

Hanna Step Forward Project

Family Violence Resource Needs Assessment

Final Report

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Prepared for:

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A.1 Background and Project Purpose

The Hanna and District Association of Lifelong Learning applied for and received funding for an initiative to address family violence. A task force consisting of the following organizations was formed to manage this initiative:

- Hanna and District Association of Lifelong Learning, hereafter referred to as the Hanna Learning Centre
- Family Resource Worker Program
- Family & Community Support Services (FCSS)
- Big Country Victim Services
- Alberta Health Services
- Town of Hanna
- RCMP
- REACH
- Hanna Ministerial Group

The first year of this initiative logically seeks to assess some baseline statistics pertaining to family violence to assess community needs. The needs assessment will determine:

- 1) Prevalence rates of family violence in the Hanna area;
- 2) Community opinion of, and awareness of supports available in the community, as well as where to refer victims.
- 3) Community opinion of prevalence rates of family violence in the community.

Schollie Research & Consulting was engaged to complete the needs assessment portion of the project. This report outlines the needs assessment.

The needs assessment will support the task force's next step in the initiative: To create a community action plan to address family violence.

A.2 Project Method

While there are a number of definitions for family and domestic violence, for this study we define family violence as *actual or threatened physical, sexual, psychological, emotional or financial abuse directed toward a family member or someone with whom they have an intimate relationship. It also includes neglect.*

We reviewed national and provincial data regarding family violence. We primarily reference Statistics Canada data which uses both police-reported crime data and self-reported victimization data. Both sources have benefits and limitations. Police-reported surveys are limited to only those criminal incidents that are reported to and substantiated by police. Self-reported data comes from the General Social Survey (GSS) and provides information on self-reported incidents of victimization that are both reported and unreported to police. It also includes information on non-violent forms of abuse (e.g. emotional and financial abuse).

In order to determine prevalence rates of family violence in the Hanna area, we interviewed individuals, agencies, service providers and organizations that provide supports and services to victims and/or perpetrators of family violence. We asked these organizations to share what data or statistics that they could regarding family violence. We also inquired about respondents' knowledge of supports and services and their observations regarding the greater community at large and their clients' knowledge and perceptions regarding family violence.

The main method used for the community opinion and awareness portion of this study was a telephone interview of 200 randomly sampled residents in the Town of Hanna and surrounding rural area including the communities of Byemoor, Cessford, Craigmyle, Delia, Endiang, Sunnynook, Wardlow, and Youngstown. The interviewing took place between February 4th and 18th, 2016.

As with all research, the methodology used in this study has limitations and possible biases that the reader should be aware of:

- **Survey Sampling Error:** For the telephone survey, the survey statistics are generally considered accurate to within plus or minus 6.9%, 19 times out of 20. However, smaller sub-segments of the sample will have higher error. For example, estimates concerning the 62 male respondents will have a higher error than the overall sample of 200
- **Sample Demographics:** The telephone survey mostly sampled respondents with "land line" numbers, although some mobile phone numbers were included. As such, respondents aged 35-64 are likely over-represented and respondents aged 18-34 are under-represented. While we believe the error associated with this is relatively small, there is a chance that these survey statistics will be impacted.

B.1 Prevalence Rates

B.1.1 National Prevalence Rates

According to Statistics Canada's "Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile, 2013", police reported that there were 87,820 victims of family violence in Canada or 252.9 victims of family violence for every 100,000 individuals in the population (0.25%)¹. In terms of provincial rates, Alberta recorded the 4th highest rate of police-reported family violence (290.4 per 100,000 population) behind Saskatchewan (489.4), Manitoba (375.8), and Quebec (315.8).

Other highlights from this report include:

- Spousal violence was the most common form of family violence with nearly half (48%) of family violence occurring at the hands of a current or former spouse. Dating violence accounted for 53% of police-reported incidents of intimate partner violence.

¹ *Juristat* Article – Family violence in Canada: A statistical profile, 2013. Statistics Canada – Catalogue no. 85-002-X.

Note 1: the primary data sources for this report are the police-reported Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Survey and the Homicide Survey. Incidents that are not *Criminal Code* offences, such as emotional and psychological abuse are not included in this report.

