




HAMILTON POLICE SERVICE

INFORMATION REPORT

TO:	Chair and Members Hamilton Police Services Board
BOARD MEETING DATE:	April 28, 2022
SUBJECT:	2021 Year End Report – Victim Services Branch
REPORT NUMBER:	22-042
SUBMITTED BY:	Frank Bergen, Chief of Police
SIGNATURE:	

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Report and appendix for the 2021 Victim Services Branch Annual Report.

INFORMATION

The Hamilton Police Victim Services Branch was established in 1992. There are five (5) full time civilian employees and over 80 volunteers. Victim Services respond to the immediate needs of people who have been victimized by crime and/or trauma, such as homicides, suicides, sudden death, assault, sexual assault, domestic violence, motor vehicle and fire fatalities, robberies, criminal harassment, hate crime and hate bias incidents, human trafficking and missing persons, among others.

The Victim Services Branch has been the recipient of several prominent Provincial and International Awards for program delivery to victims of crime and trauma.

The Victim Services Branch has also been recognized as a best practices model and have presented at the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) Conference.

Attached is the Victim Services Annual Report for 2021, outlining the quality service provided to the residents of the City of Hamilton.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

Appendix A - Hamilton Police Service Victim Services Branch 2021 Annual Report

Vision: To be a trusted partner in delivering public safety.

Mission: To serve and protect in partnership with our communities.

Our Values: Compassionate, Dedicated, Inclusive, Integrity, Innovative, Professional, Teamwork

FB/K.Morrison



VICTIM SERVICES BRANCH 2021 ANNUAL REPORT





VISION: To be a trusted partner in delivering public safety.

MISSION: To serve and protect in partnership with our communities.

OUR VALUES: Compassionate, Dedicated, Inclusive, Integrity, Innovative, Professional, Teamwork.

Victim Services is a Branch of the Hamilton Police Service (HPS) established in 1992. It is the only 24-hour on-scene crisis intervention service for victims of crime and trauma in the City of Hamilton. We respond to the immediate needs of people who have been victimized by crime and/or trauma such as homicides, suicides, sudden death, assaults, sexual assault, domestic violence, motor vehicle and fire fatalities, robberies, harassment, hate crime and hate bias incidents, human trafficking and missing persons, among others.

In 2021, the Victim Services Branch (VSB) assisted 2,438 new victims and had a total of 9,018 contacts with victims. With 5 full-time staff and over 80 volunteers, the Victim Services Branch is able to provide these services 24/7.

The VSB Sexual Assault Support Program (SASP) was awarded the 2021-2022 Attorney General's Victim Services Award of Distinction. This program provides trauma-informed care and supports to victims and survivors of sexual violence throughout the investigative process in collaboration with the Sexual Assault Unit and Criminal Investigations Division. SASP has continued to expand and was able to provide support to 194 individuals throughout 2021. This program has also expanded to support other areas of Hamilton Police Service including the Child Abuse Branch and Human Trafficking Unit.

This year, the Victim Services Branch approach to service was realigned to continue to meet ongoing Provincial and Municipal directives for the pandemic environment to support victims and survivors of crime and/or trauma. Due to health and safety concerns as a result of the pandemic, our Branch expanded the use of technology and virtual platforms to continue to support victims of crime and/or trauma, maintain engagement with our volunteer team and community committees, as well as participate in training. Importantly, our volunteer team has returned to offering on-scene support as of March 1st, 2022. Overall, the Victim Services Branch staff and volunteers continue to have a positive impact in supporting victims and survivors 24/7 in Hamilton in collaboration with community partners.

With a shared purpose of responding to the needs of our community, the Victim Services Branch of Hamilton Police Service will continue to: focus on its core mandate to respond to the immediate needs of victims of crime and trauma, engage with HPS members to develop programs and resources, collaborate and foster opportunities for partnerships with community agencies and stakeholders.



