



## New law protects victims of family violence

Victims of family violence will be better protected under new provincial legislation which became law on November 1.

"Family violence has devastating consequences on individuals, communities and society as a whole," said Children's Services Minister Heather Forsyth. "We've made changes to the Protection Against Family Violence Act to strengthen Alberta's response to this issue and protect even more people, including children, experiencing family violence."

The new law adds stalking to the definition of family violence, which will mean Emergency Protection Orders can be issued to protect those who are experiencing this form of abuse from a family member. Alberta is only the second jurisdiction in Canada to include this provision.

The legislation helps children exposed to family violence by requiring judges and justices of the peace to consider the exposure when determining if an Emergency Protection Order should be granted. In addition, an order by the Court of



Queen's Bench can authorize children to receive counselling with the consent of one parent. This will ensure that an abusive parent cannot stand in the way of the child getting the help they need.

The legislation also protects vulnerable people, such as seniors who are being abused by a family member, regardless of whether they live together.

A new provincial public awareness campaign launched the same day as the new law encourages more Albertans to reach out to victims of family violence. Built around the theme: End the violence. Stop the violence, the campaign is aimed at Albertans who traditionally may not want to get involved, or who don't know what they can do if they suspect abuse.

In addition to television commercials, movie theatre ads, and postcards being mailed out to all rural Alberta homes, the campaign also features a new government, toll-free information line: 310-1818.

This new 24-hour line will assist callers with information and advice on how they can reach out to someone they suspect might be struggling with family violence. The information line is staffed by trained information and referral specialists.

More information on the campaign, as well as a number of resources to assist communities in their efforts to prevent family violence is available at [www.familyviolence.gov.ab.ca](http://www.familyviolence.gov.ab.ca).

## Regional efforts make an impact on domestic violence

Domestic violence affects hundreds of children, youth and families in this region but the efforts of Southeast Alberta Child and Family Services Authority and other agencies are having positive results in helping the victims and preventing the perpetrators from repeating their offences.

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*"All of us have a responsibility to do something about it."*

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The latest move is the appointment of Kelly Buckley as Prevention of Family Violence and Bullying Coordinator,

one of 10 such positions across the province. Buckley acts as the Region's point person so Children's Services can provide a coordinated response to family violence and bullying issues – something she is passionate about.

"Domestic violence is an issue that a lot of people still think is private," says Buckley, "but all of us have a responsibility to do something about it."

She comes well-equipped to this role as she's been a member of the Family Crime Unit for the past two years.

Since November 2004, the Medicine Hat Police Service and the Child and Family Services Authority have been working together through

the Family Crime Unit to address issues of child abuse, sexual abuse, and domestic violence. The team, which consists of two police officers and one intervention services caseworker, jointly investigates cases when children are involved or exposed to risks. The unit also assesses levels of risk in all domestic violence files.

The work of this unit has resulted in a substantial increase in the number of police referrals to Children's Services. The CFSA is completing an average of 10 additional investigations per month from police referrals.

In 2005, the Medicine Hat Family Crime Unit reviewed 320 cases and

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## Planning day generates public input into CFSA business plan

Community input is integral to the business planning process of Southeast Alberta Child and Family Services Authority. Each spring, the Board hosts an annual planning event to maintain the lines of communication with various stakeholders. About 60 people from various organizations that work with children and families joined CFSA Board members, managers and staff for the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Collaborative Planning Day on April 28 at Medicine Hat College.

As CEO Bryan Heninger explained to the participants, the purpose of the day was two-fold. "This provides us with an opportunity to report back to the community about what we've been doing and what we're trying to accomplish," he said, "as well as allowing us to hear from you and get input for our regional business plan."

Heninger said that while all regional authorities under Children's Services deliver provincial programs, the way they are delivered is driven by the community – a community that is going through many changes.

"We have families coming here without family ties or other connections because they've heard that Alberta is the land of milk and honey but some are struggling more than ever," said Heninger. "We must respond or our community will suffer and we need to work together because when we do we achieve great results."

That theme of cooperation was echoed in the keynote address by Phil



Goodman, Assistant Deputy Minister of Children's Services.

"No one piece of the social services matrix is capable of answering the complexity of issues facing children and families," Goodman said. "We need to have relationships built on trust and respect for each other and our clients. We need to focus on outcomes not mandates or barriers."

Following overview presentations about the work of the Ministry and CFSA, participants from a wide range of organizations, including social service agencies, law enforcement, and education, discussed what they see as gaps and needs that the CFSA can help address. The discussion themes for the small group sessions included how the delivery of services to children, youth and families can be strengthened and how the CFSA can work with partnerships to make them more efficient and effective.

CFSA staff collected the feedback from these sessions and will use it to inform the 2007-2010 regional business plan.

### Regional efforts ... cont'd from page 1

referred 211 to Child Intervention Services. That represents 318 children in Medicine Hat affected by domestic violence. Most of these cases represented the first contact with the families.

"It means we've been able to reach out to these families in a far more timely fashion for intervention," says Buckley. "In many of those cases we haven't seen those families come back. That early contact and resource information seems to prevent a lot of those families from escalating."

