



2024

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, and became an official unit in 1994. 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 2024, the Victim Services Branch (VSB) assisted over 2000 new victims in over 4970 interactions. 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 (256 individuals supported), Victim Quick Response Program+ (383 claims processed totalling \$323,130.86), and the Trauma Bear Program. VSB also continues to provide support through the Domestic Violence Intervention Program, which is an intimate partner violence early intervention program aimed at reducing escalation and re-victimization. To date, over 500 individuals have been supported through this initiative, with 114 supported in 2024.

With funding provided through the Ministry of the Solicitor General's Victim Support Grant, VSB continued 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. Additionally, through funding provided by the Department of Justice Canada, VSB was able to translate some of our support brochures into 7 additional languages to enhance support to our diverse community.

Notably, VSB celebrated our 30th Anniversary of supporting those impacted by crime and tragedy in our community. In September 2024 we held an event to acknowledge and appreciate those involved with Victim Services, both past and present. We also welcomed those interested in joining the Victim Services volunteer team to learn more and meet our team.

Many presentations were provided to the community throughout 2024 to enhance awareness of Victim Services and supports available. Notably, Victim Services was selected to present at the 2024 National Organization for Victim Advocacy (NOVA) Conference: Advancing Our Advocacy, in Washington, DC on our approach to supporting Victims of Hate.

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 2024 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

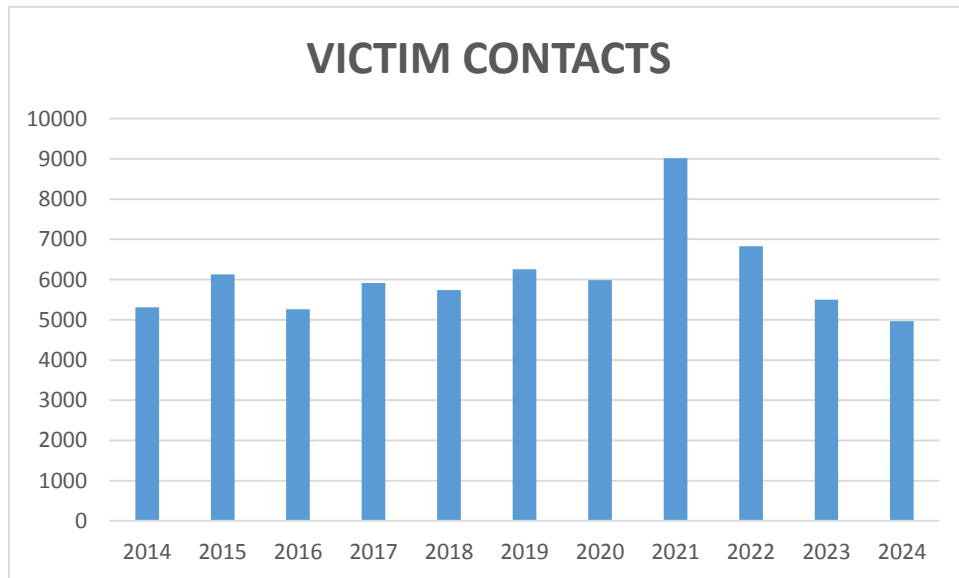
GOAL: Decrease Victimization and Re-offence Rates

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:

- **Please note:** Due to software expiry, available data from 2024 did not capture all interactions. 2024 contacts will be higher than indicated.
- Supported 1998* new individuals impacted by crime or tragedy
- See Figure A for 4969* total contacts with victims (includes new and existing clients).

Figure A.



**Please note: Due to software expiry, available data from 2024 did not capture all interactions. 2024 contacts will be 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.