BUSINESS PLAN OVERVIEW

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS • VICTIM SERVICES BRANCH



The Victim Services Branch is pleased to share our goals, achievements and initiatives for 2021 that have contributed to the outcomes and success of the 2019-2021 Business Plan in this Annual Report. The goals are aligned with the 2019-2021 Business Plan Strategic Directions and Objectives. The Branch's Annual Objectives & Performance follow.



COMMUNITY SAFETY GOAL A: Maximize communication with our community as it relates to services and supports, as well as crime prevention, public safety and harm reduction.

•**ACTION:** Increase community awareness and support for victims by continuing to provide education and supports to staff, and volunteers. Work with victims of crime to reduce the harm and impact of crime and provide supports and resources for recovery.



ENGAGEMENT & PARTNERSHIPS GOAL B: Collaborate and encourage participation within communities and organizations to help implement solutions and manage public safety needs.

•**ACTION:** Continue to work with other service providers to increase knowledge base and available resources for victims.



ENGAGEMENT & PARTNERSHIPS GOAL C: Provide meaningful volunteer opportunities and continue the development of future ambassadors for the Hamilton Police Service.

•**ACTION:** Provide meaningful opportunities for volunteers at all levels and ensure engagement. Find opportunities to recognize volunteers and the importance of their work.



ENGAGEMENT & PARTNERSHIPS GOAL D: Identify funding opportunities available to police services and community groups for the implementation of new programs and the continuation of existing effective programs.

•**ACTION:** Seek out new opportunities for funding and continue to maintain existing sources of funding.



PEOPLE & PERFORMANCE GOAL E: Implement effective delivery of internal and external training.

•**ACTION:** Continue to provide training to volunteers and staff to promote programs and supports for victims and ensure awareness of victim issues, supports, and services.



TECHNOLOGY & ASSET MANAGEMENT GOAL F: Leverage technology to enhance service to the community.

•**ACTION:** Leverage technology to enhance service to the community. Integrate a virtual approach for volunteer training and on-going volunteer engagement.

