



HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

A Snapshot

Based on “respect, trust, support, accountability, honesty, responsibility, conflict resolution, fairness and non-threatening behaviour,”^[1] healthy relationships form through positive and trusting interactions.

Information provided by the Edmonton
Social Planning Council for Edmonton Family
& Community Services Support Services.

Read the full literature review at:
edmonton.ca/fcss

FCSS
Family & Community
Support Services

Edmonton

When a person is capable of forming and maintaining healthy relationships, they are better able to build a reliable network of support and feel a sense of belonging—a proven form of protection against negative life experiences.^[2]

PREVENTING FAMILY VIOLENCE



Police-reported family violence has increased 13% from 2016 to 2019.^[3]



Nearly 67% of family violence survivors are women and girls.^[4]

In 2019, 21% of Canadian adults reported having witnessed family violence as a child, which directly linked to higher rates of violent victimization into adulthood.^[8]

Some people deprived of the skills necessary to establish healthy relationships exhibit increased risk of negative and toxic behaviour—the most harmful being family violence. Addressing violence means programs and supports can focus on improving skills and behaviours among at-risk populations of either perpetration or victimization.

DID YOU KNOW? *Supporting the development of healthy relationship skills at all stages of life generates far-reaching, long-term outcomes for women, children, and families.*

CHILDREN & YOUTH

Children exposed to family violence can experience long-term emotional, behavioural, physical, social, and educational issues,^[5] as well as higher rates of suicide.^[6] Targeted approaches to address these traumas early in life can improve skills development and strengthen healthy relationships as children engage with more complex life experiences.

Dating and romantic connections during adolescence help establish a lifelong foundation for intimate relationships. Children imitate parents' or caregivers' behaviour; if what they see is unhealthy, children are more likely to encounter interpersonal conflict or react to life stressors with violence or aggression.^[9] Youth programs can help build skills and mitigate these risks. Research shows that school-based programs result in high engagement rates. Examples include:

- The Fourth R program
- The Alberta Healthy Youth Relationships Strategy
- The Healthy Relationships Plus Program
- Shift: The Project to End Domestic Violence

MEN & BOYS

Investing in men's health is vital to addressing family violence, alongside efforts to challenge gender norms and sexist behaviours. Although there is a lack of programming specific to addressing these social challenges, programs developed for racialized participants have demonstrated success when they uplift culture, ceremony, and coping skills as ways to build individual capacity.

Prevention strategies among young boys can result in positive outcomes surrounding education, substance use, and behaviour later in life.^[11] Developing skills at a younger age supports healthy relationships and ultimately, families that thrive.

INDIGENOUS WOMEN & GIRLS

60% vs 44%

Approximately 60% of Indigenous women (aged 15+) have been victims of intimate partner violence compared to 44% of non-Indigenous women.^[12]

Cultural loss through colonial practices has led to an ingrained sense of exclusion and separation.^[12,13] Building healthy relationships requires addressing historical trauma and social marginalization. Family violence prevention measures must integrate strategies that engage youth with cultural awareness and traditional knowledge, discussions around healthy relationships, and awareness of community-based supports and services.^[15] This helps strengthen resiliency and inclusion.

DID YOU KNOW?

Peer mentoring is one of the most effective ways to engage youth and promote healthy relationship skills.^[10,11]

Alberta has had the

2nd HIGHEST

number of cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada (behind only British Columbia).^[14]

SENIOR ABUSE PREVENTION

Senior abuse can take the form of physical, sexual, financial, emotional abuse, and neglect. Perpetrators can be family, friends, institutions, or even strangers. Older adults who feel isolated are more likely to be victimized (including ethnocultural, newcomer, LGBTQ2S+, or Indigenous seniors). This isolation often results from language barriers, illness, discrimination, limited access to supports and accommodations, or poverty.^[16]

- Family violence against older adults has increased since 2015.^[3]
- The senior population in Canada is rapidly growing, which means the prevalence of abuse will likely continue to increase.
- In 2019, $\frac{1}{3}$ of all police-reported incidents of senior abuse in Canada were committed by a family member.^[3]

BUILDING RESILIENCE AND IMPROVING INCLUSION

through targeted programming can reduce risks of isolation and vulnerability.

COVID-19

- The pandemic exacerbated circumstances for women and children at risk of victimization.
- In 2020, domestic violence related calls to Edmonton police rose 16%.^[18]

In the first 6 months of the pandemic, domestic violence shelters admitted

2,725

**WOMEN, CHILDREN,
AND SENIORS.**^[19]

Though shelter numbers were lower than in 2019, this is likely because stay-at-home measures prevented women from safely leaving abusive situations, or because shelters had to reduce intake numbers to comply with public health measures.^[19] Children and youth were more likely to witness violence in the household being at home, while losing opportunities to develop relationships with teachers, mentors, coaches, and community members—the adults who typically recognize signs of family violence.^[3] These adults may also act as supports against environmental stress and encourage and support the development of stable, healthy relationships, a form of protection for younger generations.^[17]

FIRST STEPS

Ensuring there are expansive supports and programs to help people as they emerge from the pandemic is vital. Healthy relationship programming can positively impact behaviours and habits as communities adjust to a post-pandemic era.

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