



External Report: Recommendations for the University of Alberta Sexual Assault Centre's Community Engagement and Action Plan

November 2024

Territorial Acknowledgement: University of Alberta

The University of Alberta, its buildings, labs, and research stations are primarily located on the traditional territory of Néhiyaw (Cree), Niitsitapi (Blackfoot), Métis, Nakoda (Stoney), Dene, Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) and Anishinaabe (Ojibway/Saulteaux), lands that are now known as part of Treaties 6, 7 and 8 and homeland of the Métis. The University of Alberta respects the sovereignty, lands, histories, languages, knowledge systems and cultures of First Nations, Métis and Inuit nations.¹

Land Acknowledgement: Possibility Seeds

This work is taking place on and across the traditional territories of many Indigenous nations. We recognize that gender-based violence is one form of violence caused by colonization that is still used today to marginalize and dispossess Indigenous Peoples from their lands and waters. We must centre this truth in our work to address gender-based violence on campuses and in our communities. We commit to continuing to learn and take an anti-colonial inclusive approach in all our work. One way we are honouring this responsibility is by actively incorporating the Calls for Justice within [Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls](#).

Dedication

This report is dedicated to the many campus volunteers, community mentors, grassroots groups, university staff, community partners, and most importantly, the survivors who have built, nurtured and sustained the University of Alberta Sexual Assault Centre for over 30 years. We hope the deep roots you have planted continue to grow and flourish.

¹ University of Alberta. (n.d.). *Territorial Acknowledgement*. Retrieved from <https://www.ualberta.ca/indigenous/index.html>

Reference

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Self Care

Although there are no descriptions of sexual violence in this report, any discussion about sexual violence and gender-based violence can elicit strong emotions; we encourage you to prioritize your mental health and practice self-care. If you need support, please contact campus resources like the University of Alberta Sexual Assault Centre or other community resources. For a list of on-campus and off-campus services, please see the UofA Sexual Assault Centre's [resources page](#).

A Note on Terminology

- **Decolonization**, as defined in *Braiding Past, Present and Future* (2022c), is a commitment to "repudiating the racist justifications and dismantling the colonial structures aimed at disenfranchising Indigenous Peoples of their legal, social, cultural, religious and ethnic rights; reclaiming Indigenous identity, language, culture and worldviews." Decolonization also includes respecting and restoring Indigenous knowledge, practices, and perspectives while unlearning biases rooted in colonialism (Cull *et al.*, 2018).
- **Gender is not binary**. In this report, the terms "men" or "women" refer to both cis and trans people unless stated otherwise. Research, funding, programming, and media reporting on sexual and gender-based violence often focus solely on cis communities, even though these conversations are not binary. For instance, Two-Spirit, trans and non-binary people are targeted for and subjected to high rates of sexual and gender-based violence; they are two to three times more likely than cis people to be subjected to sexual assault (Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton).
- **"Leading practice"** refers to interventions, programs, services, or strategies recognized as particularly effective. These practices demonstrate high excellence

and innovation, often setting new benchmarks for organizations to follow. While they may not yet be widely adopted, they are based on expert consensus or early evidence of success and are seen as models of excellence with the potential to shape future approaches in the field.

- **“Service disruption”** and **“service suspension”** refer to different levels of service interruption. In this report, "service disruption" describes unexpected interruptions where programs may still be partially available or functioning in a new or different way, such as with the UASAC drop-in services. In contrast, "service suspension" refers to a pause or stop of a program for a set period, as seen with the UASAC volunteer program, with plans to resume later.
- **“Sexual violence”** and **“sexual and gender-based violence”** are used in different instances throughout this report. “Sexual violence” is used when discussing the University of Alberta Sexual Assault Centre, reflecting language in the centre’s mandate. “Sexual and gender-based violence ” is used when referring to the Government of Alberta’s Campus Climate Survey and other aspects of the University of Alberta's context.
- **“Survivor”** is used when referring to people subjected to sexual violence. While there is an ongoing debate over the use of the terms “victim” or “survivor” (Setia & An, 2021), we believe every individual should have the opportunity to be identified by the language of their choice.
- **“University of Alberta Sexual Assault Centre”** and **“centre”** are used interchangeably to reflect language in the documents and consultations.

Acronyms Used

- **AASAS:** Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services
- **CSJ:** Campus Saint-Jean
- **GBV:** Gender-based violence
- **IPV:** Intimate partner violence
- **MMIWG:** Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

- **PSIs:** Post-secondary institutions
- **PSP:** Psychological Support Program
- **SACE:** Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton
- **SGBV:** Sexual and gender-based violence
- **SV:** Sexual violence
- **TRC:** Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada
- **U of A:** University of Alberta
- **UASAC:** University of Alberta Sexual Assault Centre

For the complete list of key terms, please see [Appendix 1.1](#).

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	8
A Note on Trust	9
Summary of Key Recommendations	10
Organizational Structure and Staff Support	10
Centre Structure	10
Staff Structure	11
Volunteer Complement	11
Strategic Framework	11
Protocols and Procedures	12
Core Services and Programs	12
Support Services	13
Education Program	13
Volunteer Program	13
Community Engagement and Systemic Advocacy	14
Rebuilding Trust	14
Background and Context	15
Understanding SGBV at Post-Secondary Institutions in Canada	15
National Statistics on Campus Sexual and Gender-Based Violence	16
Provincial Statistics on Campus Sexual and Gender-Based Violence	17
Key Findings from Alberta's Ministry of Advanced Education 2023 Campus Climate Survey on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence	17
Campus Climate Survey Finding #1: Most U of A students have been subjected to SGBV at some point in their lives.	17
Campus Climate Survey Finding #2: Nearly all U of A students agreed that those affected by SGBV ought to have access to institutional services and support.	17
Campus Climate Survey Finding #3: There is a need for greater awareness of institutional services and support to address SGBV.	18
Campus Climate Survey Finding #4: U of A students are not accessing institutional services and support to address SGBV. However, when they do, they most often turn to UASAC.	18
Institutional Responses to SGBV at the University of Alberta	18
University of Alberta Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Policy	18
Constellation of SGBV-specific Positions and Services at the University of Alberta	19

The University of Alberta’s Sexual Assault Centre	20
A Brief History	20
University of Alberta Sexual Assault Centre Service Disruption	22
UASAC Services Available Post-Disruption	23
Report Creation Process	24
Project Design	24
Campus Partner Engagement	24
Literature and Document Review	25
Assessment and Recommendation Development	26
Scope, Limitations and Considerations	26
Key Findings and Recommendations	27
a. Organizational Structure and Staff Support	27
i. Centre Structure	27
ii. Staff Structure	32
iii. Volunteer Complement	40
b. Strategic Framework	43
b. Protocols and Procedures	51
c. Core Services and Programs	55
i. Approach	56
Phase One: Safety and Stabilization	56
Phase Two: Remembrance and Mourning	58
Phase Three: Reconnection	58
d. Support Services	60
e. Education Program	65
f. Volunteer Program	72
g. Community Engagement and Systemic Advocacy	76
h. Rebuilding Trust	81
Key Recommendations for Phase Two and Three Success	83
Conclusion	85
Appendix 1.1 Key Terms	86
Appendix 1.2 The University of Alberta Sexual Assault Centre’s Community Engagement and Action Plan	90
Appendix 1.3 Key Highlights of the Centre’s History	91
Appendix 1.4 Literature and Document Review	93

Literature Review	93
Best and Leading Practice Standards and Guiding Principles	93
Calls to Action from Students	95
SGBV Context at U of A	96
Document Review	97
Appendix 1.5: Considerations for a Monitoring and Evaluation Plan	98
Introduction	98
Values and Approach	98
Core Values	98
Approach: Participatory Evaluation	99
Objective, Outcomes and Indicators	99
Overall Objective	99
Identifying Outcomes and Indicators	100
Establishing Outcomes	100
Measuring Progress on Outcomes	100
Example: Evaluating a Protocols and Procedures Recommendation	101
Proposed Outcomes	101
Suggested Indicators	101
Focused Example: Evaluating a Revised Intake Procedure and Protocol	102
Considerations: Why Create Baseline Questions?	102
Sample Baseline Questions: Revised Intake Procedure	102
Feedback Survey: Revised Intake Procedure Training	103
Sample Post-Training Feedback Survey Template	105
Template Survey	106
Works Cited	108

Executive Summary

As part of its commitment to continuous service improvement, the University of Alberta (U of A) initiated a community engagement and action plan to envision how it could build upon three decades of support, service and education provided by its campus-based sexual assault centre (UASAC). The UASAC is recognized as a community-driven, trauma-informed and intersectional leader in providing comprehensive care to survivors of sexual violence in North America. The community engagement and action plan for the centre consists of the following phases:

- **Phase One: Planting — Spring 2024:** Objective: Build upon the UASAC's legacy of service by developing a comprehensive, community-driven set of recommendations through an external review. These recommendations will enhance service delivery, align with leading practices, and ensure the UASAC continues to meet the evolving needs of the campus community.
- **Phase Two: Growing — Fall 2024:** Objective: Further UASAC's legacy through the collaborative planning and implementation of recommendations. Strengthen partnerships across the campus community and ensure the awareness and transparency of UASAC's work through targeted outreach and communication.
- **Phase Three: Flourishing — Fall 2025:** Objective: Evaluate and celebrate UASAC's legacy by assessing the long-term reach and impact of the implemented recommendations. Highlight successes, identify opportunities for ongoing growth, and continue building on this legacy of support, education, and advocacy.

Each phase will be developed collaboratively with internal and external community partners, guided by the principles of care, co-design, curiosity, equity, and transparency.

In Phase One, the university commissioned [Possibility Seeds](#), a nationally recognized leader in sexual violence prevention, to conduct an external review and produce a report with recommendations to build on the legacy of the UASAC. The scope of the external review was the UASAC's structure and core services, including its support programs, educational initiatives, volunteer program, community engagement efforts, and systemic advocacy work. The UASAC's Psychological Support Program (PSP) and the university's broader efforts to address and prevent sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) were not included in this review.

Possibility Seeds engaged in a participatory approach from start to finish, including co-developing the guiding principles of this community engagement and action plan. In Spring 2024, we worked with U of A students, faculty, and staff to co-design the report process. We gathered community input and extensively reviewed documents and literature, including recent data from the [Government of Alberta's Campus Climate Survey](#). This final report presents 42 actionable, evidence-based recommendations to guide the centre's programs and activities for the 2024-25 academic year and beyond. To successfully implement the recommendations, it is essential that the university allocate additional resources beyond the centre's annual operational and staffing budget. This investment is crucial to building trust and ensuring the centre's long-term success.

It is important to note that some recommendations extend beyond the centre, applying to other departments and offices within the University of Alberta, the institution as a whole, and even the provincial government. Sexual violence and gender-based violence (SGBV) cannot be addressed in isolation; the centre can only thrive when there is an ecosystem of support for its vital work.

A Note on Trust

Cultivating institutional trust through meaningful actions is essential to addressing sexual violence. In its [Winter 2024 Update](#), the University of Alberta acknowledged that the "disruption to the U of A's Sexual Assault Centre" significantly impacted the campus and the broader community (University of Alberta, 2024). This disruption weakened trust among some community members, including centre volunteers, students, faculty, and staff, in the university's commitment to addressing sexual violence.

To rebuild trust, the university must take proactive steps to reassure the community of a strong support system for survivors. In its Winter 2024 Update, U of A recognized the pressing need to "rebuild trust in the important services provided by the university to the community" (University of Alberta, 2024). This effort is underway, with the university actively recruiting key staff to restore full operational capacity in its support, education, volunteer, and community engagement programs. Additionally, since October 2024, the university has established a community advisory group and a steering committee to guide the implementation of the recommendations outlined in this report. Rebuilding trust will require institutional courage, a concept from Dr. Jennifer Freyd, which necessitates moral action and accountability, even when challenging or costly.

[It is] an institution's commitment to seek the truth and engage in moral action, despite unpleasantness, risk, and short-term cost. It is a pledge to protect and care for those who depend on the institution...It is a force that transforms institutions into more accountable, equitable, effective places for everyone (Centre for Institutional Courage, 2023).

The recommendations in this report present an opportunity for the University of Alberta to demonstrate institutional courage and rebuild trust. By collaborating with campus partners to implement these recommendations, the University can show its commitment to maintaining "a safe, vibrant and supportive learning environment" (University of Alberta, 2022a) for all campus community members affected by SGBV. As the university seeks to navigate this challenging landscape, there is a pressing need to rebuild trust, reestablish vital services, and ensure survivors receive adequate care and support.

Summary of Key Recommendations

The 42 recommendations are designed to guide the centre's programs and activities throughout the 2024-25 academic year and beyond. They are organized into eight categories: organizational structure and staff support, protocols and procedures, core services and programs, support services, education program, volunteer program, community engagement and systemic advocacy, and rebuilding trust. These recommendations align with leading practices for community sexual violence centres and campus programs in Canada and address calls to action from crucial campus partners. The university administration should actively support these recommendations and provide appropriate resources beyond the centre's annual operational and staffing budget.

Organizational Structure and Staff Support

Centre Structure

1. **Re-establish a distinct, centralized centre** to support survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).
2. **Consider expanding the centre's scope** to include gender-based violence while maintaining a primary focus on sexual violence.
3. **Archive the centre's history and legacy** to honour its contributions and guide future generations.

Staff Structure

1. **Re-establish a dedicated leadership role** with specialized expertise in SGBV and decision-making authority to oversee the centre's daily operations and systemic advocacy.
2. **Ensure optimal staffing levels** by hiring qualified personnel to provide essential services and support.
3. **Invest in ongoing professional development** by offering staff continuous training and growth opportunities.
4. **Implement organizational strategies to address vicarious trauma**, including access to clinical supervision and sustainable workload practices.

Volunteer Complement

1. **Reinstate the UASAC volunteer program** and build on its legacy. Ensure the program is well-resourced for training, supervision, and support, engaging former and new volunteers.
2. **Foster volunteer skill development**, providing opportunities for comprehensive, ongoing training.
3. **Provide ongoing support, supervision and evaluation for volunteers**, including informal debriefs and formal check-ins.
4. **Promote a nurturing environment** where volunteers feel supported, celebrated and valued.
5. **Host a dedicated community space** for past volunteers to share, connect, and grieve with one another.

Strategic Framework

1. **Maintain the UASAC's vision, mission and values** by emphasizing a feminist, anti-oppressive, intersectional, trauma-informed, and client-centred framework.
2. **Explore renaming the centre** to better align with its values of inclusion and accessibility.

3. **Develop a strategic framework** by collaborating with service users, community members, staff, volunteers, and university leadership to create a cohesive and comprehensive plan.
4. **Engage in regular monitoring and evaluation** by conducting ongoing assessments of the centre's operations, programs and service delivery.
5. **Ensure meaningful alignment between policies and practices** related to addressing and preventing SGBV.
6. **Support the centre's commitment to decolonization** by creating opportunities to embed these principles into its procedures and practices, which will help build a culture of consent.
7. **Foster a trauma-informed campus** by exploring ways the university can further the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action* (2015), particularly those focused on creating trauma-informed public institutions. The university can align these efforts with *Braiding Past, Present and Future*.

Protocols and Procedures

1. **Ensure a clear operational structure** by establishing comprehensive, accessible protocols and procedures for staff and volunteer roles, intake procedures, confidentiality, recordkeeping, information sharing, risk management and communications.
2. **Develop a client bill of rights and responsibilities** in collaboration with service users, community members, staff, volunteers, and leadership to reflect the UASAC's values.

Core Services and Programs

1. **Consider reshaping the service provision and program model** with Judith Herman's Trauma Recovery Model.

Support Services

1. **Develop a streamlined, trauma-informed academic modifications protocol** to complement the SGBV policy and support survivors effectively.

2. **Ensure predictable and consistent access to support** by fully restoring services, including timely short-term crisis intervention support, and developing contingency plans to prevent future disruptions.
3. **Expand campus presence** by increasing access to support at Campus Saint-Jean and Augustana campuses, including providing resources in French to serve those campuses' needs better.
4. **Explore refreshing the crisis intervention program name** by gathering input from key campus partners, including volunteers, students, centre staff, and survivors.
5. **Introduce a legal information program** by partnering with UAlberta Law to provide free legal information and enhance systems navigation and advocacy support.

Education Program

1. **Activate educational programming** that is aligned with leading practices, continuous, consistent and theory-driven.
2. **Strengthen and maintain campus partnerships** to support and expand educational programming.
3. **Develop targeted educational programs to engage men** by collaborating with specific campus departments, groups, and faculties.
4. **Implement mandatory consent and sexual violence training** for all incoming students, including transfer and graduate students.

Volunteer Program

1. **Retain and revitalize the volunteer program**, focusing on support, crisis intervention, education, and systemic advocacy.
2. **Explore options to strengthen the intake model** by increasing awareness and understanding of the process within the campus community.

3. **Conduct a volunteer recruitment drive** to actively engage participants in the program.
4. **Develop a placement program** by collaborating with academic departments such as social work, nursing and law.

Community Engagement and Systemic Advocacy

1. **Create a communications strategy and campaign** to increase understanding of the centre's services.
2. **Collaborate with campus partners** to strengthen efforts to foster a consent culture across campus.
3. **Build and maintain collaborative relationships with external partners** to ensure coordinated, wrap-around service delivery and support a comprehensive response to sexual violence.
4. **Engage in advocacy and social change** by promoting public awareness, supporting survivor-led efforts, advocating for policy reform and addressing structural barriers to safety.

Rebuilding Trust

1. **Commit to transparent and ongoing communication** with the U of A community and external partners about the centre and the university's efforts to address and prevent sexual and gender-based violence.
2. **Foster meaningful participation in implementing the UASAC community engagement and action plan** by creating opportunities for collaboration through ongoing advisory committees and working groups.
3. **Host dedicated community spaces** for members impacted by the Fall 2023 changes to the centre, creating a space to share, connect, and support one another.

Background and Context

Understanding SGBV at Post-Secondary Institutions in Canada

Sexual violence and gender-based violence are recognized as critical public health issues by both the World Health Organization (2023) and the Public Health Agency of Canada (2016). These forms of violence can have severe health impacts, negatively affecting a survivor's psychological, physical, and physiological health, as well as their learning outcomes, and impeding their full participation in the communities where they live, learn, and work.

Understanding the prevalence, severity, and impact of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is essential to developing effective interventions and ensuring safer, inclusive environments for all campus community members. With the University of Alberta's student population, mainly those aged 18-22, being at higher risk for experiencing gender-based and sexual violence, it is especially vital for the university to address this issue from a public health perspective. This approach not only highlights the broad health implications of sexual and gender-based violence but also underscores the need for comprehensive strategies that encompass preventive education, immediate crisis support, long-term mental health services, ongoing community engagement and systemic advocacy, ultimately fostering a safer campus environment.

While statistics and studies help frame the scope of the issue, they do not necessarily capture the experiences of marginalized populations if they are not designed with these groups in mind. After all, SGBV does not happen in a vacuum; it occurs at the intersection of multiple forms of systemic oppression like racism, misogyny, ableism, classism, homophobia, and transphobia. Applying an "intersectional lens" (Crenshaw, 1991) allows us to see the disproportionate impact of SGBV on survivors from marginalized communities. This lens helps us understand how they are targeted for, heal from, and access support and justice for incidents of SGBV (Khan *et al.*, 2019). It also helps us understand the ramifications of their exclusion from policies, practices and programming to address and prevent SGBV (Harris & Linder, 2017). Subsequently, this report applies an intersectional lens throughout.

While numbers capture only a fraction of the story, the statistics below provide context for this report's key findings and recommendations. However, it is essential to note that data is often collected within limited categories and rarely disaggregated meaningfully. This

narrow approach excludes the nuanced realities of individuals whose experiences intersect across race, ethnicity, gender identity, and more. Consequently, statistics often fail to fully represent the experiences of marginalized campus members, including but not limited to Two-Spirit, trans, and non-binary individuals, Black, Indigenous, and racialized communities, Deaf people, and those with disabilities. This gap obscures the compounded impacts of systemic violence and discrimination they face.

