leave and go to a shelter, when they leave the shelter women are often faced with poor housing options and a lack of finances that leaves them with a choice between homelessness and returning to an abusive partner.

In addition, too little social assistance is a significant barrier to women's abilities to flee abusive relationships. Many women spend all, or almost all, of their monthly social assistance cheque on housing and have little or nothing left for food, utility bills, house repairs, clothes and transportation.

Access to safe, affordable, permanent housing must be seen as a core issue for policy makers and social services organizations that serve abused women.

### Fast Facts:

Calgary 2008:

- 4060 homeless individuals (18% increase since 2006),
- 197 homeless families (36% increase since 2006)
- 30% of homeless are women
- 20 – 40 % of homeless youth are gay/lesbian/bisexual/trans-identified
- 154 homeless youth are between 13 and 17 years old
- 327 homeless individuals are between ages of 18 and 24



## What To Do If You Are Being Abused

Domestic Violence is ABUSE. Abuse hurts. It can include hitting, name calling, controlling a person's money or actions, threats, or forced or unwanted sex.

Recognize that you are not responsible for the abuse. There is nothing that you can do to stop the abuse. It is the abuser's responsibility to decide to make a change. It is your responsibility to keep yourself and your children safe.

Recognize that violence/abuse is not likely to stop on its own - episodes of violence usually become more frequent and more severe.

It is important to break the silence. Try to tell someone who will believe you.

Safety plans must be developed to take into account the specific circumstances and abilities of each individual.

In cases where there has been physical abuse or extremely controlling behaviour, telling the abuser can seriously endanger the abused. Abusers can become increasingly violent when they fear their partner is leaving or they are losing control.



## Fact Sheet

### Family Violence Fact Sheet In Canada:

- 78% of instances of abuse and violence go unreported
- 1-2 spousal homicides each week

### In Alberta:

- 4 of every 10 murders in 2005 were domestic-related homicides
- Women experience the highest rates of domestic violence in Canada
- April 2006-March 2007, shelters received over 100,000 crisis calls

### In Calgary:

- Police responded to 12,276 domestic violence calls in 2007 (500 more than 2006)
- In 2007, 27% of homicides were domestic-related

## Financial Support

Albertans fleeing family violence may be eligible for help to pay for things that ensure their safety and well-being:

- \$1000 allowance to set up new households
- \$30 monthly allowance for telephone
- \$60 monthly allowance for transportation

**Funding to cover costs of re-locating to a place of safety**

For more information visit

<http://www.employment.alberta.ca/awonline>

or visit an Alberta Works office.



## For More Information

[www.endviolence.ca](http://www.endviolence.ca)  
<http://www.sutr.ca>

### 24 Hour Help For Everyone - Calgary And Area

Emergency - Police/Fire/Ambulance	911
Requests for Police Service	403-266-1234
Distress Centre (Telephone Information)	403-266-1605
Men's Line (Telephone Information and Support)	403-266-4357
Community Resource Team (Mobile Team)	403-299-9699
Child Abuse (Emergency Social Services)	403-297-2995
Calgary Communities against Sexual Abuse (Includes sexual assault)	403-237-5888
Children's Cottage	403-233-2273
24 Hour Family Violence Helpline	403-234-7233

### Shelters

Awo Taan Native Women's Shelter	403-531-1972
Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter	403-234-7233
Kerby Rotary House (60 years plus)	403-705-3250
YWCA Sheriff King Home	403-266-0707
Eagle's Nest Stoney Family Shelter (Morley)	403-881-2000
Rowan House Emergency Shelter (Black Diamond)	403-933-3370
Strathmore Shelter (Wheatland) (for men and women)	403-934-6634

### Second Stage Shelters

Brenda Strafford Centre	403-270-7240
Discovery House	403-670-0467
Sonshine Community Services	403-243-2002