A joint project with the Provincial Crown, Medicine Hat Police Service, Alberta Justice and the CFSA resulted in the creation of a Domestic Violence Court in October 2005 to fast track all family violence files in 12-15 days from the offence. A pre-disposition team (consisting of representatives from the Crown, probation, Family Crime Unit, CFSA, women's shelter and victim assistance staff) reviews each file and makes recommendations so the best resolution can be put forward. The court provides immediate and

comprehensive assistance to both victims and perpetrators, focusing on victim safety and perpetrator accountability.

"Domestic violence court is a shining example of community collaboration. People from different backgrounds and different ministries with different mandates came together because it was the right thing to do and we made it work," says Buckley.

Her new role focuses on community development, public education, policy development and staff training.

She's already begun meeting with stakeholders across the region as well as other sectors such as health to understand what resources are currently available. She will be connecting with groups in Medicine Hat, Oyen, Brooks, Bow Island and other places to get a sense how family violence and bullying issues are addressed in those communities.

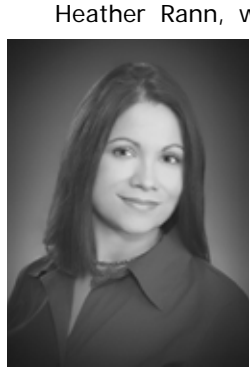
"This is not just a Child Protection or police issue," says Buckley. "This impacts everybody. No little kid should have to worry about what's going to happen to their parents."

### The Protection Against Family Violence Amendment Act became law on Nov. 1, 2006:

- adds stalking to the definition of family violence;
- protects vulnerable people, such as seniors or individuals with disabilities, who are being abused by a family member who does not live with them;
- clarifies the use of Emergency Protection Orders and allows them to be granted even if the offenders say they did not mean to hurt anyone; and
- requires only one parent/guardian to give consent for a child to receive counselling.

# New Co-Chair, members appointed to CFSA Board

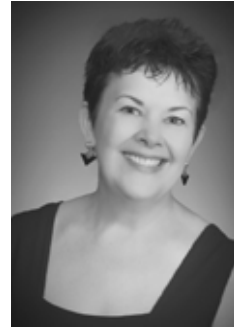
The Board of Southeast Alberta Child and Family Services Authority (CFSA) welcomed a new Co-Chair and two new members earlier this year to help govern the CFSA in its work to strengthen families and keep children and youth safe and protected.



Heather Rann

Heather Rann, who has been a member of the Board since October 2004, joined Ken Serr as Co-Chair. A special constable with the Medicine Hat Police Service, Rann has lived and worked in the southeast region her entire life. She was a member of the steering committee that helped establish the Child and Family Services Authority and sat on the selection committee for the original Board. She sees her biggest role as an advocate for children and families.

"Children and families are the heart of our communities," she says. "My involvement with this Board allows me to connect with their needs and allows me a greater perspective in both my professional and personal life."



Sue Masterman

New Board members Susan Masterman of Medicine Hat and Sharon Ness of New Brigden both bring relevant community experience to

their new roles.

During her 34-year teaching career, Sue Masterman taught in a variety of diverse settings including Thicket Portage, a Cree village in Northern Manitoba; Grand Prairie; Dayton, Oregon; Ralston; and Redcliff. She has a Bachelor of Education degree and a Master's in Special Education. Since moving to Medicine Hat in 1981, she's

served on a number of boards including the Women's Shelter Board and Parish



Sharon Ness

Council for St. Mary's Church. She is also active in the Alberta Teacher's Association and is currently serving her second year as local president.

Born in Eston, Saskatchewan, Sharon Ness has lived in the New Brigden area all of her married life. She works for AFSC – Crop Insurance in Oyen and her family owns a cattle and horse ranch. While raising her children she was involved in community organizations such as ECS and Home and School. She has also served on a Mental Health Advisory Board and served as the treasurer of her church. She is currently a volunteer for Victims' Assistance with the RCMP.

See page 4 for a complete list of board members.

## The community partnership enhancement fund: a closer look

The Community Partnership Enhancement Fund (CPEF) is a province-wide Children's Services initiative designed to enhance the connection between Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) programs and Child and Family Services Authorities (CFSAs).

In this region, a CPEF committee with the CFSA as well as seven FCSS programs (Bassano, County of Forty Mile, Cypress County, Grasslands, Medicine Hat, Oyen, and Redcliff) was formed in 2003. The goal of the committee is to increase the capacity of these organizations to work together and create opportunities that will enhance both the exchange of information and the interaction of community programming to better serve the needs of children, youth, and families.

The CPEF committee has sponsored and facilitated a number of key initiatives including: several joint professional development and networking opportunities; a regional resource directory ([www.infointhehat.ca](http://www.infointhehat.ca)); and a rural community asset mapping project. In addition, the committee funds two part-time community worker positions (in Bassano and the County of Newell). The significant and far reaching work of the committee shows that teaming up the CFSA and FCSS organizations continues to be a positive undertaking in this region.

For more information, please contact Nadine Jodoin, CPEF Coordinator, at [njodoin@shaw.ca](mailto:njodoin@shaw.ca).

