

OTTAWA VICTIM SERVICES (OVS)

A Season of Growth and Turning Points: Reflecting on Spring 2026

Thursday, August 13th, 2026

An Overview

Spring 2026 was such a significant season of growth at Ottawa Victim Services (OVS). Throughout the season, our team continued strengthening the services, partnerships, programs, and community connections that allow us to respond compassionately and effectively to individuals affected by crime, violence, abuse, and tragic circumstances.

OVS remained focused on ensuring survivors can access timely, inclusive, compassionate and trauma-informed support through activities such as welcoming and training two new groups of volunteers and advancing community-based initiatives addressing intimate partner violence and hate. We were also honoured to participate in important Victims and Survivors of Crime Week events, contribute to conversations about coercive control and homicide, and celebrate the leadership and dedication of our Executive Director, Heidi Illingworth.

This spring was also a reminder that supporting survivors requires collaboration across organizations, sectors, individuals, and communities. We are deeply grateful to our staff, volunteers, board members, partners, funders, donors, and community supporters who continue to make this work possible.

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“Thank you for your kindness, support, and assistance. I am pleased to let you know that today I received the personal safety alarm for my daughter. We truly appreciate this support and the care shown by your organization. I would also like to share that both my daughter and I have started receiving counselling support, which has been very helpful. Your assistance has made a meaningful difference for our family during this time. Thank you again for your compassion and generosity. We are sincerely grateful for all your help”. – From an OVS Client–



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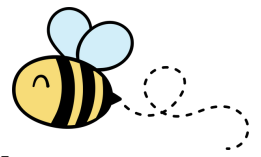


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A Message from the Executive Director



This Spring was definitely a meaningful and active season for OVS. Across our programs, partnerships, event contributions, and community initiatives, we continued strengthening the supports available to victims and survivors of crime, violence, abuse, and tragic circumstances.

I want to begin by recognizing our volunteers and staff, because they are truly what make OVS what it is. This spring, we were so pleased to welcome and train two new groups of crisis-response volunteers, whose compassion and commitment help make support available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Partnership and collaboration remained central to our work. We met with the Children's Aid Society of Ottawa's Intimate Partner Violence Team, participated in regional critical-incident coordination efforts, and joined community events and training focused on honour-based violence, coercive control, hate, homicide support, and trauma-informed responses.

I was grateful to speak at the Victimology Research Centre's event on public understanding of coercive control and to participate in the Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime's Experiencing Victim Services series, where I discussed the supports available to families following homicide.

This season also brought important growth. OVS received funding through Ontario's Civil Remedies Grant Program for the Post Incident Neighbourhood Safety (PINS) project, expanded our Walk-In Counselling service by joining the Walk-In Counselling & Counselling Connect, and continued enhancing our community-based reporting tool for hate-crimes, now available in 7 languages (English, French, Arabic, Farsi, Spanish, Somali, and Mandarin).



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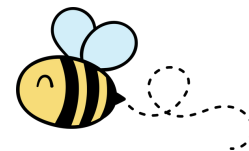


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A Message from the Executive Director



I was also deeply grateful that OVS, alongside WISE Ottawa, was selected as a recipient by 100 Men Who Care Ottawa. I had the opportunity to speak at their fundraising evening about our work and the importance of supporting victims and survivors in our community, and the message truly resonated with them. Their generous collective donation of \$6,000 will help us continue responding to individuals and families during some of the most difficult moments of their lives. We are so thankful for their support!

On a personal note, I was profoundly honoured to receive a 2025–2026 Victim Services Award of Distinction. After more than 25 years of working alongside victims, survivors, volunteers, advocates, colleagues, and community partners, I see this recognition as a demonstration of the collective commitment of everyone working to strengthen victims' rights and compassionate support.

I remain sincerely grateful to our staff, volunteers, board members, partners, funders, donors, and supporters. Every contribution to this work helps us create safer and more accessible pathways to healing, advocacy, prevention, and support, and reminds victims and survivors that they are not alone

With much appreciation,



Heidi Illingworth
Executive Director
Ottawa Victim Services (OVS)

*Thanks For
Your Support*



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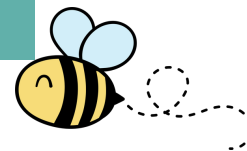


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Spring Highlights



Welcoming and Training Two New Groups of OVS Volunteers

This spring, OVS welcomed and trained two new groups of volunteers who are preparing to support individuals affected by crime and tragic circumstances across Ottawa.

Volunteer training introduces participants to trauma-informed communication, emotional support, crisis response, practical assistance, safety planning, referral pathways, confidentiality, boundaries, cultural humility, and the different experiences victims and survivors may encounter.