Support Victims of Crime and/or Tragic Circumstance (cont'd):

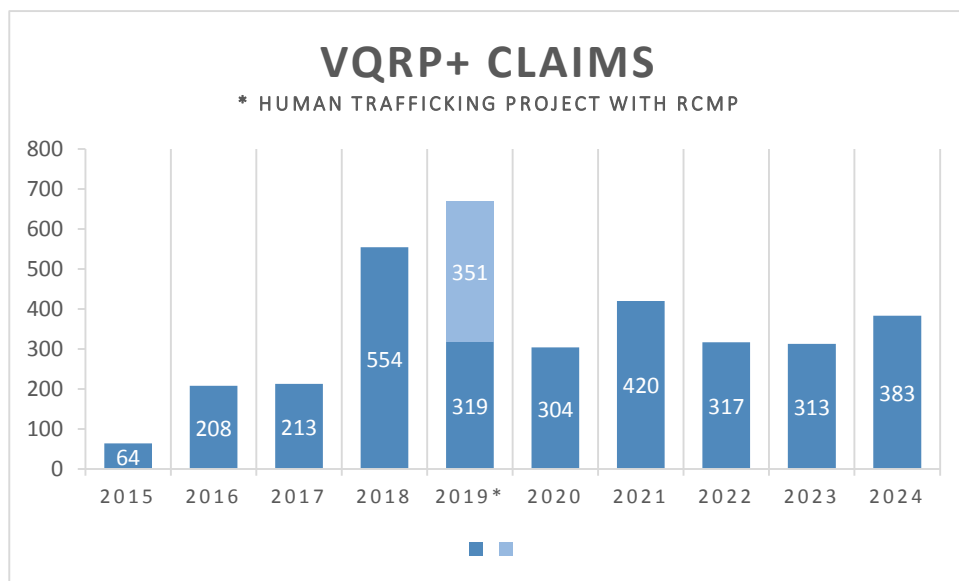
- Victim support brochures continue to be available at VSB, as well as in all Division locations.
- Victim Services Branch brochure is now available in English, French, Arabic, Punjabi, Somali, Spanish, Swahili, and Ukrainian.
- Coping with a Sudden Death and Victims of Domestic Violence brochure is now available in English, French, Arabic, and Spanish.
- This diversification is an on-going endeavor and we aim to expand the languages provided for all brochures.



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.

- Continued to deliver the Victim Quick Response Program+ (VQRP+) for the City of Hamilton on behalf of the Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Services (MCCSS).

Figure B.



- 383 claims processed through VQRP+ in 2024, for example door/lock repairs, cell phone replacement, transportation, crime scene clean-up, funeral, counselling services, etc. [See Figure C above].
- Claims totaled over \$323,130.00 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. 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. 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, which became available Canada-wide in 2024. This funding ended March 31st, 2024.

Collaborative Initiatives to Reduce Victimization & Re-offence:

- Completed year 3 of the Domestic Violence Intervention Program (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, the program has received over 500 referrals since it began in late 2021 with 114 supported in 2024. 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. based on individual needs.



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:

- 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: Hamilton Anti-Human Trafficking Conference, and the National Organization for Victim Advocacy (NOVA) Conference: Advancing Our Advocacy in Washington, DC, and the NOVA Virtual Conference.
 - Organization Presentations: Sisters in Sync, Jewish Federation of Hamilton, Milli Gould Foundation, Circle of Beads, Lynwood Charlton Centre/Thrive Programs, WAVES (Survivor Advisory group for WAWG), Hamilton Newcomer Day at Hamilton City Hall, Native Women's Centre, Salvation Army, City of Hamilton, among others.

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, Hate Crime Case Review Team (HCCRT).
- 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 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, Comfort Bears Gala, Hamilton Newcomer Day, Interval House of Hamilton – Victoria and Friends Shelter Expansion, Women Abuse Prevention Month, and The National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, Crime Stoppers, among others.



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 500 hours of direct support to victims, and offer support in 19 languages in addition to English.
- Trained 24 new recruits through 39 hours of instruction throughout our annual Victim Services Volunteer Training.
- In 2024, 13 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.

