



PARTNERS IN POLICING

Item 10.2.2  
Board of Police Commissioners  
April 2, 2025

# HALIFAX

# HRP Victim Services

Dolly Mosher, Coordinator, HRP VS



# HRP Victim Services

- Police-based victim support unit
- Established in 1996 to provide supportive services to victims of a crime
- Special emphasis: victims of domestic violence and sexualized violence
- Office location:  
7 Mellor Ave., Burnside  
East Division



# Victim Services Team

- Victim Services Coordinator
- Sexual Assault Case Worker
- Domestic Violence High-Risk Case Coordinator (DVCC)
- Domestic Violence Police Officer (DVO)
- Domestic Violence Offender Navigator (DVON)
- Volunteer Mobile Outreach Team (15 Volunteers)
- Business Support Person



# Victim Services Goals

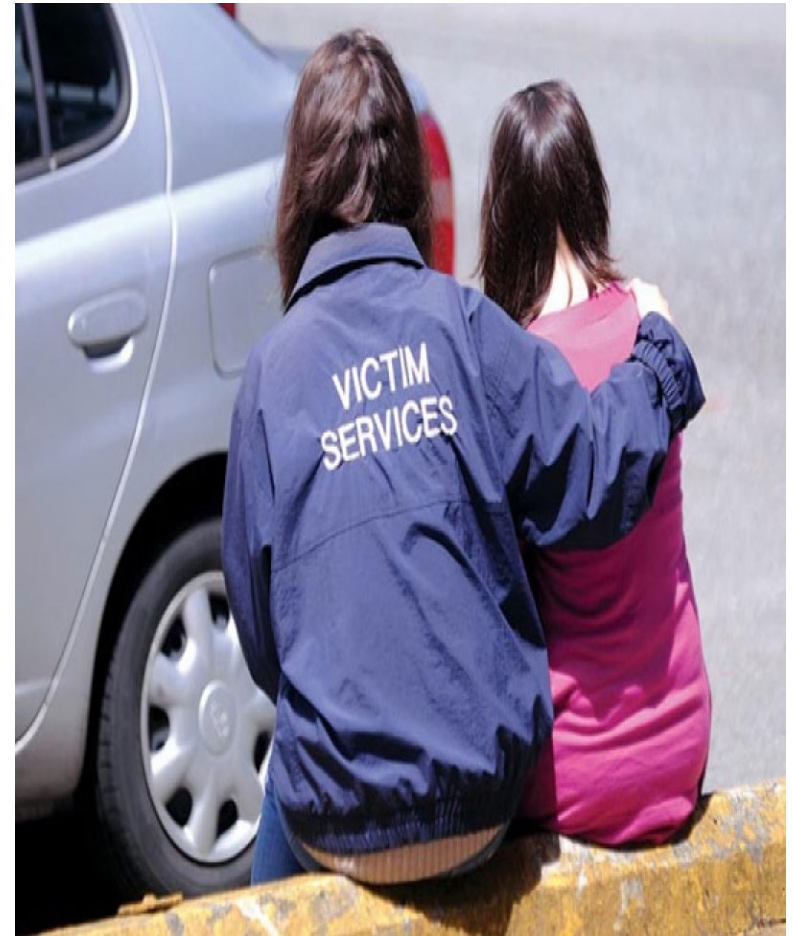
- Enhance the services provided by police to victims
- Provide a coordinated trauma-informed response to victims in cooperation with community agencies
- Increase awareness of community-based services through education
- Increase supports and healing for victims through research and education



# Who Do We Support?

Victim Services supports victims of **all crimes** and tragic circumstances, including:

- Domestic Violence
- Sexual Assault
- Robbery
- Sudden death/suicide
- Homicide
- Officer led referrals



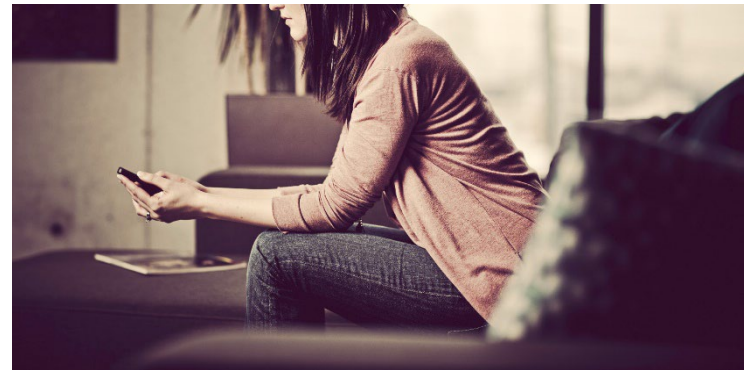
# What do we do?