National Statistics on Campus Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

- In 2019, 71% of students witnessed or experienced unwanted sexualized behaviours in a post-secondary setting (Burczycka, 2020b).
- In 2019, 1 in 10 students who were women were sexually assaulted in a post-secondary setting (Burczycka, 2020b).
- In 2019, gay, lesbian and bisexual students reported being subjected to discrimination based on gender, gender identity or sexual orientation at two times the rate of heterosexual students. Transgender students (40%) also reported disproportionate rates of this type of discrimination compared to cisgender students (17%) (Burczycka, 2020a).
- In 2019, 10% of First Nations, Métis, or Inuit students were subjected to sexual assault in a postsecondary setting (Burczycka, 2020b). Note: While there are no national studies specifically examining SGBV faced by Indigenous students on post-secondary campuses, it is well-documented that Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit people face higher rates of SGBV due to systemic issues such as colonization, anti-Indigenous racism, discrimination, and misogyny. Indigenous women are sexually assaulted three times more often than non-Indigenous women (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019), which strongly suggests that Indigenous students face an increased risk of SGBV on campus (de Heer & Jones, 2017).
- 80% of sexual assaults in a post-secondary setting were committed by someone known to the survivor (Canadian Federation of Students, 2015).
- Students are at the highest risk of sexual assault in the first few weeks of the academic year (Kimble *et al.*, 2008).

Provincial Statistics on Campus Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

- In 2023, 77% of post-secondary students in Alberta shared that they had been subjected to sexual and gender-based violence before attending their current post-secondary institution (Leger, 2023a).
- In 2023, 50% of post-secondary students in Alberta have been subjected to sexual and gender-based violence since attending their current post-secondary institution (Leger, 2023a).

Key Findings from Alberta's Ministry of Advanced Education 2023 Campus Climate Survey on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

In 2023, Alberta's Ministry of Advanced Education surveyed 26 publicly funded post-secondary institutions to understand the climate of sexual and gender-based violence among students. At the University of Alberta, 2,468 students participated in the Campus Climate Survey on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence. The survey results provide an overview of SGBV at the university, including incidents and knowledge of institutional supports. Below are the key findings:

Campus Climate Survey Finding #1: Most U of A students have been subjected to SGBV at some point in their lives.

- 64% of survey respondents had been subjected to SGBV since they became students at U of A (Leger, 2023b).
- 79% of respondents had been subjected to SGBV before becoming a student at U of A (Leger, 2023b).

Campus Climate Survey Finding #2: Nearly all U of A students agreed that those affected by SGBV ought to have access to institutional services and support.

- 93% of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that people who have experienced SGBV should be able to access support from the university (Leger, 2023b).
- Only 54% of survey respondents agreed that services were available to people who experienced SGBV (Leger, 2023b).

Campus Climate Survey Finding #3: There is a need for greater awareness of institutional services and support to address SGBV.

- Survey respondents were more aware of the University Health Centre (87%), Counselling and Clinical Services (81%), and Wellness Supports (75%) than of the UASAC (70%) (Leger, 2023b).
- In terms of institutional policies, more students were aware of U of A's SGBV policy (67%) than where they could access support from the university for SGBV (47%) (Leger, 2023b).

Campus Climate Survey Finding #4: U of A students are not accessing institutional services and support to address SGBV. However, when they do, they most often turn to UASAC.

- Almost half of survey respondents (45%) said they would primarily contact the UASAC if they experienced SGBV (Leger, 2023b).
- Although only 7% of respondents who had experienced SGBV since becoming a student at U of A told someone at the university, 35% of those individuals told someone from a specialized SGBV support service (Leger, 2023b).
- By contrast, of the 1 in 10 students who accessed services or supports for SGBV before becoming a U of A student, only 9% accessed services or supports from the U of A (Leger, 2023b).

While this data does not provide a complete understanding of the issue of SGBV in the context of U of A, it does indicate that a significant portion of the campus community has been subjected to SGBV. Most students believe the university should support these individuals and provide access to specialized SGBV services. However, as our report indicates, several challenges persist regarding awareness and access to institutional services and support designed to address SGBV.

Institutional Responses to SGBV at the University of Alberta

University of Alberta Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Policy

The University of Alberta's [Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Policy](#) articulates the institution's responsibilities and commitment to those affected by SGBV, including the institutional responsibility to:

[P]rovide coordinated and comprehensive supports for disclosers to reduce barriers to participation in the learning environment that occur as a result of SGBV.

[M]aintain safe, confidential and neutral mechanisms for individuals to disclose, make an SGBV complaint, or alert the university to incidents of or conditions conducive to SGBV.

[R]aise awareness of consent, gender inclusivity, SGBV prevention, and appropriate responses to disclosures of SGBV through institution-wide education (University of Alberta, 2022a).

The policy is anchored at a broad level by the university's mission statement, which articulates that:

[A]ll members of the university community, including leaders, response and prevention experts, students, faculty, staff and post-secondary partners, must work together to create equitable access to a university environment, free from harassment and sexual violence (University of Alberta, n.d.)

Constellation of SGBV-specific Positions and Services at the University of Alberta

The UASAC is an integral and essential service that supports the university in meeting its responsibilities and commitments regarding SGBV. It has been the institution's primary unit, focusing on SGBV for over thirty years. It continues to be a necessary component in the response landscape at the U of A that now includes the following SGBV-specific positions and services:

- **Sexual Assault Centre:** The university-based centre that provides support to survivors of sexual violence and their supporters, as well as comprehensive educational workshops for the campus community.
- **SGBV Response Lead:** An administrative, university-based position focusing on policy and education efforts (Yiu & Smith, 2024).
- **Options Navigation Network:** A group of university units that assist those who have experienced SGBV in exploring and understanding the options available through the university (Office of the Provost and Vice-President (Academic), 2024b).
- **UA Protective Services:** An operational unit that offers on-campus safety planning.

- **Office of Safe Disclosure and Human Rights:** This administrative office takes confidential and anonymous disclosures and assists survivors in navigating their options. Its services include an online disclosure [tool](#).
- **Counselling and Clinical Services, Wellness Services, the Interfaith Chaplains Association:** provide counselling and other mental health support including counsellors on-site at Augustana Campus and Campus Saint-Jean.
- **Academic, residence and workplace modifications:** may be available across the university at the academic departmental level or coordinated through Student Care Coordinators in the Office of the Dean of Students. Modifications are articulated in respective university policies and protocols.
- **Employee Family Assistance Program:** the employer-sponsored benefits program.
- **External supports:** are available through the Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton, Alberta One-Line for Sexual Violence and the Central Alberta 24-hour Sexual Assault Support Centre.

The University of Alberta's Sexual Assault Centre

A Brief History

The University of Alberta Sexual Assault Centre (UASAC) was established in 1993 in response to a high-profile sexual assault case on campus. Students, staff, and faculty called for immediate crisis support services for survivors and prevention education programs. The centre became a place to build community, heal individually and collectively, and advocate for a safer campus. As one of the first campus-based sexual assault centres in Canada, the UASAC also became an example of leading practice.

Notably, the UASAC is the only university-based sexual assault centre that is part of a provincial sexual assault centre association, a partnership that is both critical and mutually beneficial. This partnership allows the UASAC to access support, best practices, resources, and advocacy networks, enhancing its services and broadening its impact. The UASAC's inclusion in the association is essential because it is the only university-based member serving the age demographic most at risk for sexual violence. Located on a campus where most students are aged 18-22, the centre provides valuable insights into addressing the needs of this demographic. Additionally, the UASAC serves a population larger than many

other centres in Western Canada, as the University of Alberta operates as a “city within a city.”

Since its inception, the UASAC has worked to provide a safe and supportive environment for people affected by sexual violence, as well as foster a culture of consent within the U of A campus community and beyond. It provides critical services and resources, including confidential crisis intervention support, counselling and educational services. The centre’s counselling program, the Psychological Support Program (PSP), is available to both U of A students and employees, and it offers confidential crisis intervention support.

The UASAC is a university-mandated service primarily funded by mandatory non-instructional student fees, grants, and some operational funds from the Office of the Dean of Students. The centre as a member of Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services (AASAS) also receives annual provincial funding. Recently, the UASAC partnered with the Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton (SACE) to monitor Alberta OneLine, ensuring province-wide callers receive appropriate sexual violence support. Our document review showed that the centre has previously supported survivors within the broader Edmonton region due to the anonymous and confidential nature of drop-in service delivery and the centre’s grassroots origins. In our community consultation with the U of A administration, they shared that “while the UASAC will not turn away anyone seeking support who comes through the doors, the centre specifically serves U of A students.”

When the centre opened, it was staffed by one part-time employee and a team of 15-20 volunteers who provided confidential drop-in support. As the needs of survivors and the University of Alberta community grew, the centre expanded its services. By its 30th anniversary in 2023, the UASAC had grown to four full-time and three part-time employees and 30-40 volunteers who provided support, education, community engagement, and systemic advocacy for the university and the broader Edmonton community. Core services and program areas are discussed below.

Over its three decades of operations, the UASAC built a robust crisis intervention support model, education and outreach approach, and volunteer program. Participants in the community consultations remarked upon the real-time accessibility of the UASAC's drop-in crisis intervention support program, distinguishing it as a vital resource within the U of A and the larger Edmonton community. One U of A staff member shared, "As someone who

has referred people - both students and staff - I trusted that they would be given timely, evidence-based information and the right care."

The UASAC's various educational initiatives aimed to raise awareness and understanding of sexual assault, violence and consent within the U of A community. A U of A volunteer remarked, "The Education Program was valuable in promoting awareness of the centre and the services and changing culture on campus."

The UASAC's robust volunteer program has been adopted as a model at other post-secondary institutions. A U of A faculty member noted, "The Volunteer Program itself is a model that has been copied at other post-secondary institutions. Our centre has a 30-year record of offering an excellent volunteer experience." This testament highlights the program's excellence and influence beyond the university, showcasing the UASAC's broader impact on volunteer management and support services.

A timeline of the centre's operational history is included in [Appendix 1.3](#).

University of Alberta Sexual Assault Centre Service Disruption

The recent improper and unauthorized use of the name of the University of Alberta's Sexual Assault Centre in endorsing an open letter has raised understandable concerns from members of our community and the public. Effective immediately, the director of the centre is no longer employed by the university. The university has appointed a new interim director of the Sexual Assault Centre (University of Alberta, 2023).

In November 2023, an "unexpected disruption to U of A's Sexual Assault Centre" (University of Alberta, 2024) deeply impacted the U of A community. This was followed by the termination of three additional staff and the suspension of the volunteer program in January 2024, further deepening the impact (Teeling, 2024). Since then, the UASAC volunteer program, which consists of the peer-led crisis intervention program and the peer education program, has not been in operation. In addition, the centre's community engagement and systemic advocacy program and education program, specifically the synchronous education (online and in-person workshops, training, and events), have all been paused. As of September 2024, none of these programs have been reinstated.

While Possibility Seeds was not commissioned to address the events leading to the UASAC's service disruption, the significant impact on the U of A community is undeniable. During

community consultations, many students, staff, faculty, and volunteers called for the immediate and complete re-establishment of the centre's staffing and services, highlighting the disruption's effects across campus life. They emphasized that halting the volunteer program hindered efforts to prevent sexual violence and provide education on consent. One faculty member remarked in the community consultations, "It was a robust educational program, and the volunteer peer model worked well. Now, we have to fill the gaps by outsourcing SGBV training for our student clubs." The impact extended beyond prevention education—faculty and staff also expressed the loss of crisis intervention services, with some noting they felt unprepared to support survivors adequately.

UASAC Services Available Post-Disruption

Access to the asynchronous online education modules on SGBV remains available to the university community. The UASAC's Psychological Support Program (PSP) also continued to provide in-person and virtual counselling appointments and system navigation support to U of A students and staff impacted by SGBV.

However, UASAC's PSP staff took on extra responsibilities to address service disruptions, including drop-in services and case management, to support current and new clients. In addition, local sexual assault centres such as SACE stretched their already limited resources to fill the gaps in service provision for campus survivors (Anchan, 2024).

In February 2024, the university hired an interim part-time social worker for the UASAC PSP program to offer drop-in crisis intervention sessions for 2 hours a day, three days a week, for people affected by SGBV. The university hired another part-time staff member in May 2024 to expand these services to five days a week, with one day offering 3.5 hours of support and another offering 8 hours. The UASAC drop-in services currently provide crisis intervention, systems navigation, and case management within a professionalized social work model rather than the previous peer volunteer model.

In August 2024, the university announced the appointment of an Assistant Dean for Community Wellness Supports and plans to hire full-time staff for drop-in services, an education coordinator, and a centre manager in the Fall of the same year.

Report Creation Process

To produce a final report with actionable, evidence-based recommendations for Phase One of the university's community engagement and action plan, Possibility Seeds employed a four-part methodology: project co-design, campus partners engagement, literature and document review, and assessment and recommendation development. This co-design process involved campus partners throughout, from project design to review of the final draft. Additionally, Possibility Seeds hired a U of A graduate student to support the co-design process, including reviewing recommendations with campus partners.

Project Design

We collaborated with University of Alberta students, faculty, and staff to ensure the review was grounded in the needs and insights of those directly involved with the UASAC. This co-design process was crucial in developing the project's guiding principles and shaping our methodology and deliverables.

Campus Partner Engagement

The campus partner engagement process involved targeted community consultations through interviews and focus groups with students, staff, faculty, UASAC volunteers and external partners. A feedback form was also circulated to gather input from the U of A community, and internal and external community partners reviewed the draft report. These methods capture insights into the UASAC's strengths, challenges, and opportunities. Community members generously shared their time and perspectives throughout this process.

During Spring 2024, Possibility Seeds led:

- Two co-design sessions;
- Five community conversations with the UASAC volunteers, students, faculty, staff, administrators and community partners;
- One survey for campus community members; and
- Four presentations to review the draft report with internal and external community partners.

These insights were used to:

- Generate 42 actionable recommendations; and
- Guide the centre's community engagement, programs and activities moving forward.

Literature and Document Review

To support evidence-based recommendations for the UASAC, we conducted a comprehensive literature review focusing on best and leading practice standards and guiding principles for equitable and anti-oppressive approaches to gender-based violence programs and services, both nationally and internationally. Our review included national student affairs standards for sexual violence programs and services from the Council for the Advancement of National Standards in Higher Education. We also considered standards for sexual violence services from the Ontario Network of Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Treatment Centres, Ontario Association of Interval Houses, the National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence (Australia), Rape Crisis England & Wales and Rape Crisis Scotland.

We reviewed relevant reports, articles and documents from crucial campus partners, including the University of Alberta, the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Centres, the University of Alberta Student Union, U of A Graduate Students' Association, the Council of Alberta University Students, Our Campus Our Safety coalition, and the national Courage to Act Project. This process enabled us to align our recommendations with calls to action from students at U of A, in the province, nationally, and with leading practices nationwide. Additionally, we considered data from the newly released 2023 Alberta Campus Climate Survey on Sexual and Gender-based Violence to understand better the context of SGBV at the U of A.

Following the literature review, we conducted a document scan of the UASAC where possible. For more information on the scope of our document review process, please refer to [Scope, Limitations and Considerations](#). The document review supported us in assessing the UASAC's operations, services and program delivery compared to best practice standards, guiding principles and calls to action identified in the literature review.

To learn more about the literature and document review, please see [Appendix 1.4](#).

Assessment and Recommendation Development

We assessed the data collected from community consultations, feedback forms, literature and document reviews to identify key themes, challenges and opportunities for the UASAC. This assessment informed the development of this report's actionable, evidence-based recommendations.

Scope, Limitations and Considerations

While the University of Alberta offers a wide range of services to support those affected by sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), this external review focused solely on the University of Alberta Sexual Assault Centre (UASAC). Possibility Seeds was commissioned to review the UASAC's structure and core services, including its support programs (except the PSP), educational initiatives, volunteer program, community engagement efforts, and systemic advocacy work. This external review aims to provide actionable, evidence-based recommendations to guide the centre through the 2024-25 academic year and beyond.

The review faced some challenges, including mistrust from some participants due to the circumstances surrounding the UASAC service disruption, the timing of consultations in the spring when most of the U of A community is off-campus, and a lack of institutional memory regarding the UASAC's services, operations and programming. Despite these challenges, Possibility Seeds reviewed nearly 100 centre documents and consulted with 57 campus partners, including students, staff, faculty, administrators, and the UASAC volunteers, to gather valuable insights reflected in this report.

For future planning, it is crucial that the university continue efforts to rebuild trust with the community, including finding ways to foster meaningful engagement in planning and implementing the report's recommendations. Further, since this report does not capture the entire history of the UASAC's 30-year legacy, a separate document dedicated to archiving its contributions would be valuable (see [Organizational Structure and Staff Support](#)).

Key Findings and Recommendations

This section offers actionable, evidence-based recommendations to guide the centre's support (excluding the Psychological Support Program), education, volunteer and community engagement and systemic advocacy programs and activities throughout the 2024-25 academic year and beyond.

We have based our recommendations on the UASAC's current state, which is operating without a whole staff team and volunteers to run its support programs (including crisis intervention program, ongoing and bridging support, and systems advocacy), peer education, volunteer program, and community engagement programs. The recommendations in this report fall into two focus areas:

- **Cultivate:** Practices to reestablish, maintain and improve.
- **Plant:** New initiatives to consider.

Note: The recommendations in this report address the UASAC's current situation. However, the labels "cultivate" and "plant" refer to the centre's invaluable and well-regarded service and program delivery when it operated at full capacity before November 2023.

a. Organizational Structure and Staff Support

i. Centre Structure

Cultivate: A distinct, centralized campus centre to support survivors of sexual and gender-based violence.

The UASAC's support services—including drop-in support, systems navigation and advocacy, and clinical and therapeutic support—provide tailored, comprehensive, centralized support to meet service users' needs. This specialized support is critical as individuals affected by sexual violence require care that addresses the traumatic nature of sexual violence and its physical, emotional and psychological impacts (Government of New Brunswick, 2018).

To this end, maintaining a clear distinction between the UASAC and other university-based wellness supports allows the UASAC to continue providing specialized, trauma- and violence-informed care. Maintaining this distinction also allows those seeking support for SGBV to do so directly. A centralized sexual violence centre on campus also consolidates support and coordination efforts for individuals impacted by gender-based violence,

ensuring they receive comprehensive assistance without the added distress of recounting their traumatic experiences to various responders (Khan *et al.*, 2019).

When sexual violence support services are decentralized into general campus programs, this poses significant risks, which can include compromising confidentiality, diluting specialized expertise and leading to gaps in care. As a staff member observed,

A decentralized model will not work. If we're thinking of housing it within a faculty or broader wellness service, students may not feel very comfortable. These might be professors or administrative staff they've interacted with and may not want them to know. They may not think their information is confidential. Even if it is, there's this perception that it may not be if it's decentralized. When it's more centralized, students may feel more comfortable walking into the space.

By maintaining centralized support, U of A can ensure people who have been affected by gender-based or sexual violence have access to trauma-informed care, all within a framework that respects their privacy and dignity. Centralized support through the UASAC helps U of A advance its goal of reducing barriers to accessing SGBV support and maintaining "safe, confidential and neutral mechanisms for individuals to disclose, make an SGBV complaint, or alert the university to incidents of or conditions conducive to SGBV" (University of Alberta, 2023).

Further, the centre plays a crucial role in the campus support ecosystem for survivors, helping to mitigate risks for the university. A successful human rights case against UBC Okanagan highlighted the importance of centralized robust sexual violence services. The university was ordered to pay \$50,000 in a sexual assault discrimination case due to an inadequate response to a student's report of sexual assault (CTV News, 2023). This case underscores the significant risks institutions face without well-resourced sexual violence services, including damage to their reputation, financial losses, and impacts on employee and student retention and student enrollment. Comprehensive services and resources for addressing and preventing sexual violence are crucial to protect community members and the institution as a whole.

Cultivate: The possibility of expanding the centre's scope to include gender-based violence while maintaining its primary focus on sexual violence.

The UASAC's mandate, like most campus sexual assault centres, is currently concentrated on sexual violence. This focus is reinforced by the province-wide Campus Climate Survey,

which revealed that a large percentage of U of A students had been subjected to sexual violence (Leger, 2023b).

This emphasis stems from provincial legislation, policy and research, and campus advocacy, which emphasize the sexual violence students experience. As a result, the broader spectrum of gender-based violence they face is sometimes inadvertently overlooked. This narrow scope limits the ability of the centre and the university to provide comprehensive, inclusive and effective support for those affected by GBV.

Expanding the scope to include gender-based violence would acknowledge that students and youth face the highest rates of intimate partner violence (IPV).

- In 2020, three in ten (29%) women aged 15 to 24 had been subjected to at least one incident of IPV. This rate is more than double that of women aged 25 to 34 or 35 to 44 and nearly six times higher than those aged 65 or older (Statistics Canada, 2021).
- More than one in ten U of A students has been subjected to at least one form of IPV since entering the university (Leger, 2023b).

Further, students arrive on campus with histories of SGBV, including high rates of adolescent dating violence (ADV):

- 79% of U of A student respondents have been subjected to sexual and gender-based violence before becoming students at the university (Leger, 2023b).
- This finding aligns with a University of Calgary study that reported one in three Canadian youth (grades 9-10) who had dated were subjected to adolescent dating violence (Exner-Cortens, 2021).

