

November 6, 2007

New Alberta unit combats relationship violence and stalking

Edmonton... The first threat assessment unit in Canada to bring together experts from various fields to deal solely with reducing and preventing relationship violence and stalking is now fully operational in Alberta.

The Alberta Relationship Threat Assessment and Management Initiative (ARTAMI) coordinates the efforts of police, prosecutors and community organizations to more effectively address threats posed in violent, high-risk relationships and stalking situations - including homicide and suicide.

“No one should ever live in fear,” said Fred Lindsay, Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security. “By helping coordinate appropriate responses to significant relationship violence and stalking threats, this unit will help those who are the most at risk in our community stay safe.”

“ARTAMI will intervene and help prevent relationship crimes of stalking, violence and death,” said Ron Stevens, Minister of Justice and Attorney General. “It will also better position our courts to help build the cases of victims and support them through the trial process. This is especially important in cases of family violence, which are notoriously difficult to prosecute,” he added.

Along with director Val Campbell, ARTAMI also includes a Crown prosecutor, a family law expert, a victim safety specialist, a Children's Services liaison, four RCMP members, and four municipal police officers (Edmonton, Calgary, Medicine Hat, and Lethbridge). The unit also has access to the services of a forensic psychologist/psychiatrist.

ARTAMI is a resource for police, prosecutors, child intervention case workers, women's shelters, corrections personnel, and mental health experts to help victims of high-risk relationship violence and stalking.

The establishment of the Alberta Relationship Threat Assessment and Management Initiative is part of Premier Ed Stelmach's plan to secure Alberta's future by building our communities, greening our growth and creating opportunity.

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Backgrounder: Background information on ARTAMI

Media enquiries may be directed to:

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The Alberta Relationship Threat Assessment and Management Initiative (ARTAMI)

When was ARTAMI established and how much does it cost?

- ARTAMI was established and its director, Val Campbell, was hired in late spring. ARTAMI became fully operational this fall, once policies and procedures were in place and training of staff was completed.
- ARTAMI's budget is approximately \$2 million per year and is paid for by the Government of Alberta.

Why was it created?

- ARTAMI was created after the victim of one of the longest and most extreme stalking cases in Canada made a plea for a better approach to threat assessment in Alberta. Over a three-year period, a diverse committee, including government, police, and community agencies, created ARTAMI.

Is ARTAMI modeled on similar initiatives outside of the province?

- ARTAMI is the first joint-forces, multi-disciplinary threat assessment unit dedicated to relationship violence and stalking in Canada. The Ontario Provincial Police has had a police-based threat assessment unit since 1995.

What does ARTAMI do?

- ARTAMI helps coordinate appropriate responses to serious threats through local police, Crown prosecutors, and community organizations, and provides expertise in risk assessment and management. For example, ARTAMI will:
 - refer "at-risk" individuals and families to community agencies and local police services;
 - help ensure the necessary evidence is gathered for the prosecution of offenders; and
 - address issues involving children.

How does ARTAMI operate?

- All referrals to ARTAMI will come through police services or prosecutors. Other outside agencies, such as women's shelters, child intervention caseworkers, and mental health professionals may refer clients through their local police service.
- ARTAMI members will help coordinate an appropriate response through local police, prosecutors and community organizations.
- Where necessary, ARTAMI members will develop a comprehensive threat assessment and case management document to assist with victim safety and to lessen the threat of the offender.
- ARTAMI is not a first response unit and will not normally respond to crisis situations or to crime scenes.

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