- Crisis intervention
- Police case information
- Emotional support/short-term counseling
- Safety planning
- Advocate for victims
- Referrals
- Liaison between the police and victim
- Crisis on-scene support

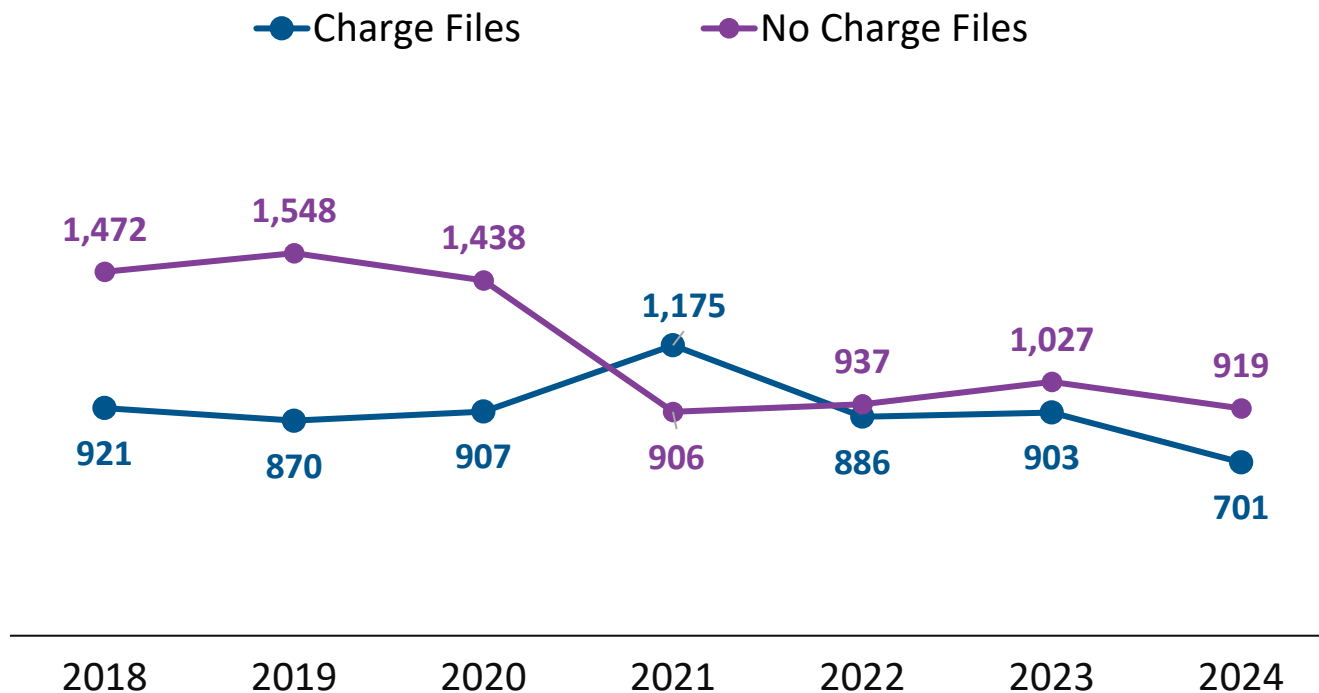


# How Do We Get Referrals?

- Victim Services work queue
- Direct referrals by police officers
- Client-initiated contact
- Community agencies