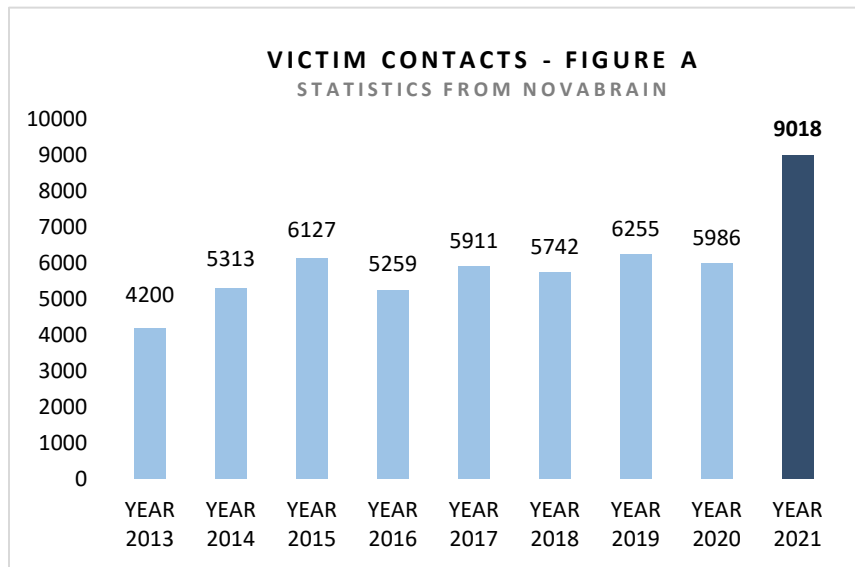




GOAL A RESULTS

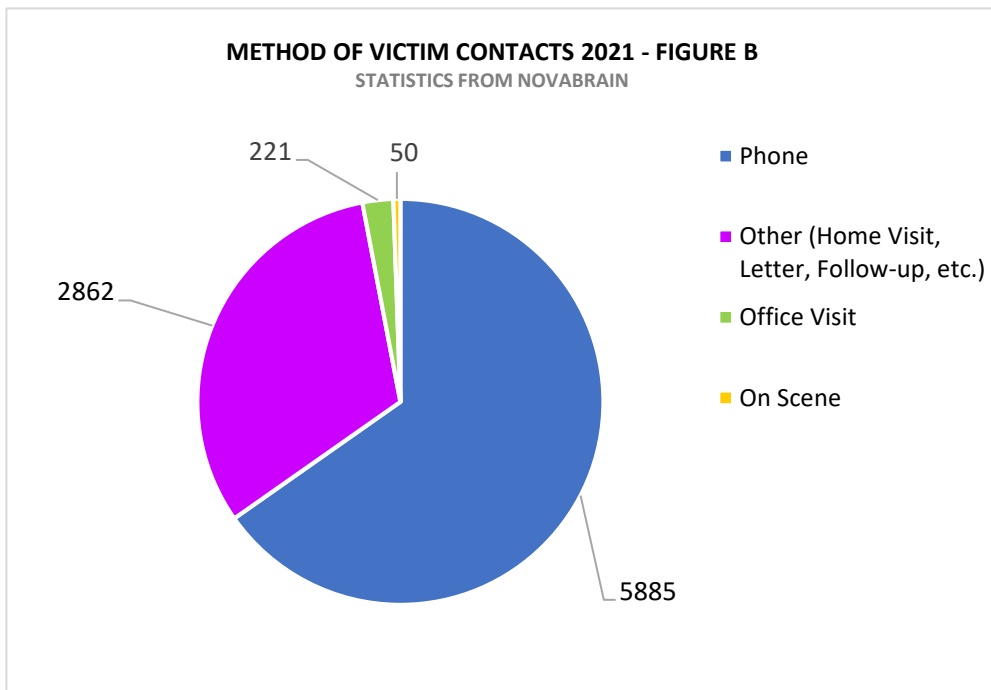
Increase community awareness and support for victims by continuing to provide education and supports to staff, and volunteers. Work with victims of crime to reduce the harm and impact of crime and provide supports and resources for recovery.

- 2,438 new victims assisted.
- See Figure A for 9,018 total contacts with victims (includes new and existing clients).
- For breakdown of contact type, please refer to Figure B [next page].



- Although public health guidelines altered the way Victim Services was able to provide support to those impacted by crime and/or traumatic events throughout 2021, volume of support provided to members of the community significantly increased from 2020.
- Continued to work with victims/survivors of crime in providing support, as well as navigating systems and referrals to reduce harm and promote resiliency.
- Participated in the development of the new Domestic Violence Intervention Program Pilot, which aims to provide support to individuals involved in non-criminal domestic disputes with community resources and system navigation in an effort to reduce escalation and enhance public safety.
- Participated in the development of a potential Hate Crime Community Review Team in partnership with both HPS and community members to enhance safety and support for victims of Hate Crimes.





Responses to a stressful situation vary greatly from person-to-person and not all people will experience the same reaction at the same level of intensity nor for the same length of time. However, it is important to recognize that whatever the reaction is, it is often a normal human response to a stressful situation. For many victims, they are able to empower themselves with self-supporting options and do not require further assistance after initial contact with Victim Services. Other victims may determine that continued resources/interaction with Victim Services is required to support their resiliency. Victimization may have occurred recently or historically. Not all victims request or need on-scene crisis intervention.

