



Commitment to Care

An Overview

Welcome to the OVS' Spring 2025 Newsletter! Since the start of the year, OVS has grown significantly with so many positive changes. Our dedicated crisis-trained staff and volunteers have continued to expand programs and adapt services to meet the needs of survivors in our community who rely on our support. We are very happy to be progressing and strengthening the capacity of our team to serve Ottawa's diverse communities with compassion and care.



"I just wanted to give a big shout out to the 2 volunteers who were there for the client and stayed to support and help prepare a victim impact statement. Their presence was valued by me and the client. They definitely made a difference with the compassion, kindness and support they provided."

– FROM AN OVS CLIENT





A Message from the Executive Director



Everything we do at OVS is centered around the wellbeing of survivors, including every initiative we have and all the hours our staff and volunteers contribute. We have one goal which is to make sure that everyone impacted by violence, loss, or trauma in

Ottawa feels supported and safe.

Since the start of 2025, OVS has continued to attend important events and engage in conversations which inform best practices in victim support and community safety across the region. I was proud to have presented at the **Building Bridges and Preventing Hate Learning Series**, hosted by United Way Eastern Ontario and the City of Ottawa to launch the Ottawa Stops Hate Together campaign on the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. We shared about our new online hate crime reporting tool. OVS also participated in the **National Office for Victims Roundtable** on issues in federal corrections and parole in March, as well as attending the **National Forum on**

Combatting Antisemitism. We also welcomed a new addition of **16 crisis-trained volunteers** during our January training.

These, along with our ongoing staff and volunteer-driven crisis response and outreach, are made possible through the trust of survivors and the generosity of our community. If you are able, we invite you to consider making a one-time or monthly donation as an OVS Changemaker. Your support helps us stay available 24/7 for survivors in our community impacted by crime and tragedy. Every dollar donated goes towards continuing and expanding on our programs and services.

On behalf of the entire team at OVS, we thank you for your continued support!

Warm regards,

Heidi Illingworth, OVS Executive Director



Volunteer with OVS

Volunteering with OVS makes a huge impact for survivors when they need it most. Our crisis-trained volunteers are at the heart of our organization, providing essential support 24/7 to individuals navigating trauma and crisis. In this issue, we are spotlighting two of our dedicated volunteers, Raian and Sylvie, who share why they volunteer with OVS and what the organization means to them.



Volunteer Spotlight

Sylvie's Story in Her Own Words

"With a professional background as a former Military Police officer and a volunteer with the Ottawa Distress Centre,

after retiring, I felt a strong desire to continue serving my community in a meaningful way. Ottawa Victim Services has allowed me to do just that. I have spent the past eight years providing assistance to the organization by offering compassionate support to victims and survivors of crime and tragedy.

My experiences have taught me the importance of empathy, active listening, and resilience. In my personal time, I enjoy long-distance hiking while backpacking in Europe and have walked over 7,500 kms to date—an experience that continues to deepen my appreciation for personal growth and human connection."

Did you know that Sylvie is also our Bingo Volunteer of the Year?

As soon as we started our Bingo Charity initiative, Sylvie was on right board to help any which way she can. Eliciting the support of her very supportive partner Kevin, Sylvie and Kevin have consistently taken on shifts to cover Bingo (sometimes twice a month) – which supports our volunteer program immensely with supporting our community members. So Thank you to Sylvie and Kevin for your never-ending support of our initiatives and work here at OVS!

Interested in becoming a crisis-trained volunteer with OVS? Learn more and apply at www.ovs-svo.com/volunteer/

Volunteer of the Year: Meet Raian!

Raian has shown an outstanding eagerness to support clients at OVS during their most difficult moments. Always responsive to volunteer requests for supports Raian will always try to find a way to make it work. Raian has attended court numerous times providing emotional support to clients but also assisting with Arabic interpretation during the process. Raian exhibits the commitment to her role as a Victim Support Worker that we value so much making this award so fitting for her. Thank you Raian for all that you do to support the members of our community!





Organizational Updates

Since the beginning of the year, we have continued to strengthen our capacity to support survivors and engage our community in prevention work and safe intervention.

In response to the City of Ottawa and Ottawa Police Service's declaration of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) as an epidemic, we launched our new campaign: **See It, Name It, Change It**, generously funded by the City of Ottawa. This campaign has been thoughtfully adapted and urbanized from Lanark County Interval House's rural-based campaign of the same name. The campaign focuses on IPV prevention and early intervention by educating the public and survivors on how to recognize warning signs and respond safely. These resources include tailored tip sheets for individuals, community members, and teachers, especially to support youth who are exposed to or directly impacted by IPV. As part of this campaign, **OVS has launched an ad campaign** currently running across OC Transpo which has helped make this message visible throughout Ottawa.

In January, we also launched an **Online Hate Crime Reporting Tool**, generously funded by the Ontario government through their Anti-Racism Anti-Hate (ARAH) program. This tool allows hate crime victims and witnesses to document incidents of hate without requiring a police report. Eligible clients may receive emotional support and financial assistance such as counselling, home security items, or assistance with graffiti removal. The tool is available in English, French, and Arabic (the 3 most spoken languages in Ottawa) and is part of our commitment to safer and more inclusive communities.