# Total files involving domestic violence reported to Halifax Regional Police 2018-2024 (YTD: Nov. 28, 2024)





# High-Risk Case Coordination

- Team approach – DV Officer/DVCC/DVON
- Attempts to contact victim – DVCC and DVO may go out if not successful by phone
- Domestic Violence Alarm Program (DVAP) may be offered
- Risk/case management with high-risk partners:
  - Department of Justice Victim Services
  - Child and Family Wellbeing program
  - Bryony House
  - New Start Counselling
  - Correctional Services
  - Public Prosecution Service
  - Domestic Violence Court
  - Risk Unit within Nova Scotia Sheriff Services

# 8 Stages of Domestic Homicide

1. Pre-relationship history of stalking/abuse
2. The relationship develops quickly
3. Signs of coercive control are obvious
4. Perpetrator is triggered
5. Escalation
6. Perpetrator pivots
7. Premeditative planning
8. Homicide

Source: <https://www.dvact.org/post/do-you-know-the-8-step-timeline-in-domestic-abuse-homicides>

# Strangulation/Choking

- Victim Services automatically designates an Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) file as high-risk if a choking charge is laid
- Contact with the victim includes asking pertinent questions with regard to symptoms that may require the immediate need for medical attention, including:
  - Incontinence
  - Loss of consciousness
  - Swelling internally of the throat
  - Loss of voice

# Jacquelyn Campbell Danger Assessment (JCDA)(Lethality)

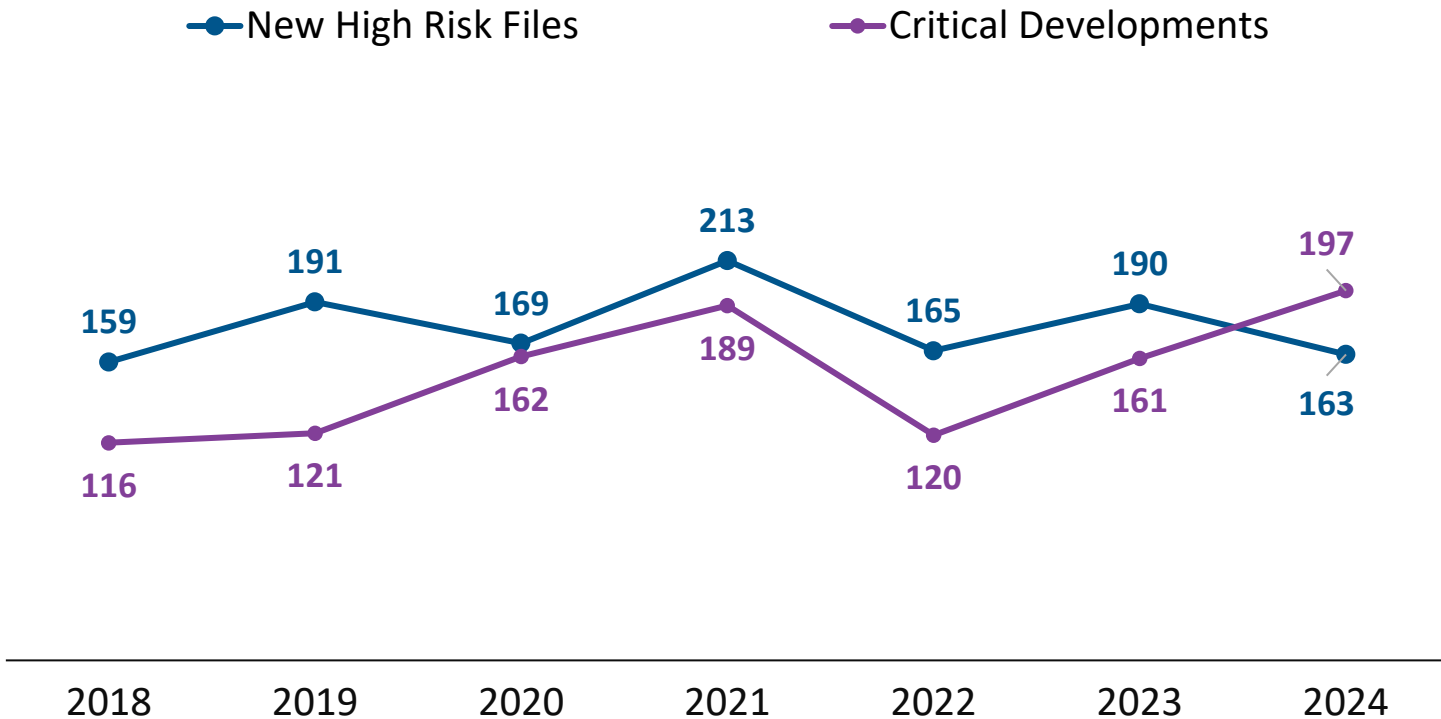
- HRP Victim Services staff are all certified in the use of the Jacquelyn Campbell Danger Assessment (JCDA), an instrument designed to assess the likelihood of lethality or near lethality occurring in a case of intimate partner violence
- The Ontario Domestic Assault Risk Assessment (ODARA) is a tool used to predict the risk of future intimate partner violence and assess the likelihood of re-offense by individuals who have assaulted their partners
  - ODARA scores of five or six are given immediate call status and victim is offered the risk assessment
  - Score of 18 or higher indicates extreme risk of lethality in that relationship and given a high-risk designation

