

HAMILTON POLICE SERVICES BOARD

- INFORMATION -

DATE: June 11, 2020
REPORT TO: Chair and Members
Hamilton Police Services Board
FROM: Eric Girt
Chief of Police
SUBJECT: *Year-End Report: Victim Services Branch – 2019*
PSB 20-025

BACKGROUND:

The Hamilton Police Service Victim Services Branch was established in 1992. There are four (4) full time civilian employees and over 80 volunteers. Victim Services respond to the immediate needs of people who have been victimized by crime and/or trauma, such as homicides, suicides, sudden death, assaults, sexual assaults, motor vehicle and fire fatalities, robberies and harassment.

The Victim Services Branch has been the recipient of several prominent Provincial and International Awards for program delivery to victims of crime and trauma.

The Victim Services Branch has also been recognized as a best practices model and has presented at the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) Conference.

Attached is the Victim Services Annual Report for 2019, outlining the quality service provided to the residents of the City of Hamilton.



Eric Girt
Chief of Police

EG/W. Mason
Attachment: *2019 Annual Report – Victim Services Branch*

cc: Ryan Diodati, Deputy Chief – Support
Will Mason, Superintendent – Community Mobilization Division

Together. Stronger. Safer.



**HAMILTON POLICE SERVICE VICTIM SERVICES BRANCH
2019 ANNUAL REPORT • 2019-2021 BUSINESS PLAN**

VISION • MISSION • OUR VALUES

COMPASSIONATE • DEDICATED • INCLUSIVE • INTEGRITY • INNOVATIVE • PROFESSIONAL • TEAMWORK

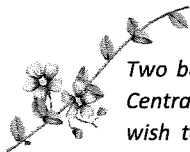


Victim Services is a Branch (VSB) of the Hamilton Police Service (HPS) since 1994. It is the only 24-hour on-scene crisis intervention service for victims of crime and trauma in the City of Hamilton. We respond to the immediate needs of people who have been victimized by crime and/or trauma such as homicides, suicides, sudden death, assaults, sexual assaults, domestic violence, motor vehicle and fire fatalities, robberies, and harassment. Victim Services Branch staff are full-time civilian members of the Hamilton Police Service and along with specially trained volunteers provide practical assistance, emotional support and referrals for additional community resources. Individuals, families, businesses and organizations receive critical crisis intervention as well as support, information and referrals necessary to assist victims in dealing with the trauma of the incident. We know that the earlier the intervention is activated for a victim, the faster a person will regain control over their life once an incident has occurred.

In 2019, Victim Services recognized its 25th milestone anniversary as a Branch with Hamilton Police Service. One hundred “Wild Heart Tulips” were planted in one of the raised garden beds in the front courtyard at Central Station to represent the amazing hearts of each of our dedicated and compassionate volunteers who give of themselves to help victims of crime and trauma in our community. The year 2019 was also the 10th milestone year for Hamilton Police Service Victim Services Branch and our community partners to join together during National Victims & Survivors of Crime Week (VSCW) and be recognized for their dedication and work in supporting those impacted by crime and trauma.

The Victim Services Branch assisted 2,098 new victims and had a total of 6,266 contacts with victims. With 4 full-time staff and over 80 volunteers, the Victim Services Branch is able to provide these services 24/7. Throughout 2019, we continued to develop relationships and create opportunities to be engaged and involved within our community in collaboration with our partners and stakeholders. As a result of the ongoing administration of existing grants, we were able to continue to offer services and resources to support victims.

With a shared purpose of responding to the needs of our community, the Victim Services Branch of Hamilton Police Service will continue to: focus on its core mandate to respond to the immediate needs of victims of crime and trauma, engage with HPS members to develop programs and resources, collaborate and foster opportunities for partnerships with community agencies and stakeholders.



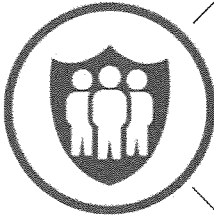
Two benches are located in the courtyard at Hamilton Police Service Central Station. The benches provide a peaceful place for those who wish to pause, rest or reflect. On each bench is a plaque with an inscription: “FORGET ME NOT” ~ A Place of Quiet Reflection to Honour All Victims of Crime Because “Every Victim Matters”.

BUSINESS PLAN OVERVIEW

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS • VICTIM SERVICES BRANCH

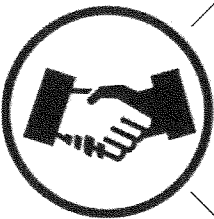


The Victim Services Branch is pleased to share our goals, achievements and initiatives for 2019 that have contributed to the outcomes and success of the 2019-2021 Business Plan in this Annual Report. The goals are aligned with the 2019-2021 Business Plan Strategic Directions and Objectives as follows:



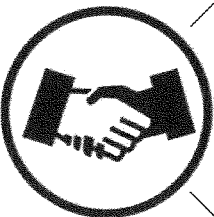
COMMUNITY SAFETY GOAL F: Maximize communication with our community as it relates to services and supports, as well as crime prevention, public safety and harm reduction.