Our volunteers bring their own experiences, perspectives, languages, and strengths to OVS. We are incredibly grateful to each new volunteer for choosing to stand alongside survivors and contribute to a safer and more supportive Ottawa.

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



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Spring Highlights



An Evening with 100 Men Who Care Ottawa and WISE Ottawa

OVS had the opportunity to join 100 Men Who Care Ottawa alongside our partner organization, WISE Ottawa, for an evening dedicated to community impact and supporting survivors across Ottawa.

The event created an opportunity to speak about the realities faced by individuals affected by crime, violence, abuse, and tragic circumstances, as well as the role community-based victim services play in helping people navigate the immediate and long-term effects of victimization.

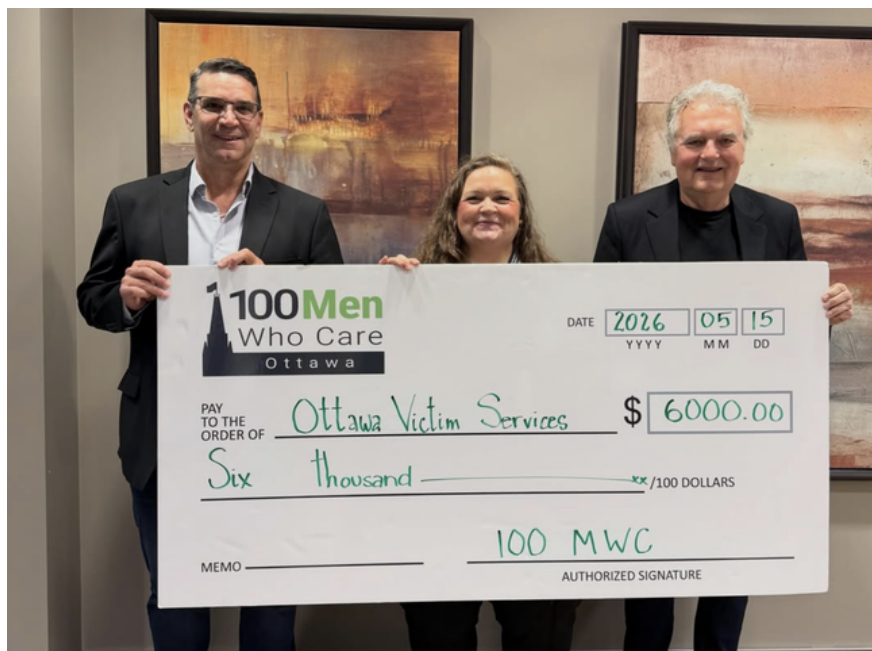
We were grateful to share this space with WISE Ottawa and connect with community members who understand that timely, compassionate, trauma-informed, and practical support can make an important difference in a survivor's life.

A Generous \$6,000 Donation from 100 Men Who Care Ottawa

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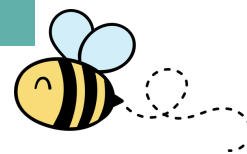


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Spring Highlights



Supporting Staff Wellness with Dr. Raja Abdel-Majid

In April, members of the OVS team participated in team building art activities facilitated by Dr. Raja Abdel-Majid.

Victim services professionals regularly support individuals experiencing trauma, grief, danger, loss, and crisis. While this work is significant and meaningful, it can also be emotionally overwhelming. Team wellness and self-care through creative activities provide an opportunity for staff to reconnect and strengthen their ability to remain present in their work.

We are grateful to Dr. Abdel-Majid for creating a supportive and fun space!



Strengthening Collaboration with the Children's Aid Society of Ottawa

In May, OVS met with partners from the Children's Aid Society of Ottawa's Intimate Partner Violence Team to discuss shared areas of work and strengthen coordination for children and families affected by intimate partner violence.

Families experiencing intimate partner violence may interact with multiple services at the same time. Survivors may be navigating concerns involving safety, housing, child welfare, legal systems, finances, counselling, and access to community resources. Clear communication and coordinated referral pathways can help reduce confusion and prevent survivors from having to repeatedly explain difficult experiences.

We appreciated the opportunity to learn more about the team's work and discuss how our organizations can continue working collectively to support families through trauma-informed and survivor-centred responses.



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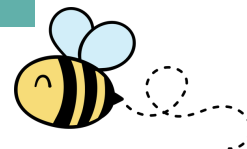


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Spring Highlights



Victims and Survivors of Crime Week

Understanding Honour-Based Violence

During Victims and Survivors of Crime Week, members of the OVS team attended the Understanding Honour-Based Violence training hosted by Victim Services Lanark County.

