
GUIDE TO SPCS AT SAFFRON



SAFFRON
CENTRE

**WELCOME TO THE SPECIALIZED
POLICE AND COURT SUPPORT
PROGRAM**

SAFFRON provides in-person or online support services for those affected by sexual violence, whether as a survivor or a support person. For anyone needing to address a history of perpetrating sexual violence, we can provide referral information to other agencies.

OUR PHILOSOPHY

SAFFRON believes all people are worthy of respect and dignity. Our focus is on providing information, skills, and support to those who have experienced sexual violence so you can regain your personal power; understand, express, and integrate your feelings; and move through your experience to a life that is less impacted by what happened. We also believe strongly in your courage and strength in being able to deal with such a painful issue and desire to follow your lead. Therefore, you are encouraged to be active in your own healing process by setting goals and providing input and feedback.

WHAT CAN I EXPECT DURING MY FIRST PHONE CALL?

Your initial phone call with an Advocate will be about what services or information you need from the Police and Court Program. From this conversation, the Advocate should be able to develop a plan to help you become more informed in the judicial process. Initial phone calls will also include demographic information gathering and any information relevant to your police and court file.



WHAT ARE THE RISKS AND BENEFITS?

As you progress through the justice system with our Advocates, you may feel anxious or stressed about the process. This is normal, and it is our job to help you navigate those feelings and achieve a better sense of understanding about the steps that you are taking.

WHAT CAN I EXPECT AFTER MEETINGS?

You may experience more tiredness, anxiety, or vulnerability than you expected. You may also leave feeling empowered and confident. We encourage you to keep our SPCS Advocates up to date as you move through the court process.

WHAT KIND OF RELATIONSHIP WILL I HAVE WITH MY ADVOCATE?

Advocacy is different than talking to a friend or family member. You will be sharing private and important details about your life with them, but you will learn very little about their private life. Our staff does need to follow certain professional codes of conduct, including:

- Staff cannot have a business relationship with you.
- Staff cannot be a family member or friend.
- Staff cannot give you advice they are not qualified for (i.e. legal, medical, financial).
- Staff cannot have any kind of romantic, friendship or sexual relationship with a former or current client, or with any people close to the client.
- Staff cannot give or receive gifts from clients except tokens with personal meaning to the process.
- Staff cannot be your supervisor, teacher or evaluator while also engaging in the advocacy process with you.
- And Staff cannot attend personal parties/events of yours even if you invite them.

Safety concerns?

If you are unable to feel comfortable with your assigned advocate(s), you can request a different advocate(s) or a referral to another agency.

Our staff also have the right to feel safe in their work. If they become aware that there is a conflict of interest or if their own personal experiences or skill set will interfere with their ability to provide you with the best care possible, they may need to ask that your care be transferred to someone else.

Also, for both your safety and that of our staff, we ask that you do not attend sessions while under the influence of drugs or alcohol. This enhances individual safety, while ensuring your participation and disclosures in police and court are voluntary and deliberate. If it becomes apparent that your judgment is impacted by drugs or alcohol, your advocate may end the current session and reschedule.

HOW WILL I BE CONTACTED BY SAFFRON?

Should we need to contact you we will do so by the preferred method that you identify during the initial contacts you make with the department. Advocates are currently only available to clients during business hours, which typically run from 9:00am to 5:00pm, unless we have scheduled an evening prep or accompaniment with you, in which case we will be on call.

If you have information to add to your police file or to send to your Crown Prosecutor, please contact them directly. Saffron Advocates cannot be responsible for the collection of new evidence.

If you are having a mental health emergency, go to your nearest hospital emergency department or contact one of these crisis numbers:

**THE CANADIAN MENTAL
HEALTH ASSOCIATION
DISTRESS LINE AT
780-482-4357 OR
THE ALBERTA ONE LINE
FOR SEXUAL VIOLENCE
AT 1-866-402-8000.**

What do I need to know about Confidentiality and Privacy?

Information related to your police and court file at SAFFRON is only shared with others outside of SAFFRON with your written or verbal consent, except:

- SAFFRON advocates meet on a regular basis to talk about their work with various clients in order to get feedback, support, and new ideas.
- SAFFRON advocates may seek professional supervision or consultation with qualified professionals who do not work at SAFFRON in order to advance their training and criminal justice skills. In these cases, efforts are made to protect your privacy (i.e. names are not used).
- Demographic and statistical information may be used for research purposes or to report back to funding providers, but any personal identifiers are not shared.

When are SAFFRON staff legally obligated to release information without your consent?

- Reporting to authorities if a child, elderly, or vulnerable person (physically or mentally challenged) is at risk of physical, emotional, or sexual violence or neglect.
- Reporting to authorities if you intend to harm yourself or another person.
- Providing files subpoenaed by courts. ***Please note that we keep our Police and Court Support files separate from Counselling files for this purpose. Please see more information on the following page.**
- If you take legal action against someone on the advocacy team. Our staff may then need to access information you shared while accessing services to handle your complaint.



HOW IS MY SAFFRON FILE STORED?