•**ACTION:** Address victimization in our community.



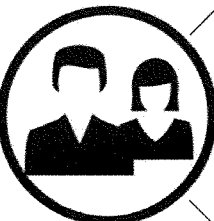
ENGAGEMENT & PARTNERSHIPS GOAL B: Provide meaningful volunteer opportunities and continue the development of future ambassadors for the Hamilton Police Service.

•**ACTION:** Victim Services will continue to provide ongoing training and professional development opportunities for volunteers to develop their skills.



ENGAGEMENT & PARTNERSHIPS GOAL C: Identify funding opportunities available to police services and community groups for the implementation of new programs and the continuation of existing effective programs.

•**ACTION:** Victim Services will continue to administer the Department of Justice Victims Fund "Measures to Address Prostitution" grant and apply for any other relevant grant opportunities.



PEOPLE & PERFORMANCE GOAL A: Effective recruitment and retention of high quality internal and external candidates to service in the Hamilton Police Service.

•**ACTION:** Increase recruitment of volunteers to a minimum class of 35-40 for January 2020 to include HPS Cadets.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

TO ENSURE THE SAFETY OF THE COMMUNITIES THAT WE SERVE

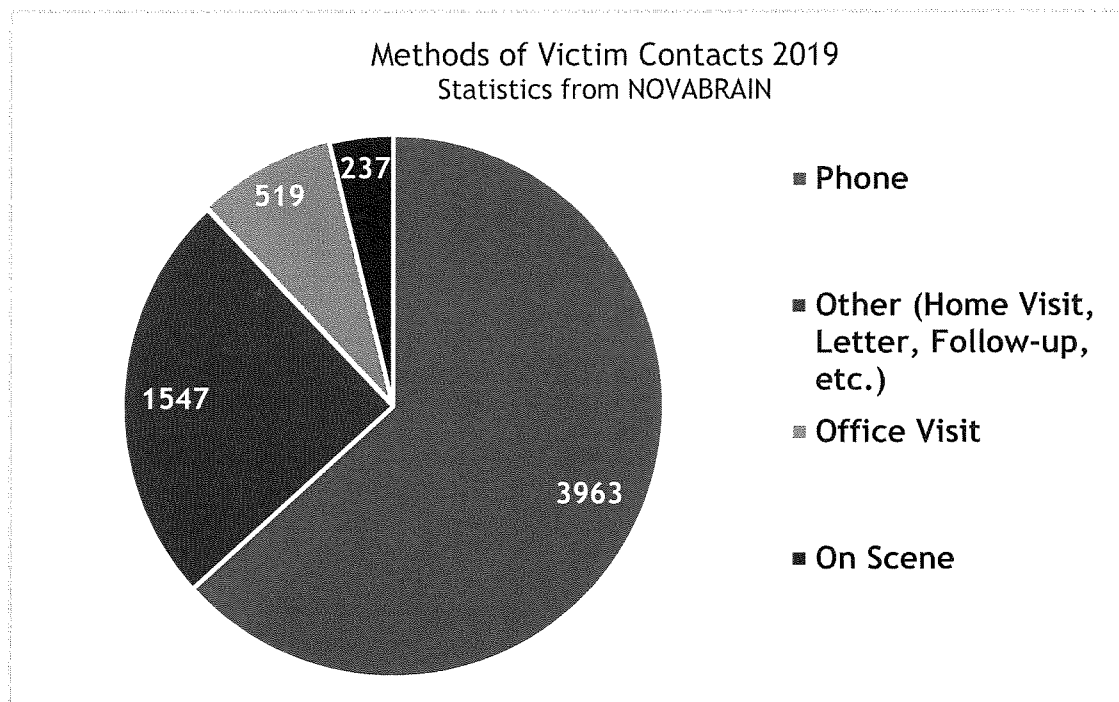


GOAL RESULTS:

- 2,098 new victims assisted.
- 6,266 total contacts with victims (includes new and existing clients).

Responses to a stressful situation vary greatly from person-to-person and not all people will experience the same reaction at the same level of intensity nor for the same length of time. However, it is important to recognize that whatever the reaction is, it is often a normal human response to a stressful situation. For many victims, they are able to empower themselves with self-supporting options and do not require further assistance after initial contact with Victim Services. Other victims may determine that continued resources/interaction with Victim Services is required for their resiliency. Victimization may have occurred recently or historically. Not all victims request or need on-scene crisis intervention.

