



2023

# Victim Services Annual Report

Prepared by Kristen Morrison



INVESTIGATIVE SERVICES DIVISION

**HAMILTON  
POLICE SERVICE**  
Together. Stronger. Safer.

# VISION ▪ MISSION ▪ OUR VALUES

COMPASSION ▪ DEDICATION ▪ INCLUSIVITY ▪ INTEGRITY ▪ PROFESSIONALISM ▪ COLLABORATION



**VISION:** To be a trusted partner in delivering public safety.

**MISSION:** To serve and protect in partnership with our communities.

**OUR VALUES:** Compassion, Dedication, Inclusivity, Professionalism, Collaboration.

Victim Services is a Branch of the Hamilton Police Service (HPS) established in 1992. It is the only 24-hour on-scene crisis intervention service for victims of crime and trauma in the City of Hamilton. We respond to the immediate needs of people who have been impacted by crime and/or tragic circumstance such as homicides, suicides, sudden death, assaults, sexual assault, domestic violence, motor vehicle and fire fatalities, robberies, harassment, hate crime and hate bias incidents, human trafficking and missing persons, among others.

In 2023, the Victim Services Branch (VSB) assisted 2,006 new victims and had a total of 5503 contacts with victims. With 5 full-time staff and over 50 volunteers, VSB is able to provide these services 24/7.

VSB continues to provide support through established programs, such as the Sexual Assault Support Program (264 individuals supported), Victim Quick Response Program+ (313 claims processed), and the Trauma Bear Program. VSB also continues to provide support through the Domestic Violence Intervention Program, which is an intimate partner violence pilot program aimed at reducing escalation and re-victimization. To date, over 385 individuals have been supported through this initiative, with over 120 supported in 2023.

With funding provided through the Ministry of the Solicitor General's Victim Support Grant, VSB established the Community Liaison Program in partnership with Interval House of Hamilton, Banyan Community Services, and the YMCA of Hamilton, Burlington and Brantford. Each organization provides specialized support for victims/survivors of Domestic Violence and/or Human Trafficking.

Importantly, VSB acknowledged with extreme gratitude the dedication and commitment of Victim Services Volunteers through the HPS's Marg Marshall Award exemplifying leadership and commitment, HPS Volunteer Years of Service Awards, as well as the Ontario Service Awards through Ontario Honours and Awards Secretariat Citizenship, Inclusion and Heritage Division through the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism. Overall, 10 Volunteers received awards: one 30 Year Milestone Award, two 25 year Milestone Awards, one 15 Year Milestone Award, two 10 Year Milestone Awards, three 5 Year Milestone Awards, and one Marg Marshall Award.

Many presentations were provided to the community throughout 2023 to enhance awareness of Victim Services and supports available. Notably, Victim Services was selected to present at the 2023 National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA) Conference: The Power of Connection, in New Orleans, Louisiana on our Sexual Assault Support Program.

With a shared purpose of responding to the needs of our community, the Victim Services Branch of Hamilton Police Service will continue to: focus on its core mandate to respond to the immediate needs of victims of crime and trauma, engage with HPS members to develop programs and resources, collaborate and foster opportunities for partnerships with community agencies and stakeholders.

# STRATEGIC PLAN OVERVIEW

VICTIM SERVICES BRANCH



The Victim Services Branch is pleased to share our goals, achievements and initiatives for 2023 that have contributed to the outcomes and success of the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan in this Annual Report. The Branch's Annual Objectives & Performance follow.



## COMMUNITY SAFETY

**GOAL: Decrease Victimization & Re-Offence Rates**

- **ACTION:** Continue to provide support to those impacted by crime and tragic circumstance, work with community agencies to best support victims/survivors, and continue collaborative initiatives to reduce re-offence rates specific to intimate partner violence.



## COLLABORATIVE ENGAGEMENT

**GOAL: Community Partnerships & Engagement**

- **ACTION:** Improve awareness of supports available through the Victim Services Branch, and continue to collaborate with community agencies on programs and initiatives to best support those impacted by crime and tragedy in the Hamilton community.



