

OTTAWA VICTIM SERVICES (OVS)

A Season of Access and Community: Reflecting on Winter 2026

Friday, April 24th, 2026

An Overview

As we head into spring and reflect on the winter months, Ottawa Victim Services (OVS) continued to expand access to support, strengthen prevention initiatives, provide ongoing assistance, and deepen collaboration across systems responding to violence and victimization.

This season has been focused on reducing barriers to support, advancing early intervention, and ensuring services are accessible, inclusive, evidence-based, and responsive to the diverse communities we serve. OVS continues to evolve while maintaining our 24/7 commitment to survivors of crime and tragic circumstances through ongoing partnerships and expansion.

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“A heartfelt thanks for taking the time to write a letter of support for my crisis move application. I got a call from my tenant support that it has been approved! Your work has made a direct impact on my quality of life, and I have hope there will be better days ahead. And warmer weather! All the best”. – From an OVS Client–



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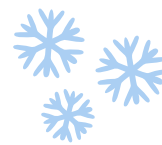


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A Message from the Executive Director



At OVS, our work continues to support individuals and families during some of the most difficult moments of their lives. The past winter was such a significant period of growth as we focused on expanding access to support, strengthening prevention efforts, building partnerships, and deepening collaboration across our community.

One of the most important developments this season has been the expansion of our Online Hate Crime Reporting Tool, now available in seven languages and adapted using simplified and plain language to better serve individuals across Ottawa. This work reflects our ongoing commitment to reducing barriers and ensuring that more people can access confidential and trauma-informed support when they need it.

We have also continued to strengthen our “See It, Name It, Change It” initiative by working to integrate education on Red Flag Laws. This work has involved ongoing collaboration with community partners and stakeholders to ensure that the information we provide is evidence-based, accessible, and aligned with legal frameworks, while remaining centred on the needs and experiences of survivors.

Additionally, we were honoured to receive a generous donation of 800 cell phones from the City of Ottawa’s Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Indigenous Relations team. Through our partnerships, including with the Ottawa Police Service Victim Support Unit, these phones are helping to ensure that survivors have access to a safe and reliable means of communication during times of risk.

I also had the opportunity to meet with Ottawa Mayor Mark Sutcliffe to discuss the work of OVS and the ways we continue to support victims and survivors across our community. During this meeting, we highlighted the City of Ottawa’s support in expanding our Online Hate Crime Reporting Tool to include additional languages, helping ensure that more community members can safely and confidentially report incidents and access support. We also shared our appreciation for the City’s donation of 800 cell phones to support survivors of gender-based violence. We are grateful for this conversation and for the City’s continued partnership in strengthening supports for victims in Ottawa.

We were also pleased to welcome The Honourable Michael Parsa, Ontario’s Minister of Children, Community and Social Services, to OVS this winter to discuss the importance of community-based, trauma-informed supports for survivors of violence and crime. The visit provided an opportunity to share more about the work of OVS and the ongoing need for accessible services and prevention initiatives across Ottawa.



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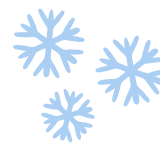


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A Message from the Executive Director



This winter also marked an important investment in our volunteer program, with over 15 new crisis-trained volunteers completing training and joining OVS. These individuals play such a big role in delivering compassionate, 24/7 support to survivors across Ottawa, and we are incredibly grateful for their commitment.

This season has also been a reminder of the strength of our partnerships and the importance of collective action in addressing violence and supporting those impacted by it. I remain deeply grateful to our staff, volunteers, board members, partners, and supporters for the care, compassion, and commitment you bring to this work every day.

We continue to remind survivors that they are not alone by building pathways to safety, healing, advocacy and support. We could not do this without you!

With much appreciation,



Heidi Illingworth
Executive Director
Ottawa Victim Services (OVS)

*Thanks For
Your Support*



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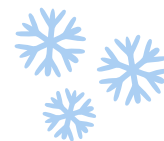


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Volunteering at OVS to Support Survivors



You can make a meaningful and lasting impact for survivors when they need it most by volunteering with OVS. Our crisis-trained volunteers are at the heart of our organization, providing compassionate, trauma-informed support 24/7 to individuals navigating the immediate and ongoing impacts of crime or tragic circumstances. Volunteers play a key role in ensuring that no one has to face these experiences alone, no matter if they offer emotional support, assist with safety planning, or help individuals access resources. Volunteers also contribute in other important ways, including supporting our partnership with Overbrook Bingo Palace, where their time and dedication help generate essential funding that sustains our services and programs.



I have been a volunteer with Ottawa Victim Services for almost five years now. This experience has helped me not only be in touch with people in the community but all the wonderful community partners that help victims every day. I have learned so much through a multitude of training that OVS has provided.

Whether it is providing basic needs to someone being sheltered to Court accompaniment, every experience with a client provides an opportunity to help someone who really needs compassionate and practical support.