Notably, past centre staff and volunteers recognized that service users had experiences of gender-based violence beyond just sexual violence. Our document review indicated that survivors were accessing the centre after incidents of stalking, sexual harassment and intimate partner violence. However, without an official mandate to support GBV survivors, centre staff and volunteers were unable to advocate for critical resources, including adequate staffing, sustainable funding, and professional development on responding to GBV and implementing trauma-informed practices.

Expanding the centre's mandate to include all forms of gender-based violence recognizes the interconnectedness of various types of violence. According to the campus climate survey, 64% of students have experienced some form of gender-based violence since

enrolling at the University of Alberta (Leger, 2023b). Broadening the mandate accounts for this reality. It also promotes holistic care, enhances access, supports prevention efforts, and better addresses the diverse needs of survivors.

Broadening the centre's mandate also ensures proper alignment with the university's current Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Policy, its campus-wide Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Advisory Council, and the constellation of SGBV-specific positions and services at the university, including the SGBV Response Lead. Aligning these critical elements of the University of Alberta's work to address sexual and gender-based violence is necessary to ensure comprehensive support for service users and facilitate consistency, clarity and coordination.

The centre's mandate cannot be broadened without sustainable resourcing from the province and the university. Sustainable funding enables hiring staff with specific expertise in supporting community members facing intimate partner violence, training on risk assessments, expanding service reach and infrastructure, and sustaining long-term program development and innovation, including revamping the Volunteer Program to meet the broader mandate. Sustainable and adequate funding ensures comprehensive support and quality service delivery. Resources also enable effective community engagement and continuous improvement through research and feedback. Funding was a primary request by the University of Alberta student union following the release of the Campus Climate Survey:

Generating this essential data was only the first step. Now it needs to be believed and acted on. The government has a duty to provide consistent funding to address this issue as promised. We need adequate support services, prevention campaigns, funded training and online-based training modules for campus staff and faculty, province-wide. We need to make sure effective and informed responses to disclosures are the norm if we ever hope to create a safer campus environment (August 31 2023).

The centre's ability to provide comprehensive support and prevention services hinges on receiving substantial and sustained funding from the university and province. This funding will enable the centre to meet the needs of survivors on campus, implement effective prevention strategies, and work with campus partners to foster a safer community.

Another consideration is UASAC's membership in the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services (AASAS). During our community consultations, AASAS emphasized that "it is important for UASAC to maintain its primary mandate of preventing and responding to sexual violence." However, the UASAC can uphold this mandate while expanding its scope to address the broader issue of gender-based violence (GBV).

Plant: Archive the centre's history and legacy.

While we had limited access to internal documents, we were able to review some internal and external manuals developed by the UASAC staff. We commend past staff and volunteers for managing to create documentation for training, protocols and procedures, in addition to their daily operational work. The volunteer training manual was especially impressive. In our community consultations, we learned that other campus sexual assault support centres see this comprehensive volunteer training manual as a leading practice. The university should invest resources in documenting the UASAC's programs, procedures, and protocols. This documentation should be completed alongside an archive of the centre's 30-year history and legacy.

An archive is crucial for several reasons. As a form of knowledge management, archiving provides staff and volunteers with the institutional knowledge and information they need to work efficiently, productively and transparently (2 Acre Studios, n.d.). One staff member explained how the existing knowledge gap will impact the centre's operations in the future:

A lot of institutional knowledge and foundational pieces are gone now—I think the biggest piece is not improvement, but how do you support? How do we give enough backing to those who come into the role as they work to rebuild? It will be hard work.

Cultivating this institutional memory will support the sustainability and continuity of the centre's operations. It also supports accountability and protects against recurrent mistakes that may be preventable with the necessary institutional memory (Harper & Trees, 2020). The centre should continue documenting programs, processes and procedures, establishing a centralized information repository, and facilitating training and knowledge transfer among staff and volunteers.

Archiving also preserves the centre's significant feminist history, ensuring community members can access knowledge about past staff and volunteers' struggles, victories, strategies, and ongoing challenges in addressing and preventing campus SGBV. Further,

archiving the decades of work reflects the centre's mission and vision of remembering "the contributions of all those engaged in anti-sexual violence activism before us and all of those who will continue this work long after we are gone" (UASAC, Volunteer Application). In highlighting the experiences and contributions of all members, especially marginalized groups within the movement, including Black, Indigenous, and racialized women, 2SLGBTQIA people, survivors, and people with disabilities, an archive serves as a valuable educational resource for current and future anti-SGBV advocates at the U of A to learn from and build upon. This comprehensive archive would serve as a historical benchmark and complement the annual reports also recommended in this report as part of ongoing and regular centre management. We recommend that the university hire past volunteers to help archive the centre's history.

ii. Staff Structure

The following recommendations support the centre in meeting a leading practice standard: having a clear, well-resourced organizational structure that balances efficiency and effectiveness, responds to the needs of diverse service users and the community, and supports access to programs and services (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2023).

Cultivate: A dedicated leadership role to ensure operational effectiveness and accountability.

The centre needs a dedicated leadership position with specialized SGBV knowledge and decision-making authority for operational effectiveness and accountability. This role would focus on daily operational management and require specific skills and expertise to oversee service provision and programming. It would ensure specialized support for service users with complex histories and needs, deliver anti-SGBV education and manage staff and volunteers. The role would complement the strategic management provided by senior leadership.

The university recently hired an Assistant Dean of Community Wellness Supports to oversee the centre. While this role covers a wide range of wellness services, it raises concerns about its capacity to effectively manage the centre's demanding day-to-day operations. We strongly recommend reinstating a leadership-level position that reports directly to the Assistant Dean to address this. The incumbent should have critical expertise and training in sexual and gender-based violence prevention and response, as named in a

community consultation with the leadership of the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Centres:

It is essential that the centre's leadership demonstrate a strong commitment to maintaining a coordinated and collaborative response to sexual violence, informing policy and practice while being grounded in the daily work of sexual violence prevention and response.

The role would manage all aspects of the UASAC, including its services, programs, personnel, and operations; lead planning and decision-making at the unit and department levels; collaborate and connect with campus service partners; and provide appropriate specialized support and prevention education. The role would be guided by the new Assistant Dean, who would champion the UASAC's vision, mission, and values and advocate for the resources necessary to support the UASAC in meeting diverse service user needs (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2023; Women's Aid, 2009).

Cultivate: Optimal staffing levels for program and service delivery.

Centre staff provided vital support to the campus community, a sentiment echoed by many participants in the community consultations. A U of A student-survivor explained:

I was so overwhelmed by everything I was dealing with. It was a comfort to talk to staff with experience advocating for students. They knew who I needed to talk to to make my report. They outlined the whole process for me.

As of November 2024, the University of Alberta Sexual Assault Centre (UASAC) is actively recruiting key staff to restore full operational capacity across its support, education, volunteer, and community engagement programs. The Psychological Support Program (PSP) is now fully staffed, including a full-time drop-in counsellor, addressing the increased workload resulting from previous staffing shortages. This expansion can help reduce wait times for counseling services. Additionally, the role of education coordinator has been filled, with plans underway to hire a volunteer program coordinator and centre manager. However, the volunteer program and systemic advocacy initiatives remain suspended at this time.

The absence of a full team hinders the university's ability to fulfill its obligation to provide "access to support and options for disclosers or anyone who has been affected by SGBV" (University of Alberta, 2023). As the fifth largest university in Canada with over 40,000

students (University of Alberta, n.d.) and support extending to the broader Edmonton community, there is a pressing need for sufficient staffing and resources.

Even before the service disruptions in November 2023 and early 2024, the centre needed to be better staffed and resourced. A UASAC volunteer commented, “The thing that sticks out the most is staffing and resourcing. It was woefully understaffed for what we needed on campus.” Our document review also showed the negative impact of resourcing constraints on staff and volunteer workloads, well-being, and service delivery. We learned that the centre had to scale back its participation in various community initiatives and limit access to its psychoeducational support group Roots, which resulted in limited offerings for individuals on the waitlist for individual trauma therapy.

As the U of A welcomes new students, the UASAC's community will continue to grow, making adequate and sustainable resourcing essential. To ensure the centre can deliver its services and programs, it is crucial to have, at minimum, the following positions:

- A leadership role with decision-making authority to oversee the UASAC (see above);
- An increase in qualified staff to deliver the Psychological Support Program;
- Sexual and gender-based violence specialists to guide the Volunteer Program, as well as to provide drop-in crisis intervention, ongoing and bridging support, and systems navigation and advocacy to service users; and
- Education specialists with a dedicated role to oversee the Education Program.

The centre should be staffed by qualified personnel with appropriate educational credentials and equivalent experience to accomplish its mission and goals (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2023). Staff should:

- Be qualified to supervise volunteers and provide frontline sexual and gender-based violence support and/or education, depending on their role; and
- Reflect the diversity of the community and service users (National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence, 2021; Abbas, 2022; Male Survivors Partnership & LimeCulture Community Interest Company, 2017; Swan *et al.*, 2023). This diversity is essential for building trust and care (Khan *et al.*, 2019).

Cultivate: Sustainable investment in ongoing professional development.

Centre staff should receive support to participate in ongoing training and other professional development activities (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2023; Ontario Network of Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence, 2019; National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence, 2021; Rape Crisis England & Wales and Rape Crisis Scotland, 2018; Women's Aid, 2009). Ensuring equitable, comprehensive professional development plans for all staff supports a commitment to a high standard of care for service users as well as for the staff themselves (Ontario Network of Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence, 2019).

At a minimum, centre staff should be supported in accessing ongoing training and professional development on:

- **Relevant laws, policies and professional standards:** Staff should have opportunities to enhance their knowledge about relevant laws, institutional policies, and professional standards, where applicable (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2023; Women's Aid, 2009).
- **Sexual and gender-based violence:** Staff should have opportunities to continue learning about sexual and gender-based violence, including the ways it manifests and its impacts (Khan *et al.*, 2019; Ontario Network of Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence, 2019). This might include emerging topics like the use of technology to perpetrate acts of sexual and gender-based violence (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2023), as well as new research about SGBV in post-secondary contexts.
- **Trauma- and violence-informed care:** Staff should have opportunities to keep updated on leading practices for trauma- and violence-informed care (Khan *et al.*, 2019; Ontario Network of Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence, 2019). This will strengthen their understanding of how trauma manifests among diverse populations, including how systems of oppression, including colonialism, racism and ableism, can be sources of trauma (National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence, 2021).
- **Intersectionality, equity and anti-oppression:** Centre staff should have opportunities to enhance their skills and knowledge in applying equitable, intersectional, and anti-oppressive approaches to their work (Council for the

Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2023). Training should incorporate deep introspection, critical reflection, meaningful dialogue, and evidence-based decision-making to advance these principles effectively. These efforts should ensure that equity, intersectionality, and anti-oppression are integrated into the centre's structure and service delivery.

- **Indigenous education:** Centre staff should receive comprehensive training on the historical and systemic impacts of colonization, particularly its intersection with sexual violence, to provide culturally safer and more inclusive support for Indigenous survivors and the wider community. This training should address the 94 Calls to Action from the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC)* and the 231 Calls to Justice outlined in *Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls* (Abbas, 2022; Bernhardt & Cooper, 2022; National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019). It also ought to include discussions of decolonization, defined in *Braiding Past, Present and Future* (2022c) as a commitment to “repudiating the racist justifications and dismantling the colonial structures aimed at disenfranchising Indigenous Peoples of their legal, social, cultural, religious and ethnic rights; reclaiming Indigenous identity, language, culture and worldviews” (page 14). Ongoing training and collaboration with campus and community partners will strengthen the centre's strategic planning, service delivery, education programs, and advocacy efforts, fostering reconciliation and systemic change. These efforts are critical to fulfilling the TRC and MMIWG calls to action.

Plant: Organizational strategies for addressing vicarious trauma

Trauma occurs when individuals or communities experience, witness, or learn about events involving actual or threatened death or serious injury. It can manifest in various forms, including intergenerational, historical, complex, acute, vicarious, chronic, and community-based trauma (Klinic Community Health, 2023). Trauma can result from various factors, such as oppression (racism, ableism, poverty, transphobia, heterosexism, etc.), sexual and gender-based violence, accidents, witnessing or experiencing violence, family violence, the suicide of a loved one or community member, severe injury, sudden death, natural disasters, war, colonialism, and genocide (Klinic Community Health, 2023).

A trauma-informed organization acknowledges that trauma impacts people in multiple ways—structurally, culturally, and historically. It recognizes that marginalized communities

are disproportionately affected by sexual and gender-based violence. Understanding this helps institutions better support those who have experienced trauma and address the broader systemic issues contributing to it.

Vicarious trauma can be described as "the experience of bearing witness to atrocities that are committed human against human...the impact of working directly with individuals who have experienced or been affected by trauma" (Klinik Community Health, 2023). The community consultations revealed that UASAC staff and volunteers regularly encounter survivors' traumatic narratives of SGBV.

Repeated exposure to trauma can lead to vicarious or secondary trauma, which impacts mental, emotional and physical health (Brown *et al.*, 2020; Kulkarni *et al.*, 2013; Poskitt, 2019; Rossiter *et al.*, 2020; Warthe *et al.*, 2022; Wood *et al.*, 2019). One impact of vicarious trauma is burnout, which can lead to higher rates of absenteeism, staff turnover, reduced morale, diminished productivity, or premature retirement (Wood *et al.*, 2019; Baker *et al.*, 2007). Institutional support is essential to mitigate these effects.

The Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children (CREVAWC) identifies organizational risk factors for vicarious trauma, including high caseloads, extended direct work hours with survivors, and witnessing or experiencing microaggressions. Due to staffing shortages and funding, insufficient opportunities for debriefing, peer consultation, and supervision exacerbate these issues (Tabibi, Baker & Lalonde, 2021).

Importantly, vicarious trauma is not a sign of inadequate staff self-care; it is the impact of regularly bearing witness to trauma. Adopting workplace processes that provide protection and renewal is crucial (Kearney, 2018). A trauma-informed workplace includes resourcing the centre to meet its mandate, recognizing and managing workload pressures, setting reasonable expectations, and fostering a work environment that promotes healthy boundaries. Addressing vicarious trauma requires collaborative efforts between the UASAC staff and the university.

Senior leadership, in particular, is responsible for fostering an organizational culture that recognizes vicarious trauma as a common outcome for centre staff and volunteers and implementing institutional mechanisms to address this trauma. This aligns with the university's responsibility to ensure a safe environment and protect current and future students, staff, and faculty (University of Alberta, 2022a; University of Alberta, 2022b).

Attending to staff's vicarious trauma goes beyond providing benefits or general mental health resources. It involves creating a culture of support, understanding and proactive care. Recommendations include:

1. **Provide clinical supervision:** UASAC staff, irrespective of professional designation, should have regular access to clinical supervision from an external practitioner to debrief casework and strengthen their trauma stewardship skills. The Australian Clinical Supervision Association (2015) defines clinical supervision as “a formal professional relationship between two or more people in designated roles, which facilitates reflective practice, explores ethical issues, and develops skills.”

This support should be separate from performance evaluations or management oversight to align with the centre's mandate and mitigate vicarious trauma.

Research shows that external professional support effectively reduces burnout and improves care for GBV frontline workers (American College Health Association, 2020, as cited in Khan, 2019; Frontline Partners With Youth Network, 2019; Kulkarni *et al.*, 2013; Shakespeare & Lafrenère, 2012). Providing this support is crucial for the staff's well-being and the Centre's effectiveness.

2. **Ensure a sustainable workload:** Supporting staff balancing individual work with community engagement is crucial. Research highlights the importance of workload management in mitigating trauma exposure impacts for GBV frontline workers (American College Health Association, 2020, cited in Khan & Rowe, 2019; Workplace Strategies for Mental Health, 2021). Maintaining adequate staffing levels is essential to meet the campus community's needs effectively. The new Assistant Dean should collaborate with centre staff to develop and implement sustainable workload practices, and the university should ensure that the centre is well-resourced to manage its caseload.
3. **Collaborate with the campus community:** Colleagues across departments and the broader campus community play a vital role in supporting centre staff and volunteers. One way to foster this support is by offering opportunities for participation on advisory boards and committees. This involvement helps reduce the isolation often experienced by SGBV workers, encouraging understanding and engagement. More effective use of the SGBV Advisory Council can enhance collaboration. The council advises the Lead on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Response on policy, training, strategy, and non-disciplinary responses. Expanding its

scope to include the centre would centralize and strengthen the university's GBV efforts. We recommend the university adopt a co-chair model, with the Lead on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Response and the UASAC director sharing leadership. This model would leverage the director's expertise, resulting in a more informed and effective response to SGBV.

To enhance the Council's effectiveness further, we suggest establishing three additional working groups: the Gendered and Sexual Violence Response Action Group, the Education Action Group, and the Student Advisory Committee. These groups should include and provide platforms for staff, faculty, and students to offer feedback, ideas, and research to address and prevent SGBV, rebuilding trust within the university community.

Leading Practice: Simon Fraser University's Advisory Panel for Sexual Violence Support & Prevention. Designed to support the Sexual Violence Support & Prevention Office (SVSPO), this panel is comprised of experts with specialized knowledge and experience in addressing sexual violence prevention, education, and response, both on campus and in the wider community. The Advisory Panel acts as a critical resource, providing strategic guidance, informed recommendations, and expert insights in line with section 5.2.13 of the university's Sexual Violence and Misconduct Prevention, Education, and Support Policy. This initiative ensures a collaborative, evidence-based approach to preventing and responding to sexual violence, positioning SFU at the forefront of institutional efforts to foster a safer, more supportive environment.

4. **Strengthen monitoring and evaluation practices:** Ensure the UASAC's strategic plan includes clear goals and actions for addressing vicarious trauma, supported and resourced by the university. These plans should be developed with input from an external clinical supervisor. Collecting data on staff retention, service user satisfaction, missed appointments, community perceptions of the UASAC, and the university's responsiveness to staff and volunteer needs will strengthen the case for enhanced resources. Implementing these measures will help the UASAC better support survivors while maintaining a trauma-informed, healing-centred work environment for its staff and volunteers.
5. **Develop protocols to address harassment of centre staff and volunteers:** In the community consultations, some participants spoke about the online harassment

endured by the UASAC volunteers and staff in fall 2023. They shared their disappointment at how the institution handled the matter. It is important that the university create, strengthen and communicate specific protocols that build upon the existing university-wide anti-harassment policies. These protocols should include detailed procedures for reporting and addressing both physical and online harassment, ensuring that all staff and volunteers understand the protections to which they are entitled and the steps to take when subjected to harassment.

Regular training on conflict resolution, de-escalation techniques, and online safety should be provided. In addition, counselling and support services specifically tailored to those affected by online harassment should be made available. Creating confidential and accessible reporting mechanisms will allow staff and volunteers to voice their concerns without fear of retaliation.

iii. Volunteer Complement

Since its inception, volunteers have been the heart of the UASAC, providing essential services like peer crisis intervention support and educational programming. Volunteer involvement has allowed the centre to offer expanded hours, extended services and valuable peer support. We recommend that the university immediately reinstates the volunteer program's crisis intervention and education streams. A key part is ensuring that the volunteer program is well-resourced for training, supervision, and support. In addition, both former and new volunteers should be engaged in future planning of the centre's services and programs. The UASAC volunteer program is a valuable component of its core services that benefit the university campus community and greater Edmonton.

The UASAC's volunteer program exemplifies the benefits of peer leadership in support and education services. One volunteer explained, "It's important that students have peers they can speak to – sometimes you just want to speak to a peer who is in a similar position as you (not just to a professional)." This observation is echoed in the literature. Some survivors may feel more comfortable and understood when sharing with peers who have similar experiences. Peer support and education can empower survivors, reduce isolation, and promote early intervention (Khan *et al.*, 2019).

Training and support should include engaging former volunteers with knowledge of the centre's history and operations and recruiting and onboarding new volunteers for the 2024-25 academic year. An important part of this is exploring an intake model for the

centre to increase options for people affected by sexual and gender-based violence (see page 71).

Cultivate: Volunteer skill development through comprehensive, ongoing training.

The UASAC's volunteer program has benefited the volunteers by providing valuable training, professional development, and mentorship. Several volunteers praised the rigorous 60-70-hour training course, which covers sexual violence, harassment, stalking, trauma, and common misconceptions, delivered from a "feminist, anti-colonial, anti-oppressive, and trauma-informed framework." This training not only equips volunteers with essential skills to understand and respond to SGBV but also fosters a supportive team dynamic.