## CULTURE AND CAPACITY

**GOAL: Recruitment, Retention, & Member Engagement**

- **ACTION:** Volunteer engagement, training opportunities, and continued enrichment.



## TRUSTING CHANGE

**GOAL: Continued Improvement & New Initiatives**

- **ACTION:** On-going involvement in the development of new programs, initiatives, and opportunities to support those impacted by crime in the Hamilton community.



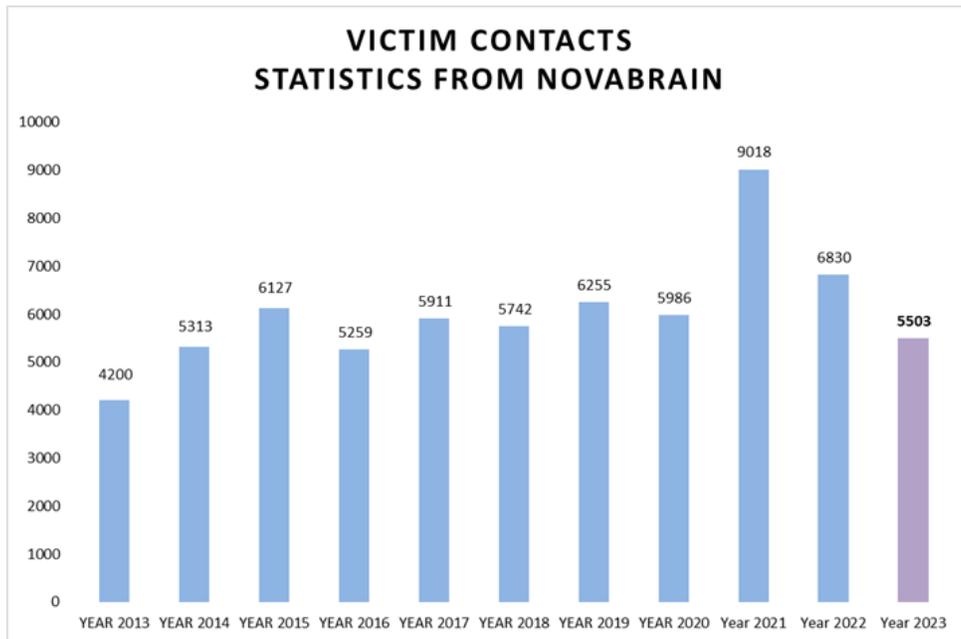
# COMMUNITY SAFETY

## GOAL: Decrease Victimization and Re-offence Rates

Action Items: Continue to provide support to those impacted by crime and tragic circumstance, work with community agencies to best support victims/survivors, and continue collaborative initiatives to reduce re-offence rates specific to intimate partner violence.

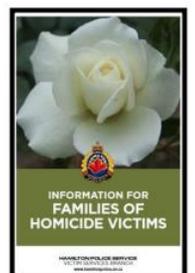
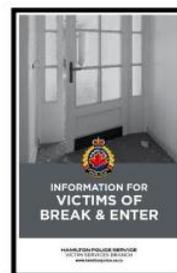
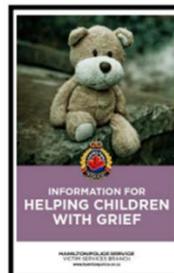
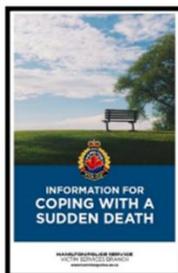
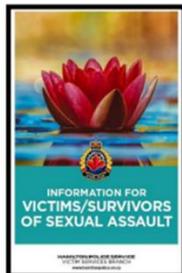
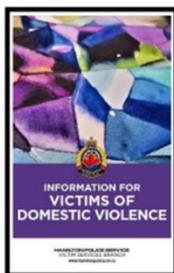
### Support Victims of Crime and/or Tragic Circumstance:

- Supported 2006\* new individuals impacted by crime or tragedy
- See Figure A for 5503\* total contacts with victims (includes new and existing clients).
- For breakdown of contact type, please refer to Figure B. [next page].