- Involved in planning/collaborating with Hamilton and Halton partners to increase community awareness and education on Human Trafficking.
- Training provided by staff to organizations in the community to raise awareness about Victim Services and supports available.
- Overall, over 170 hours of training provided by community organizations were completed by Volunteers and over 310 hours were completed by Victim Services staff on important topics such as: Human Trafficking, Indigenous Services, Trauma Counselling, Supporting Grief, and the link between Domestic Violence and Animal Abuse, among many others.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

TO ENSURE THE SAFETY OF THE COMMUNITIES THAT WE SERVE



- The Victim Services Branch strives to assist all areas of the Hamilton Police Service to best support victims of crime and/or trauma such as: Domestic Violence Unit, Bail Safety Unit, Homicide Unit, Sexual Assault Unit, Criminal Investigations Division, Child Abuse Branch, Human Trafficking/Vice & Drugs Unit, Crime Prevention Branch, Training Branch, Communications, and Patrol, among others.
- All new brochures were developed and distributed throughout the Service to support victims of various circumstances. New/updated brochures in circulation include: Victim Services–Supporting Victims of Crime and Trauma, Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, Sudden Death, Supporting Children with Grief, Serious or Fatal Motor Vehicle Collisions, Break and Enter, Homicide.



Supporting
Victims of
Crime &
Trauma

Victims of
Domestic
Violence

Victims
Survivors of
Sexual
Assault

Helping
Children
With Grief

Coping With
a Sudden
Death

Victims of
Break &
Enter

Families
Involved
with Fatal &
Serious
Injury
Collisions

The Victim Services Branch brochures were developed/revised throughout 2021. The brochures are shared with victims of crime and trauma, community partners, and HPS Members and Volunteers. [Refer to Goal A Results.]





GOAL B RESULTS

Continue to work with other service providers to increase knowledge base and available resources for victims.

- Continued to work in collaboration with community organizations to ensure wrap-around supports are available to any victims/survivors supported through the Victim Services Branch.
- Continued involvement on community committees to enhance collaboration and community-based solutions (10+ committees) to support victims/survivors of crime.
- Committee and Community Work: Victim Services Alliance Ontario; Emergency Preparedness Committee for City of Hamilton; High-Risk Domestic Violence Community Advisory Team; Hamilton Anti-Human Trafficking Coalition (HAHTC) and Steering Committee; Women Abuse Working Group (WAWG); Public Awareness and Education – sub-committee of WAWG; International Women’s Day Planning Committee; Hamilton Police Women’s Services Advisory to the Chief; Emergency Women’s Shelter Protocol Committee; Sexual Assault Community Review Team (SACRT); Safe at Home Hamilton, Domestic Violence Court Advisory Committee; Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) Network, Hamilton School Board Anti-Human Trafficking Protocol Advisory.
- Resource Manual was updated regularly to ensure up-to-date community resource options are provided by both staff and volunteers. 11 new resources were provided to the team throughout 2021. In addition, information was updated on several existing community resources to reflect current offerings.
- Partnership was developed with “Comfort Bears” to provide teddy bears to individuals impacted by trauma. Bears are now available through the Victim Services Branch, and are also distributed to the Child Abuse Branch, Sexual Assault Unit, and Homicide Unit.
- Continued administration of the Trauma Bear Program in partnership with Shaw Communications Inc. by ensuring all Hamilton Police Service vehicles contain Trauma Bears. Police Officers give Trauma Bears to individuals at scenes to provide some comfort during the aftermath of a crime or traumatic event. This partnership with Shaw Communications Inc. and their donation of the trauma bears has been in place since 2012.
- Continued administration of the Rapid Relief Food Boxes Program to support those experiencing food insecurity.
- The Victim Services Branch continued to participate as a member of the Sexual Assault Community Review Team (SACRT). The team is comprised of the HPS Sexual Assault Unit (SAU), the Victim Services Branch, the Sexual Assault Domestic Violence Care Centre - Hamilton Health Sciences, the Sexual Assault Centre of Hamilton and Area (SACHA), and the Native Women’s Centre.