The skills volunteers acquired were transferable beyond their immediate roles. Notably, volunteers had a clause in their contract requiring a commitment to ongoing learning: "I really appreciated the requirement in our contract to keep ourselves educated on sexual violence; we didn't stop being volunteers and advocates after our shift was over." Future volunteer contracts should include a similar commitment to continuous learning.

Although Possibility Seeds did not have access to all training materials, we recognize that volunteers received comprehensive and ongoing training. To build on the UASAC's legacy, future training should include anti-sexual violence advocacy and crisis intervention support for Crisis Intervention Program volunteers and training for Education Program volunteers to facilitate anti-sexual violence workshops. This training should build on the previous program, which included 10-20 hours of self-directed e-learning, 50 hours of mandatory training with role plays, and interactive workbooks.

Cultivate: Ongoing support, supervision and evaluation for volunteers.

In addition to comprehensive and ongoing training, the university should invest resources to ensure that the UASAC volunteers receive adequate support, supervision and evaluation aligned with leading practice standards (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2023; Public Safety Canada, 2008).

Our document review revealed that the UASAC volunteers received continuous supervision and evaluation from staff. For example, a UASAC staff member, usually the Crisis Intervention Volunteer Coordinator, supported the volunteers during their shift if needed and facilitated debriefing after each session. Though informal, these debriefs were

thorough, focusing on emotional impacts, volunteer strengths, areas for improvement, and setting goals for future sessions. During each debrief, staff ensured that the volunteer:

- Used a client-centred support approach (including a non-judgmental, non-victim-blaming, empathetic support stance);
- Relevantly and accurately discussed and normalized clients' reactions and concerns;
- Relevantly and accurately discussed dynamics of sexual assault and abuse, sexual harassment, and relationship violence;
- Provided accurate information about recovery and referrals;
- Addressed the goals and needs of the client; and
- Connected the client with the Primary Staff Supporter for ongoing support (if applicable).

Education volunteers also worked in pairs and debriefed with the Education Program Coordinator after each presentation. As the Volunteer Program is re-established, it is important to continue these practices.

Another essential practice that should continue is the formal mid- and end-of-year check-ins with centre staff and regular informal check-ins throughout the year. Building on the existing formal check-in practices, volunteers should meet individually with the UASAC staff to discuss their progress, set goals, and review their self-evaluations. Volunteer evaluations should be conducted at the end of the training in September and again at the end of the academic year. The end-of-year assessment should include a self-evaluation and an anonymous general evaluation of the volunteer's experience with the UASAC.

Cultivate: A supportive and valued volunteer community.

The UASAC has historically created a supportive and valued volunteer environment through appreciation events and regular check-ins. The centre also encouraged feedback by providing formal and informal opportunities for volunteers to share their experiences, following leading practices (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2023). Maintaining these practices is crucial to sustaining a culture of care and respect for the students who provide essential services and programming to the U of A community.

The UASAC prioritized community care for its volunteers. Practices such as pairing volunteers in the Crisis Intervention Program and the Education Program enhanced

feelings of support and care. These practices should be cultivated and expanded, with attention given to addressing the impacts of trauma exposure on volunteers, recognizing that service users' trauma stories may affect them (Khan *et al.*, 2019; National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence, 2021).

Plant: A dedicated community space for past volunteers to share, connect, and grieve with one another.

The university should consider collaborating with an external organization like the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Centres (AASAS) to create a dedicated community space for volunteers to gather and grieve. This is important, especially in light of the “unexpected disruption to the U of A’s Sexual Assault Centre,” including the volunteer program in November 2023 (University of Alberta, 2024). Volunteers have voiced deep sadness and frustration about the disruption and its impact on those affected by SGBV. Many also expressed concerns about participating in community consultations due to fears that their personal beliefs, faith, community ties, or advocacy efforts might lead to institutional retaliation. As one former UASAC volunteer noted,

“As volunteers, we feel like we’re on shaky grounds. Previously, there have been platforms where we’d talk; however, now no one feels safe talking about how they feel. We’re all scared and we don’t know if the services will exist.”

Partnering with AASAS to facilitate these healing spaces could offer a secure and supportive environment for volunteers to process their experiences and reconnect, helping to strengthen the volunteer community and rebuild trust with the university.

b. Strategic Framework

Cultivate: The UASAC’s vision, mission and values.

For 30 years, the centre's work has been guided by its vision, mission and values. Its mission states:

The University of Alberta Sexual Assault Centre (UASAC) actively works towards creating a campus community free of sexual violence. We operate from a feminist, anti-oppressive, intersectional, trauma-informed, client-centred framework.

Our mission is to empower the campus community to challenge sexual violence through peer education, community-driven awareness initiatives, and person-centred support.

We value:

- Spaces that recognize, respect, and honour various intersections of being in an attempt to be safe(r) and more accessible to the people who occupy those intersections;
- Centering the lived experiences of those who have endured sexual violence;
- Unconditional, non-judgemental, non-directive support for survivors and their choices for recovery;
- Self-advocacy;
- Emotional expression in all its forms;
- The contributions of all of those engaged in anti-sexual violence activism before us and all of those who will continue this work long after we are gone;
- Community-driven prevention and education efforts;
- The self-knowledge, resiliency and tremendous capacity for change that students possess;
- Creating environments that encourage and facilitate a commitment to continual learning, growth and understanding;
- Fostering collaborative, sustainable relationships throughout the community;
- Individual, community and institutional accountability.

The University of Alberta Sexual Assault Centre's (UASAC) current vision, mission, and values align with leading practice standards, as outlined by the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (2023). The value statements are clear, comprehensive, and consistent with UASAC's framework, offering a holistic, proactive, and inclusive approach to guide its work effectively. The vision articulates the aspirational goal of fostering a campus free from sexual violence alongside university and community partners.

The mission emphasizes UASAC's use of a feminist, anti-oppressive, intersectional, trauma-informed, and client-centred framework, acknowledging the complexity of sexual violence and its diverse impacts. UASAC's mission clearly outlines its objectives and actionable steps, aligning with its vision. It highlights the importance of a person-centred approach to support services while engaging the broader community in prevention and

awareness initiatives. This mission could be further strengthened in some ways, including an explicit commitment to decolonization, creating culturally inclusive spaces and providing culturally responsive services. The mission, vision, and values should be reviewed and updated during the centre's strategic planning process with input from service users, community members, staff, volunteers, and external community partners.

Leading Practice: The centre's vision, mission and values were recognized as a leading practice by other campus sexual assault centres, particularly for their clear and comprehensive articulation of sexual violence:

A broad term shaped by social structures, bureaucratic institutions, cultural norms, and interpersonal interactions that simultaneously increase and decrease people's access to power and resources;

An individual experience that is intricately connected to the unique intersections of identity that a person inhabits;

Happening around us all the time and impacting us all in really foundational ways that we need to be sensitive to when engaging with others;

An experience that can be integrated into a person's understanding of themselves and their life when they have access to supportive environments where they can recognize their personal resiliencies.

Plant: An exploration of refreshing the centre's name to further align with its values of inclusion and accessibility.

A core value of the centre is inclusivity and accessibility. To reinforce this commitment, participants in the community consultations recommended that the centre work with the campus community to consider changing its name or adding an introductory word or phrase. Many sexual assault centres across the country, both on campus and in the community, are exploring new names to meet the changing needs of their communities and their mandate.

Some survivors may be reluctant to access these critical services because of the words "sexual assault centre." which can carry a stigma or may cause discomfort or fear of being judged or labelled. As a result, some community members may avoid seeking the support they need due to concerns about confidentiality, social repercussions, or misunderstanding the nature of the services provided. A staff member shared that international students, in particular, might hesitate to seek help based on the current name of the centre:

When international students read 'Sexual Assault Centre,' their understanding of what that means and what the service provides can be different from our understanding. For domestic students, these topics have been introduced earlier. International students may not feel comfortable accessing the centre or know what to expect when they get there.

Decisions on renaming the centre to ensure greater accessibility must be made in consultation with volunteers, service users and community members. The term "sexual assault" should remain a part of the name to make the service easily identifiable for community members. As noted by the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Centres: "The sexual violence centre must be easily identifiable, allowing those in need to access the appropriate support and resources."

Leading Practice: On April 1, 2023, WAVAW Rape Crisis Centre officially transitioned to Salal Sexual Violence Support Centre, a change driven by extensive community feedback and a commitment to inclusivity. The new name, Salal, symbolizes resilience, adaptability and connection to the land, reflecting the centre's dedication to supporting all survivors of sexualized violence, including those from historically marginalized communities. This rebranding is part of the organization's ongoing efforts to decolonize its practices and deepen its alignment with anti-oppression and intersectional feminist values. By choosing a name that resonates more broadly, Salal Sexual Violence Support Centre aims to create a welcoming and inclusive space for survivors from all walks of life, ensuring everyone feels seen and supported (Salal Sexual Violence Support Centre, 2023).

Plant: A collaborative, clear and comprehensive strategic framework.

The UASAC needs a cohesive, comprehensive, articulated strategic framework as it rebuilds. This framework should align with the UASAC's values, supporting its vision and mission with goals that meet the diverse needs of the U of A community (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2023; Male Survivors Partnership & LimeCulture Community Interest Company, 2017). This strategic framework should also align with *Shape: the University Strategic Plan 2023-2033*, *the Strategic Plan for Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity* (2019), and *Braiding Past, Present and Future* (2022c). For example, the centre should show how its services, education and programming will support campus Indigenization and decolonization efforts.

The centre's strategic plan goals should incorporate clear objectives, actionable strategies, comprehensive services and programming, defined time frames, measurable outcome indicators, and robust evaluation methods (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2023; Women's Aid, 2009). For example, as part of UASAC's strategic planning process, staff and volunteers could collaborate to identify current and new campus and community partners within the first three months, define their roles by creating partnership agreements within six months, and implement engagement strategies such as joint workshops and campaigns over the following year. Regular evaluations would assess progress against these indicators, allowing for adjustments to strategy and ensuring continuous improvement in addressing campus SGBV.

The UASAC's strategic framework should be developed in collaboration with service users, community members, staff, volunteers, and leadership (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2023; Women's Aid, 2009). Co-designing the strategic planning process ensures that the UASAC remains accountable for advancing its vision, mission and values while addressing the diverse needs of its community. This collaborative effort requires leadership resources to create space for engagement and discourse with service users, community members, staff, and volunteers (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2023; Male Survivors Partnership & LimeCulture Community Interest Company, 2017).

The strategic framework should be publicly accessible through a strategic plan updated every five years. An annual report should also detail progress toward goals, outcomes, and impact assessment. This practice promotes transparency, accountability, community engagement, and ongoing archiving of the centre's work.

Leading Practice: The University of Toronto's Sexual Violence Prevention and Support Centre enhances transparency with the campus community through its annual report (University of Toronto, 2022). This report highlights their work, showcases staff and volunteer profiles, and outlines goals for the coming year. Such practices demonstrate the centre's progress, celebrate the dedication of those involved and set clear objectives for continued improvement.

Sustainability of Service Provision: Part of the strategic planning process is envisioning and working toward the centre's sustainability and stability. This can include evaluating

the centre's scope, identifying its service population, and ensuring that services are adequately resourced. U of A students primarily fund and use the UASAC. Currently, no funding is provided by any faculty and staff associations or unions to offset service costs. The Office of the Dean of Students provides operational funds to support the centre.

The UASAC, as a member of Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services (AASAS), receives annual provincial funding. Through its affiliation with AASAS, UASAC volunteers provide confidential and specialized support via text, chat and phone to both the campus and the broader community (Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services, n.d.). The UASAC's crisis intervention drop-in takes referrals from community sexual assault and gender-based violence service providers, specifically when a campus community member needs support. This referral support exemplifies the benefits of the UASAC being part of the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Centres, as it helps ease the strain on centres like SACE, where service users may face up to a year-long wait for some services. (Anchan, 2024). Given that the UASAC serves the wider community, it would be important for the strategic plan to include collaboration with community partners to advocate for sustainable funding from the province.

Cultivate: Regular monitoring, evaluation and assessment of the centre's operations, programs and service delivery.

The UASAC should maintain the leading practice of regularly monitoring, evaluating, and assessing all aspects of operations, programs and service delivery (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2023). This includes evaluating programs and services for barriers to access, reviewing strategic frameworks, and examining operational structures, policies, procedures, protocols, decision-making processes, and organizational culture (National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence, 2021; Bernhardt & Cooper, 2022; Khan *et al.*, 2019). Engaging in these practices is essential in ensuring services and programs meet diverse service user needs and demonstrating accountability to service users, funders and other community partners (Ontario Network of Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence, 2019).

Our document review revealed that the UASAC regularly monitors, evaluates and assesses various aspects of its services and programs. This includes:

- Access to services and programs;
- Impact of services and programs;

This statement highlights how decolonization efforts are central to the centre's mission to address and prevent sexual violence. It reflects the centre's commitment to understanding and mitigating colonialism's ongoing impacts, as highlighted by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action (2015) and *Braiding Past, Present and Future* (2022c). These efforts should be cultivated as a means of addressing systemic inequities, oppression, and violence, including SGBV, that disproportionately impact Indigenous communities. Strengthening the centre's commitment to decolonization also enhances its ability to provide culturally safe and responsive support and cultivate a consent culture on campus.

Plant: Foster a trauma-informed campus

Decolonization practices do not occur in a vacuum; the university can support the centre in upholding its mission and values, particularly its trauma-informed approach, by fostering a campus culture centred around these principles. As some of the community consultation participants noted, building a trauma-informed campus supports the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's 2015 Calls to Action* as well as the *National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls 2019 Calls to Justice*. Both emphasize the need for culturally appropriate, trauma-informed care that addresses unresolved trauma, including intergenerational, multigenerational, and complex trauma (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019). The university can align these efforts with *Braiding Past, Present and Future* (University of Alberta, 2022c) and *Shape: the University Strategic Plan 2023-2033*, which aims to deepen commitments to Indigenous communities (University of Alberta, 2023). By working towards a trauma-informed campus, the university can demonstrate its commitment to creating a supportive, inclusive community that respects and meets the unique needs of Indigenous survivors.

b. Protocols and Procedures

The centre's existing protocols and procedures likely reflected leading practices and met legal and institutional standards. However, we cannot provide a full assessment due to limited access to centre documents. We recommend refining and updating existing protocols and developing new ones to strengthen UASAC's operational framework and ensure alignment with university-wide policies. All protocols should be created with an intersectional lens, consistent with the UASAC's feminist, anti-oppressive, trauma-informed,

and client-centred approach. This will promote inclusivity and align with the U of A's Strategic Plan for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (2019).

Cultivate: Clear operational structure guided by comprehensive and accessible protocols and procedures.

The UASAC's operational structure should be clearly outlined in its protocols, as this clarity is essential for rebuilding and preserving the institutional memory and foundational practices that have been lost. Policies and protocols should ensure that services and programs adopt a strategic and proactive approach, providing an organized, seamless, timely, respectful, and survivor-centred response (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2023; Women's Aid, 2009). To achieve this, the UASAC should include the following elements in its policies and protocols to guide service and program delivery:

- **Staff and volunteer roles and responsibilities:** Policies and protocols should clearly outline the scope of staff and volunteer roles and responsibilities.
- **Intake:** The UASAC should have clear protocols to guide intake and waitlist management. Intake procedures should be relevant to all staff and volunteers and rooted in informed consent (National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence, 2021).
- **Informed consent:** The centre should establish clear protocols and processes for informed consent that align with university policies and are consistent with the Options Navigation Network. These procedures should ensure individuals accessing the UASAC's services and programming are notified in a timely, accessible and responsive manner about:
 - Their care and support options to make informed decisions about their healing and accessing justice (Khan *et al.*, 2019; Ontario Network of Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Treatment Centres, 2019; Women's Aid, 2009).
 - Their rights and responsibilities, including the mechanism for making a complaint to internal and/or external bodies and the right to decline services and withdraw consent at any time (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2023; National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence, 2021; Women's Aid, 2009).

- The terms of service (National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence, 2021).
- Policies and procedures regarding confidentiality and consent (Mendoza, 2023b; National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence, 2021).
- **Confidentiality:** While the UASAC has some information on their website regarding privacy and confidentiality, our document review could not locate specific centre procedures and protocols on confidentiality that address the following:
 - The scope and limits of confidentiality, including those prescribed by law, institutional policies, and professional standards or regulations (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2023; Ontario Network of Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Treatment Centres, 2019; National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence, 2021; Women's Aid, 2009).
 - Mandated reporting requirements and who mandated reporters are (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2023).
 - Responsibilities of staff and volunteers regarding privacy and confidentiality, including when, how and who to consult with when unclear (Khan *et al.*, 2019; National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence, 2021).

Tool: [Guidelines on Confidentiality and Reporting: Checklist Tool for Campus Gender-Based Violence Service and Support Agreements](#)

This tool sets the tone and expectations for keeping disclosures of GBV confidential before reaching a threshold where they must be reported. Its purpose is to provide clarity to those who receive disclosures by establishing common core principles and providing a checklist for assessing service and support agreements.

- **Recordkeeping:** The UASAC should have clear policies and protocols outlining its practices and procedures regarding client recordkeeping, including:
 - Guidance about who keeps records, what information should and should not be documented, and who has access to these records (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2023).
 - Procedures for managing client requests to access their file that protect client safety and well-being, as well as the security of the file (National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence, 2021).

- Procedures for responding to a breach of client information (National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence, 2021).

Tool: [Record-Keeping Guidelines and Reflection Tool for Campus Gender-Based Violence Offices](#)

This tool provides advice and reflection on what, why and how records regarding GBV are to be kept at PSIs. Its purpose is to clarify who is responsible for maintaining such records, who, under certain conditions, has access to such documents, and who provides an accurate accounting of GBV cases.

- **Information sharing:** The UASAC should have information-sharing agreements to outline the procedure and principles for sharing service user information internally and externally (Mendoza, 2023c; Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2023; Women’s Aid, 2009). The information-sharing agreements should:
 - Clearly articulate the purpose of sharing information, namely to increase the safety of the person subjected to sexual violence and to allow for “promote consistent, holistic, and coordinated care and support” (Mendoza, 2023c).
 - Specify what information can be shared, the minimum thresholds for information sharing and the limits of confidentiality (Mendoza, 2023a).

The current information-sharing agreement, titled University of Alberta Protective Services / HWS Information Sharing Procedure, incorporates these key principles. It can be further strengthened with recommendations detailed in the following leading practice tool.

Tool: [Creating Information-Sharing Agreements Among Stakeholders Responding to Campus Gender-Based Violence](#)

This tool provides an aerial framework and instructions on collaborating with other partners to share relevant information, both on and off-campus, to respond properly to disclosures of GBV.

- **Risk management:** As part of a broader risk management strategy, the UASAC should have risk management procedures to identify, prevent, mitigate, and eliminate potential harm to service users, staff and volunteers during services or programming (Public Safety Canada, 2008). These procedures should take an

intersectional, anti-oppressive approach that recognizes how service providers and the inherent harm within colonial institutions can harm people.

- **Communications:** The UASAC had a Social Media and Communications manual detailing its communications strategy, particularly guidelines for posting on social media. They should refine this manual to include guidelines for external communication practices, including interactions with the media, social media or other public communication channels (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2023). These guidelines should ensure that external communications are:
 - Accessible: Use accessible formats and modalities, ensuring websites and digital platforms are adaptable to multiple devices and formats (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2023).
 - Inclusive: Design communications to engage diverse audiences within the community (National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence, 2021).
 - Privacy-Conscious: Be attentive to privacy and confidentiality, clearly state the limits of confidentiality on the UASAC website and provide secure platforms for service users to communicate sensitive information (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2023).

Plant: Establish a Client Bill of Rights and Responsibilities.

The UASAC should develop a Client Bill of Rights and Responsibilities (“Bill of Rights”), which can foster accountability and transparency, build trust, and help maintain a safe and supportive environment for service users, staff and volunteers.

The Bill of Rights should be developed in collaboration with service users, community members, staff, volunteers, and leadership and should embody the UASAC’s values.

At a minimum, the Bill of Rights should include the right to:

- Equitable access to services (Khan *et al.*, 2019; Rape Crisis England & Wales and Rape Crisis Scotland, 2018).
- Anti-discriminatory practice and respect for the diversity of service users (Rape Crisis England & Wales and Rape Crisis Scotland, 2018).
- Unconditional, non-judgemental, non-directive support.

- Be treated with dignity and humanity, underscored by recognizing how a person can be subjected to and perpetuate harm (Khan *et al.*, 2019).
- Informed consent and respect for autonomy (Khan *et al.*, 2019).
- Voice concerns or complaints about services with an expectation that they will be heard and without fear of retaliation.