Note 2: the term "family" refers to relationships defined through blood, marriage, co-habitation (common-law partners), foster care, or adoption. Dating relationships are not included in the definition of "family" for this report.

- Victimization by a parent was the next most common form of police related family violence (17%).
- The national rate of police reported intimate partner violence is 310.3 victims per 100,000 population and includes dating partners.
- Over two-thirds of all family violence victims were female (68%).
- Common assault was the most frequent form of family violence reported to the police (58% of victims), followed by intimidation offences (17%). Intimidation offences include criminal harassment, indecent telephone calls, and uttering threats.
- Trend data indicate that police-reported incidents of family violence have decreased; between 2009 and 2013, physical assault declined by 14%, spousal victimization declined 17%, and incidents involving other family members decreased by 10%.
- Physical assault was the most common type of police-reported family violence against children and youth followed by sexual offences.
- Seniors represented a relatively small proportion of all family violence victims – 56.8 victims per 100,000 seniors.

According to Statistics Canada “Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile, 2014”, *trends in self-reported spousal violence*, 70% of spousal violence is not reported to the police². Looking at results from the 2014 General Social Survey (GSS), about 4% (760,000 individuals) of the 19.2 million Canadians in the provinces who had a current or former spouse or common law partner reported having been physically and/or sexually abused by their partner in the preceding five years. This is significantly lower than the 7% that was reported ten years ago in 2004.

B.1.2 Provincial Prevalence Rates

Provincial statistics from Statistics Canada’s “Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile, 2013” indicate that rates of police-reported physical and sexual assaults committed against a family member is third highest in Alberta (238.5 per 100,000 population), after Saskatchewan (410.3) and Manitoba (323.7), among Canada’s provinces.

Table B.1.2.a: Victims of police-reported physical and sexual assaults committed against a family member, 2013

Victims of police-reported physical and sexual assaults committed against a family member, 2013	Alberta		Canada	
	Number	Rate per 100,000 population	Number	Rate per 100,000 population
• Total physical assault	8,810	220.5	62,024	179.8
• Total sexual assault	718	18.0	5,435	15.8
• Total physical & sexual assault	9,528	238.5	67,459	195.6

- Alberta is one of only three provinces to record rates below the national rate for family violence against children and youth (223.8 per 100,000 population compared to 243.5).

² Statistics Canada. 2016. "Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile, 2014." The Daily. January 21. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 11-001-X. Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey on Victimization, 2014.

- Among the provinces, New Brunswick (76.5 per 100,000 population) and Alberta (75.7), followed closely by Saskatchewan (73.0) recorded the highest rates of family violence against seniors in 2013. The national rate was 56.8.
- The provincial rate of police reported intimate partner violence is 394.3 victims per 100,000 population and includes dating partners.

This report also records the victims of police-reported family violence, by census metropolitan area (CMA) and non CMA, which is one of the closest indications there is of rural versus urban.³

Table B.1.2.b: Victims of police-reported family violence, by census metropolitan area (CMA), 2013

Victims of police-reported family violence, by census metropolitan area (CMA), 2013	Number	Rate per 100,000 population
CMA Total	47,913	196.5
Non-CMA Total	39,907	385.8
Canada	87,820	252.9
Calgary	2,409	175.9
Edmonton	3,120	243.0

A non-CMA rate of 385.8 is substantially higher than the CMA total of 196.5 and the national rate of 252.9 implying that there is a notably higher rate of family violence in rural areas compared to urban.

In another Statistics Canada report “Measuring Violence Against Women: Statistical Trends” using the General Social Survey (GSS) 2009 as a source, the proportion of women experiencing spousal violence was significantly higher in Alberta than the national average (9% versus 6%)⁴. This report also notes that Western provinces record the highest rates of police-reported sexual offences. After Manitoba (189 per 100,000 population) and Saskatchewan (164), Alberta recorded the third highest rate of sexual offences against women (125).