The training was led by Aruna Papp, a nationally and internationally recognized educator, author, human rights advocate, and survivor.

Honour-based violence may involve abuse, threats, coercion, surveillance, forced marriage, isolation, or violence intended to control a person whose behaviour is perceived as bringing shame or dishonour to a family or community. Victims may experience significant barriers to seeking help, including fear of retaliation, family or community pressure, financial dependence, isolation, immigration concerns, and mistrust of institutions.

The training supported participants in developing a more informed understanding of these dynamics while emphasizing the importance of culturally responsive approaches that prioritize safety, dignity, and the individual choices of survivors.

We thank Victim Services Lanark County and Aruna Papp for facilitating this important learning opportunity.

Public Understanding of Coercive Control

OVS Executive Director Heidi Illingworth spoke at the Victimology Research Centre's virtual event, Public Understanding of Coercive Control, during Victims and Survivors of Crime Week.

Heidi joined representatives from the Victimology Research Centre and the Eastern Ottawa Resource Centre for an important panel discussion examining coercive control, its impact on victims and survivors, and the role of collaboration in strengthening community responses.

Coercive control is usually a pattern rather than a single incident, which can include isolation, intimidation, monitoring, threats, manipulation, financial control, humiliation, restriction of movement, interference with employment or education, and control over relationships or access to services.

These behaviours can gradually reduce a person's independence and create an environment of fear and dependence. Because coercive control may not always involve visible injuries, increasing public and professional understanding is essential to recognizing risk and responding appropriately.

We were grateful to contribute to this important discussion and to stand alongside organizations committed to strengthening responses to intimate partner violence.

Watch the recording of this event [here](#).



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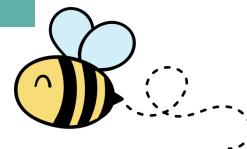


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Victims and Survivors of Crime Week

National Capital Region Critical Incident Response and Coordination of Victim Assistance Group

The gathering brought together police officers and leadership, victim service providers, City and hospital partners committed to improving coordinated and trauma-informed responses for victims and survivors following mass violence and critical incidents.

Serious incidents can affect large groups of individuals, families, witnesses, first responders, neighbourhoods, schools, workplaces, and even entire communities. Needs may include immediate emotional support, crisis intervention, information, safety planning, grief support, practical assistance, referrals, and longer-term follow-up.

Coordinated responses help ensure that organizations understand their roles, are prepared to actionize plans quickly, communicate effectively, reduce duplication, identify service gaps, and connect affected individuals with appropriate support as quickly as possible.

OVS was grateful to participate in this important conversation and continue strengthening relationships with partners across the National Capital Region.

Experiencing Victim Services: Navigating Support Following Homicide

OVS Executive Director Heidi Illingworth participated in the Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime's Experiencing Victim Services series.

In the [video](#), Heidi discusses navigating victim service systems following homicide, including crisis intervention, referrals, information about victims' rights, and information about available financial assistance.

As Heidi explains:

"Homicide is a lifelong impact on the survivors who are left behind."

The effects of homicide extend far beyond the immediate aftermath. Surviving family members and loved ones may experience traumatic grief, changes to family roles, financial pressures, criminal justice proceedings, media attention, safety concerns, and the ongoing emotional impact of a violent loss.

Victim services can help survivors better understand their options, access information, navigate systems, connect with counselling or community resources, and receive compassionate support throughout different stages of their experience.



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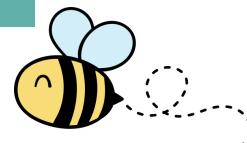


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OVS receives funding from Ontario's Civil Remedies Grant Program

OVS is thrilled to receive funding for two years to implement our Post Incident Neighbourhood Safety Project, also known as PINS. In June, we attended an announcement by provincial officials including:

- MPP George Darouze
- Attorney General Doug Downey
- Ottawa Police Service Chief Eric Stubbs
- Elyse Shipper, Executive Director of Family Services Ottawa
- Rebecca Fromowitz, Associate Executive Director of Family Services Ottawa

The project will strengthen community-based prevention, awareness, education, and support related to intimate partner violence and other forms of violence. It will include public education, resident engagement, a community advisory process, and microgrants for locally led community events.

The goal is to help neighbours, families, and community members:

- Better recognize warning signs of violence
- Understand available community supports
- Respond safely when they are concerned about someone
- Know how and where to seek help
- Build stronger connections within their neighbourhoods
- Participate in locally relevant prevention and education activities

The project recognizes that communities can play an important role in prevention when residents are provided with accurate information, practical tools, trusted referral pathways, and opportunities to become involved.

