
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.



TERMINOLOGY



The Specialized Police and Court Support Team falls under the Justice, Research and Outreach Department of the SAFFRON Centre. 'Advocate' is a term used throughout this document to describe SAFFRON's Justice, Research and Outreach Workers and Volunteers.

**WHAT CAN I
EXPECT DURING
THE INTAKE
PROCESS?**

Once your file is referred into the SPCS Program, you will be sent a series of documents. This includes a consent form, intake form, and this Guide. You are required to read and sign all documents and send them back to the SPCS Team before we will contact you about your file.

Once your documents are submitted, you can expect a phone call from an Advocate within 7 business days.



**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 KIND OF RELATIONSHIP WILL I HAVE WITH MY ADVOCATE?

Advocacy is different than talking to a friend or family member. You may be sharing private and important details about your life with your Advocate, 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 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 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 to the department. Advocates are currently only available to clients during business hours, which typically run from 8:30am to 5:00pm, unless we have scheduled an evening prep or accompaniment with you, in which case we will be available.

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 1-866-403-8000.**

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 the SPCS Program with your written or verbal consent, except:

- The SAFFRON SPCS Team meets 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 2021, SAFFRON SPCS uses the Victim Services Client Management Database, a secure program designed for Victim Service Units and used widely across Alberta.
- Only Saffron staff and designated volunteers have access to client information. Older paper files are locked in filing cabinets.
- All SPCS team members 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 14 and over for advocacy and accompaniment services. In the event that we receive a referral for anyone under the age of 18, we may speak with parents/legal guardians and the child/youth 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 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.

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 Justice, Research & Outreach. 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.

REPORTING OPTIONS: SATELLITE REPORTING

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, adult 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

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.
- 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.