As another indicator of family violence, the Alberta Council of Women’s Shelters indicate that over 4,900 women and 4,500 children were accommodated in member’s emergency shelters in Alberta between April 1, 2014 and March 31, 2015. In the same time period 9,073 women and 9,548 children were turned away from Alberta member shelters due to lack of capacity.⁵

B.1.3 Prevalence Rates in the Hanna Area

One of the challenges that the Hanna Task Force for Family Violence encountered when they first embarked on their Step Forward project was to start with a solid understanding of family violence in the Hanna area. Collecting data locally has been a challenge for various reasons including:

³ A Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) consists of one or more neighbouring municipalities situated around a major urban core. A CMA must have a total population of at least 100,000, of which 50,000 live in the urban core.

⁴ *Juristat* Article – Measuring violence against women: Statistical trends. Statistics Canada – Catalogue no. 85-002-X. Note: The General Social Survey (GSS) provides self-reported data on criminal victimization. It also offers from information in spousal relationships and children witnessing spousal abuse. The victimization data from the GSS has the advantage of providing information both on crimes that come to the attention of the police and those that may go unreported therefore would not be captured in official police statistics.

⁵ Alberta Council of Women’s Shelters. *Alberta Provincial Shelter Data*. Collected from April 1, 2014 – March 31, 2015.

- Some of the service providers and agencies are working with a small numbers of clientele (less than 6) so maintaining confidentiality can be a challenge when it comes to sharing data.
- A number of the individuals we interviewed had only been in their role for a couple of years, so were unable to comment on longer-term trends.
- Often service providers are treating clients primarily for issues such as anxiety, depression, addictions, parenting and coping skills and in the process family violence or neglect is uncovered as an underlying issue.

The Hanna RCMP were able to run some reports to determine how many of their calls for service were scored with “Spousal Abuse as Defined by the Family Violence Report of Alberta” and then how many of the files contained scoring for “Spousal Abuse – Male or Female Party Charged.”⁶ In this case, the definition of spousal abuse includes current and former dating relationships.

We estimate that the population for the area serviced by the Hanna RCMP is approximately 4,900 citizens based on the 2011 Census of Population.

Table B.1.3: Hanna RCMP Detachment Statistics and Estimated Rates of Victims of Family Violence

Year	Hanna RCMP Statistics		Estimated Rates: Victims of Family Violence ⁷	
	Files	Files Cleared by Charges	Files / Population	Per 100,000 Population
2013	26	11	0.53%	530.6
2014	28	16	0.57%	571.4
2015	40	18	0.82%	816.3
2016 year to date	11	4	0.22%	224.5

The estimated rates shown above for the Hanna area seem valid given that the national rate is 252.9, and the non-CMA rate is 385.8 per 100,000 population; those rates do not include dating relationships, while the above numbers from Hanna would include current and former dating relationships. The provincial rate of police reported intimate partner violence, which does include dating partners, is 394.3 victims per 100,000 population.

Additionally, Big Country Victim Services estimates that they deal with about 70-80 cases annually in the Hanna region. They also observed that they had seen a significant increase in family violence cases in the last 6-8 months, which corresponds with the RCMP’s increased files in 2015.

While, numbers were either not available, or unable to be disclosed due to small size, discussions with local resource people confirm that they are dealing with clients who have or are experiencing various instances of family violence including verbal, emotional, financial, physical, sexual abuse, and neglect.

⁶ Files are based on how they were scored by investigating officers and supervisors at the time, consequently there may be a small margin in error. There has been closer review of scoring over recent years by supervisors so it is anticipated that most files have been appropriately classified.

⁷ “Files by Population” calculated by taking the number in the “files” column and dividing it by the estimated population area of 4,900. “Per 100,000 Population” is calculated by multiplying the percentage calculated in “Files by Population” by 100,000.

We also interviewed Addictions, which has run groups in Hanna for men, who are typically mandated by court order or recommended via their probations officer or counsellor to attend. These individuals usually have anger or family violence issues. Addictions also deals with both male and female clients who are mandated to get supports around addictions and violence.

C.1 Community Opinion and Awareness

A telephone interview of 200 randomly sampled residents in the Town of Hanna and surrounding rural area was conducted to gauge community opinion of the prevalence family violence and the awareness of supports available in Hanna.