Leading Practice: The Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton provides the rights of those who can access counselling services on its [website](#). They include the right to be treated with respect and dignity, consent (specifically, informed consent to services and the right to withdraw), privacy and confidentiality, understanding what counselling is, understanding your counsellor's approach, providing feedback about your counselling experience, and asking questions.

Leading Practice: Women's Health in Women's Hands in Toronto has a Client Bill of Rights on its [website](#) to ensure clients receive a respectful and dignified healthcare experience. These include the right to be treated with respect and without discrimination, the right to informed consent, the ability to refuse or discontinue services, and the right to voice concerns or provide feedback. In addition to these rights, the Client Bill of Rights includes client responsibilities such as providing accurate health information, asking questions if they do not understand something, and treating staff respectfully. This approach helps foster a collaborative and respectful healthcare environment for everyone.

c. Core Services and Programs

Our review found that the UASAC is a community-driven, trauma-informed and intersectional leader in providing comprehensive care to sexual violence survivors in North America. The UASAC can be viewed as offering eight core services and programs as identified by the AASAS. This includes: crisis intervention programs, systems navigation and advocacy, counselling programs, education, outreach, volunteer programming, coordination and collaboration, and systemic advocacy (Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services, n.d.) This report further organizes these core services and programs into four categories: support, education, volunteer programming, and community engagement and systemic advocacy. The UASAC has provided exemplary service in these areas, ensuring that all aspects of its care are designed to sensitively and inclusively meet the diverse needs of service users.

This section examines the four core service provision and program delivery categories, outlining key insights and offering recommendations highlighting the UASAC's effectiveness and impact.

i. Approach

Cultivate: An approach to service provision and program delivery that aligns with Judith Herman's *Trauma Recovery Model*.

Judith Herman's *Trauma Recovery Model*, which divides recovery into three phases — safety and stabilization, remembrance and mourning, and reconnection² — offers a helpful approach to framing services that support survivors' healing journeys (Herman, 1992). These phases are not strictly linear; survivors may move back and forth between them as they heal, and for some, it may not be necessary or desired to be part of all the phases. While the UASAC has not explicitly stated that its services follow Herman's model, its approach aligns well with these principles. The model provides a valuable framework for understanding the centre's service provision and program delivery, ensuring a holistic pathway for survivors.

Phase One: Safety and Stabilization

A key element of trauma recovery, as identified by Herman, is establishing safety. For a sexual assault centre, this involves creating a secure environment where survivors feel both physically and emotionally protected. By prioritizing safety, the sexual assault centre helps survivors begin the healing process by reducing immediate feelings of fear and vulnerability (Herman, 1992). To continue fostering safety and stabilization for its service users, the UASAC should maintain the following measures:

- **Confidentiality and protection of information:** Ensure clear policies are in place, educate staff and volunteers on their responsibilities, and inform service users of their rights and the limits of confidentiality to protect their privacy.
- **Secure facilities:** Maintain a safe, discrete physical and confidential online space for the community.

² In earlier versions of Judith Herman's trauma recovery model, stage three was called "reconnection." In later versions, it is referred to as "reconnection and integration."

- **Trained staff and volunteers:** Offer ongoing, comprehensive training for staff and volunteers on providing trauma-informed, intersectional, feminist support.
- **Feminist, trauma-informed, intersectional, and grassroots guiding principles:** Uphold the UASAC's longstanding commitment to feminist, community-based, intersectional, and equity-driven principles. For over 30 years, the UASAC has amplified diverse survivor voices, engaged with campus partners, and addressed systemic inequalities. Building on this foundation will ensure services remain inclusive and transformative.
- **Drop-in crisis intervention support:** Provide immediate, confidential support for survivors, allowing them to share their stories with trained responders. Offer emotional support, safety planning, and crisis intervention as needed.
- **Systems navigation:** Support those affected by SGBV in understanding and accessing various legal, medical or academic services. This guidance helps reduce the overwhelming task of navigating complex systems post-assault, stabilizing the survivor's environment.
- **Academic modifications:** Coordinate with university staff to provide survivors with necessary academic accommodations, such as assignment extensions, rescheduled exams, or alternative study environments.
- **Accompaniment:** Provide survivors with a supportive presence during medical exams, police interviews or court appearances. This helps maintain their safety and ensures they are not alone during potentially re-traumatizing experiences.
- **Education and awareness programs for survivors:** Provide educational resources and workshops, both in person and online, to help survivors understand trauma, its effects, and the context of their experiences.
- **Support groups:** Continue offering support groups like Roots. According to the UASAC website, "Roots is a five-week psychoeducational group programme built specifically for survivors of sexual violence. This group is co-led by two Sexual Assault Centre clinicians and focuses on the impacts of sexual violence and trauma, and the management of common reactions after sexual assault." It serves both as a pre-counselling initiative for survivors on a waitlist and a stand-alone program for those not seeking long-term counselling.

Phase Two: Remembrance and Mourning

The second part of Herman's model is remembrance and mourning, where survivors can process and articulate their traumatic experiences in a safer space. This phase is vital for survivors to integrate their trauma into their narrative and begin moving forward (Herman, 1992). The UASAC should continue offering the following services and programs to facilitate this:

- **Psychological Support Program (PSP):** Continue offering individual counselling through the PSP, where survivors can explore and understand their trauma in a supportive environment, work through their emotions, and begin integrating these experiences into their lives.
- **Support groups:** Explore developing additional support groups to help survivors process traumatic events together, fostering a community of shared experiences and healing.

Phase Three: Reconnection

Reconnecting with others is part three of Herman's model. It focuses on rebuilding the social connections that trauma often disrupts. Reconnecting with others helps survivors restore the social systems of care, protection and meaning that trauma can destroy (Herman, 1992). By fostering these connections, the UASAC supports survivors in re-establishing a sense of belonging and purpose. To this end, the UASAC should continue to offer:

- **Volunteer program:** Maintaining the robust Volunteer Program, where participants support people affected by sexual violence and engage in building education activities and programming. This is instrumental in helping create a culture of consent on campus and supporting survivors and allies in developing skills, knowledge, and community engagement.
- **Community engagement and education:** Continuing community engagement and education initiatives designed to raise awareness about sexual violence, educate the campus community, and promote a culture of support and prevention. Through workshops, seminars and training sessions, the UASAC aims to change societal attitudes and reduce the stigma associated with sexual assault. This proactive

approach helps create a safer and more informed community, which is essential for the reintegration of survivors.

- **Systemic advocacy:** Engaging in systemic advocacy, focused on influencing policies and practices within the university and the broader community, was driven by the staff leadership of the centre, often in collaboration with campus partners and community organizations. This involves working with university administration, local government and other organizations to advocate for survivor-centric policies and practices. The goal is to drive systemic changes that support survivors and prevent future assaults. By addressing structural issues and promoting institutional accountability, the UASAC helps ensure that the environment where survivors reconnect and integrate is progressively more supportive and responsive to their needs.
- **Survivor advocacy:** Regaining a sense of power over one's life is critical to healing and reconnection. At the UASAC, survivors were supported in strengthening their understanding of advocacy and practicing it actively through the centre. Historically, This has included survivors learning to advocate for issues they have been directly impacted by, such as access to justice and increased services for marginalized communities. Through this process, survivors have shared in centre evaluations that the advocacy supported them in reclaiming their agency, contributing to meaningful change, and fostering a deeper sense of community empowerment and connection.
- **Community outreach, partnerships and collaborations:** The UASAC engages in extensive community outreach, partnerships, and collaborations that extend its impact beyond the university, fostering collaborations with local agencies, healthcare providers, and advocacy groups. Such partnerships enhance the support network available to survivors, ensuring a cohesive, community-wide approach to addressing sexual violence. This broad-based support network is vital for survivors as they work to rebuild their lives and integrate back into their communities.

Viewing the UASAC's services through Judith Herman's Trauma Recovery Model highlights the importance of the centre's holistic approach. The framework captures how the centre addresses immediate safety and stabilization needs, offers tools for healing, fosters peer connections and learning, and advocates for systemic change.

d. Support Services

Throughout its 30-year history, the UASAC has provided support services to people affected by sexual violence, including crisis intervention and drop-in support, systems navigation and advocacy, and counselling and therapeutic support through the Psychological Support Program (PSP).

- **Crisis Intervention Program:** The UASAC's Crisis Intervention Program offers confidential and anonymous drop-in, short-term crisis intervention and information. The program responds to and assesses disclosures of sexual violence, provides intensive crisis support, assesses the risk of harm to self or others, and works to prevent further instances of harm. Drop-in support was available through multiple access points, both in-person and virtually. These options are complemented by the province-wide Alberta One Line, which offers confidential and specialized phone, text and chat support.

This approach ensured services were accessible to a wide range of service users. A volunteer explained, "In Edmonton, the UASAC was the only SAC with drop-in. All the others are by appointment. The centre served not only students but the broader community." Another volunteer emphasized the impact of these services, stating, "I think the most valuable aspect is the immediate crisis intervention. From my interactions with survivors, this has been a huge pillar of support in their lives."

The convenience and accessibility of the service were also praised, with a faculty member commenting on "the immediate in-person support and students being able to go when needed and not having to wait/find a time that the centre is open." Together, these comments underscore the critical role the UASAC's crisis intervention and drop-in support play in providing timely and effective assistance to survivors.

- **Case Management, Systems Navigation and Survivor Advocacy:** The UASAC also provides case management, systems navigation and survivor advocacy, ensuring that service users receive comprehensive, wrap-around and/or bridging support. Staff act as advocates or provide case management support for service users navigating multiple or complex systems and processes. This includes supporting service users with housing, financial, academic or other needs, accompanying and advocating for service users seeking medical attention, reporting sexual violence to

the police or the University of Alberta Protective Services, and attending court processes or similar proceedings at the University of Alberta.

As one volunteer noted, "The centre provides immediate support for those experiencing SGBV and helps people navigate their options of what to do (or not do) next." The UASAC was critical in guiding survivors through their choices and the next steps. A staff member echoed this, emphasizing the value of the advocacy provided:

The advocacy role that the UASAC staff took on was valuable. They would accompany students to hearings to offer support in that space to help them when they might have trouble articulating their needs. They advocated for students, especially in structured processes at an institution that can be intimidating to students, let alone students navigating harm done to them outside of their control.

UASAC staff played a crucial role in providing essential support and advocacy, helping survivors navigate complex systems and processes. Their guidance ensured survivors were supported in navigating difficult and often intimidating environments, offering critical assistance when needed.

- **Psychological Support Program:** The UASAC's Psychological Support Program (PSP) complements its Crisis Intervention Program by offering specialized wrap-around support services. The PSP offers psychosocial interventions and trauma therapy, including individual and group therapy, resource-based counselling and interventions, evidence-based treatment from a biopsychosocial model, and resourcing and systems navigation. The PSP also offers two key programs: a psychoeducational peer support group called "Roots" and a therapy group called "Yoga for Healing." While our review does not delve deeply into the PSP, its significance as a crucial resource for the University of Alberta community was underscored during community consultations, where it was noted as a critical part of the UASAC's support services.

The PSP program is operational, and additional interim staff have been brought in to provide drop-in crisis intervention, case management, and system navigation services. However, the peer-led crisis intervention and drop-in program is presently not operating. It is important to reestablish and appropriately resource this program. Recommendations for this are outlined under [Organizational Structure and Staff Support](#).

Cultivate: An academic modifications protocol that the centre can use to support students affected by sexual and gender-based violence.

The ability to defer assignments, reweight coursework, or modify exam dates and locations is essential for supporting students affected by SGBV. Academic modifications are often the most practical support PSIs can provide to those affected by SGBV (Jafry, Z. *et al.*, 2022). Therefore, it was unsurprising that students in the community consultations asked for more robust academic modifications to support those impacted by SGBV. This is captured in the updated 2023 University of Alberta Sexual Violence policy in section 2:

“Any person who discloses and/or makes a complaint of SGBV can expect to be... offered options for modifications to prevent further unwanted contact with the subject of the disclosure and reduce, to the extent possible, the negative impacts of the SGBV on the discloser’s ability to access and participate in the learning environment” (University of Alberta, 2023).

It was encouraging to learn that the Lead, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Support is creating an academic modifications guide to support the university community. This guide will streamline the process, ensure policy alignment, and help campus partners like the centre support survivors more easily. As a protocol, the academic modifications guide should be survivor-centred and grounded in trauma-informed practice. It should also guide employees in supporting survivors through related administrative processes (Jafry *et al.*, 2022).

Cultivate: Predictable, consistent access to support services.

Ensuring that the supports available through the UASAC are predictable and consistent is essential for sexual violence services and a crucial aspect of a trauma-informed approach (National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence, 2021). Predictable, consistent access to services fosters trust, reliability and a safer model of care. To achieve this, support services should be re-established, reflecting the level of access and care provided before November 2023. As a UASAC volunteer observed, “What the program was before the events that unfolded last year was very good. It allowed survivors to reach out when in need, and allowed others to learn how to support survivors and foster a community of consent.”

To prevent future service disruptions and rebuild community trust, senior leadership should consider developing contingency plans to ensure continued access to vital services.

These plans should ensure consistency in service delivery, maintain the level of access and care that the UASAC provides when operating at full capacity, and mitigate the impact of any changes to support services. This includes accounting for the staff and volunteers required to maintain these services and recognizing the different types of support services relied on by the community, particularly those unique to the UASAC, such as peer support and drop-in crisis intervention support (see below).

Cultivate: Adequate and timely access to drop-in services.

The UASAC should reestablish drop-in and crisis intervention support for at least 35 hours per week. As of October 2024, the university will have hired a full-time staff member for this position to operate drop-in crisis intervention services for students. This service is critical and essential for the U of A community — between September and November 2023 alone, UASAC provided 100 instances of drop-in, text and chat support (Anchan, 2024). The value of this service lies in offering immediate, short-term crisis intervention support and information from Monday to Friday without requiring an appointment. This aligns with the leading practice standard of providing timely access to services (Ontario Network of Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence, 2019).

One user emphasized, “Drop-in is essential, and the more hours the centre is available, the better... especially because the student community has variable classes/other commitments that are likely to conflict with those limited hours.” Drop-in services and crisis intervention support also serve as a bridge, connecting users to ongoing assistance to address specific needs, such as clinical and therapeutic support through the PSP, systems navigation and advocacy support from staff, or referrals to other external services.

Cultivate: Increased campus presence and access to support for Francophone communities.

In a 2021 joint letter sent to the university administration on sexual violence prevention and response, undergraduate and graduate students outlined several demands for U of A to ensure a safe learning environment (University of Alberta Students' Union *et al.*, 2021). The calls to action included:

- Ensuring that all sexual violence prevention and response resources are available in French and explicitly designed for Campus Saint-Jean (CSJ) students; and
- Increasing the availability of in-person sexual violence prevention and response resources at Augustana Campus, given its distance from North Campus.

To respond to these requests and improve access to support for all U of A students, the UASAC should consider expanding its presence at both CSJ and Augustana campuses. For CSJ, this includes making resources available in French.

However, to increase access at CSJ and Augustana Campus, the UASAC needs adequate resources, including staff and volunteer support (see [Organizational Structure and Staff Support](#)). As one student suggested, "To better serve the French-speaking student population, increase the presence of French-speaking volunteers, particularly those recruited from Campus Saint-Jean. This initiative could involve setting up recruitment booths at CSJ to attract potential volunteers." Another added, "It would be great to have more presence at Campus Saint-Jean from French-speaking volunteers - possibly those that have been recruited from CSJ." These initiatives help ensure that students impacted by SGBV have better access to vital support and resources.

Cultivate: A possible refresh of the name of the UASAC's drop-in Crisis Intervention Program.

While crisis intervention is essential to support services, not all survivors deem their experience a "crisis." Some survivors might downplay the severity of the incident, convincing themselves it wasn't serious enough to warrant immediate help. For example, 44% of U of A students who have been subjected to SGBV since starting at U of A did not disclose it to the school, primarily because they did not feel it was serious enough to report (Leger, 2023b). Recognizing that the phrase "crisis" could be a barrier to accessing help, the UASAC might consider refreshing the name of the Crisis Intervention Program to reflect the broad range of drop-in support provided and encourage access for community members who might hesitate to seek help if they don't view their situation as a crisis. Any conversation about refreshing the program's name should be held with the community, including past and current volunteers, service users, student unions, centre staff, and the wider campus community.

Plant: Access to free legal information for survivors.

There is an opportunity to further bolster support services by introducing a free legal information program in partnership with Alberta Law that provides information specific to students impacted by sexual assault. Currently, the University of Alberta Student Union offers a Student Legal Services initiative; however, it is more general, whereas the proposed model focuses specifically on sexual assault. The sexual assault legal information

program could be modelled after Western University's successful pilot initiative, Legal Information for Sexual Assault Victims (LISA).

Leading Practice: [LISA](#) is a legal information pilot program at Western University that provides free and confidential legal guidance to students affected by sexual assault or abuse. It is led by a volunteer team of current and former Western Law students under professional supervision. Western University students accessing LISA meet trained law students who can support them in discussing their legal options, understanding various legal processes, and receiving information and referrals to legal and non-legal resources.

Access to legal information and advice also benefits staff navigating the complexities of SGBV cases. Centre staff should have access to legal expertise (e.g., a legal advice program or a dedicated lawyer with specialized expertise in SGBV and post-secondary contexts) to better assist those affected by SGBV, especially those requiring systems navigation and advocacy support.

Leading Practice: Toronto Metropolitan University's Sexual Violence Support and Education Office partners with an external lawyer specializing in sexual and gender-based violence to provide up to five hours of monthly legal information. The legal information provided helps staff assist clients in navigating the legal system and understanding their rights and responsibilities.

e. Education Program

The UASAC's Education Program provides comprehensive sexual violence prevention education to the U of A community, including faculty, staff and students. This program includes peer education and professional development through online courses, interactive workshops, and psychoeducational resources. It is grounded in research, theory, and evidence and is regularly updated based on evaluation feedback and community needs. The program aligns with leading practices and standards and should be further developed to maintain its effectiveness and community-driven focus. A UASAC volunteer observed,

The presentations during classes and events were a way of informing students who had experienced sexual violence that they could receive drop-in support at the UASAC. These presentations allowed survivors to understand what they were going through if they hadn't been able to name it before.

Educational workshops and presentations benefit both survivors and their allies. In the community consultations, a faculty member shared,

SAC has very robust training on receiving disclosures of sexual and gender-based violence... it was a necessary piece for those in supportive roles and faculty members as well. Quite often, you hear from faculty members who might be hearing something very sensitive that they don't know how to handle those types of conversations.

As of November 2024, the university community has access to the UASAC's asynchronous online education modules, while the synchronous trainings, workshops, events, and peer education programs are not in operation. In October 2024, the university hired the UASAC education coordinator. It is crucial that the education program returns to its full operational capacity and is appropriately resourced (see [Organizational Structure and Staff Support](#)).

Cultivate: Comprehensive educational programming aligned with leading practices.

The UASAC should provide comprehensive, ongoing, consistent educational programming to the U of A community. To this end, the UASAC's Education Program should continue to:

- **Follow guiding principles:** Educational programming should continue to align with the UASAC's mission, vision and values (see [Strategic Framework](#)), as well as with the following guiding principles as identified in the Courage to Act Report: culturally grounded; trauma- and violence-informed; engaging; survivor-centred; acknowledge power; intersectional; allow for space making; peer-to-peer; and accessible (Khan *et al.*, 2019).
- **Be theory-driven:** The UASAC should continue to ensure all educational programming is theory-driven and rooted in research and leading practices (Khan *et al.*, 2019; Flood & Rowe, 2021). It should adopt the socio-ecological model, targeting structural, societal, community, relationship, individual, and historical factors, and integrate primary, secondary and tertiary levels of prevention (Khan *et al.*, 2019; Flood & Rowe, 2021).
- **Be ongoing and consistent:** The UASAC should continue to ensure educational programming is ongoing, consistent, and follows a well-developed and appropriate curriculum (Flood & Rowe, 2021; Kemeni *et al.*, 2022).