\*Please note: Due to software expiry, available data from 2023 may not have captured all interactions. 2023 contacts are likely higher than indicated.

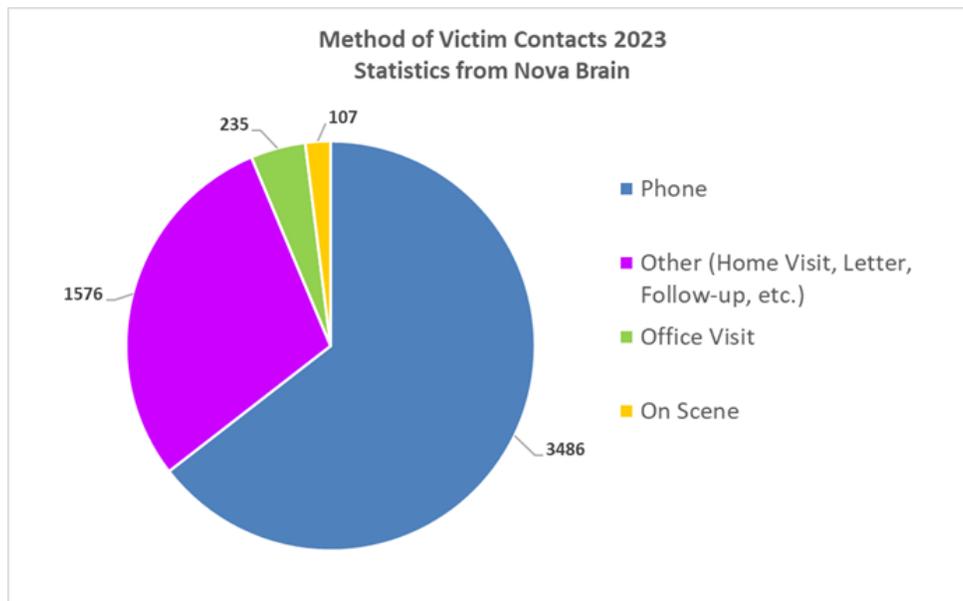
- Continued to work with victims/survivors of crime in providing support, as well as navigating systems and referrals to reduce harm and promote resiliency.
- VSB strives to assist all areas of the Hamilton Police Service to best support victims of crime and/or trauma such as: Intimate Partner Violence Unit, Bail Safety Unit, Homicide Unit, Sex Crimes Unit, Criminal Investigations Division, Crimes Against Children Unit, Major Drugs and Gangs – Human Trafficking Unit, Crime Prevention Branch, Training Branch, Communications, and Patrol, among others.
- Victim support brochures continue to be available at VSB, as well as all Division locations.