C.1.1 Community Awareness of Supports Available in the Hanna Area

When asked what groups, individuals or organizations in Hanna assist people if they are a victim of Family Violence, about a third of respondents interviewed responded “don’t know.” The RCMP was identified by 42% of respondents, followed by Big Country Victim Services, an organization that works closely with the RCMP. Components of the health care system, including mental health, doctors, clinics and hospital, were identified next most frequently.

Table C.1.1.a: To the best of your knowledge, what groups, individuals or organizations in Hanna assist people if they are a victim of Family Violence?

Mentioned	Count	Percent
RCMP	83	42%
Don't Know	68	34%
Big Country Victim Services	35	18%
Mental Health	29	15%
Family Doctor / Physician / Clinic	27	14%
Hospital	25	13%
Clergy / Church	19	10%
Family & Community Support Services (FCSS)	12	6%
Other	11	6%
A school counsellor / Family Resource Worker	10	5%
Private counsellor or therapist	9	5%
Alberta Child & Family Services / Social Services	9	5%
Hanna Learning Centre / Provincial building (programs & services)	8	4%
Schools / Teachers	7	4%
Community health / Public health / Health unit	5	3%
Helpline / Hotline	4	2%
EMT / Ambulance / First Responders	3	2%

Nearly half of the 62 males interviewed responded “don’t know” (48%) compared to only 28% of females.

Respondents were then asked where they would refer an adult friend, neighbor, or relative in Hanna if they knew or suspected they were a victim of family violence. Two-thirds of respondents indicated the RCMP (67%). A much lower proportion (14% each) mentioned a doctor/clinic and/or the hospital.

Table C.1.1.b: If you knew, or suspected that someone in the Hanna area was a victim of family voice, where or to whom would you refer them for help?

Mention	An adult friend, neighbour or relative		A child or youth	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
RCMP	133	67%	144	72%
Hospital	28	14%	23	12%
Family Doctor / Physician / Clinic	27	14%	19	10%
Don't Know	22	11%	11	6%
Big Country Victim Services	19	10%	11	6%
Mental Health	18	9%	8	4%
Clergy / Church	18	9%	12	6%
Other	13	7%	12	6%
Family & Community Support Services (FCSS)	13	7%	17	9%
Hanna Learning Centre / Provincial building (programs & services)	7	4%	9	5%
Private counsellor or therapist	7	4%	3	2%
Alberta Child & Family Services / Social Services	5	3%	34	17%
Community health / Public health / Health unit	4	2%	2	1%
An adult they can trust	4	2%	9	5%
A school counsellor / Family Resource Worker	3	2%	29	15%
A women's shelter	2	1%	-	-
Helpline / Hotline	1	1%	4	2%
School / A teacher or principal	-	-	24	12%

Eighteen percent of males responded “don't know” compared to 8% of females when asked where to refer an adult friend, neighbour, or relative. A significantly higher percentage of male respondents (74%) indicated the RCMP compared to 64% of females. A higher proportion of females compared to males indicated hospital, doctor/clinic, victim services, mental health, clergy, and FCSS. Eight percent of males compared to 1% of females suggested the Hanna Learning Centre / Provincial Building.

Next, respondents were asked where they would refer a child or youth in the Hanna area for help if they knew or suspected they were a victim of family violence.

RCMP topped the list again with 72% of respondents' mentions. A much lower proportion of respondents indicated Alberta Child & Family Services (17%), and components of the school system (teacher, principal, school counsellor, Family Resource Worker).

Eighty-two percent of males interviewed stated RCMP compared to 67% of females when asked where to refer a child or youth. However females were more likely to state components of the school system compared to males; 18% of females stated “school counsellor/Family Resource Worker” and 14% of females stated “a teacher/principal or schools” compared to 6% of males in both cases.

C.1.2 Community Opinion Regarding the Prevalence of Family Violence in the Hanna Area

When respondents were asked what percentage of the population in the Hanna area was a victim of family violence in 2015, the overall average was 13.7%. Table C.1.2.a outlines the distribution. Sixty-eight percent of the males that responded thought less than ten percent of population in the Hanna area was a victim of family violence in 2015 compared to only 30% of females.

Table C.1.2.a: In your opinion what percentage of the population in the Hanna area was a victim of family violence in 2015?

