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For Immediate Release

CALGARY – Families of all cultural backgrounds suffer from domestic abuse and yet many cultures view counselling as a taboo subject. Calgary Counselling Centre is working to break the negative stigma associated with professional counselling among Calgary’s Sikh community.

Often people of Sikh background fear counselling will divide and split families when in fact the only thing dividing families is the domestic abuse taking place in their homes. Domestic abuse counselling services like those offered at Calgary Counselling Centre aim to heal and create unity in families experiencing domestic abuse.

“Here at the Centre it’s a priority for counselling to be accessible to everyone,” says Jaspaal Dial, Counsellor and participant in Calgary Counselling Centre’s Diversity Program, “this includes providing first language counselling in Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu and Farsi.”

Calgary Counselling Centre operates with no waitlist and fees are adjusted according to income to maximize accessibility. Service is provided by a diverse counselling staff in a culturally sensitive environment.

“A major barrier in seeking counselling for individuals in the Sikh community experiencing domestic abuse is apprehensiveness towards being identified within their communities,” says Dial. “Calgary Counselling Centre’s location and policies make it possible for clients to have complete anonymity.”

The Sikh community is well established in Calgary. Calgary Counselling Centre is looking to this community to set the example for other cultural communities that they too may see domestic abuse counselling as an accessible and positive resource.

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Backgrounder

The following organizations provide service to the Sikh community regarding issues of domestic abuse:

Calgary Counselling Centre

Calgary Counselling Centre operates with a diverse staff creating a culturally sensitive environment for all clients. The Centre runs several domestic abuse counselling programs and offers first language service in 21 languages including:

- Punjabi
- Hindi
- Urdu
- Farsi

All domestic abuse treatment programs at Calgary Counselling Centre focus on the impact of abuse on self, families and relationships; gender roles, expectations and beliefs that support violence; healthy relationships and commitment to non-violence. Programs include:

- Responsible Choices for Men Who are Abusive in Intimate Relationships
- Responsible Choices for Women Who are Abusive in Intimate Relationships
- Turn for the Better: for men who have been involved in an abusive relationship
- You Are Not Alone: for women who have experienced abuse in an intimate relationship
- Responsible Choices for Children and Parents: for children who are abusive or aggressive at home or at school

A leader in the research and treatment of domestic abuse issues in North America, Calgary Counselling Centre helps clients working against the lifelong psychological and emotional effects of domestic abuse. The Centre is unique in that all families and individuals receive customized treatment programs. Our philosophy for providing treatment – one size does not fit all.

Responding to domestic abuse with strong treatment programs such as those offered at Calgary Counselling Centre helps to rebuild and provide positive futures for families experiencing domestic abuse.

HomeFront

HomeFront assists victims of domestic abuse while ensuring their ongoing safety during the court process. The traditional criminal justice response to domestic abuse was ineffective with cases falling through the cracks because of a lack of evidence and unwillingness of victims to testify in court.

The dedicated court calendar operated by HomeFront improves response time to domestic abuse cases. Conferences between legal representatives and those charged with domestic abuse offenses held prior to the court date are effective in holding offenders accountable and better protecting the safety of victims.

The pre-court conference system allows for many cases to reach resolution before a criminal trial ever takes place. HomeFront ensures effective offender accountability, treatment and eventual incorporation into positive social roles and responsibilities.

HomeFront coordinates an Early Intervention and Outreach Program with the Calgary Police Service for families with children. The program supports families in building on their existing strengths and also helps to connect families with appropriate community resources for domestic abuse treatment.

Calgary Immigrant Women's Association

The Calgary Immigrant Women's Association (CIWA) supports the integration of immigrant and refugee women, girls, and their families into our community. Programs offered through CIWA respect dignity and spirit and help women to realize their full potential.

Through their Family Services Department CIWA operates and Family Conflict Program. The program assists immigrant women find appropriate counselling services in their new environment.

Calgary Communities Against Sexual Abuse

Calgary Communities Against Sexual Abuse (CCASA) is the primary sexual assault and sexual abuse crisis and education service provider for Calgary and surrounding areas. Formed in 1994, the organization builds community awareness of sexual abuse and sexual assault and works to reduce the related trauma.

Programs offered through CCASA include 24 hour support and information line, Calgary Sexual Assault Response Team (CSART), crisis intervention and support counselling, group counselling and an empowerment and celebration weekend for women survivors of sexual abuse.