We are deeply grateful to the Ministry of the Attorney General for supporting this initiative and investing in safer, more informed, and more connected communities across Ottawa.



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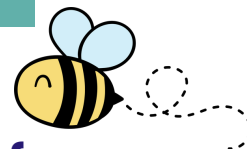


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Spring Highlights



OVS Executive Director Receives Victim Services Award of Distinction

We are thrilled to announce our Executive Director Heidi Illingworth was one of the recipients of the 2025–2026 Victim Services Awards of Distinction and was honoured to receive the award this spring. Heidi has dedicated more than 25 years to frontline victim services, victims' rights, public education, and anti-violence work.

Her leadership and experience have included serving as:

- Canada's Federal Ombudsperson for Victims of Crime
- Executive Director of the Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime
- An educator in Algonquin College's postgraduate Victimology program
- Executive Director of Ottawa Victim Services

Throughout her career, Heidi has worked to improve awareness of victims' rights, strengthen services, advocate for systemic change, and ensure survivors are treated with dignity and compassion. At OVS, her leadership continues to support the development of community-based services, prevention initiatives, collaborative partnerships, volunteer engagement, and accessible support for individuals and families affected by crime and tragic circumstances.

We are incredibly proud to celebrate Heidi and this well-deserved recognition of her longstanding contribution to victims, survivors, frontline workers, and the victim services field!



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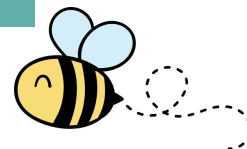
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Spring Highlights

Together Against Hate Ottawa



OVS and our Victim Support Unit teammates were proud to participate in the Together Against Hate Ottawa forum, led by the Ottawa Police Service.

The forum brought together community organizations, institutional partners, advocates, and leaders to share knowledge and reaffirm a collective commitment to confronting hate and creating safer and more inclusive communities across Ottawa.

Hate incidents and hate-motivated crimes can have serious and long term effects on individuals, families, and entire communities. These experiences may contribute to fear, isolation, trauma, reduced feelings of safety, and mistrust of institutions.

Community forums create opportunities to strengthen relationships, improve reporting and referral pathways, identify barriers, and ensure that those affected by hate know where they can access support. OVS was grateful to participate alongside our partners and continue contributing to collaborative responses that centre the needs and experiences of affected communities.

Ottawa Stops Hate Together Community Engagement Forum

OVS was pleased to participate in the Ottawa Stops Hate Together Community Engagement Forum, led by the City of Ottawa.

We appreciated hearing from Councillor Ariel Troster and Chinatown walking tour guide and artist Don Kwan, who spoke about the importance of addressing hate and strengthening community responses across Ottawa.

The forum provided a valuable space for community members and organizations to discuss the impact of hate, share experiences, and identify opportunities for collective action.

OVS was also pleased to see information about the [OVS Hate Crime Reporting Tool](#) displayed through business cards available in seven languages:

- English
- French
- Arabic
- Farsi
- Mandarin
- Somali
- Spanish



The expansion of the tool was funded by the City of Ottawa and helps make confidential reporting and access to support more accessible to diverse communities.

Individuals can use the tool to document an incident, request follow-up support, and learn about available assistance. Making information available in multiple languages is a very important step toward reducing barriers and ensuring more people can safely access support following hate incidents or crimes.



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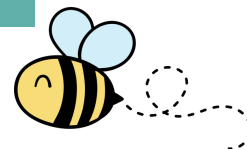


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Spring Highlights



Expanding Access to Walk-In Counselling

OVS' Walk-In Counselling Clinic started off in Summer 2025 as a monthly service. During Spring 2026, OVS expanded its Walk-In Counselling service to a weekly model, helping improve access to timely and low-barrier mental health support.

Through a partnership with Somerset West Community Health Centre, the Walk-In Counselling Clinic, and Counselling Connect, Kody Moore, MSW, RSW, is now available every Tuesday from 12:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. at Somerset West Community Health Centre, located at 55 Eccles Street in Ottawa. Appointments are available both in person and online.

The service focuses particularly on supporting individuals affected by gender-based violence, while remaining available to people impacted by other forms of crime, violence, trauma, hate crimes, or abuse. Walk-in counselling provides timely access to support without requiring a lengthy wait, referral, or commitment to ongoing mental health supports. Depending on each person's needs, sessions may include emotional support, grounding, validation, safety planning, short-term counselling, practical information, and referrals to additional community services.