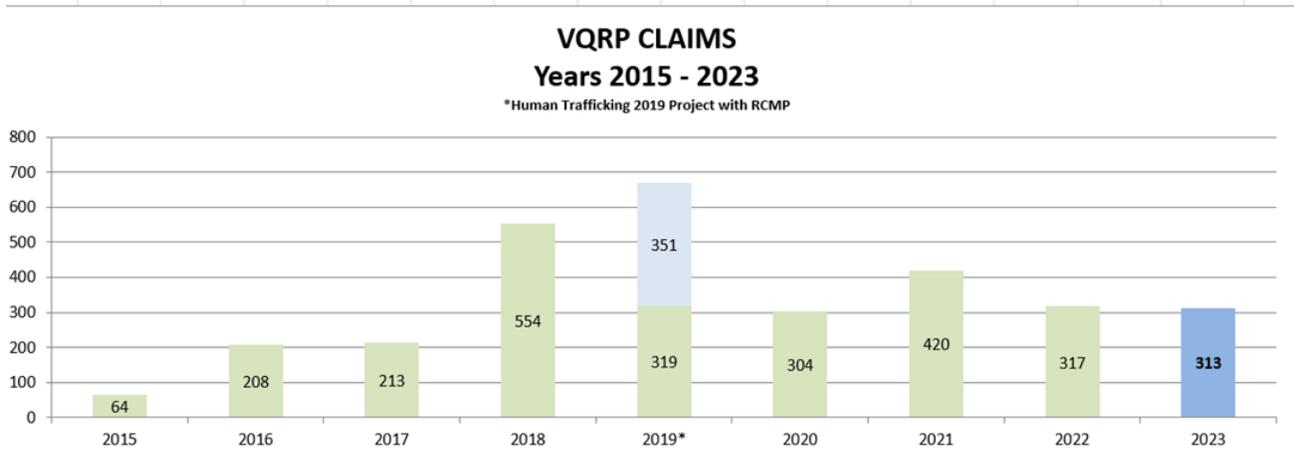
## COMMUNITY SAFETY

Figure B.



*Responses to a stressful situation vary greatly from person-to-person and not all people will experience the same reaction at the same level of intensity nor for the same length of time. For many victims, they are able to empower themselves with self-supporting options and do not require further assistance after initial contact with Victim Services. Other victims may determine that continued resources/interaction with Victim Services is required to support their resiliency. Not all victims request or need on-scene crisis intervention.*

Figure C.



- Continued to deliver the Victim Quick Response Program+ (VQRP+) for the City of Hamilton on behalf of the Ministry of Community, Children, and Social Services (MCCSS).
- 313 claims processed through VQRP+ in 2023, for example door/lock repairs, cell phone replacement, transportation, crime scene clean-up, funeral, counselling services, etc. [See Figure C above].
- Claims totaled over \$212,100.00 in direct benefit to victims of crime.



## COMMUNITY SAFETY

### Work with Community Agencies to Improve Supports for Victims/Survivors:

- Received funding via the Victim Support Grant through the Ministry of the Solicitor General. Funding secured: \$100,000 per year (2021-2024) to support victims/survivors of human trafficking (HT) and/or intimate partner violence (IPV). This allowed for the continuation of the Community Liaison Program (CLP) in partnership with Interval House of Hamilton, Banyan Community Services, and the YMCA of Hamilton, Burlington, Brantford. CLP aims to provide immediate wrap-around support for victims/survivors of IPV and/or HT, as well as increase awareness of both IPV and HT in the Hamilton community as well as within HPS. Notably, an online course was developed for HPS to increase awareness of human trafficking, which included the perspective of a survivor and specialized support worker for human trafficking. This course launched on the Canadian Police Knowledge Network as of September 2023. When examining re-offence rates throughout the grant period, an average of 77% who were referred to wrap-around supports related to intimate partner violence did not have further calls to HPS.

### Collaborative Initiatives to Reduce Victimization & Re-offence:

- Completed year 2 of the Domestic Violence Intervention Program Pilot (DVIP), which aims to provide support to individuals involved in non-criminal domestic disputes with community resources and system navigation in an effort to reduce escalation and enhance public safety. In partnership with the Intimate Partner Violence Unit, over 120 individuals were referred through the program in 2023, with the pilot receiving over 385 referrals since it began in late 2021. All individuals were contacted and offered referrals to a wide variety of community agencies for supports such as counselling, legal advocacy, housing support, mental health and substance use services, etc.



## COLLABORATIVE ENGAGEMENT

### GOAL: Community Partnerships & Engagement

**Action Items:** Improve awareness of supports available through the Victim Services Branch, and continue to collaborate with community agencies on programs and initiatives to best support those impacted by crime and tragedy in the Hamilton community.

### Improve Awareness of Victim Supports:

- 19 Training sessions provided by staff to organizations and conferences in the community and abroad to raise awareness about Victim Services and supports available.
  - Conferences included: Hate Crime Symposium, Hamilton Anti-Human Trafficking Conference, and the National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA) Conference: The Power of Connection, in New Orleans, Louisiana.
  - Organization Presentations: Special Investigations Unit (SIU), Good Shepherd Centres, Native Women's Centre, Hamilton Regional Indian Centre, and the Ronald McDonald House in Hamilton.

### Collaboration with Community Agencies:

- Continued to work in collaboration with community organizations to ensure wrap-around supports are available to any victims/survivors supported through the Victim Services Branch.
- Continued involvement on community committees (15+) to enhance collaboration and community-based solutions to support victims/survivors of crime.