## Saamis Family Programs Update

Changes at the Saamis Children's Centre will enhance family enhancement and intervention services for children and families, particularly high risk youth.

To ensure quality service is being provided to the children and families in Southeast Alberta and in keeping with the philosophy of the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act*, counselors within the Community Care Program were reassigned as intervention caseworkers.

The new Intervention Services Unit will work out of Saamis Children's Centre focusing on families with youth in both the Family Enhancement and Protection Services programs and working to preserve families and prevent the escalation of issues.

Saamis Family Programs will continue to operate the R.E.A.L. School Program in partnership with School District #76 and Alberta Works. Doug Thomas supervises all components of the Saamis Family Programs and the new Intervention Services Unit.

"Having both an intervention unit and a school program delivered out of one facility, with common philosophies and supervision is an exciting proposition for the Region," says Thomas. "Highest risk youth have the opportunity to attend school and receive guidance from their caseworker, all within the same building."

The Supervised Access Program for intervention services continues to operate from Saamis Children's Centre supporting both the Family Enhancement and Protection Service program areas.



### Minister's Awards of Merit

Children's Services staff and agency partners were recognized for excellence in serving the children, youth and families of Alberta on October 30 in Edmonton. Minister Heather Forsyth presented Awards of Merit to deserving recipients from across the province including Susan Reichert (in photo), an Administrative Support Worker from the CFSA's office in Brooks, who received an Employee Innovation Award. Also from our Region, Bridges Family Programs was honoured in the Community Service category while McMan Youth, Family and Community Association received an award for Community Partnership.



### Deputy Minister visits Southeast Alberta

Deputy Minister Maria David-Evans spent a day with staff, management, and board members of Southeast Alberta Child and Family Services Authority on June 13 discussing issues and concerns. She also learned about some of the innovative and successful approaches in this Region. She connected with staff from all over the region and had her picture taken with a world-traveling Ovation Bear. The Deputy Minister took part in the Ovation Staff Barbeque at Kin Coulee Park in Medicine Hat to celebrate long term service for employees who have reached various milestones from 5 to 25 years. Congratulations to the recipients who achieved the following milestones as of Dec. 31, 2005:

Joyce-Ann Bacon	25 years
Beverley Carson	20 years
Terry Aho	15 years
Diana M. Robson-Haugan	15 years
Douglas Thomas	10 years
Lawrence Horeczy	10 years
Sheri Lynn Cobbe	10 years
Dianna M. Malmgren	5 years
Rhonda Beck	5 years
Heather L. Cluett	5 years
Charlene S. Wyrostok,	5 years
Jerry D. Mortensen	5 years
David A. Sawatsky	5 years

### Protecting drug-endangered children

Under the new Drug-endangered Children Act, police and caseworkers are better able to protect children exposed to serious drug activity such as manufacturing and trafficking. DECA is the first legislation in Canada to make it clear that these children are victims of abuse and require protection. Children can be apprehended based solely on the fact they are drug-endangered. Research has found that children exposed to marijuana "grow ops" and drug labs are at high risk for chronic respiratory disorders, neurological damage, cancer and physical, emotional and sexual abuse.

### Virtual Parent Link Centre

Children's Services Minister Heather Forsyth recently launched the new virtual Parent Link Centre ([www.parentlinkalberta.ca](http://www.parentlinkalberta.ca)) which brings together information about choosing child care, communicating with your child, behaviour and discipline, health and safety, and becoming a parent. Parents can now access information no matter where they live.

### Animal friends teach children online safety

Children in Alberta now have a new group of animal friends to teach them how to be safe online. Blockin' Betty, Chattin' Charlie, Careful Cara and Thinkin' Theo are the main characters of a new website, [www.badguy patrol.ca](http://www.badguy patrol.ca), designed to teach five- to 10-year-olds Internet safety skills through games. The site was developed by Alberta Children's Services and Microsoft Canada.



**Southeast Alberta**  
Child and Family Services Authority

#### Who We Are

*Southeast Alberta Child and Family Services Authority (CFSA) is mandated under Alberta Children's Services to deliver a wide range of services to strengthen families and keep children and youth safe and protected.*

#### Our services include:

- early intervention
- child intervention services (family enhancement and protection, including foster care, adoption services and permanency planning)
- child care licensing, monitoring and subsidy
- prevention of family violence and bullying
- prevention of sexual exploitation of children
- Family Support for Children with Disabilities (FSCD)

#### Our Board

The CFSA is governed by a Board, whose members are chosen from the community and appointed by the Minister of Children's Services. The community members serving on our Board provide strong leadership and work closely with communities in the region.

#### Co-chairs

Ken Serr – *Medicine Hat*  
Heather Rann – *Medicine Hat*

#### Board members

Jim Black – *Medicine Hat*  
Fred Kramer – *Medicine Hat*  
Susan Masterman – *Medicine Hat*  
Sharon Ness – *New Brigden*  
Norma Roy – *Medicine Hat*

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The 2005-06 Annual Report is available online or by contacting the Regional Authority Office.