- **Be comprehensive:** The UASAC’s Education Program should continue to provide workshops, training, and other educational initiatives and programming that cover the key components of gender-based violence education as defined in the Courage to Act Report: relationships and consent; changing norms; policy and access to supports; coordinated, effective response; bystander intervention; and roots of gender-based violence and awareness raising (Khan *et al.*, 2019). It should also continue to be responsive to educational requests from community members to address gaps in programming specific to the U of A community. The UASAC should also continue to provide training in areas identified as most useful by students, specifically:
 - How to intervene as a bystander to sexual and gender-based violence;
 - How to respond to a disclosure of sexual and gender-based violence and support a victim/survivor; and
 - How to report sexual and gender-based violence (Leger, 2023a).
- **Evolve and adapt:** Educational programming should be ever-evolving and adaptable (Khan *et al.*, 2019; Flood & Rowe, 2021; Kemeni *et al.*, 2022). The UASAC should continue to adjust its educational programming based on evaluation feedback and ongoing assessment. It should remain responsive to changing contexts, like during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the pandemic, the centre staff adapted the content and delivery of their educational programming. For instance, they introduced “Supporting People Who Experience Harm During the Pandemic,” a two-part workshop for service providers who serve clients experiencing interpersonal violence because of the pandemic and isolation.
- **Be multi-modal and multi-faceted:** The UASAC should continue to provide educational programming that is multi-modal and multi-faceted to ensure that it is inclusive, accessible, comprehensive and effective (Khan *et al.*, 2019; Flood & Rowe, 2021; Kemeni *et al.*, 2022).
- **Be targeted for specific groups:** The UASAC should continue to provide educational programming for specific groups on campus, including but not limited to:
 - students living in residence;

- residence staff;
- faculty and staff;
- student leaders;
- clubs and groups;
- faith groups;
- student journalists and editorial staff of *The Gateway*;
- medical students;
- the theatre community;
- first responders;
- the Greek community; and
- individuals in dual roles, such as student-staff and those who supervise others while being supervised.

The UASAC should also continue the work that was underway to ensure that educational programming was meeting the needs of campus groups, including meeting with student groups, staff associations and faculty members to determine anti-sexual violence educational needs, tailoring anti-sexual violence programming to the needs of various groups and demographics on campus, and developing additional content for the online course tailored to specific groups such as graduate students. Programming should incorporate leading practices in assessment and evaluation and align with the centre's and university's various strategic plans, e.g. *Shape: the University Strategic Plan 2023-2033*.

- **Include peer education:** Peer-to-peer education is the most effective approach to sexual violence prevention education (Khan *et al.*, 2019). For students, peer facilitation can help create a safer and more comfortable space by removing power differentials between students, staff and faculty (Livingston *et al.*, 2020). This should include, for example, continuing to work with the Fraternity Liaison within the Greek Life community.

Tool: [Education and Training Toolkit: Addressing and Preventing Gender-Based Violence at Post-Secondary Institutions](#)



This toolkit is designed to engage and support the work of GBV prevention education at post-secondary institutions. It offers campus educators a blueprint of prevention education possibilities through in-depth tools, resources, reflection questions, and much more. The toolkit provides six unique chapters covering various prevention topics.

Leading Practice: Simon Fraser University's Sexual Violence Support & Prevention Office offers a comprehensive prevention education plan for the 2024-2025 academic year, focusing on fostering a campus culture of respect, consent, and support. The plan incorporates a Social-Ecological Framework, which addresses the multiple layers of factors contributing to sexualized violence. It outlines its methodology, guiding principles, desired outcomes, and priorities. Accessible on their website, the plan provides insights into their initiatives for the year and serves as an archive of their work for future partners and collaborators. These elements ensure that the plan remains structured, consistent, and adaptable to the evolving needs of the campus community.

Cultivate: Relationships with campus partners to support educational programming.

Throughout its history, the UASAC has coordinated with campus partners to deliver comprehensive educational programming (Khan *et al.*, 2019). When the Education Program is re-established, the UASAC should work closely with the Lead, SGBV Response, and collaborate with campus partners. These partners include the Office of Safe Disclosure and Human Rights; Helping Individuals at Risk; Residence Services; the International Services Centre; Accommodations & Accessibility Services; Health & Wellness Services; the University Health Centre; First Peoples House; Athletics; Campus & Community Recreation; The Landing; The Fyrefly Institute; fraternities and sororities; student unions and associations; staff and faculty unions and associations; and departments and faculties within the university.

A U of A student emphasized the importance of this collaboration:

"The centre can be strengthened by building stronger collaborations with local organizations, health services and advocacy groups to create a more comprehensive support network for survivors. Host joint events and initiatives with these partners to raise awareness and provide additional resources to the campus community."

Working with diverse campus partners will enhance engagement and ensure that UASAC's educational programming meets community needs (National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence, 2021).

Cultivate: Targeted education and programming to engage men on campus.

According to the Campus Climate Survey, women and gender-diverse students at U of A are more likely to participate in SGBV training and information sessions than men (Leger, 2023b). This disparity is concerning because men also experience SGBV and face unique barriers to reporting their experiences of sexual violence (Shumka *et al.*, 2021). It is, therefore, critical that the UASAC sustain efforts and develop new strategies to engage men in anti-sexual violence education.

Leading Practice: The UVic Men's Circle is a leading practice that provides a drop-in discussion group for men and masculine-identified individuals to share their experiences, challenges and successes in navigating life as men. Participants can connect with others with similar identities, exchange experiences, and seek advice and support. The flexible structure of the circles encourages open discussions on any challenges or struggles, aiming to break down limiting views of masculinity for a healthier, more authentic life. Additionally, the UVic Men's Circle fosters the unlearning and challenging of patriarchy and other intersecting forms of oppression, offering a space for those who have caused harm to engage in growth, healing and accountability.

Targeted outreach and education are crucial not just because some men are survivors but also as effective prevention strategies. While recognizing that gender is a social construct and that perceptions of masculinity vary by individual and community, research shows that boys and men are often socialized with harmful gender-based norms. For instance, a Statistics Canada 2017 report showed that the vast majority of those identified as perpetrators of sexual violence are men (Conroy & Cotter, 2017). In a post-secondary context, it is important to note that two-thirds of the incidents reported in this survey cycle were committed by men between the ages of 18 and 35 acting alone.

In line with best practice (Shumka *et al.*, 2021), the university should support the UASAC's continued outreach and engagement efforts to reach individuals most likely to cause harm, recognizing that they can also be survivors and allies. This support may decrease their risk to the campus community, reduce their ability to escalate with others, increase their likelihood to participate more fully in taking accountability for their actions and encourage them to engage in repair work with the community. Supporting such individuals is essential because it provides them the opportunity to change their harmful and abusive behaviours, which are often a trauma response to the abuse they've experienced in their own lives. Thus, those found to cause harm need assistance for various practical and ethical reasons.

In the document review, we learned that the UASAC has historically engaged with these individuals, such as those in the Greek community. By working closely with Greek organizations through workshops, policy reviews, focus groups, and ongoing communication, the UASAC has fostered a shared commitment to change and heightened awareness of responsibilities in sexual violence prevention and response. This engagement has led to a stronger relationship where Greek community groups are more likely to seek guidance from the UASAC.

Tool: [Pathways for Engagement: Institutional and Program-level Considerations to Engage Men and Prevent Sexualized and Gender-Based Violence on Post-Secondary Campuses](#)

This tool is designed to support PSIs in proactive, positive and productive ways to engage men in GBV prevention work on university and college campuses. It provides readers with an environmental scan of what work has been or is currently underway in Canada, identifies some emerging promising practices to promote this work at an institutional level, and provides practical advice on engaging men in programming.

Plant: [Mandatory consent and sexual violence training for incoming students at the University of Alberta.](#)

The University of Alberta offers a voluntary online module titled "Building a Culture of Consent on Campus." This module comprises six parts and was developed by centre staff and volunteers. Implementing mandatory training ensures that,

All members of the university community, including leaders, response and prevention experts, students, faculty, staff and post-secondary partners, work together to create equitable access to a university environment, free from harassment and sexual violence (Office of the Provost and Vice-President (Academic), 2024a).

At a governance level, a U of A staff member informed us that,

"The Board (of Governors) has been engaged in this work and the focus has been for the university to explore mechanisms, feasibility and impact of mandatory training for all students, recognizing that there are other implications but broadening/increasing access and completion rates is an important goal.

It is encouraging that the university is working to make this training mandatory for all incoming students across faculties, thereby strengthening efforts toward building a consent culture on campus.

Furthermore, in community consultations, a U of A student emphasized the importance of mandatory consent education for all incoming students: "Find a way for ALL students upon intake to receive sexual assault training. It was done at my previous university." A mandatory consent module is one way the university can provide incoming students with the information they need to "challenge sexual violence," thereby supporting the centre's mission.

Additionally, mandatory consent and sexual violence education is a key request from post-secondary communities across Canada. In 2022, student leaders from over twenty universities, colleges, CEGEPs, and various national organizations representing over 1.2 million students created ten evidence-based calls to action for PSIs and governments to address campus sexual violence (Kemeni *et al.*, 2022). One of their recommendations was mandatory workshops for all incoming students, including transfer, mature and students in residence. They also stressed that these workshops should be trauma-informed, allowing those affected by sexual violence to opt-out if needed (Protetch & Rosser, 2021).

f. Volunteer Program

The UASAC's Volunteer Program is pivotal to its service and program delivery. This unique and well-regarded program hosts between 30 to 40 volunteers each year. In 2018, volunteers were divided into crisis intervention volunteers and education program volunteers.

- **Crisis intervention volunteers** support the Crisis Intervention Program by providing information, resources and emotional support to those accessing the service under the supervision and guidance of Centre staff. These volunteers provide peer support and peer education to the U of A community. Peer support of this type "can help reduce feelings of isolation and build and/or re-build self-esteem, self-determination, and self-empowerment" (Abbas, 2022). Moreover, peer education is recognized as the most effective approach to sexual violence prevention education (Khan *et al.*, 2019). The crisis intervention volunteers serve as the first point of contact for individuals reaching out to the UASAC and handle most drop-in support under the supervision of the UASAC staff. Thanks to these volunteers, the UASAC can offer extended hours and other types of support in addition to drop-in, such as text and chat and virtual support. During the 2022-23

academic year, 30 crisis intervention volunteers provided in-person, virtual, text and chat support to those in need.

- **Education program volunteers** support the Education Program by developing, promoting, evaluating and facilitating various educational workshops across campus. During the 2022-23 academic year, six education program volunteers facilitated 14 workshops and contributed 480 hours to the UASAC.

The UASAC's Volunteer Program was previously featured in the Council of Alberta University Students policy paper, *Sexual Violence on Campus: Recommendations for the Government of Alberta*, in which they recognize:

Students are at the centre of any campus community; therefore, they must be encouraged to occupy prominent roles in addressing the very issue that has substantial consequences to them...Engaged students are in a perfect position to challenge and transform their peers' beliefs about sexual violence and, ultimately, help change the norms of the campus community (Tetreault-Bergeron & Santiago, 2020).

Throughout the community consultations, students, faculty and staff echoed the value of the Volunteer Program. In one session, a student remarked,

There are so many impactful things the Sexual Assault Centre's Volunteer Program provides to the university and surrounding community. Both the education stream and crisis intervention stream are so important in building a stronger, safer, and more inclusive community.

The Volunteer Program (including the education and crisis intervention streams) has not operated since November 2023. Although the UASAC has continued to offer a version of the drop-in crisis intervention service, it has been solely managed by staff from the UASAC PSP team, with no opportunities for campus community members to volunteer within it. Given the critical role volunteers play in supporting UASAC's work and helping the university achieve its mandate of a vibrant and supportive learning environment free from harassment and sexual violence (Office of the Provost and Vice-President Academic, 2024a), the university can build upon the program's legacy by activating it as soon as possible.

Plant: A strengthened intake model.

Before the disruption to services in November 2023, crisis intervention was primarily conducted in person, mostly via walk-in appointments managed by volunteer pairs with the support of a centre staff person. Community members could also access services via phone or virtual platforms. Volunteers on shift managed the initial drop-in sessions, referring clients to either staff or the Psychological Support Program (PSP) as needed. The volunteer or staff member they initially met with would be their sole contact for those seeking only one crisis intervention session, as not all service users required further referrals and support.

Feedback from community consultations highlighted an opportunity to strengthen the centre's overall intake process, specifically around the options available to survivors. One participant remarked:

I have wanted to get support from the centre, but I have classmates who volunteer there. And I don't want them to know I am getting counselling. I would have preferred to have had the opportunity to speak directly with the staff from the beginning.

Another student shared their fear of having to retell their story to multiple individuals to access specific services:

I wanted counselling, and I wanted to be able to access the counselling program directly. I didn't want to have to tell my story to more than one person. I worried that I would have to speak with the volunteers to get my referral to the psychologist. But I knew this was an option for me because I had heard there were staff there.

The centre should refine its intake model and improve community awareness to increase students' feelings of safety when accessing services. We recommend that staff collaborate with volunteers, community members, and survivors to refine the intake model. Survivors should have the option to choose whether they speak with a volunteer or a staff member during their initial contact with the service. In addition, the university should work on a campaign to increase the community's understanding of the centre's intake process and privacy safeguards.

Another consideration for refining the intake model is to meet the complex needs of service users. As a U of A faculty member noted:

The mental health needs of students are increasingly complex, and the capacity to help in these circumstances requires extensive training and expertise. It's unfair to expect volunteers who do not have our extensive benefits or professional organizations to manage those cases. It's not fair to them or the students seeking support. We need to figure out a better way forward.

The crisis intervention program has proven effective and should be reestablished. This involves collaborating with current and former volunteers and centre staff to refine the intake process. By doing so, the program can better address the community's diverse needs and support the well-being of volunteers and staff.

Some provincial sexual assault associations are calling for crisis intervention roles to be provided or supervised by regulated health professionals, such as social workers. This shift may require centres to adjust their intake models, potentially moving to initial screenings by regulated professionals before referring clients to regulated and non-regulated staff or volunteers. Such changes could alter the grassroots nature of these centres as the focus moves toward a more professionalized framework.

Cultivate: An expanded recruitment drive for the volunteer program.

The suspension of the volunteer program since November 2023 has had a demoralizing effect on volunteers. In the community consultations, many shared feeling disheartened and unsupported, diminishing their motivation to contribute to programs and advocacy efforts. In particular, two volunteers shared that they had quit and would not return when the centre resumes its volunteer program. This decline in volunteer engagement is concerning as it reduces the support available to survivors and could weaken the overall support network within the university.

Rebuilding trust involves acknowledging the significant contributions of the UASAC volunteers, especially when recruitment for the volunteer program resumes. Traditionally, outreach and training begin in the spring and summer to ensure readiness for the fall term. However, as of November 2024, the volunteer program has yet to be re-established, making it challenging for incoming staff to have it operational in time for the next semester. Reestablishing the program is crucial for supporting survivors and rebuilding trust with the U of A community and the broader Edmonton community.

To reestablish the volunteer program, the university should invest time and resources in a robust recruitment drive for both streams. In our review, the UASAC volunteers noted that

the education program had traditionally had fewer volunteers than the crisis intervention program. To address this, the UASAC should enhance its outreach efforts to attract more volunteers for the education program.

For volunteer training, supervision and support recommendations, see [Organizational Structure and Staff Support](#) above.

Cultivate: A robust placement program.

The centre should explore opportunities to develop meaningful and sustainable collaborations with social work, nursing and law school programs for student placements. These placements should enhance the centre's work without overburdening existing staff. Efforts should prioritize outreach and recruitment to attract students from equity-deserving communities.

A volunteer highlighted the benefits: "The program, on top of extending the reach of the SAC, has provided valuable experiential learning for those students who go into this field."

Volunteers also appreciated the external opportunities provided by staff, such as job positions in the community, lectures and additional training sessions. They suggested expanding these opportunities to enrich the volunteer experience further and provide professional development and networking opportunities: "I really enjoyed it when staff would reach out with external opportunities, so I'd love to see more of that! Whether it be job positions in the community, lectures or additional training."

g. Community Engagement and Systemic Advocacy

The UASAC also engages in meaningful community engagement and systemic advocacy work. This includes coordinating with campus partners such as the Lead, SGBV Response, conducting on- and off-campus outreach, and advocating for systemic change within the institution and the broader community. These activities are crucial for bolstering the UASAC's services and programming and fulfilling its vision, mission, and values.

However, like the Education Program, the UASAC's community engagement and systemic advocacy work is currently inactive. We recommend supporting this work when the UASAC returns to full capacity (see [Organizational Structure and Staff Support](#)).

Cultivate: Communications strategy and plan to increase understanding of services available.

In November 2023 and February 2024, the dismissal of centre staff and the reduction of services and programs left many survivors and community members feeling isolated and marginalized, with fewer support options. While U of A has since resumed in-person and virtual appointments and increased drop-in hours to five days a week, concerns remain. The university has acknowledged these issues, stating in their 2024 Spring Update: “We have heard the concerns of U of A students, and drop-in hours at the centre have recently increased across five days a week, and we will continue to add more hours when possible” (University of Alberta, 2024).

Increasing drop-in hours will improve survivors' access to support services. However, these services should be well-publicized to increase opportunities for survivors to disclose or report incidents. Community consultations revealed that many students, staff, and faculty are not fully aware of the range of support and services provided by the UASAC.

For instance, some participants requested more virtual options, particularly for the Psychological Support Program (PSP), to improve accessibility. Currently, U of A students in Alberta can access PSP virtual sessions, though staff have noted a growing demand for in-person sessions instead. This indicates a need for better advertising of virtual counselling and the centre's services to ensure community members know all available support options. Clear information about these options will help students understand that continuous support is available, regardless of their location. The university should assist the centre in developing a communications plan to enhance campus-wide awareness of their essential work.

Cultivate: A collaborative relationship with campus partners.

According to the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (2023), a leading practice standard for sexual violence centres is to build and maintain strong, mutually beneficial, supportive, and collaborative relationships within the institution to:

- Foster a campus culture and environment that does not tolerate sexual violence;
- Build a strong, comprehensive institutional response to sexual violence;
- Develop and implement policies, procedures, and programs with the aim to eliminate sexual violence on campus; and

- Provide effective sexual violence-related support services (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2023; Rape Crisis England & Wales and Rape Crisis Scotland, 2018).

The UASAC has developed a meaningful relationship with the Lead, SGBV Response, working closely to ensure that frontline and institutional efforts to respond to sexual violence are complementary and consistent. This collaboration is a leading practice and should continue to support the following:

- Consistent anti-sexual violence educational messaging across all levels of the institution;
- Co-creation of resources for campus partners, including the Options Navigation Network;
- Ongoing strengthening of institutional policies and procedures;
- Meaningful and effective data collection, including future campus climate surveys; and
- Delivery of educational and awareness initiatives.

Additionally, the UASAC should strengthen its relationships with other campus partners, such as the Office of Safe Disclosure and Human Rights, Helping Individuals at Risk, Residence Services, the International Services Centre, Accommodations & Accessibility Services, Health & Wellness Services, the University Health Centre, First Peoples House, Athletics, Campus & Community Recreation, The Landing, The Fyrefly Institute, fraternities and sororities, student unions and associations, staff and faculty unions and associations, and departments and faculties within the university. The UASAC should also engage equity-deserving groups such as faith-based organizations, Black, Indigenous, and racialized communities, and 2SLGBTQIA groups on campus. These partnerships are vital for fostering trust, ensuring inclusivity, and providing culturally responsive, intersectional services to survivors of SGBV.

These relationships align with the UASAC's commitment to fostering collaborative, sustainable partnerships. They benefit all parties by promoting information exchange, reducing isolation, and facilitating resource sharing (Ontario Network of Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence, 2019). As part of the UASAC's strategic planning process, staff and volunteers should have the opportunity to collaboratively identify key campus

partners, define their roles, and outline strategies for meaningful engagement. This exercise will help strengthen partnerships and enhance the centre's effectiveness in addressing campus SGBV.

Cultivate: Strong, ongoing collaborative relationships with off-campus partners.

The UASAC should continue to collaborate with off-campus partners to address and prevent sexual violence. Collaboration with community-based organizations is crucial for a strategic approach, enabling coordinated and comprehensive service delivery that meets the diverse needs of service users and the community (Khan *et al.*, 2019; Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2023; National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence, 2021; Rape Crisis England & Wales and Rape Crisis Scotland, 2018; Women's Aid, 2009).

This engagement should include supporting educational programming beyond the campus community (Ontario Network of Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence, 2019; National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence, 2021; Women's Aid, 2009). The UASAC has successfully collaborated with Edmonton-based organizations such as the Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton (SACE), Sexual Assault Voices of Edmonton (SAVE), and ConsentEd. For example, the UASAC worked closely with SACE to deliver workshops for bar staff to intervene in instances of sexual violence and harassment (St-Onge, 2018). Additionally, the UASAC has contributed to the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services' (AASAS) First Responder to Sexual Assault and Abuse Training (FRT), which supports professionals, paraprofessionals and community members in responding to disclosures of sexual assault and abuse (Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services, 2024). The expertise and experience of the UASAC enhance the association's training programs and provide crucial insights into addressing the needs of a high-risk demographic.

