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## **Infant Response Team provides support to at-risk families**

*Calgary...* The Alberta Vulnerable Infant Response Team (AVIRT) will provide immediate supports and services to at-risk families with vulnerable infants in Calgary.

A team of Alberta Children and Youth Services caseworkers, Public Health nurses and the Calgary Police Service officer will work together to assess risk, develop safety plans and work with families to provide guidance and support with resources and services. Working directly with parents, the team will help at-risk families with challenging life situations, keep their infants safe through learning parenting and coping skills and the provision of access to addictions and family violence counseling. This highly specialized team will provide immediate and ongoing assistance, before a crisis occurs.

“Parenting is an important and demanding responsibility,” said Yvonne Fritz, Minister of Children and Youth Services. “For those dealing with issues such as addictions, mental health challenges or domestic violence, the added responsibility can be overwhelming. In these circumstances, the earliest intervention possible can help to ensure the safety and well-being of the baby, in the first months when they are most vulnerable.”

Children and Youth Services and Alberta Health Services each provided half of the \$1 million project funding for AVIRT. The Calgary Police Service has dedicated one full-time officer to the team.

“Honourable Gene Zwozdesky, Minister of Health and Wellness and Honourable Frank Oberle, Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security have been tremendous partners for this initiative, from the beginning,” said Minister Fritz. “Their support, along with the dedication of the leadership team and steering committee, has helped make AVIRT a reality.”

The team will include four nurses, four child and family services caseworkers and one police officer. Detailed information will be collected relative to the extent and scope of the issues related to vulnerable infants. This will assist with the development of a model that will be expanded to other regions in the province.

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