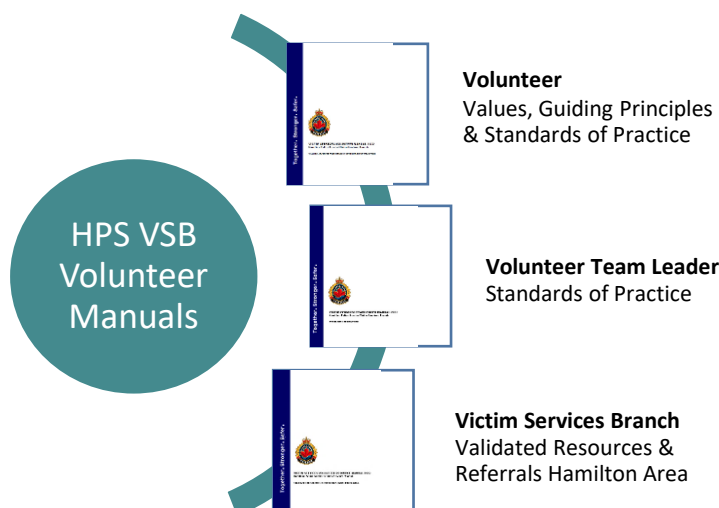




GOAL C RESULTS

Provide meaningful opportunities for volunteers at all levels and ensure engagement. Find opportunities to recognize volunteers and the importance of their work.

- Volunteers contribute over 30,000 hours of available on-call coverage, provide almost 500 hours of direct support to victims, and offer support in 23 languages in addition to English.
- Trained 35 new Volunteers and 20 Cadets through 39 hours of instruction throughout our annual Victim Services Volunteer Training.
- 4 Professional Development Training Nights (8 hours) provided.
- 20 External Training Opportunities on various topics to support victims of crime were provided throughout 2021.
- Training on new programs and trends including Ambiguous Loss and Supporting Families with Missing Loved Ones, Well-Being and the Impact of Empathetic Strain, Indigenous Services, Services for Youth, among many others.
- Volunteer recognition completed throughout the year through individual notes of appreciation, as well as through National Volunteer Week and International Volunteer Day.
- Continued Volunteer engagement, training, and meetings through Microsoft Teams to ensure health and safety.
- Volunteers were temporarily back to providing on-scene support on November 8th, 2021 but due to health and safety returned to phone support December 21st, 2021. Our volunteer team has since returned to offering on-scene support as of March 1st, 2022.



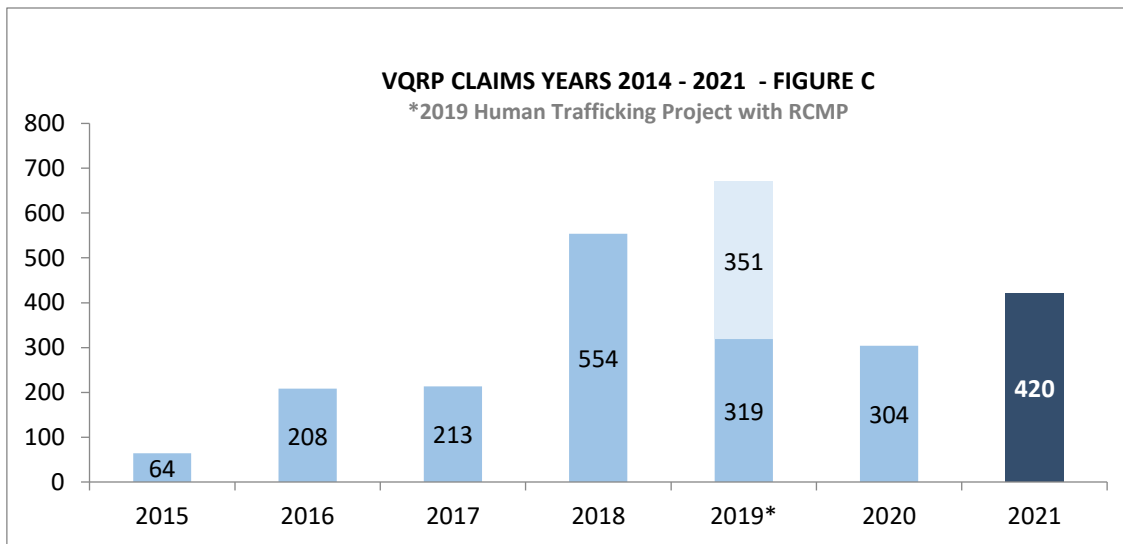
Together, these form a part of the volunteer's commitment to ensure that our core values, integrity and accountability are held to the highest standards of professional and ethical conduct.