- Since July 2020, all SPCS files are stored electronically on the Owl Practice online record system, designed specifically for therapy centres. This system uses high levels of encryption for security and is stored on mainframes within Canada.
- Only Saffron staff and designated volunteers have access to client information. Older file information is locked in filing cabinets.
- All advocates have access to all client files.
- All of our staff and volunteers are bound by an oath of confidentiality.
- Files are made “Inactive” if you have not responded to attempted contacts by the SPCS department in three months, or if you identify to us that you are no longer in need of our services.
- **Note: The SPCS department deliberately keeps files separate from Counselling department files. In the event that a counselling file is subpoenaed by the courts, our goal is that the Police and Court file will not be requested. In the event that your file is ever subpoenaed by the court, our Advocates use plain language when filling out our case notes to protect as many details of your case as possible.**

FOR CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS



CHILD ADVOCACY CENTRES

SAFFRON Police and Court Advocates will see youth ages 15 and over for advocacy and accompaniment services. In the event that we receive a referral for someone under the age of 15, we are able to speak with parents/legal guardians and the child to help them understand the process of a Child Forensic Interview and the benefits of using a Child Advocacy Centre for Police and Court Support.



CONSENT FOR MINORS

In order for a minor/child to be seen, a consent form must be signed by a legal parent/guardian.



GUARDIANSHIP AND CUSTODY

In the event that parents or legal guardians are in the middle of custody disputes in court during the Police and Court process with SAFFRON, please know that our Advocates are unable to act as witnesses to parenting or guardianship in court.

WHAT ARE MY RESPONSIBILITIES



As a client at SAFFRON, you have the right to:

1. Be treated with respect and dignity.
2. Ask for what you need.
3. Move at your own pace, understand in your own time, and to say, "I don't understand."
4. Be heard, and to be allowed to feel and to express difficult feelings in a way that is not harmful to yourself or anyone else.
5. Timely, affordable, confidential, and compassionate advocacy services.
6. Withdraw consent for police and court support at any time in writing.

WORKING WITH VOLUNTEER ADVOCATES



As of October 2020, SAFFRON Police and Court has restructured our department to include multiple volunteer Advocates that will be providing information, preps, and accompaniments to clients moving through the judicial process. Our model is built in a similar way to the Zebra Child Protection Centre and the Strathcona County Victim Services Unit.

All volunteers accepted into our program undergo a full online training orientation as well as hours of in-person seminar training and job shadowing. Volunteers have passed Criminal Record, Vulnerable Sector, and Child Welfare Checks and are passionate about the process of police and court. They report back to the Director of the SPCS program frequently and debrief after every meeting with clients.

The Police and Court process can take a long time, and we have switched to using multiple advocates in order to best support the client over a long period of time.

HAVE CONCERNS?

If you have any concerns regarding your Advocate(s) during the Police and Court process, please address these concerns with your Advocate(s) first. If this is not possible, you may bring your concerns to the Director of the Program. Since SPCS Advocates are not part of any official regulatory body, concerns may ultimately be elevated to the Executive Director of SAFFRON.

PRICE OF SPCS SERVICES

The SAFFRON Police and Court Department is proud to be able to offer all of our services **free of charge**. The only time a client may need to pay is for expenses related to their case (i.e. court or police station parking fees, information request charges, etc.) Clients will always be informed of their options for transportation; please note, it is never appropriate for Advocates to transport clients anywhere.

TERMINATION

Once your file is considered complete in the criminal or civil justice system, your advocate will work with you to ensure that you have referrals for any additional services you may need before closing your file. You may choose to withdraw your file from the Police and Court Support services at any time during your process. Files will be closed after three months of inactivity, but can always be reopened.

REPORTING OPTIONS: SUPPORTED REPORTING PROTOCOL



SUPPORTED REPORTING

Supported Reporting gives clients the option of whether or not they would like to give their police interview with a support advocate from Saffron Centre present in the room for emotional support. Advocates cannot contribute in any way to your report or tell individuals what to say. They simply offer a supportive presence in the room while clients report sexual violence. Currently, this protocol only stands with the Strathcona County RCMP.

Satellite Reporting refers to the physical space in which a client chooses to give their police interview. Barring any exceptional circumstances like a 911 call, hospital visit, or a circumstance where reporting is urgent, clients can choose to report sexual violence at a reporting room in the Saffron Centre beginning June 1, 2021. RCMP will still be conducting the police interview, but the choice of space offers clients the opportunity to be as comfortable as possible.



SATELLITE REPORTING

WHAT SERVICES ARE OFFERED THROUGH THE POLICE AND COURT PROGRAM ?

The SAFFRON Specialized Police and Court Support Department is proud to offer the following services to our clients:

- Information, Advocacy, Prep, and Accompaniment for Reporting Sexual Violence to Authorities in any rural or urban area in and around the Greater Edmonton Area. This includes our new Supported Reporting Protocol with the Strathcona County RCMP.
- Information, Advocacy, Prep, and Accompaniment for Court Dates Related to Sexual Violence in any rural or urban Courthouse in and around the Greater Edmonton Area.
- Regular check-ins and follow-ups with clients throughout the entire Police and Court process for the purposes of updating case files and offering emotional support.
- Connecting clients to any relevant services in order to help them feel best supported through the process.
- Helping clients to understand and file paperwork related to their case, including Victim Impact Statements, Restitution Requests, and Emergency Benefit Requests.
- Working with clients to create an exit strategy from the Police and Court Program once their file is completed.

Over the 2021 year, we will be working on offering a variety of new services, including Third-Party Reporting at the SAFFRON Centre. For more information on what this means, please see our Saffron Podcast on various platforms. We have episodes by our Program Director dedicated to providing information on these topics.