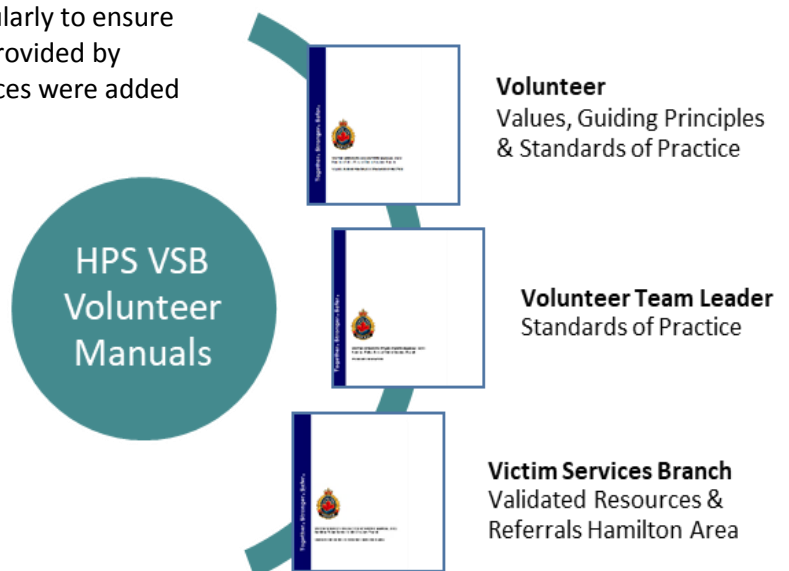
since 2014. In addition, another 8 Cadets completed a rotation working within the VSB office as part of their supervised practicum.

- 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 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.
 - 6 Volunteers received awards: one 25 year Milestone Award, two 15 Year Milestone Awards, three 5 Year Milestone Awards.
- Notably, VSB celebrated our 30th Anniversary of supporting those impacted by crime and tragedy in our community. In September 2024, VSB held an event to acknowledge and appreciate those involved with Victim Services, both past and present. We also welcomed those interested in joining the Victim Services volunteer team to learn more and meet our team.

Training Opportunities:

- 25+ Training Opportunities were provided to Victim Services staff members and/or volunteers throughout 2024, on topics such as Cultural Safety & Responsiveness, Access to Justice for Victims and Survivors of Sexual Assault and Intimate Partner violence, Fraud Awareness, Human Trafficking, Grief & Bereavement, Neurodevelopmental Disabilities and Sex Trafficking, Trauma-informed Practice, Elder Abuse, Supporting Families with Missing Children, Gender-Based Violence connections following the Nova Scotia Mass Casualty Commission report, 2SLGBTQIA+ Rights in Ontario, National Organization for Victim Advocacy (NOVA) Conference, RCMP Missing Person Training, among many others.
- 4 Professional Development Training Nights (8 hours) provided to Victim Services Volunteers, which included a presentation from Banyan Community Services, internal case reviews, community resource review to ensure consistency and quality of support, software training, as well as networking opportunities.
- 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, the Sexual Assault Support Program, and the Domestic Violence Intervention Program. Presentation groups included:
 - New Sworn Recruits Post-OPC

- Out of Region Police Services
- Sex Crimes Unit Detectives
- Domestic Violence Course (DVO) - HPS and non-HPS members attended
- Criminal Investigation Division Staff Sergeants
- 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 and implementation of the 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 and finalization of HCCRT.
 - HCCRT was finalized and training was held from September-December, which included topics such as the Criminal Code of Canada, the criminal justice process, victim support, and exposure to vicarious trauma.
 - Review of cases to begin in January 2025.
- Received funding for Victims and Survivors of Crime Week from the Department of Justice - Canada.
 - Funding secured: \$9,000
 - Activities: Translation of 3 support brochures to support Hamilton's diverse community.
 - Victim Services Support – now available in English, Arabic, French, Punjabi, Somali, Spanish, Swahili and Ukrainian.
 - Information for Victims of Domestic Violence – now available in English, Arabic, French and Spanish.
 - Information for Coping with a Sudden Death – now available in English, Arabic, French and Spanish.
- New technologies continue to be integrated for enhanced safety planning options for victims of crime, such as door bell cameras, personal alarms, etc.
- Integration of two new software programs to manage volunteer participation/scheduling, as well as victim case management.
- Social Media continues to be used to raise awareness for Victim Services throughout the year, as well as to recruit Victim Services Volunteers.

...



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".