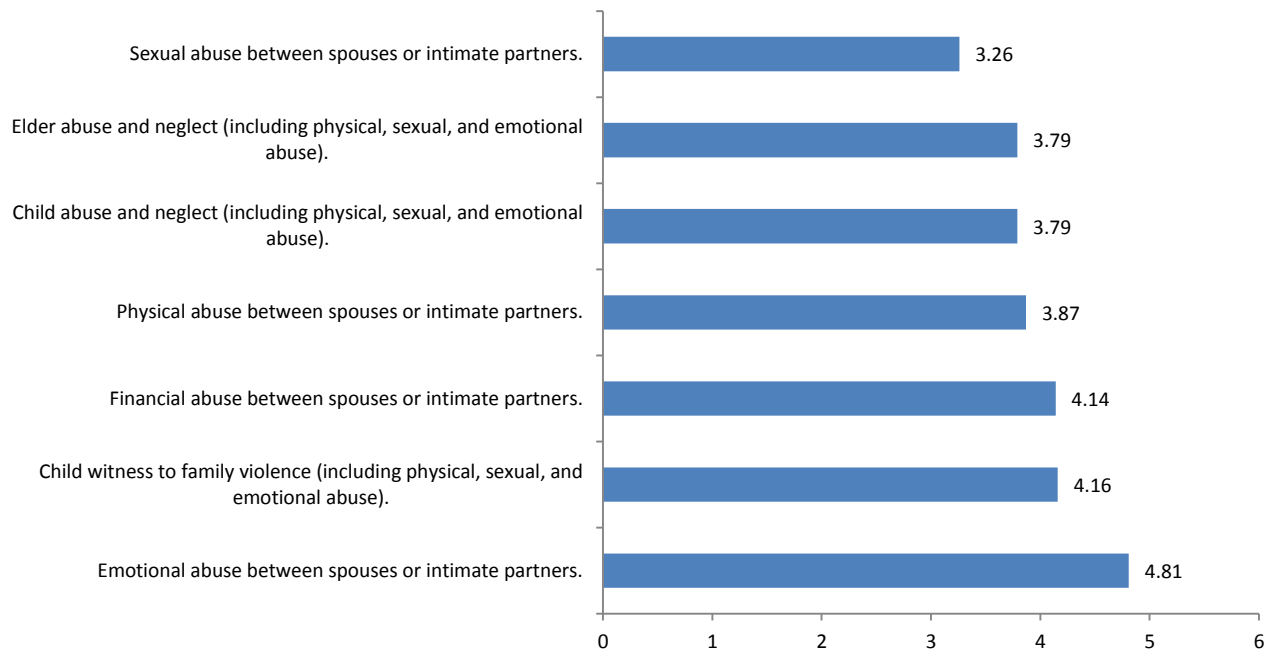
Mentioned	Count	Percent
Less than 10%	59	41%
10% - 25%	70	48%
26% - 50%	14	10%
More than 50%	2	1%

A study conducted by Ipsos Reid for the Alberta Government in March 2014 found that 51% of Albertans think family violence exists “a lot” or “a fair bit” in their own community⁸. This study found that a significantly higher percentage of females compared to males think that family violence exists “at lot” or “a fair bit” in their community (61% vs. 41%); the majority of males say family violence occurs “not at all” or “not very often”. This perception is highest among males aged 16 to 34 years (62%). Paradoxically, intimate partner violence is most likely to occur when individuals are in their twenties and thirties, for both men and women according to “Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile, 2013.”

Respondents were asked to rate their opinion on the prevalence of various types of family violence in the Hanna area using a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is not at all prevalent and 10 is very prevalent.

⁸ Alberta Human Services “Albertans’ Perceptions of Family Violence and Bullying Survey 2014” Final Report, March 2014. Prepared by Ipsos Reid.