The transition to a weekly model strengthens access to counselling that is compassionate, inclusive, accessible, and trauma-informed. It also provides individuals with more opportunities to connect with support at a time, location, and format that may be easier for them to access.

Location

Somerset West Community Health Centre
55 Eccles Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1R 6S3

Schedule

- Every Tuesday
- 12:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.
- In-person and online appointments available
- More information is available at:
• <https://ovs-svo.com/ovs-walk-in-counselling-clinic-is-moving-to-a-weekly-model/>



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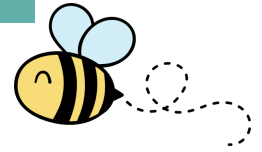
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Spring Highlights

OVS Team Walk at Chapman Mills Conservation Area



The OVS team took time this spring to connect outside the office with a team walk at Chapman Mills Conservation Area.

The outing provided an opportunity to enjoy the outdoors, spend time together, share OVS experiences, and recharge after such intensive crisis and victim services work. Some team members even went for a swim in the river.

Team connection and wellness are important parts of sustaining a compassionate and supportive workplace.



Looking Ahead at OVS

As continue into summer, OVS remains committed to strengthening prevention, expanding access to counselling and crisis support, investing in our volunteers, and continuing partnerships across Ottawa. We look forward to expanding the “[See It, Name It, Change It](#)” campaign to include education and resources about Canada’s Red Flag Laws in relation to intimate partner violence. This project was developed in partnership with Lanark County Interval House and the Victimology Research Centre at Algonquin College. The new resources provide clear, accessible guidance on the legal options available when there are concerns that someone may pose a risk to themselves or others involving firearms. They explain how to apply for an emergency prohibition order, the differences between the available legal pathways, and what individuals may expect throughout the process. The expansion also includes practical tip sheets and information developed for people who may be at risk of suicide, concerned loved ones, survivors of violence, service providers, and other community members seeking guidance on how to recognize risk and respond safely.



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Charitable Gaming & OVS



As an official charitable gaming partner, OVS receives funds which directly support our crisis-trained volunteer program and help sustain our ability to provide services 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We are especially grateful to our charitable gaming volunteers, whose time and dedication make this partnership possible. We are so grateful to the Overbrook Bingo Palace for their continued support.

Those interested in supporting OVS in a non-crisis volunteer role, including through charitable gaming at Overbrook Bingo Palace, can learn more at: www.ovs-svo.com/volunteer/



Our Programs & Services

OVS provides [community-based support](#) to individuals affected by crime, violence, abuse, and tragic circumstances.

Our core programs and services include:

- 24 hour crisis intervention, 7 days a week, including on holidays
- Emotional support
- Practical assistance
- Safety planning
- Advocacy
- Information about victims' rights
- Referrals to community and government services
- Support following intimate partner violence and gender-based violence
- Support following homicide and sudden or traumatic death
- Assistance following hate incidents and hate-motivated crimes
- Access to financial assistance programs where eligibility requirements are met
- Walk-in counselling provided by a Registered Social Worker
- Community education and prevention initiatives
- Volunteer-delivered crisis support
- Collaboration with police, hospitals, community organizations, shelters, social services, and other partners

OVS continues to adapt and expand its programs in response to the evolving needs of individuals and communities across Ottawa.



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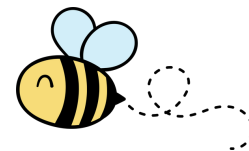


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Become a Part of OVS' Story as a Donor



Throughout Spring 2026, OVS continued supporting individuals and families affected by crime, violence, trauma, and tragedy. We are committed to serving survivors with compassion, dignity, cultural humility, and respect for their choices. This work is strengthened by the generosity of community members who believe in our mission and help ensure survivors can access compassionate support when they need it most.

Donations help OVS provide safety planning, crisis intervention, emotional support, advocacy, practical guidance, and connection to resources during some of the most difficult moments in a person's life. They also help sustain and grow important initiatives, including our Walk-In Counselling service, Online Hate Crime Reporting Tool, "See It, Name It, Change It" prevention campaign, and Red Flag Laws education initiative.

OVS is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and every contribution helps us continue building safer and more accessible pathways to support, healing, education, and prevention across Ottawa. Through our donation platform, Zeffy, 100% of each gift is directed to OVS, as Zeffy does not charge service fees and is supported through optional donor contributions.

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



\$20/month

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

Ambassador



\$50/month

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

Advocate



\$130/month

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

Ally



Custom Amount

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



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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.

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.

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.



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 *Thank you* 

**Stay Tuned for
Upcoming Newsletters!**