We are incredibly grateful and send our heartfelt thanks to the City of Ottawa for their **generous donation of 1,500 9-1-1 cellphones to OVS**. These can serve as lifelines for survivors of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), human trafficking, sexual violence and Gender-Based Violence (GBV), ensuring they can call for help in dangerous and unsafe situations. We also reiterate that IPV has been declared an epidemic in Ottawa, and having these phones to provide survivors with is particularly timely. This initiative is an important step toward making our city safer for women and other marginalized groups and ensuring that no one feels alone in their path towards safety and justice.

We are also very grateful for **our ongoing partnership with the Overbrook Bingo Palace** as an official charitable gaming partner which helps sustain and grow our volunteer program, funding us with over \$1,500 per month to support our crisis-trained volunteer team.

Lastly, On May 14th, OVS held a **volunteer appreciation dinner** in honour of National Victims and Survivors of Crime Week. The evening brought together our volunteers, board members, and staff to honour the strength and commitment that volunteers show every single hour of every day. It was such a great night where we acknowledged the significant role our volunteers play in supporting survivors 24/7 and to celebrate the collective impact of our team. We thank the Department of Justice Canada for funding this event and Boston Pizza Orleans for sponsoring this event!



Support OVS: Opportunities for Giving

Did you know that 100% of your donation goes to OVS directly toward supporting survivors in our community? Because our donor platform, Zeffy, relies only on optional contributions from donors, every dollar you donate to OVS will go directly to supporting survivors as they navigate the aftermath of crime and tragic circumstances, without any deductions. You can choose to give a one-time gift or become an OVS Changemaker through joining our new monthly giving program below. Your contributions help us fund crisis intervention, advocacy, new programs, and essential resources for those facing difficulty. Make a donation today at www.ovs-svo.com/give-today!



Donor Spotlight

"I am a proud monthly donor to Ottawa Victim Services (OVS). When tragedy happens to victims of crime in Ottawa, OVS is there for them...listening, supporting, advocating. Because violence is preventable, OVS helps with safety plans for survivors and works hard to get policies that stop the victimization before it happens. Because so much more is needed to bring Ottawa up to minimum rights for victims, OVS shares what can be learnt internationally. OVS deserves so much more support – every dollar counts".

– IRVIN

Become an OVS Changemaker by Giving Monthly

Become an OVS Changemaker and select a tier of your choice to contribute year-round as an OVS Changemaker.

Supporter

\$20/month

Covers mileage to dispatch our 24/7 crisis support volunteers.

Advocate

\$130/month

Provides survivors with safety devices, lock changes, or onboarding 15 new volunteers every quarter.

Ambassador

\$50/month

Covers volunteer expenses such as parking, meal vouchers, or 2 Uber rides to safety for survivors.

Ally

Custom Amount

A custom amount can help provide groceries and basic needs for survivors after fleeing violence.

Program and Services

Our core services such as crisis intervention, safety planning, and advocacy remain at the heart of what we do, with our dedicated team working hard to ensure that no one facing hardship is left without support. OVS remains dedicated to creating a safer and more supportive environment for everyone. Keep an eye on our social media platforms for more updates!

Looking Ahead at OVS

At the end of May, OVS became part of the province-wide Ask for Angela campaign, an initiative and code word designed to provide discreet and immediate support to survivors feeling unsafe from issues such as intimate partner violence (IPV), stalking, or human trafficking.

The goal of this initiative is that anyone experiencing abuse or violence can walk into a Loblaw Companies Limited Banners (Loblaws, Joe Fresh, Real Canadian Superstore, Real Canadian Wholesale Club, Shoppers Drug Mart, No Frills, Valu-Mart, Your Independent Grocers, and Fortinos) and “Ask for Angela”. All store staff have been trained on how to respond and will take survivors to a private space to allow them to contact OVS for support. We are grateful to be providing a safe space and connection to resources through this collaborative initiative and hope to provide survivors with the support they need to heal.





Our mission

To support survivors of crime or tragedy. To provide the resources, guidance, help and referrals for survivors to get back to living their lives. To help people protect themselves and stand up for their rights.

Our vision

We aim to create a stronger, safer, and kinder community for all.

Our values

COMMUNITY DRIVEN

We know that strength lies in teamwork, and that supporting our community means working as a community. OVS is part of a network of local services and organizations that work together to support our Ottawa community.

COMPASSION

We do what we do because we care. Our team builds relationships with people and partners based on respect, trust, and openness. We listen carefully, guide gently, and never judge. We aim to create a welcoming space where everyone is heard and helped.

INCLUSIVENESS

Our services are freely available to people of every:
Race • Ethnicity • Religion or belief • Sex • Gender • Sexual orientation • Age • Disability • Marriage & civil partnership • Pregnancy and maternity
We work hard to understand and consider the different cultural backgrounds of the people we serve. We prioritize equity, diversity, and inclusion in the way we work, from how we deliver our services to how we hire people.

FREEDOM OF CHOICE

We're here to help you, not control or judge you. We'll listen to what you're struggling with and what you need.

We'll help you understand your options. Finally, we'll support you with what you choose to do. We are here to help, not control or judge our clients. We listen to their needs and struggles. We help them understand their options. Finally, we support our clients with what they choose to do.

We value independence and privacy. We work in partnership with the police, but we are not the police.