

After nearly 14 years in development, Nanaimo is moving closer to establishing a formal Domestic Violence Unit (DVU).

Working in partnership the Nanaimo RCMP and Nanaimo Community Victims Services at Haven Society (CVS) will provide frontline services for highest risk domestic violence situations. Where children are involved and at risk the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) will also be involved. This team is supported by a range of local justice and community service providers.

“While all domestic violence is a concern, certain cases pose an even greater risk of serious bodily harm or death,” said Anne Taylor, Executive Director at Haven Society.

“The DVU will offer an enhanced response to these highest risk cases through collaboration and community partnerships.”

In the highest risk cases of domestic violence, DVUs are widely accepted as a best practice for supporting victims and holding offenders accountable. Victims at the greatest risk of violence are immediately connected with resources and brought to safety.

In order to provide this lifeline for vulnerable women and families, the BC government has committed to making our province a safer place for anyone who has been affected by domestic violence.

After extensive consultation with anti-violence groups and the general public, the government outlined a three-year plan and commitment that includes the creation of additional DVUs in cities across the province.

The roots of Nanaimo’s DVU reach back to October 2000, and the formation of the Nanaimo Domestic Violence Emergency Response System. This team supported a proactive multi-agency response whenever high risk circumstances were identified.

Almost a decade later, RCMP and the Nanaimo CVS at Haven Society began an ongoing conversation and partnership, highlighting an enduring alliance and dedication to addressing the most potentially dangerous domestic violence cases.

"We are excited about the creation of the Domestic Violence team in Nanaimo and building on the close working relationship we have with Haven Society,” said Mark Fisher, Officer in Charge, Nanaimo RCMP.

This collaboration also included representatives from the justice community intent on improving local responses, and the DVU was one of several critical goals identified. The group adopted the name Community Coordination of Domestic Safety (CCDS) in February of 2010, in recognition of their over-arching purpose.

The CCDS started an active process of highest risk case strategic planning. In April 2010, the RCMP approved a domestic violence investigator under the community policing umbrella who soon started attending CCDS meetings.

In early 2013, the CCDS helped launch the Domestic Violence Court. Designed to enhance victim safety, this initiative focuses on reducing overall risk in Nanaimo and surrounding area by taking into account the special characteristics that domestic violence cases present, as well as improving coordination and consistency.

The Domestic Violence Court is just one of many significant success stories following the development of these important community partnerships. Most recently, the Ministry of Justice provided funding support to establish a long-awaited DVU in Nanaimo.

With this essential support, we can continue building on the strong foundation created to date.

Over the next two years, we will develop protocols and procedures to guide the work of the DVU, provide frontline victim services in Nanaimo, co-locate the RCMP and Nanaimo Haven Society CVS DVU team members in one location, deliver training opportunities for DVU members and related partners, strengthen partnerships with key community allies, and extend services between the DVU and children impacted by domestic violence.

We are focused on ensuring that best practices are an integrated feature of Nanaimo's overall response to domestic violence. Ultimately, the shared vision driving our community partnerships is a safer Nanaimo for women, children and families experiencing domestic violence.

*Nanaimo CVS could not exist without the generous support of our local community. To donate to Haven Society and to find out how you can make a difference through financial or volunteer contributions, please contact Christine Gross at 250-756-2452 extension 239.*