

## Shift: The Project to End Domestic Violence

October 2020

5th Edition

### Dear Colleagues

This has been a year like no other. We find ourselves facing the challenges of an ongoing global pandemic and the exacerbation of long-standing inequities in our social, health, and economic systems. We have seen the pandemic's disproportionate impacts on women, people living in poverty, racialized people, and the elderly. COVID-19 and the pandemic response measures such as social distancing and self-isolation have contributed to significant increases in adult relationship conflict and gender-based violence in Alberta and around the world. All of this is challenging our sector's ability to implement prevention approaches – yet they are more critical now than ever.

As Canada and the world prepares for a second pandemic wave, the risk factors for domestic and sexual violence persist. The negative impacts on individuals, children and families, the elderly, and communities will be felt long after the pandemic is over. To continue to advance primary prevention efforts in this new context, Shift is leading, collaborating and supporting a number of initiatives and projects that aim to understand the impact of COVID-19 on domestic and sexual violence and to identify and mobilize effective approaches to prevent and respond. The sections below detail Shift's COVID-specific projects – including real-time data analysis, media monitoring, virtual care intervention design, artificial intelligence mapping and predictive tool, and a primary prevention coordinated response. Please scroll down to read more.

Developing and strengthening strategies for the prevention of domestic and sexual violence – and indeed, all forms of violence and subjugation – is our priority. We have an extraordinary opportunity to create systemic change. We look forward to doing this work together with you.

Yours in solidarity,

Lana Wells, Lianne Lee, and Elena Esina

P.S. If you are interested in learning more about our work or accessing the information from our projects, please visit our [website](#) or [contact us](#).

## Shift Research in Response to COVID



### **Data2Action: Alberta Domestic and Sexual Violence Response to COVID**

Shift has partnered with [HelpSeeker](#) and [IMPACT](#) to better understand the needs of Albertans when it comes to preventing domestic and sexual violence in a pandemic. The goal of the Data2Action project is to curate, analyze, and disseminate multiple data sources (both open source and organizational) to inform community-based strategies, interventions, and government policies that prevent and respond to domestic and sexual violence.



### **Monitoring Media Reports on Domestic Violence, Sexual Violence, Child Maltreatment, Gender Equality, Human Rights and COVID**

Between December 1, 2019 and July 16, 2020, Shift compiled [media coverage](#) related to domestic violence, sexual violence, child maltreatment, gender equality and women's rights during COVID in selected countries. This resource can be used to inform the development and implementation of prevention and intervention strategies during times of crisis and disaster.



### **Supporting the Design of Virtual Care Interventions to Provide Treatment to Individuals and Families At-Risk of Domestic Violence During COVID**

In partnership with [Dr. Stephanie Montesanti](#) (PI) and [Dr. Peter Silverstone](#) (co-PI) and funded by [Canadian Institutes of Health Research](#) (CIHR), this project aims to enhance knowledge on the use of virtual care in reaching individuals and families at-risk of domestic violence in the current pandemic context and identify scalable and appropriate virtual care interventions to address domestic violence. Review the most recent findings from this project on [CIHR website](#).

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### **Supporting Research on the Use of E-Mental Health Interventions to Address Family Violence Issues During COVID**

This research project, led by [Dr. Stephanie Montesanti](#), will potentially allow rapid and widespread deployment of a scalable and affordable intervention in this critically needed area. By using only e-mental health tools, the hope is this project will facilitate use of supports in geographically isolated communities, and in individuals who may not otherwise have easy access to appropriate supports to prevent domestic and sexual violence.

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## **InnSoTech: Leveraging Artificial Intelligence in Canada's COVID Social Response**

The InnSoTech (Innovation in Social Technology) project is a partnership led by [HelpSeeker](#), in collaboration with [AltaML](#), [Corsac Technologies](#), [CMHC](#), Shift (UCalgary), Mount Royal University, A Way Home Canada, and the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (YorkU) to develop an algorithm to support the most optimal amounts and types of social supports in the context of COVID. Lead partner HelpSeeker has prototyped an algorithm that uses a unique national dataset to predict rates of homelessness, suicides, and domestic violence and the project aims to ramp up the development of this algorithm to support COVID responses and recovery efforts. The initiative is funded through [Canada's Digital Technology Supercluster](#).



## **Partnering with Over 350 Domestic and Sexual Violence Organizations to Advance Primary Prevention During the Recovery Phase of COVID**

This two year partnership with [Sagesse/IMPACT](#) aims to facilitate evidence-informed policy design and implementation, advance coordinated action among diverse stakeholders, and support appropriate allocation of resources to advance primary prevention in Alberta during the recovery phase of COVID.

### **SHIFT IN THE NEWS**

#### **[Domestic violence: Help is always available](#)**

Every hour of every day a woman in Alberta will experience some form of interpersonal violence, according to Lana Wells. With stress levels increasing due to

COVID-19 and people staying home, experts expect domestic violence to increase. A wide range of community partners are needed to help reach victims of domestic violence: physicians, pharmacists, and “unlikely” partners like hair stylists and restaurant servers. If you suspect someone you know is experiencing family violence, reach out and let them know they can confide in you, respect their confidentiality, and help them access professional help and resources.

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### **[Researchers respond to gender-based violence, 'the pandemic within a pandemic'](#)**

UA News – Rates of domestic violence and violence against women have been on the rise during the COVID-19 pandemic, and researchers are moving quickly to support survivors stuck at home. “I think there’s an opportunity right now to dismantle the systems that aren’t working for those most in need,” says Ms. Wells, “I feel it’s a catalyzing time if there are people willing to do the work.”

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### **[Can early intervention help raise better boys?](#)**

Many gender-based violence researchers and Canadian NGOs believe interventions for adults who perpetuate violence come too late — after the harm has been done. Increasingly, the question is not simply if we can stop domestic violence but something broader: can we reimagine what it means to be a man? “We have to look at the home, where people congregate, and the external media and socialization,” says Wells. “It’s super complex, and there is no silver bullet.”

We would like to thank Emma Lee for supporting the writing of this newsletter.

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