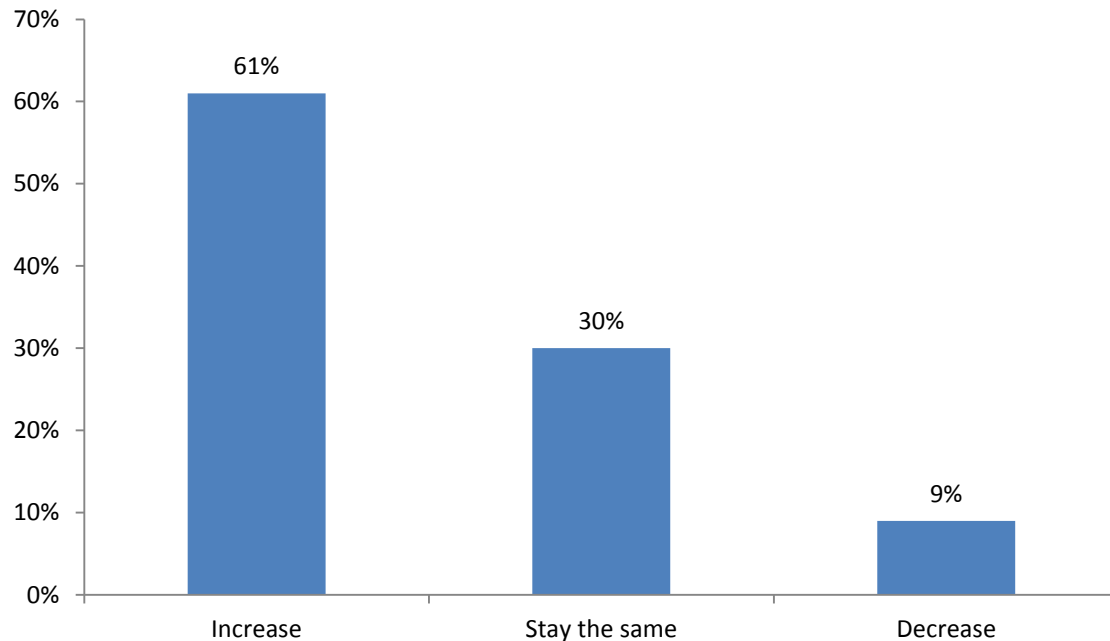
Table C.1.2.b: On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is not at all prevalent and 10 is very prevalent, how prevalent do you think the following forms of family violence are in the Hanna area?



Given the current state of the economy in Alberta (the price of oil has been less than \$40.00 / barrel for the past 3 months) and the current government’s commitment to phase out coal-fired power stations like the nearby ATCO Sheerness Generating Station, which employs about 110 workers, the Hanna Task Force for Family Violence was also curious to know whether or not the general public felt that incidences of family violence would increase, decrease, or stay about the same in the near future.

Sixty-one percent of respondents thought the incidence of family violence would increase in the next couple of years.

Table C.1.2.c: Over the next couple years, do you think the incidence of family violence in the Hanna area will...



As previously stated in this report, one of the service providers interviewed observed that they had seen a significant increase in family violence cases in the last 6-8 months. The individual interviewed felt that it was due to downturn in economy and layoffs. Couples often argue over finances and these arguments escalate - sometimes into physical violence.

Some of the other service providers indicated that their caseloads had increased in recent years. The marriage & family counsellor used to come to Hanna four times a month and now comes six times a month and has a waiting list. Another service provided stated that they had a very active caseload and while not all these are indicative of family violence they tend to be indicative of family breakdown.

C.1.3 Key Service Gaps, Challenges, and Issues

Some of the key service gaps, challenges and issues identified by service providers include:

- Rural culture: There is a stigma and people may tend to not report family violence. The attitude of “what happens in the home stays in the home” may be prevalent. Even if you know, you pretend you don’t which makes for a culture of acceptance. Also because the community is small, it may be difficult to seek help in an anonymous fashion; you probably know a number of the staff at the hospital or medical clinic on a personal level.
- Knowing and identifying what constitutes abuse. Some of the individuals interviewed felt that a lot of citizens think abuse has to be physical and/or sexual. Therefore it isn’t acknowledged or reported; the perception is that you turn to police for physical violence. However, a number of service providers indicated that verbal and/or emotional abuse is quite predominant.