The staff at OVS are such dedicated individuals who work very hard to provide excellent services. They are also very supportive of their volunteers. If you enjoy helping others, supporting victims of violence or a crime, this volunteer work is for you! - From an OVS Volunteer



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



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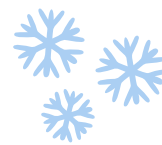


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Winter Highlights



Expanding Access: Online Hate Crime Reporting Tool

This winter, OVS announced the expansion of our [Online Hate Crime Reporting Tool](#) to better serve communities across Ottawa.

With funding support from the City of Ottawa, the tool is now available in seven languages: **English**, **French**, **Arabic**, **Mandarin**, **Somali**, **Spanish**, and **Farsi**. In addition to language expansion, content has been revised using simplified, plain language to ensure it is more accessible and easier to navigate for individuals seeking support.

This expansion is a significant step in addressing barriers faced by individuals who may not feel comfortable reporting through traditional systems, ensuring that more people can access confidential and trauma-informed support when experiencing hate incidents or crimes. Through this tool, OVS also assesses for elements of hate and risk, and individuals may be eligible for additional supports, including emotional support and financial assistance for needs such as graffiti removal, home security items, and counselling. This approach helps ensure that those impacted are not only able to report safely, but are also connected to supports in response to their experiences.



Strengthening Prevention: Expanding “See It, Name It, Change It”

OVS continues to expand the “[See It, Name It, Change It](#)” (SINICI) initiative, with new work underway to integrate Red Flag Laws into the campaign.

Throughout the winter, OVS engaged with project partners at Lanark County Interval House & Community Support and the Victimology Research Centre at Algonquin College, along with key stakeholders, community partners, and system leaders to ensure that this expansion is evidence-based, survivor-centred, accurate, and aligned with legal and institutional frameworks.

Red Flag Laws are one pathway which provide a legal means for individuals to take action when there are warning signs that someone may pose a risk to themselves or others. This work strengthens early intervention efforts and supports communities in recognizing and responding to risk in a safe and informed way. This expansion remains ongoing, with continued collaboration to ensure resources are accurate, accessible, survivor-focused, and supported by best practices.



Public Safety
Canada



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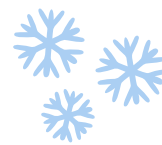


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Winter Highlights



Welcoming Provincial Leaders to Discuss Survivor Support

This winter, OVS was honoured to welcome the Honourable Michael Parsa, Minister for MCCS, for a visit to our office to discuss OVS' important work to support survivors of violence, crime, and tragic circumstances across Ottawa. The visit provided an opportunity to share more about OVS programs and services, including the ways we continue working to strengthen prevention, intervention, responses, and survivor support initiatives within the community.

The meeting also highlighted the importance of collaboration between community organizations, government partners, and systems leaders in addressing gender-based violence and improving access to support for survivors. OVS was grateful for the opportunity to engage in great conversations about the evolving needs of survivors and the continued importance of trauma-informed and community-based services.



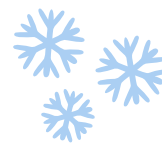
Holiday Breakfast Bringing Together The Entire OVS Team

This winter, OVS was pleased to host a holiday breakfast bringing together staff, volunteers, and board members to connect and celebrate the collective efforts that continue to strengthen support for survivors across Ottawa. The gathering provided an opportunity to recognize the compassion, dedication, hard work, and collaboration that make the work of OVS possible each day.

We remain deeply grateful to our volunteers, staff, and board members for the care, time, initiative, and leadership they continue to bring to OVS and the community we serve.



Winter Highlights



Continuing Trauma-Informed Support Through Our Walk-In Counselling Clinic

Following its launch in Summer 2025, our monthly [Walk-In Counselling Clinic](#) continued throughout Winter 2026, providing survivors with timely and accessible mental health support from a Registered Social Worker on the OVS team. Six sessions continue to be offered on the first Wednesday of every month, on a first-come, first-served basis, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., allowing survivors to access counselling without the need for appointments or lengthy waitlists. Sessions are held at the OVS office and use trauma-informed and evidence-based interventions. To further expand accessibility and respond to identified community needs, survivors can now also book virtual counselling sessions outside of the in-person clinic hours, helping increase flexibility and access to support for individuals who may face barriers attending in person.

Since its launch, the clinic has helped more than 50 survivors connect quickly with professional support while providing a safe and compassionate space to process difficult experiences, receive validation, engage in safety planning, and access referrals to additional services where needed. The continuation of this program throughout the winter has continued to highlight the importance of low-barrier and same-day access to care, particularly for individuals navigating crisis, violence, trauma, or danger. As part of this ongoing work, OVS also looks forward to eventually establishing a partnership with Jewish Family Service Ottawa to help further strengthen referral pathways and expand access to culturally responsive support for survivors across the community.

We remain deeply grateful to the Ottawa Community Foundation for funding this important initiative, which represents a significant step toward reducing barriers to care and ensuring survivors in our community are met with timely and compassionate support.