Building relationships with off-campus faith-based communities is also crucial for the UASAC's outreach efforts to address sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). Faith communities often play a significant role in shaping survivors' values and providing support, making them key partners in raising awareness and promoting prevention. It is well documented that, during times of crisis, women subjected to abuse often turn to faith leaders for spiritual guidance before seeking support from secular services (Keeping the Faith, 2020). Strengthening these connections allows UASAC to extend its reach, create safe spaces for difficult conversations, and work collaboratively toward eliminating SGBV on and off campus.

Maintaining community engagement also involves participating in local advisory committees related to sexual violence. The centre has been active in groups like the Western Canadian Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Coordinator Community of Practice, the AASAS's FRT Advisory Committee, and the Restorative Initiatives for Sexual Violence Committee, among others.

To sustain these vital partnerships, the university and the UASAC should maintain and build strong, ongoing, and reciprocal relationships, avoiding reaching out only in times of crisis (Khan *et al.*, 2019). To date, the UASAC has taken a reciprocal approach to its community partnerships, exemplified by its membership in AASAS, collaboration with SACE, and support for other organizations like Lloydminster Sexual Assault Services, which sought the UASAC's expertise to develop their survivor's group. The UASAC would benefit from increased resources to enhance its community engagement efforts and strengthen its valuable contributions and partnerships. Recommendations on this point are included under [Organizational Structure and Staff Support](#).

Cultivate: Advocacy for systemic reform and social change.

Engaging in systemic advocacy is a critical component of sexual violence work and a leading practice standard for sexual violence centres worldwide. This approach helps prevent sexual violence, improve outcomes and reduce harm to those affected (National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence, 2021; Rape Crisis England & Wales and Rape Crisis Scotland, 2018; Women's Aid, 2009). Promoting public awareness, advocating for policy reform, and addressing structural barriers to safety are key parts of building a campus where consent is paramount.

The UASAC should continue to promote public awareness of sexual violence and its impacts within U of A and the broader community. This includes challenging misperceptions and social tolerance of sexual violence (Rape Crisis England & Wales and Rape Crisis Scotland, 2018; Women's Aid, 2009).

Additionally, the UASAC should support policy reform beyond the institution. For example, our document review indicates that the centre worked with AASAS member agencies to refine sexual violence research and policy recommendations put forward by SHIFT: The Project to End Domestic Violence.

The UASAC should also engage in systems-level advocacy to address how other services and systems harm their service users (National Association of Services Against Sexual

Violence, 2021). One example is their support for the victim's advocate case review with the RCMP, which ensures community oversight of police files involving sexual violence and provides opportunities to mitigate future harm in RCMP investigations.

Furthermore, it is critical that the UASAC's systemic advocacy must challenge oppressive systems as they relate to and intersect with sexual violence (National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence, 2021). The UASAC has previously supported equity, diversity and inclusion efforts within the Office of the Dean of Students and collaborated with on- and off-campus community members on equity-focused initiatives. By continuing these efforts, the UASAC can contribute to a more equitable and just society, improving the lives of survivors and creating safer communities.

h. Rebuilding Trust

During the co-design and community consultation processes, rebuilding trust emerged as the top priority for community members, second only to reestablishing the volunteer program (see *A Note on Trust* on page 10). The university acknowledged the necessity of rebuilding trust in its Winter 2024 update, stating, "We are hopeful that these commitments will help rebuild trust in the important services provided by the university to the community" (University of Alberta, 2024).

While Possibility Seeds was not commissioned to review the events that unfolded leading to the "disruption to the U of A's Sexual Assault Centre" (University of Alberta, 2024) and the subsequent fallout from that, we recognize that the disruption to services and the dismissal of staff influenced participation and feedback in these processes. From the start, some community members expressed reluctance to participate, citing mistrust towards the administration, concerns about whether the issues raised in the report would be heard, fears of retribution for honesty, sadness about the current operations, and uncertainty about the future. Those who did participate quoted a significant erosion of trust in the administration. Many felt that the university continued to prioritize other concerns over the safety and support of its community members, resulting in a disconnect between the administration and the university community. One student commented:

"The distance between 'central' and the experience of students and other members of the U of A community is huge, and there is very little trust. The purpose of the bureaucracy is to grow itself and to look good while shuffling sexual violence under the carpet. There are sympathetic individuals within that bureaucracy who

understand how to manage cases, but there is very little empathetic, informed support for survivors.”

Dr. Jennifer Freyd defines this sentiment as institutional betrayal: “wrongdoings perpetrated by an institution upon individuals dependent on that institution, including failure to prevent or respond supportively to wrongdoings by individuals within the institution” (Freyd, n.d.). There are a variety of ways in which institutional betrayal may co-occur with the trauma of SGBV, like the omission of protective, preventative, or responsive institutional actions (Smith & Freyd, 2014). When an institution fails to uphold its commitment to student safety and well-being, it sends a message of neglect that undermines confidence in the administration. This broader insecurity and distrust can permeate the student body, faculty and staff, weakening the sense of community and collective efficacy.

In our community consultations, the feeling of institutional betrayal was particularly evident among the UASAC volunteers. Past volunteers shared that they felt disheartened and disrespected by the university administration for their essential services: “We provided an essential service unpaid. It was a win/win for the university.” Without rebuilding relationships with the UASAC volunteers, new and old, the university risks losing volunteer motivation to contribute to initiatives, advocacy efforts or future centre programming. This loss of support weakens the university's efforts to create a safe and supportive environment for survivors.

To ensure the success of Phases Two and Three and the university's efforts to address and prevent SGBV, it is essential to create meaningful opportunities for rebuilding trust. The university has taken initial steps by actively hiring key staff to restore full capacity to its support, education, volunteer, and community engagement programs. Additionally, since October 2024, it has established a community advisory group and a steering committee to guide the implementation of the recommendations in this report.

Community members, especially service users, staff and volunteers, want to feel heard, supported and valued. This will require acts of institutional courage, defined as “a commitment to seek the truth and engage in moral action, despite unpleasantness, risk, and short-term cost” (Freyd, n.d.). The recommendations outlined in this report provide pathways for the University to demonstrate this institutional courage.

Key Recommendations for Phase Two and Three Success

1. **Transparent and ongoing communication:** It is critical that the university commits to transparent ongoing communication with both campus and external partners about the centre and its efforts to address and prevent SGBV. Especially in Phases Two and Three, regular, timely, and transparent updates are crucial. This can include updates via email, social media, and town hall meetings. As a staff member in a community consultation explained: "Due to the large disruption in services, there should be more community-facing regular updates to regain trust in the centre." Updates should include timelines about posting new roles and the hiring process for new staff, the timeline for reinstating the volunteer program, and the measures implemented to ensure improved survivor support.

Transparent communication is crucial for volunteers to understand the centre's future and their role within it. As one volunteer mentioned,

There is a lot of apprehension around administration being overly involved in the centre. We've been very autonomous and are scared that's going to be lost with everything that's happened, there's a lot of micromanagement from senior admin. We don't know their faces; we just deal with the consequences of their decisions. We speak different languages. They speak in terms of liability and risk assessment; we speak in terms of caring and growth based on how we care for our community. It's a hard transition.

These sentiments were echoed in many of the community consultations.

Volunteers, staff, and students expressed concerns about increased administrative involvement, which they said would undermine the centre's autonomy and ability to deliver community-oriented services.

2. **Meaningful engagement and collaboration with the U of A community and external partners:** The success of the community engagement and action plan depends on the participation of the U of A community and external partners. The university should foster meaningful participation by creating opportunities for collaboration through ongoing advisory committees and working groups.

Across the community consultations, a consistent sentiment was the lack of engagement leading up to the review. One community member commented, "This [community consultation] is the only engagement I have seen so far. It's been

months. I would appreciate the opportunity to be more directly engaged, such as being part of a working group.”

We recommend that the university enhance opportunities for meaningful participation in implementing the plan and the ongoing operations of the UASAC. This can be achieved through the following approaches:

- Seeking feedback throughout all process phases and sharing how this feedback is incorporated into the action plan and how adjustments are made to reflect the community’s evolving needs and priorities.
 - Expanding the mandate and membership of the Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Advisory Council. The Council should prioritize creating working groups that include survivors, frontline staff, students, faculty, and community partners.
 - A vital part of this collaboration is the inclusion of volunteers and members of the Options Navigation Network. The university should ensure that these groups can contribute their perspectives, ideas, and experiences meaningfully, as it is crucial for rebuilding trust within the community.
3. **Fostering opportunities for community healing:** During our consultations and in written submissions, community members reported a pervasive culture of fear on campus following the disruption to services in Fall 2023. They shared that the abrupt discontinuation of some centre services discouraged open discussion about these incidents due to fears of institutional retaliation. As one community member stated, “This atmosphere of intimidation has silenced many of us, creating a barrier to open dialogue and support.” To foster opportunities for community healing regarding the events that unfolded in Fall 2023, it is essential to host dedicated spaces where those affected can come together to grieve and access support. These spaces can offer valuable opportunities for connection, healing, and support. We recommend that an external group, such as the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Centres, lead these healing spaces.

Conclusion

This report summarizes the key findings and recommendations from our comprehensive external review. It acknowledges the valuable services and programs provided by the UASAC over the past three decades. It offers 42 actionable, evidence-based recommendations to strengthen and support the centre's vital work. These recommendations also strengthen U of A's capacity for "institutional courage" and provide opportunities for the university to rebuild trust with survivors and the broader U of A community.

Research on institutional betrayal and institutional courage highlights that an institution's response to negative events is often as important, if not more so, than the events themselves (Freyd, n.d.). In other words, it is not just about what happened but what happens next. As work begins on subsequent phases of the community engagement and action plan initiative, we hope these findings and recommendations offer a tangible blueprint for change, enabling U of A to lead with courage and purpose.

Appendix 1.1 Key Terms

Please note that the terms listed below are sourced from the University of Alberta's [Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Policy](#).

Sexual and Gender-Based Violence: Any sexual act or act of a sexual nature, or act targeting sexuality, whether physical or psychological, committed without consent, or other forms of abuse and control over another person, based on their gender, gender expression, gender identity or perceived gender. This includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- A. Sexual Assault - Any form of sexual contact without consent. This can include unwanted or forced kissing, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Policy fondling, vaginal or anal penetration or touching, or oral sexual contact.
- B. Sexual Harassment - May be broadly defined as unwelcome conduct or comment of a sexual nature which detrimentally affects the learning environment or otherwise leads to adverse consequences for the person who is the target of the harassment. It may consist of unwanted sexual attention, sexually oriented remarks or behaviours or the creation of a negative psychological and emotional environment based on gender, gender identity or sexual orientation. It may be an isolated act or repetitive conduct, but it cannot be trifling. Retaliation or threat of retaliation against an individual for rejecting a sexual solicitation or advance may also constitute sexual harassment. The person(s) engaged in harassment need not have the intention to harass; it is the objective assessment of the circumstances that matters. How would a reasonable observer perceive the situation? A complainant need not expressly object to unwelcome conduct or comments, although any clear indication that the behaviour is unwanted will satisfy the test. A complainant's apparent passivity or failure to object overtly to sexual advances does not necessarily signal consent or welcomed behaviour, especially where a power imbalance exists between the individuals.
- C. Stalking - Repeated unwanted contact or communication directed at another person that causes reasonable fear or concern for that person's safety or the safety of others known to them. The harm may be physical, emotional, or psychological or related to the personal safety, property, education, or employment of an individual.

Stalking can occur physically (such as watching and monitoring, pursuing or following, making threatening or obscene gestures, sending unsolicited gifts), electronically (for example, continuously commenting or contacting via social media, surveillance, letters, text Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Policy messages, emails or phone calls), directly and/or indirectly through a third party.

- D. Indecent Exposure - Exposing one's genitals, buttocks and/or breasts or inducing another to expose their own genitals, buttocks and/or breasts in nonconsensual circumstances, in person or electronically.
- E. Voyeurism - Surreptitiously observing and/or recording another individual's full or partial nudity or sexual activity without the knowledge and consent of all parties involved.
- F. Distribution of Intimate Images - Includes showing, sharing, distributing or streaming of images, video or audio recording of a sexual activity or full or partial nudity of oneself or others, without the consent of all the recipient(s) and the subject(s) of the image or recording, or the threat to do the same.
- G. Nonconsensual condom removal - The act of intentionally removing a condom during sex without the consent of the partner.
- H. Inducing intoxication, impairment or incapacity for the purpose of making another person vulnerable to nonconsensual sexual activity.
- I. Intimate partner violence, also known as dating violence or domestic violence - Abuse or aggression that occurs in a current or former romantic relationship. IPV can range from one episode of violence to chronic and repeated episodes over multiple years. IPV can include physical, sexual, and psychological abuse.
- J. Retaliation - Retaliating against another person in relation to a disclosure or complaint of SGBV. Retaliation includes taking, attempting to take or threatening to take any adverse action, reprisal or retribution of any kind against anyone involved in any process described in the Sexual and Gender Based Violence Disclosures Procedure, including the person who made a disclosure or complaint, and anyone involved in an investigation or resolution of a Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Policy allegation of SGBV, or friends or family members of those individuals. Retaliation can take many forms, including threats, intimidation, pressuring, harassment, continued abuse, violence or other forms or threats of harm to others,

and be carried out in varying modes, including in person, via electronic communication or through third parties. Retaliation can also include adverse employment or educational actions taken or threatened against an individual because of participation in the reporting, investigating and/or resolution of an alleged violation of this policy, or any conduct that would discourage a person from participating.

K. Other analogous conduct.

Intersectional(ity)/ intersection(s): The acknowledgement that an individual can occupy multiple political and social locations, for example, along racial, gender, sexual, religious, ability, class and other lines, and that overlapping social locations can create a complex system of discrimination where individuals face compounded disadvantages.

Culture of consent: A culture in which consent cannot ever be implied or assumed.

Consent: Consent is a voluntary, ongoing, active and conscious agreement to engage in the sexual activity in question. Consent or a “yes” that is obtained through pressure, coercion, force, threats or by inducing intoxication, impairment or incapacity is not voluntary consent. Silence or ambiguity do not constitute consent. Additionally, there is no consent when:

- it is given by someone else;
- the person is unconscious, sleeping, highly intoxicated or high, or otherwise lacks the capacity to consent;
- it was obtained through the abuse of a position of power, trust or authority;
- the person does not indicate “yes”, says “no” or implies “no” through words or behaviours; or
- the person changes their mind and withdraws their consent. Consent cannot be implied (for example, by a current or past relationship, by consent to another activity, or by failure to say “no” or resist). In addition, consent cannot be given in advance of sexual activity that is expected to occur at a later time. It is the responsibility of the person wanting to engage in sexual activity to obtain clear consent from the other and to recognize that consent can be withdrawn at any time.

Learning environment: The learning environment is to be understood broadly to encompass all aspects of university life. It includes:

- Physical and virtual spaces where university teaching, learning, work, research, residence, recreational and social activities take place; and
- University activities, events and functions, including, but not limited to, teaching, research, studying, work, administration, meetings, public service, travel, conferences, and training; public lectures, performances; student group events; and social or sports activities.

Trauma-informed: An approach to processes, procedures, and service provision that incorporates and responds to the effects of trauma. A trauma-informed approach takes into account the potential effects of trauma on cognition, memory and behaviour. It includes steps to address the needs created by trauma and to prevent re-traumatization.

Trauma and violence-informed approaches: Policies and practices that recognize the connections between violence, trauma, adverse health outcomes and behaviours. These approaches increase safety, control and resilience for people who are seeking services about experiences of violence and/or have a history of experiencing violence (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2022).

Gender-based violence: Violence that is committed against someone based on their gender identity, gender expression or perceived gender. GBV is not limited to physical abuse but includes words, actions, or attempts to degrade, control, humiliate, intimidate, coerce, deprive, threaten, or harm another person.

Appendix 1.2 The University of Alberta Sexual Assault Centre's Community Engagement and Action Plan

In Spring 2024, as part of a commitment to continuous service improvement, U of A began a year-long community engagement process and action plan to envision “how to build on the centre’s 30+ years of service for not only the next academic year but also the next generation of support and awareness for U of A students” (University of Alberta, Spring 2024 Update). The community engagement process and action plan consist of three phases aimed at strengthening the UASAC’s support and education services, ensuring its alignment with leading practices, and ensuring that services are responsive to the changing needs of the U of A community.

Phase One: Planting (Spring 2024)

The university engaged an external systems change consultancy, Possibility Seeds, to create a set of actionable, evidence-based recommendations to support the centre’s community engagement, programs, and activities throughout the 2024-25 academic year and beyond (University of Alberta, Spring 2024 Update). These recommendations are informed by conversations with campus partners and community members, a literature review, data from the 2023 Government of Alberta’s Campus Climate Survey on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, and Possibility Seeds’ 20+ years of leadership and participation in campus sexual violence prevention.

Phase Two: Growing (Fall 2024 to Winter 2025)

Under the leadership of a new Assistant Dean of Community Wellness and Sexual Violence Supports in the Office of the Dean of Students, the University of Alberta will collaborate with key on- and off-campus partners in sexual and gender-based violence education and support to share and implement the strategies and recommendations identified during Phase One. This phase will involve active engagement and integration of these strategies into the centre’s operations and outreach efforts.

Phase 3: Flourishing (Summer 2025)

The University of Alberta will work with campus partners to conduct a one-year check-in from the start of the process. This assessment will evaluate the recommendations’ impact on service provision and broader campus culture, identifying opportunities for continued growth and enhancing the centre’s impact on the community.

Appendix 1.3 Key Highlights of the Centre's History

Please note that the following is only a snapshot of the important history of the UASAC. A crucial part of rebuilding trust will involve archiving and celebrating the centre's work, including creating a timeline of key events, milestones, and the contributions of staff, volunteers, and survivors. See page 29 for the recommendation on archiving the centre's history and legacy.

- **1993:** The UASAC opens as a joint service between the University of Alberta and the University of Alberta Students' Union, with one part-time coordinator.
- **1994:** The coordinator becomes a full-time position, and the first cohort of volunteers is trained to provide crisis intervention support.
- **1995:** The coordinator becomes a director position, in line with other student leadership positions, and the UASAC's Education Program is created with two part-time student-staff educators.
- **1997:** A full-time volunteer coordinator position is created.
- **1998:** A full-time education program coordinator position is formalized, replacing the part-time student-staff positions.
- **2002:** The UASAC volunteers are trained to provide intake services for the U of A's Safe House Program for students who need emergency accommodations.
- **2003:** A student referendum was passed, and 83% of students voted to have the UASAC funded through student fees.
- **2013:** An in-house psychologist is hired to provide trauma-informed, long-term therapy to survivors, marking the start of the UASAC's Psychological Support Program (PSP).
- **2016:** A second education program coordinator position is added to respond to a growing demand for educational workshops and training.
- **2018:** The Volunteer Program is split into two streams — education program volunteers who dedicate their time to increasing knowledge and awareness about the issue across campus and crisis intervention volunteers who continue supporting drop-in clients.

- **2019:** A second psychologist is hired to conduct initial consultations for clients interested in accessing the UASAC psychological support program. They also developed and implemented a support group for survivors.
- **2019:** The Alberta One-Line for Sexual Violence—a province-wide central platform for sexual assault support services—is launched, and the UASAC crisis intervention volunteers begin providing text and chat support.
- **2020:** Roots, a psychoeducational group for survivors to connect with and support each other while learning about the impacts of trauma, is launched by the PSP program in the centre.
- **2021:** The PSP hires two social workers to provide initial consultations and resourcing to clients seeking counselling.
- **2023:** The PSP's staff contingent is adjusted to include two psychologists and a clinical social worker providing counselling and resourcing to clients.

Appendix 1.4 Literature and Document Review

Our literature and document review involved examining a wide range of data sources, including scholarly articles, reports, websites, news clippings, book chapters, and community-based documents from the University of Alberta, the University of Alberta Sexual Assault Centre, and the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Centres, among others. We looked at critical documents that recognized the evolving nature of this field and the imperative to remain responsive to emerging needs and committed to a feminist praxis that values community-driven knowledge alongside evidence-based models, recognizing the importance of centring the voices of those accessing and providing services.

Notably, the scope of our review, tight timelines and limited access to internal documents restricted our ability to conduct a comprehensive and systematic literature and document review. Nonetheless, we identified best and leading practice standards, guiding principles, and calls to action and gleaned valuable insights to inform our assessment, future initiatives and program enhancements.

The following is a summary of our literature and document review process and a high-level summary of key findings that informed our assessment and recommendation development.