Victim Services Branch, in partnership with the Woman Abuse Working Group (WAWG), applied for and received a grant to develop and produce a comprehensive safety plan for victims of domestic violence and 1,000 kits were developed and disseminated amongst community service partners. The goal of kits is to ensure victims receive the same information on safety planning from all community agencies.



ENGAGEMENT & PARTNERSHIPS

TO FOSTER EFFECTIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH ALL OF OUR COMMUNITIES



GOAL RESULTS

The Victim Services Branch continued to participate as a member of the Sexual Assault Community Review Team (SACRT). The team is comprised of the HPS Sexual Assault Unit (SAU), the Victim Services Branch, the Sexual Assault Domestic Violence Care Centre, the Sexual Assault Centre of Hamilton Area (SACHA) and the Native Women's Centre. The team met throughout 2019 to review a sampling of sexual assault cases where *"no charges resulted"*. The vision of the team is *"we are all committed to undertaking this review with the end goal of improved service delivery to victims of sexual assault. It is our hope that everyone who experiences sexual assault in Hamilton gets the best possible response, service and care."*

As a result of one of the SACRT recommendations, Victim Services continued to offer the Sexual Assault Support Program (SASP) in 2019. The SASP worker meets with victims/survivors of sexual assault prior to their interview with a Sexual Assault Unit Detective. The purpose of the meeting is to provide trauma informed care, information on community resources and counselling, information on the process and answer any questions prior to their meeting with their assigned Detective. They are offered accompaniment throughout their video statement should they choose to exercise this option. Follow-up with the victim/survivor is also done the next day after their interview. The program has been well received with many positive anecdotal comments noted from victims of crime. When the program was launched, victims were asked the following day of their interview if the Sexual Assault Support Program was helpful:

- 52 victims engaged in the feedback process when SASP launched and 100% of them indicated that SASP was helpful to them.
- 150+ individuals were supported by SASP by the Victim Services Branch throughout 2019.

The Victim Services Branch continued to deliver the Victim Quick Response Program (VQRP) and the newly enhanced VQRP+ for the City of Hamilton on behalf of the Ministry of the Attorney General (annual contract since 2013). There were 670 claims processed through the Victim Quick Response Program in 2019 e.g. door/lock repairs, cell phone replacement, accommodation, transportation, crime scene clean up, counselling, homicide funerals, etc. The claims totalled over \$300,000 in direct benefit to victims of crime.

Victim Services also continued to deliver the five-year grant made possible through the Department of Justice Canada Victims Fund for \$15,000/year (July 2015 – March 2020). The benefits derived from this grant continue to support its three pillars: community stakeholder initiatives, education and individuals exiting sex work. As part of the grant, Victim Services Branch collaborated with the Hamilton Anti-Human Trafficking Coalition (HAHTC) and hosted a conference in February and updated the Community Guide for professionals and front line responders working with trafficked persons.

ENGAGEMENT & PARTNERSHIPS

TO FOSTER EFFECTIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH ALL OF OUR COMMUNITIES



The Victim Services Branch also administered the Trauma Bear Program in partnership with Shaw Communications Inc. by ensuring all Hamilton Police Service vehicles contain Trauma Bears. Police Officers give Trauma Bears to children at scenes to provide some comfort during the aftermath of crime and trauma. This partnership with Shaw Communications Inc. and their donation of the trauma bears has been in place since 2012.

Victims and Survivors of Crime Week (VSCW) is an annual outreach initiative of the Justice Canada Policy Centre for Victim Issues (PCVI). The year 2019 was the 10th year that the Victim Services Branch applied and received funding from the Department of Justice Canada. In addition to the safety plan kits, a ceremony honouring victims of crime was held at Hamilton Police Service Central Station.

Community Contributions

- **Events:** Hamilton Urban Core Street Health Fair, World Elder Abuse Day, HPS PRIDE Flag Raising, Sisters In Spirit Flag Raising, McMaster University Community Engagement & Volunteer Fair, December 6 “Remembering Victims of the Montreal Massacre: Commemorating the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women”, Ontario Hockey League (OHL) 911 Appreciation Night, Hamilton Council on Aging Seniors 55+ Active Living Information Fair, HPS Police in the Park, McMaster University Resource Fair, Sisters In Spirit Candle Light Vigil Six Nations.
- **Committee & Community Work:** Emergency Preparedness Advisory Committee for City of Hamilton; High Risk Domestic Violence Community Advisory Team; Hamilton Anti-Human Trafficking Coalition (HAHTC); Hamilton Police Women's Services Advisory Committee to the Chief; Emergency Women's Shelters Protocol Committee; Woman Abuse Working Group (WAWG); Sexual Assault Community Review Team (SACRT); HPS LGBTQ2S+ Internal Support Network and International Women's Day Planning Committee.
- **Presentations:** HPS Citizens' Police College; Mohawk College; Indigenous Victim Services; Women's Weekly Catholic Family Services of Hamilton; Hamilton Funeral Homes Peer Support Group; Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB); Sexual Assault Centre Hamilton Area (SACHA); Hamilton Hebrew Academy; Healing Our Sisters Anti-Human Trafficking Crisis Services and Resources Native Women's Centre; Canadian Red Cross Hamilton Branch and Victim/Witness Assistance Program (V/WAP).