OTTAWA
COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION

invested for good



OTTAWA
JEWISH FAMILY SERVICES

A Donation of 800 Cell Phones

This winter, OVS was honoured to receive a donation of 800 cell phones from the City of Ottawa's Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Indigenous Relations team to support survivors of gender-based violence. Through partnerships including the Ottawa Police Service Victim Support Unit, these phones are helping ensure survivors have access to a safe and reliable means of communication during times of risk and crisis.

OVS also had the opportunity to meet with Ottawa Mayor Mark Sutcliffe to discuss the work being done to support victims and survivors across Ottawa. During this conversation, we highlighted the City's support in expanding our Online Hate Crime Reporting Tool to include additional languages, as well as the important impact of the cell phone initiative in strengthening safety and access to support for survivors in our community.



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Continuing Our Collaboration with Overbrook Bingo Palace

We are sincerely grateful for the ongoing partnership with Overbrook Bingo Palace and the community members who contribute to our mission at OVS through their involvement in charitable gaming. It is because of this commitment that we can continue to grow and sustain the essential services we provide.

As an official charitable gaming partner, this collaboration provides us with more than \$1,500 each month, funding that directly supports our crisis-trained volunteer program, and this partnership continues to be a significant source of support for OVS. The dedication of our Bingo volunteers who give their time to participate at the Bingo sessions has been so crucial in sustaining our ability to provide 24/7 support to survivors. If you are interested in supporting OVS in a non-crisis volunteer role, including through our charitable gaming partnership, we encourage you to learn more at www.ovs-svo.com/volunteer/



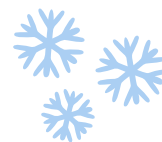
Our Programs & Services

Our [core services](#) such as 24/7 crisis intervention, safety planning, emotional support, advocacy, and referrals, continue to be central to our work. Alongside our prevention initiatives and community partnerships, OVS continues to adapt and grow to meet the evolving needs of individuals and communities impacted by crime and tragedy.

Looking Ahead at OVS

As we move through the winter months and into the spring, OVS remains committed to strengthening prevention efforts, expanding timely and responsive programs, building partnerships, and advocating for survivors and their families. This includes the ongoing development of our See It, Name It, Change It Red Flag Laws expansion initiative, as we continue working closely with partners to ensure it is evidence-based and accessible. We are also continuing our Walk-In Counselling Clinic, providing low-barrier and same-day support to those in need, while building and strengthening important partnerships across the community. Above all, we remain dedicated to supporting survivors with care, dignity, compassion, and cultural humility.

Become a Part of OVS' Story as a Donor



As we look back on the progress and growth of Winter 2026, we understand that this work is only possible because of the generosity of those who support OVS and our mission to stand alongside survivors of crime and tragedy.

Every donation to OVS directly supports programs and services that provide survivors with safety, emotional support, advocacy, stability, and guidance during some of the most difficult moments of their lives. Through our donor platform, Zeffy, 100% of every gift goes directly toward supporting survivors, as the platform relies only on optional donor contributions rather than service fees.

Every contribution, no matter the amount, helps strengthen our ability to respond 24/7 to individuals and families across Ottawa. Donations support essential services such as crisis intervention and safety planning, while also helping OVS continue expanding initiatives including our Walk-In Counselling Clinic, our Online Hate Crime Reporting Tool, and our "See It, Name It, Change It" prevention campaign and Red Flag Laws education initiative.



With the continued support of our community, OVS can continue building safer pathways to healing, prevention, education, and support for survivors across Ottawa.

To make a donation today, visit www.ovs-svo.com/give-today



Become an OVS Changemaker by Giving Monthly

Select a tier of choice to contribute year-round as an [OVS Changemaker!](#)

Supporter	Ambassador	Advocate	Ally
			
\$20/month	\$50/month	\$130/month	Custom Amount
Covers mileage to dispatch our 24/7 crisis support volunteers.	Covers volunteer expenses such as parking, meal vouchers, or 2 Uber rides to safety for survivors.	Provides survivors with safety devices, lock changes, or onboarding 15 new volunteers every quarter.	A custom amount can help provide groceries and basic needs for survivors after fleeing violence.



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.

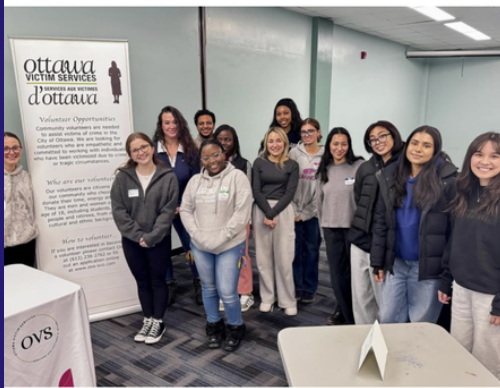
We are here to help, not control or judge our clients. We listen to their needs and struggles. We help them understand their options.

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.



Captured Moments



Thank you

**Stay Tuned for
Upcoming Newsletters!**



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