- Committee and Community Work: Victim Services Alliance Ontario; Emergency Preparedness Committee for City of Hamilton; High-Risk Domestic Violence Community Advisory Team; Hamilton Anti-Human Trafficking Coalition (HAHTC) and Steering Committee; Women Abuse Working Group (WAWG); Public Awareness and Education – sub-committee of WAWG; International Women’s Day Planning Committee; Hamilton Police Women’s Services Advisory to the Chief; Emergency Women’s Shelter Protocol Committee; Sexual Assault Community Review Team (SACRT); Safe at Home Hamilton, Domestic Violence Court Advisory Committee; Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) Network, Hamilton School Board Anti-Human Trafficking Protocol Advisory.
- VSB continued to participate as a member of the Sexual Assault Community Review Team (SACRT). The team is comprised of the HPS Sex Crimes Unit, the Victim Services Branch, the Sexual Assault Domestic Violence Care Centre - Hamilton Health Sciences, the Sexual Assault Centre of Hamilton and Area (SACHA), and the Native Women’s Centre.
- Partnership continued with “Comfort Bears” to provide teddy bears to individuals impacted by trauma. All patrol cars are equipped with Comfort Bears, so Officers can give these bears to individuals at scenes to provide some comfort during the aftermath of a crime or traumatic event. Comfort Bears are also available through the Victim Services Branch, the Crimes Against Children Unit, Sex Crimes Unit, and Homicide Unit.
- Continued administration of the Rapid Relief Food Boxes Program to support those experiencing food insecurity.
- Continued partnership with The Hospital Activity Book for Children organization to provide activity books for volunteer child kits.
- Continued partnership with the Suicide Prevention Community Council of Hamilton (SPCCH) to provide a Suicide Resource Kit to individuals/families who have lost a loved one to suicide.
- VSB attended several community events to enhance partnerships with community agencies including: Sisters in Sync – International Day of the Girl, International Women’s Day, Carol Anne’s Place Grand Opening, Women Abuse Prevention Month, and The National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, among others.



 A decorative graphic consisting of a green speech bubble shape on the left containing three interlocking gears. To the right of the speech bubble is a green arrow pointing right, which contains the text 'CULTURE AND CAPACITY' in bold, green, uppercase letters.
 

## CULTURE AND CAPACITY

### GOAL: Recruitment, Retention, & Member Engagement

Action Items: Volunteer engagement, training opportunities, and continued enrichment.

#### Volunteer Engagement:

- Volunteers contribute over 30,000 hours of available on-call coverage, provided over 550 hours of direct support to victims, and offer support in 23 languages in addition to English.
- Trained 17 new recruits through 39 hours of instruction throughout our annual Victim Services Volunteer Training.
- In 2023, 20 HPS Cadets completed Victim Services Branch Volunteer training as part of their Cadet training program. VSB continues to be an integral component of the continuum of learning for the HPS Cadet program since 2014. In addition, another 6 Cadets completed a rotation working within the VSB office as part of their supervised practicum.
- Volunteer recognition completed throughout the year through individual notes of appreciation, as well as through National Volunteer Week and International Volunteer Day.
- Victim Services Volunteers were celebrated through HPS’s Marg Marshall Award exemplifying leadership and commitment, HPS Volunteer Years of Service Awards, as well as the Ontario Service Awards through Ontario Honours and Awards Secretariat Citizenship, Inclusion and Heritage Division through the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism.

- 10 Volunteers received awards: one 30 Year Milestone Award, two 25 year Milestone Awards, one 15 Year Milestone Award, two 10 Year Milestone Awards, three 5 Year Milestone Awards, and one Marg Marshall Award.
- VSB staff connected with Mohawk College and their alumni, McMaster University and their alumni, Police Association Retirees, City of Hamilton Libraries, Recreation Centres and Senior Centres to share information about volunteer opportunities.