GOAL D RESULTS

Seek out new opportunities for funding and continue to maintain existing sources of funding.

- Successful grant application: Victim Support Grant through the Ministry of the Solicitor General.
- Funding secured: \$100,000 per year over 2 years to support victims/survivors of human trafficking and intimate partner violence.
- Continued to deliver the Victim Quick Response Program+ (VQRP+) for the City of Hamilton on behalf of the Ministry of the Attorney General. There were 420 claims processed through VQRP+ in 2021, e.g. door/lock repairs, cell phone replacement, transportation, crime scene clean-up, funeral, counselling, etc. [See Figure C]. The claims totaled over \$679,000 in direct benefit to victims of crime. This is a significant increase from the \$175,000+ provided in 2020.



PEOPLE & PERFORMANCE

TO INCREASE ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY AND EFFECTIVENESS BY ATTRACTING,
DEVELOPING AND RETAINING OUR MEMBERS



GOAL E RESULTS

Continue to provide training to volunteers and staff to promote programs and supports for victims and ensure awareness of victim issues, supports, and services.

- Training provided to staff and volunteers to educate on important topics to best support victims of crime and/or trauma such as: Human Trafficking, Indigenous Services, Trauma Counselling, Supporting Grief, and the link between Domestic Violence and Animal Abuse, among many others.
- Overall, over 170 hours of external training were completed by Volunteers and over 310 by staff.
- Information on new programs and community resources distributed to both staff and volunteers on a regular basis to ensure up-to-date awareness of victim issues and supports. 11 new community resources were provided throughout 2021 and many existing resources were updated to reflect current information.
- Publication of the “Did You Know” volunteer monthly newsletter.
- Provided Victim Services training to new Hamilton Police recruits post-OPC, as well as Communications Branch members.
- Presentations provided to community partners on supports available through the Victim Services Branch.
- In 2021, 20 HPS Cadets completed Victim Services Branch Volunteer training as part of their Cadet training program. The Victim Services Branch continues to be an integral component of the continuum of learning for the HPS Cadet program since 2014. In addition, another 5 Cadets completed a rotation working within the VSB office as part of their supervised practicum.





GOAL F RESULTS

Leverage technology to enhance service to the community. Integrate a virtual approach for volunteer training and on-going volunteer engagement.

Due to health and safety concerns as a result of the pandemic, our Branch expanded the use of technology to continue to support victims of crime and/or trauma, maintain engagement with our volunteer team and community committees, as well as participate in training.

- Microsoft Teams continued to be used to connect with the Victim Services Branch volunteer team (80+ Volunteers) to promote engagement and training.
- Virtual platforms were also used to facilitate the Victim Services Branch Volunteer Training from January – March, 2021. This virtual format resulted in existing Volunteers joining training sessions to refresh their skills and knowledge.
- Technology and virtual training opportunities allowed for an additional 20 external training opportunities to be offered to our Volunteer team. In addition, our staff team was able to participate in an in-depth Grief course, which was offered by an organization in British Columbia, as well as a Provincial training out of Saskatchewan to support families with missing loved ones.
- Social Media was used to raise awareness for Victim Services throughout the year, as well as to recruit Victim Services Volunteers.

...



Two benches are located in the courtyard at Hamilton Police Service Central Station. The benches provide a peaceful place for those who wish to pause, rest or reflect. On each bench is a plaque with an inscription: "FORGET ME NOT" ~ A Place of Quiet Reflection to Honour All Victims of Crime Because "Every Victim Matters".