



PROVINCIAL COURT OF SASKATCHEWAN

NEWS RELEASE

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CELEBRATING THE SUCCESS OF THE SASKATOON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COURT

The Provincial Court of Saskatchewan is pleased to recognize eight years of using the principles of restorative justice to address domestic violence in Saskatoon.

“Therapeutic courts allow judges to take a problem-solving approach that gets to the root cause of the offending behaviour,” Judge Barry Singer said. “Saskatoon’s Domestic Violence Court has helped individuals take responsibility for their actions and make changes in their lives that end the cycle of abuse, reduce the likelihood that we’ll see them in court again and, most importantly, keep their families safe.”

Since its implementation in September 2005, the Saskatoon Domestic Violence Court has provided a treatment option that allows those who elect to plead guilty to complete a counselling program for domestic violence and address any substance abuse problems they may have. Domestic violence courts involve partnerships between treatment, social services and community agencies to emphasize healing.

“Offering an alternative to traditional court processes is important to address the underlying causes of criminal behaviour,” Justice Minister and Attorney General Gordon Wyant said. “Preventing and responding to domestic violence and abuse are high priority issues for our Government.”

Saskatchewan has two additional domestic violence court locations. The Regina Domestic Violence Court was implemented in 2008 and the Battlefords Domestic Violence Treatment Options Court was implemented in 2003.

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FACT SHEET

SASKATOON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COURT

"This program was literally life altering. It gives you a whole new perspective and way of thinking and recognizing your thought patterns. It's a new beginning."

- Offender Speaking About Saskatoon Domestic Violence Court

- Domestic violence shatters victims, wreaks havoc in the lives of children and destabilizes families and communities. Children who witness domestic violence may perpetuate the same brutality and suffering in their own relationships.
- The Saskatoon Domestic Violence Court, established in 2005, was the result of the collaboration between the justice and health sectors and community agencies in Saskatoon that had a common goal of responding to charges involving domestic violence in a different way.
- Objectives of the Court include timeliness, improved victim support and safety and offender accountability.
- The Saskatoon Domestic Violence Court provides early treatment opportunities for offenders who accept responsibility for their actions. Treatment programs are offered through the Saskatoon Health Region in cooperation with Saskatoon Indian and Metis Friendship Centre and Probation Services (Ministry of Justice) and through Family Service Saskatoon.
- The Court also offers victims and families a continuum of services, beginning as soon after the offence as possible, through the Domestic Violence Court Caseworker Program with Family Service Saskatoon. Victims are provided:
 - referrals to existing counselling services;
 - crisis intervention; and
 - ongoing information about, and support during the case.

- Domestic Violence Court Caseworkers play a critical role in the Domestic Violence Court process by ensuring that each victim is supported from the time of first contact with the legal system to the complete resolution of the case.
- The following options are available to the accused:
 - enter a not guilty plea and have the case set for trial;
 - enter a guilty plea and receive a sentence; or
 - enter a guilty plea and, if further suitability criteria are met through assessment at Probation Services, participate in the Domestic Violence Court treatment option; those deemed not suitable for the treatment option will be sentenced in the regular way.
- In 2011-12, about 1000 accused were referred to the Saskatoon Domestic Violence Court and more than 750 individuals received victim services and supports. One hundred and fifty seven offenders (157) completed programming in the domestic violence early treatment option and 137 were still attending programs at fiscal year end.