### Training Opportunities:

- 22 Training Opportunities were provided to Victim Services staff members throughout 2023, such as the Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children’s webinar titled Strong Connections: Gender-Based Violence and Mass Casualties, Ontario Women in Law Enforcement (OWLE) Training Day, York Regional Police Hate Crime Conference, National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA) Conference, the Collaborative Network to End Exploitation’s Do No Harm – Decolonizing Anti-Human Trafficking Efforts webinar series, National Centre for Victim’s of Crime’s ‘Soul Crushing’ job: Emotional Labor and Secondary Trauma in Prosecuting Sexual Assault Cases webinar, Victim Services Alliance of Ontario (VSAO) Conference for Victims/Survivors of Crime Week, among many others.
- 23 External Training Opportunities on various topics to support victims of crime were provided throughout 2023 on topics including human trafficking, sexual violence, and survivors of Military sexual trauma, elder abuse, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), and mental health, among others.
- 4 Professional Development Training Nights (8 hours) provided to Victim Services Volunteers, which included presentations from Good Shepherd – Barrett Centre to discuss mental health services, HPS Cyber Crime to enhance knowledge about safety planning with technology, and a Child Life Specialist from Hamilton Health Sciences to enhance understanding on services and supports related to children and youth who experience grief.
- Volunteer Resource Manual was updated regularly to ensure up-to-date community resource options are provided by both staff and volunteers. Several new resources were added and updates were made to existing options.

*Together, these form a part of the Volunteer’s commitment to ensure that our core values, integrity and accountability are held to the highest standards of professional and ethical conduct.*



- Victim Services also provided multiple training sessions to internal HPS members on topics such as overall services provided by the Victim Services Branch, Victim Management and Support, and the Sexual Assault Support Program. Presentation groups included:
  - New Sworn Recruits Post-OPC
  - Sex Crimes Unit Detectives
  - Sexual Assault Investigators Course through OPC (HPS and non-HPS members attended)
  - Criminal Investigation Division Staff Sergeants
  - Criminal Investigators Training Course (HPS and non-HPS members attended)
  - Communications



## TRUSTING CHANGE

### GOAL: Continued Improvement & New Initiatives

Action Items: On-going involvement in the development of new programs, initiatives, and opportunities.

#### Programs and Initiatives Dedicated to Change:

- Continued participation in the development of a Hate Crime Case Review Team (HCCRT) to support with systemic change of policies, procedures and training related to hate related investigations.
  - 1 Town Hall meeting was facilitated with community members on the development of HCCRT. Attendees requested further meetings specific to their community.
  - 6 Focus Groups were then facilitated with the following community groups: 2SLGBTQIA, Black, Indigenous, Jewish, Muslim, and South-Asian.
- Received funding for Victims and Survivors of Crime Week from the Department of Justice in Collaboration with the EDI team. Funding secured: \$9,000 for a Hate Crime Symposium during Victims and Survivors of Crime Week, which was held in May 2023 for learning, dialogue, and solution building related to hate related investigations in Hamilton.
  - Presenters included: Detective Fabiano Mendes (HPS Hate Crime Investigator), Jill McKenzie (Crown Attorney), Detective Kiran Bisla (Toronto Police Service), Acting Sergeant Ziyad Zabian (London Police Service), Dr. Barbara Perry, and a panel of those impacted by Hate in Hamilton, which was facilitated by Joëlle Kabisoso (Sisters in Sync).
  - Attendees included: HPS Members both Sworn and Civilian, Members from outside Police Services such as Halton Regional Police Service and Peel Regional Police Service, stakeholders from the justice sector, community agency representatives, and members of the Hamilton community.
- New technologies continue to be integrated for enhanced safety planning options for victims of crime, such as door bell cameras, personal alarms, etc.
- Social Media continues to be used to raise awareness for Victim Services throughout the year, as well as to recruit Victim Services Volunteers.

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*Two benches are located in the courtyard at Hamilton Police Service Central Station. The benches provide a peaceful place for those who wish to pause, rest or reflect. On each bench is a plaque with an inscription: "FORGET ME NOT" ~ A Place of Quiet Reflection to Honour All Victims of Crime Because "Every Victim Matters".*