PEOPLE & PERFORMANCE

TO INCREASE ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY AND EFFECTIVENESS BY ATTRACTING,
DEVELOPING AND RETAINING OUR MEMBERS



GOAL RESULTS

The Victim Services Branch strives to support all areas of the Hamilton Police Service. The following are examples:

- **Communications:** Provides training to Call Takers and Dispatchers on victim services and responding to victims of crime.
- **Domestic Violence Unit:** Ongoing teamwork regarding High Risk Offenders & Victims.
- **Bail Support Unit:** Continue to support Ministry of the Attorney General & Bail Support when Victim Witness Assistance Program is closed (after-hour support).
- **Homicide Unit:** Crisis response to families of homicide and child deaths under five years.
- **Patrol/CID:** Crisis response on-scene; provide HPS Trauma Bear program supported by Shaw Communications Inc.
- **Sexual Assault Unit:** Continue to support the SAU via the Sexual Assault Support Program (SASP).
- **Training Branch: Domestic Violence Officer, Recruit, Major Case Management.** Provided training to Officers during these courses.
- **Vice & Drugs Unit:** Coordinated response with Vice Unit to assist victims of human trafficking and individuals involved in sex work.
- **Crime Prevention Branch:** Victim Services Branch works collegially with Crime Prevention Branch to access and schedule safety audits (CPTED) for victims of crime/trauma.

Continued to present to internal members of the Hamilton Police Service and external agencies regarding the role of Victim Services and the Victim Quick Response Program to further inform and promote.

Training Opportunities included: HPS Block Training; Human Trafficking Conference; OPC Interview course (victim component); SPCCH Conference (zero suicide initiative); Lunch n' Learn with Crown Attorneys & Sexual Assault Domestic Violence Care Centre; Lunch n' Learn on fetal alcohol spectrum disorder; Lunch n' Learn on SACHA; Engaging Substance Using Youth; Road to Mental Readiness (R2MR); Suicide Bereavement Clinician Training; Shelter/City/VSB cross-training.

PEOPLE & PERFORMANCE

TO INCREASE ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY AND EFFECTIVENESS BY ATTRACTING,
DEVELOPING AND RETAINING OUR MEMBERS



Volunteers contribute over:

- 30,000 hours of on call coverage and availability.
- 950 hours of direct contact with victims.
- fluency in 18 languages other than English.

The Victim Service Services Branch Award of Distinction was presented to the Detectives of the HPS Sexual Assault Unit for their contribution and engagement with the new Sexual Assault Support Program (SASP). The Victim Services Branch Award of Distinction was created in 2011 and recognizes HPS Sworn and civilian members whose efforts support victims of crime and trauma.

Direct Service Volunteer Stephanie Pascoal was presented with the *Marg Marshall Award* for outstanding volunteer leadership at the HPS Annual Awards event held on May 13.

The Ontario Volunteer Service Awards were presented to Victim Services Branch volunteers at a Fall banquet hosted by the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration; volunteers were invited to the Hamilton Police Awards evening at which Victim Service Branch volunteers were recognized for their milestone continuous years of service: Marilyn Hunt (25); Karin Prowse, Diane Gatto and Gaye Yachetti (20), Sharon Schotsman, Chris Pigeon and Dolores Soyka (5).

“You Make A Difference” recognition, photos and thank you cards are presented throughout the year to acknowledge the value of volunteers’ contributions to the Branch and the citizens in our communities.

Victim Services recognizes contributions through the publication of the *Did You Know* volunteer monthly newsletter.

Training opportunities included quarterly Professional Development for all volunteers featuring calls presented by their colleagues and guest presenters on community resources; a 13 session training program to 21 new volunteer recruits from January to March.

Twelve HPS Cadets completed the Victim Service Branch volunteer training program as part of their Cadet program.

In 2019 there was also an increased recruitment of volunteers to a minimum class of between 35 – 40 for January 2020.