Literature Review

The goals of our literature review were to identify:

- Best and leading practice standards for community sexual violence centres and campus sexual violence programs and services;
- Guiding principles and practices for equitable and anti-oppressive approaches to gender-based violence programs and service provision;
- Calls to action from key campus partners; and
- The SGBV context at U of A.

Best and Leading Practice Standards and Guiding Principles

To identify best and leading practice standards for community sexual violence centres and campus sexual violence programs and services, we utilized a variety of search terms

related to sexual violence and gender-based violence service provision in the community and on post-secondary campuses. We initially limited our search to Canada, but as our research progressed, we expanded our scope to include community sexual assault centres not only in Canada but also in countries such as the UK, New Zealand and Australia. The best and leading practice standards we identified came from the following organizations:

- The Council for the Advancement of National Standards in Higher Education (Canada);
- The Ontario Network of Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Treatment Centres;
- The National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence (Australia);
- Rape Crisis England & Wales and Rape Crisis Scotland;
- Women's Aid UK;
- Male Survivors Partnership & LimeCulture Community Interest Company; and
- Public Safety Canada's Best Practice Guidelines for Screening Volunteers.

To identify guiding principles and practices for equitable and anti-oppressive approaches to gender-based violence programs and service provision, we examined community reports and academic literature that provided innovative and effective strategies for creating affirming spaces for marginalized survivors. The guiding principles and practices we identified came from the following sources:

- [Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls](#)
- [Taking Action in Our Spheres of Influence: Intersectional Anti-Racism & Anti-Oppression Gender-Based Violence Framework](#) by Nicole Bernhardt and Annelies Cooper for the Ontario Association of Interval Houses
- [Expanding our Frame: Deepening our Demands for Safety and Healing for Black Survivors of Sexual Violence](#) by Andrea J. Ritchie for the National Black Women's Justice Institute
- [Sexual Violence Against Black Women and Girls in a #MeToo Era](#) by Kharoll-Ann Souffrant for the Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children Learning Network

- [Keeping The Faith: What Survivors From Faith Communities Want Us To Know](#) by Huda Jawad and Zainab Moallin for the Faith & VAWG Coalition, England & Wales
- [Now What? Implications for Researchers, Policymakers and Practitioners](#) by Sandra Iman Pertek & Elisabet le Roux, in *On The Significance of Religion in Violence Against Women and Girls*
- [More than a Footnote: A Research Report on Women and Girls with Disabilities in Canada](#) by DAWN Canada
- [Rooting Resilience: Women, Girls, and Non-Binary People With Disabilities and the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence](#) by Dr. Jihan Abbas for DAWN Canada
- [Violence Against Women with DisAbilities and Deaf Women: An Overview](#) by Fran Odette & Doris Rajan for the Centre for Research and Education on Violence against Women and Children Learning Network

In engaging with these sources, we identified best and leading-practice standards and guiding principles related to strategic frameworks, governance, accountability, and leadership, operational structure, policies and protocols, staffing and employment practices, core programs and service delivery, monitoring, evaluation, and assessment, communications, and infrastructure. While many of these areas were beyond the scope of our assessment of the UASAC, we encourage the U of A and the UASAC to look to these sources to guide future decisions.

Calls to Action from Students

To identify calls to action, we looked to sources highlighting student voices and other key on- and off-campus partners, including the UASAC volunteers and community organizations working closely with the UASAC. Our goal was to ensure that the invaluable contributions of students in addressing SGBV on campus informed our assessment and recommendation development. To this end, we looked to the following sources:

- [Joint Letter on Sexual Violence Prevention and Response](#) from undergraduate and graduate students at the University of Alberta, 2021 November 17;
- [Sexual Violence on Campus: Recommendations for the Government of Alberta](#) by the Council of Alberta University Students, 2020 January 27;

- [Our Campus, Our Safety: Student Leaders' Action Plan for Institutions and Governments to Address and Prevent Sexual Violence on Campus](#) (National), Possibility Seeds, 2022 August;
- [Students call for promised funding from advanced education after province-wide survey on sexual and gender-based violence](#) by the University of Alberta Students' Union, 2023 August, 31; and
- Various news sources reported on and/or included interviews with key campus partners, including students, the UASAC volunteers and community partners.

These sources provided us with calls to action from students regarding SGBV at the institutional, provincial and national levels, ensuring our recommendations for the UASAC aligned with and amplified student advocacy regarding sexual violence on campus. New sources also gave us insight into the value of the UASAC from students, volunteers and community partners. They provided context for key campus partners' questions and requests regarding the UASAC.

SGBV Context at U of A

To better understand SGBV in the U of A context specifically, we looked at data from the 2023 Campus Climate Survey on Sexual and Gender-based Violence (Campus Climate Survey), administered by the Government of Alberta's Ministry of Advanced Education. The Campus Climate Survey was circulated to students across 26 publicly funded Alberta post-secondary institutions, with 2,468 participants from the University of Alberta.

While this data does not provide a complete understanding of the issue of SGBV in the context of U of A, it offers the most comprehensive scan of attitudes and beliefs about SGBV and consent, awareness and knowledge of institutional supports, experiences of SGBV, and perceptions of the institutional landscape regarding SGBV that are available.

The data indicates that a significant portion of the campus community has been affected by SGBV, and most students believe the university should support these individuals and provide access to specialized SGBV services. However, the data also revealed challenges regarding awareness and access to available institutional services.

Document Review

Our document review aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of the UASAC's structure, operations and history within institutional and community contexts. We reviewed public and internal centre documents from the last five years to do this. We reviewed resources such as staff and volunteer manuals, educational programming materials, monitoring and evaluation reports, and other foundational sources that were available to us. While we were deeply privileged to gain insight into the UASAC's work through this process, we must acknowledge that our document review was not exhaustive, as the disruption to the UASAC's staffing limited our access to available materials. In addition to UASAC-specific materials, we also looked at strategic and policy documents from the U of A and applicable documents from the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Centres related to the UASAC.

We used our findings from the literature to guide our document review and identify key themes, challenges and opportunities that informed the development of the recommendations included in this report.

Appendix 1.5: Considerations for a Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

Introduction

The University of Alberta (U of A) launched a community engagement and action plan to envision how it could strengthen and build upon three decades of support, service and education through its campus-based Sexual Assault Centre (UASAC). This initiative was driven by two key factors: the service disruption (including the suspension of some services) in November 2023 and the university's ongoing commitment to continuous service improvement.

The plan includes three phases:

- **Phase One:** Development of recommendations to enhance services, align with leading practices, and meet evolving community needs.
- **Phase Two:** Implementation of these recommendations under the leadership of the new Assistant Dean in the Office of the Dean of Students.
- **Phase Three:** Evaluation of these recommendations on service delivery and broader campus culture in collaboration with the U of A community.

Possibility Seeds, a national leader in sexual violence prevention, was commissioned to lead Phase One. The report produced 42 recommendations across eight categories: organizational structure and staff support, protocols and procedures, core services, support services, education, volunteer program, community engagement and systemic advocacy, and rebuilding trust. As part of this work, Possibility Seeds has outlined considerations for a monitoring and evaluation plan to support the university in implementing these 42 recommendations. This plan is designed to assess outcomes and impact, ensuring that improvements are not only measurable but also rooted in the needs of the U of A community.

Values and Approach

Core Values

Possibility Seeds prioritized *transparency, equity, shared learning, and relationship-building* to ensure that the U of A community had a voice in developing, implementing, and evaluating the proposed recommendations. The aim was to create a collaborative, participatory

process where campus partners—students, faculty, staff, and external stakeholders—could provide feedback at every stage to strengthen the UASAC's operations and build on its impressive legacy.

Approach: Participatory Evaluation

Evaluation is a fluid and ongoing process. A participatory approach is essential to developing, implementing, and evaluating these recommendations. It promotes equitable power-sharing, builds trust in the process, strengthens relationships among campus and external partners, and increases community support for the recommendations (Gujit, 2014). This section explores how a participatory approach can be applied to Phase 3, specifically in evaluating the recommendations' outcomes and impact.

A participatory approach involves the meaningful engagement of various campus partners and external partners. The level and timing of their involvement should be carefully considered, keeping equity at the forefront. Some important questions to consider:

- Are students, centre volunteers, staff, faculty, and external partners equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to fully participate in the evaluation aspects they are involved in?
- Are students and centre volunteers compensated for their time spent providing feedback?
- Is there commitment and support from the U of A administration for a participatory evaluation process?
- If the U of A administration is pressed for time to evaluate one or more recommendations, can the process remain participatory? If not, can they consult with affected campus partners to identify ways to adjust the process later?

Objective, Outcomes and Indicators

Overall Objective

To evaluate the effectiveness and impact of the recommendations in strengthening the UASAC's operations and services, rebuilding trust with the University, and driving broader systemic change in response to campus sexual violence.

Identifying Outcomes and Indicators

The external report provided 42 recommendations as pathways to achieve the objective. These recommendations cover various areas, including organizational structure and staff support, procedures and protocols, core services and programs, support services, education program, volunteer program, community engagement and systemic advocacy, and ways to rebuild trust. Each recommendation requires different levels of commitment and participation from various campus units, with varying time frames for implementation. To ensure progress and transparency, U of A should establish a monitoring and evaluation plan for each recommendation, outlining specific outcomes and indicators.

To assess progress, U of A should:

- Create a detailed timeline for monitoring, with key milestones and checkpoints (e.g., three months, six months, one year).
- Regularly track short-term, medium-term, and long-term outcomes (see below).
- Identify what tools or sources will be used to gather data (e.g., surveys, interviews, focus groups, service utilization logs, feedback forms, and creative materials). Consider what resources - money, time, expertise, etc. - are available to support evaluation efforts. Ensure that the selected tools are trauma-informed and accessible to participants.

Establishing Outcomes

Establishing outcomes for each recommendation is an important part of the evaluation process, as it indicates whether objectives are being met. Outcomes can be short-term (immediate), medium-term, or long-term. On the simplest level, outcomes answer the question: What do we hope will be different as a result of implementing this recommendation (National Sexual Violence Resource Centre, n.d.)?

Measuring Progress on Outcomes

A set of indicators should be developed for each outcome to measure progress on these outcomes. Indicators provide clear, measurable information that aids in assessing whether the outcomes are being achieved. In addition to determining the achievement of outcomes, indicators offer insight into what is working effectively, what is not, the changes that have occurred, and the processes by which these changes have taken place (National Sexual Violence Resource Centre, n.d.).

Example: Evaluating a Protocols and Procedures Recommendation

Select Recommendation: Ensure a clear operational structure by establishing comprehensive, accessible protocols and procedures for staff and volunteer roles, intake procedures, confidentiality, recordkeeping, information sharing, risk management and communications.

Proposed Outcomes

Short-Term Outcomes

- **Awareness:** The UASAC staff and volunteers demonstrate awareness of the protocols and procedures and their intended purpose.

Medium-Term Outcomes

- **Applicability and Relevance:** The UASAC staff and volunteers perceive the protocols and procedures as comprehensive, clear, practical, and useful.
- **Confidence:** The UASAC staff and volunteers exhibit confidence in applying the procedures and protocols in accordance with best practices.
- **Uptake:** The procedures and protocols are integrated into existing documents and systems, and the UASAC staff and volunteers utilize them to strengthen the centre's operational effectiveness.

Long-Term Outcomes

- **Increased Support:** The UASAC staff and volunteers report feeling more supported by the procedures and protocols in place.
- **Improved Response:** The centre can better serve clients, and its responses to addressing and preventing SGBV are timely and effective.

Suggested Indicators

This is a non-exhaustive list with examples of indicators to measure the above outcomes:

- Views/downloads of the new procedures and protocols by staff and volunteers.
- Promotion of the procedures and protocols via different communication channels, e.g., emails to staff, emails to volunteers, staff meetings, volunteer meetings, etc.

- The number of training sessions offered to staff and volunteers about the new procedures and protocols within the first year.
- The percentage of staff and volunteers trained on the new procedures and protocols in the first year.
- Impact of the training on staff and volunteer awareness, confidence, and uptake of the procedures and protocols.
- Reduction in time taken for intake procedures and recordkeeping as measured in process evaluations.
- Client feedback indicates increased trust (e.g., 85% of clients feel their information is handled confidentially and professionally).

Focused Example: Evaluating a Revised Intake Procedure and Protocol

The selected recommendation is broad and encompasses multiple procedures and protocols. This example focuses on the intake procedure to better illustrate the evaluation tools. The tools will assess both the revised intake procedure and the training provided for its implementation.

Considerations: Why Create Baseline Questions?

A survey may be administered to assess awareness and engagement with procedures and protocols and implementation training. Before doing so, it is necessary to create baseline questions. Baseline questions provide a general sense of who is completing the survey and gauge their awareness and engagement with the procedures and protocols. The data collected is a reference point against which progress can be measured and evaluated throughout the implementation cycle. This data will be beneficial when administering an annual survey about the reach and impact of these protocols and procedures and the associated training. Baseline questions should be included in the annual survey, allowing for a comparison of responses over time. Ideally, an upward trend will emerge, indicating increased awareness and engagement with the protocols and procedures.

Sample Baseline Questions: Revised Intake Procedure

1. **What is your current role?**

[Add open-ended comment box]

2. How long have you been in your role at the UASAC?

- Less than a year
- 1-2 years
- 2-3 years
- Over three years
- Other (Please specify)

3. How aware are you of the revised UASAC procedure for intake?

(5 point scale, 1=not aware at all, 3=somewhat aware, 5=very aware)

4. How confident are you in using the revised intake procedure when meeting clients who have been subjected to sexual and gender-based violence?

(5 point scale, 1=not confident at all, 3=somewhat confident, 5=very confident)

Feel free to elaborate on any of your above ratings.

NOTE: End with a thank you and provide contact information. You may also want to include a link to the new intake procedure.

Feedback Survey: Revised Intake Procedure Training

Why Use a Post-Training Evaluation?

After introducing the revised intake procedure, staff and volunteers will need to undergo training to understand how to use it. Post-training feedback forms are the most common evaluation tool for this purpose. These forms offer several benefits, such as collecting self-reported data from participants and being typically quick, immediate, and anonymous. They are also relatively easy to analyze and report. However, challenges include the potential for low response rates, particularly due to "survey fatigue," and the limited insights provided by self-reported data regarding actual learning and application of training content. These concerns can be addressed through a well-designed, concise feedback form that encourages participation, gathers reliable data, and uses that data to inform future learning and development initiatives.

Building a Post-Training Feedback Form

As you begin to develop your post-training feedback form, here are some considerations to keep in mind:

- **Create good conditions for evaluation** by grounding your training content in a learning needs assessment and developing/using learning outcomes for your training. Your evaluation tool will be the next logical step that builds from these foundational elements.
- **Clarify your purpose in conducting the evaluation.** Your feedback survey may need to balance multiple priorities.
 - For example, are you looking to measure the training's impact on increasing awareness/engagement of the intake procedure, enhancing knowledge, encouraging the application of skills or practices, etc.?
 - Or is this about checking in to ensure your learning spaces align with your guiding principles? For instance, do you want to know how participants experienced the training? Are you looking to flag any forms of exclusion or inaccessibility that you may not be aware of?
- **Incorporate good design considerations.** As you decide which questions to include (see next section for sample feedback form), ensure a good mix of questions that will help you collect the needed data. Some considerations include:
 - How accessible is your survey design? Are alternative formats available?
 - Is your survey too long or too short? Ideally, it should be between 5 and 7 questions or take 5-10 minutes to complete. This will depend on your evaluation needs and the length/format of your training.
 - Are you measuring indicators related to your learning outcomes? This will help you ensure that your data is valuable and relevant to the intended goals of your training.
 - Are there baseline questions? This will help enhance your data integrity because you will better understand who among your participants has completed your form (in terms of general characteristics, not in terms of people's names or identities).

- Is there a mix of open-ended (qualitative) and closed questions (quantitative)? Including both will enhance the quality of your data.
- **Reflect on ways to make your survey as trauma-informed as possible.** These are ongoing considerations, but there are generally accepted practices for ensuring that your survey is trauma-informed. For example:
 - Is there a clear indication of confidentiality/ anonymity and the purpose of the post-training feedback form?
 - Are all questions voluntary? This is an essential element for practicing consent-based survey design. If participants skip a particular question, that can indicate that the question may need to be revised, and/or it may be a helpful data point for your analysis.
 - Consider referring to the tool as a “feedback form” (i.e., avoid words like ‘evaluation,’ ‘tool,’ or ‘survey,’ since these can have more negative associations for some participants).
 - Have you included contact information for any participant who wants to speak to you about the feedback form?
- **If appropriate, emphasize to participants how much you value their feedback and your intentions in collecting their feedback.** Consider opening your survey with a gratitude message, e.g., “Thank you for participating in X training,” and thank participants for completing the form at the end. When distributing your feedback form, you can also briefly emphasize to participants how much you value their feedback. If you deliver the training again, you can also signal moments where participant feedback has improved this training, e.g., “This was a point we added based on feedback from participants,” or “We created this hands-on activity because of feedback that our participants shared about wanting more opportunities to practice these skills in a collaborative environment.”

Sample Post-Training Feedback Survey Template

The following template can be used to design a customized evaluation tool for training about the revised intake procedure. Note that the text in square brackets indicates the type of information to include. This survey can be administered at the end of the training.

When creating the survey, all questions should be voluntary, i.e., no questions are required since participation is consent-based. If participants skip a particular question, that can be an indication that the question may need to be revised and/or it may be a useful data point for your analysis.

Template Survey

[Logo]

[Title of the session]

Feedback Form

Thank you for attending [“Title”] on [Date].

Please complete this optional [5-minute] feedback form. Answers will be collected anonymously. [Add one sentence here about how you intend to use this feedback, e.g., Your feedback will help us assess learning outcomes and improve future training].

With gratitude,

[Facilitators/ Team]

[Start with 1 or 2 “baseline” questions that give you a general sense of who is completing the evaluation form. For example, you can ask about roles, how they learned about the training, and/or their reasons for attending.]

1. What is your current role?

[Add open-ended comment box]

2. How long have you been in your role at the UASAC?

- Less than a year
- 1-2 years
- 2-3 years
- Over three years
- Other (Please specify)

3. What were your reasons for attending this training? Select all that apply.

[Add 4 to 5 options that correspond to the learning outcomes, along with an “Other (Please specify)” option. The question should be formatted as a checklist rather than multiple-choice so that participants can choose multiple reasons. See below for some options.]

- To increase my awareness of the revised intake procedure
- To understand the steps I need to take as a staff member/volunteer when a client accesses the UASAC after being subjected to sexual and gender-based violence
- To know what steps to take as the UASAC when a client accesses the centre after being subjected to sexual and gender-based violence
- This was a mandatory training
- Other (Please specify)

[Now that you have asked baseline questions, you can switch to questions that help you measure the impact of the training. This can include a mix of pre/post indicators of impact. These measures help indicate what the experience was like for participants and measures that help indicate the benefits of the training. Start with quantitative formats and then use more open-ended qualitative questions near the end.]

1) **a) On a scale of 1-5, how would you rate your knowledge of the revised intake procedure PRIOR to attending this training?**

[Rating Scale 1: No knowledge of the topic, 5: Expert knowledge of the subject]

b) On a scale of 1-5, how would you rate your knowledge of the revised intake procedure AFTER attending this training?

[Rating Scale 1: No knowledge of the topic, 5: Expert knowledge of the subject]

2) **The training increased my awareness of the following:**

[Rating Scale: Strongly AGREE, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly DISAGREE, Not Sure/ Not Applicable]

[3-5 max statements]

The purpose and scope of the intake procedure

My responsibilities when I meet with a client

The limitations to my confidentiality when I receive a disclosure or report

Best practices for information-sharing among relevant centre staff and departments at U of A

[Add open-ended comment box]

Feel free to elaborate on any of your above ratings:

3) **After attending the training, I feel more confident in doing the following:**

[Rating Scale: Strongly AGREE, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly DISAGREE, Not Sure/ Not Applicable]

[3-5 max statements]

Receiving disclosures or reports from clients

Assessing the service needs of the client (e.g. impacts of trauma, their goals or intentions for the service, and their strengths, expectations, and preferences).

Communicating with the affected client about my role, responsibilities, and the limitations to my confidentiality

[Add open-ended comment box]

Feel free to elaborate on any of your above ratings:

4) **What did you appreciate the most about this training?**

[Open-ended large comment box]

5) **How would you improve this session for future participants?**

[Open-ended large comment box]

6) **Is there anything else that you would like to share with us today?**

[Open-ended large comment box]

[Always end with a thank you and contact information]

Thank you for completing this feedback form! If you have any questions, please contact [X].

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