# Highest Risk Domestic Violence Table (HRDVT)

- HRDVT is a multi-agency partnership working in collaboration to tackle the DV cases assessed as being at the highest risk for lethality
- The group meets weekly and includes HRP, the Department of Health and the Public Prosecution Service
- Cases of highest risk are referred to HRDVT
- HRP presently has five cases



# Total files involving domestic violence reported to Halifax Regional Police and designated as high risk 2018-2024 (YTD: Nov. 28, 2024)



# Domestic Violence Offender Navigator Program (DVON)

- History
- Theory
- Why?
- The DVON program started as a pilot project in 2019 and is an upstream primary resource to high-risk domestic violence offenders
- Through early intervention, they work with the offender, with the shared objective of the offender taking responsibility, acknowledging the harm of their abuse, and accepting help

*“Offenders need to access services as soon as possible to reduce the possibility of repeat behaviour and further harm.”*

*“SOONER RATHER THAN LATER”*

# Domestic Violence Offender Navigator (DVON)

## DVON Process:

- In high-risk files, accused is informed and referred by the DVO
- Accused is contacted directly by the DVON (cold call)
- Referral by DVCC/Victim Services worker
- Voluntary program; access to community resources
- DVON accompanies DVO to speak with the accused in person, when appropriate

# “A day in the life of a DVON”

- Stay connected with the offender to offer ongoing supports
- Advocate for offender rights, but also reinforce the importance of taking responsibility
- Document contact with offender
- Case discussed by all parties involved



*All of this happens before a plea is entered, with an option of accessing Domestic Violence Court*

# Sooner Than Later Conference 2023

- Funding through Canadian Women's Foundation
- 95 Police/ Corrections/ Victim Services workers from Atlantic Canada and Regina

## Highlights:

- Dr. Nancy Ross (Dalhousie School of Social Work)
- DVON program beginnings and status
- Police panel
- Dr. Allan Wade Ph.D - Violence, Resistance and the Power in Language



# How do we measure success?

- Offenders going through the DV court process, accepting responsibility and the victim not required for Criminal Court
- Offenders are NOT re-offending
- Victim and offender either reconciling or co-parenting safely
- Program has been funded successfully through:
  - Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women
  - Canadian Women's Foundation
  - Proceeds of Crime Fund
- Police agencies from NL, Ottawa, Calgary, Regina and NB seeking information on starting the program

# Officer Training Initiatives

- Trauma-informed approach to policing:
  - HRP Criminal Investigation Division (CID) Course
  - Recruits with the Police Science Program (two days)
  - New police officers who join HRP
- ODARA Training – Developed a new add-on exercise now being used in other police jurisdictions
- Victim Services 1-9 p.m. shifts (within divisions)
- Introduction to Coercive Control – What is it, is it family violence? Impacts and how to recognize it

# Other Victim Services Programs

- Peace Bond Navigators Program
- Emergency Protection Order Support
- Safe Space/Safe Place Workshops
- Translated brochures & access to interpreters for victim support
- Medical Examiners Office referrals
- Public education presentations





**Dolly Mosher**  
**[mosherdo@halifax.ca](mailto:mosherdo@halifax.ca)**  
**902-817-5832**