- Lack of services: While Hanna is very fortunate for a community of its size to have a certified marriage & family therapist and a local psychiatrist, the services available in Hanna are limited and are not always timely or easily accessible. E.g. A number of services, such as Addictions and Child & Family Services, are provided out of Drumheller and come to Hanna only a few times a week or month. The issue is more acute for small communities in the region like Youngstown, Delia, and Cessford.
- Transportation: Clients may be able to get some initial help in Hanna, but often have to leave the community for additional services, therefore transportation and flexibility to travel to larger centres for counselling/services is a major issue. Individuals may not drive, have a vehicle / a reliable vehicle, or the flexibility with their work, families, and personal schedule to leave their community for services.
- Limited help for families/individuals in immediate danger: There is no resource to get vulnerable families out of town especially in terms of after-hours access. Additionally, if you need to go to a shelter, it's a major effort to pull yourself and your family out of the community. The closest shelters are in Strathmore and Red Deer. It is also financially hard to leave a dangerous situation especially for individuals and families that have a controlling partner.

D. Summary

In conclusion, collecting statistics on family violence is challenging for a variety of reasons. A few of the key reasons are:

- not all cases of family violence are reported to the police, which is one of the key sources used to measure family violence.
- family violence is considered to be a highly personal issue, it is often “hidden” in the home, and there is a stigma regarding the acknowledgement of family violence.
- there may be a culture of acceptance with regards to family violence.

We are able to estimate, using data from the Hanna RCMP, that over the past three years the rate of police reported family violence in their service area ranges from approximately 530.6 to 816.3 per 100,000 population. This appears to be high in comparison to the national rate of 252.9 and a non CMA (a proxy for rural) total of 385.8 per 100,000 population however those rates do not include dating violence, while the numbers for Hanna would include current and former dating relationships.

While Hanna RCMP data from 2015 shows an increase in the number of files, there is also some anecdotal evidence that there has been an increase in family violence in the last year such as increased caseloads as reported by service providers, and an increase in the number of clients served by Big Country Victims Services in the last 6-8 months. Additionally, 61% of survey respondents feel that the incidence of family violence will increase in the next couple of years.

Respondents identified most frequently the following individuals and organizations in Hanna as key points of entry for accessing help:

- RCMP (top mentioned in all cases)
- Big Country Victims Services
- Various components of the health care system: doctors, clinics, hospitals, mental health
- Schools especially in the case of children and youth
- Alberta Child & Family Services in the case of children and youth
- Family & Community Support Services (FCSS)
- Clergy / church

While survey respondents listed FCSS and clergy as key points of entry, interviews suggest that, in reality, very few individuals actually seek family violence help directly through FCSS or clergy.

As the Hanna Task Force for Family Violence moves forward with an action plan to promote education and awareness of the issues, as well as promoting healthy relationships and respectful relations, they may want to consider the following suggestions:

- a) Helping members of their community to identify the various forms of family violence and demonstrating what healthy and respectful relationships look like. While the members of the Task Force no doubt have access to several great resources, one that we uncovered during our research for young people was:
<https://youthrelationships.org/>
- b) Helping members of the community to understand the implications of family violence, the long term effects of family violence, and the cost to society. People who are abused in family relationships, or have witnessed family violence, are more likely to experience low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts, and post-traumatic stress disorder.⁹
- c) Helping members of the community to understand what action they can and/or should take if they are a victim of family violence or if they are aware of or suspect that someone else is a victim of family violence.
- d) Understanding that the community identifies the RCMP, Victims Services, Health Care System, Schools, FCSS and clergy as the key referral points for family violence in the community means that these organizations should be well prepared to deal with individuals who might come to them.
- e) Investigating the “feasibility” of an emergency shelter or safe houses within the community. When one looks at the map of member shelters from the Alberta Council of Women’s Shelters in Alberta, there is a gap in facilities in east central Alberta (see: www.acws.ca/shelters). Some smaller communities like Fairview, Grande Cache, Wabasca, Morley have shelters. A regional facility, in cooperation, with communities like Drumheller, Stettler, and Coronation may be a feasible consideration.

⁹ National Clearinghouse on Family Violence. *Health Effects of Family Violence*. Prepared by Deborah Doherty. Ottawa, Public Health Agency Canada, 2003.

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