

support truth healing
safety community
hope strength



before the Zebra Child Protection Centre opened in 2002, children in our community reported abuse in an adult institutional world of police and other investigative agencies. Children who had summoned the courage to tell their stories were often called upon to repeat them several times to different officials at different locations. Not only did this add to the terrible stress on the child, it also made for disjointed information gathering and difficulty in building the case for justice.

The Edmonton Police Service knew there had to be a better way to safeguard our communities' children, address their needs and nurture their healing, while rigorously bringing the criminals who commit these crimes to justice. Together, with various agencies, concerned citizens and professionals, they sought out models in North America for a child-focused centre that integrated investigative and protective services in one safe and nurturing environment.

The consultations and research led to the development of the multi-disciplinary Zebra Child Protection Centre, a child-focused, safe environment that includes:

- Edmonton Police Services Child Protection Section
- Child at Risk Response Teams (CARRTs)
- Edmonton and Area Child and Family Services
- Alberta Crown Prosecutors
- Community volunteers (child advocates)
- Off-site medical and trauma screening professionals

No one agency or profession is fully equipped to prioritize the well-being of an abused child and balance the stringent demands of justice. Using an integrated and collaborative approach serves the children in a vital way. It allows for a more efficient gathering of information – minimizing the number of interviews and repetition of questions faced by the child – greater communication between agencies and collaborative fact-finding. This not only minimizes additional trauma for the children but also results in better information and greater potential for convicting suspects. It also serves as a support network for the development of professionals working in this demanding field. Discovering the truth behind suspicions and allegations of child abuse is a complex

process. Zebra's collaborative approach lends strength to the child during the investigative process and also lends power to law enforcement and prosecutors.

Here's how each organization works toward the whole of Zebra's strength:

Police Detectives – Taking the Lead in Investigation

The detectives assigned to Zebra through the Edmonton Police Services Child Protection Section specialize in criminal investigations to assess what the child has experienced or what they may have observed or overheard to determine the truth. The detectives are trained to investigate allegations of child abuse as defined by the Criminal Code of Canada and empowered to lay charges. Through the team approach at Zebra, these detectives receive greater opportunity for multi-disciplinary training pertaining to techniques for interviewing children and adult suspects. They also have access to additional professional and organizational resources. For example, they may call upon a Children's Services investigator to participate in the interview process where specific approaches are deemed to be most effective. There are also cases where the gender of the interviewer is important; so the team approach allows for the selection of male or female according to circumstances.

Edmonton & Area Child & Family Services – Supporting Children, Youth and Families

Zebra Centre specialized investigators (employed by Edmonton & Area Child & Family Services) undertake the responsibility of assessing the safety of the children in at-risk situations, under the governance of the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act. By conducting interviews with children, the investigators assess potential abusive conditions and begin to formulate plans to keep the children safe and supported.

The investigators respond to referrals from family court and Child & Family Services across Alberta as well as assignments with detectives.



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**Crown Prosecutors –
Delivering Justice with Strength and Compassion**

Crown Prosecutors from the Family Protection Section specialize in prosecuting crimes against families, including child abuse. It is their responsibility to assess the likelihood of conviction. The involvement of Crown Prosecutors in the Zebra team reaps many benefits to both the delivery of justice to suspects and the healing of children. Joint training programs help develop forensic interview processes and sharpen the skills of investigators in gathering the best evidence for the courts. Zebra is also able to work with the Crown Prosecutors to ensure that the court process is designed in a way that mitigates additional trauma to children and their family.

**Community Volunteers (child advocates) –
Friends Indeed to Children In Need**

Zebra’s child advocates are the “good neighbors” who stand by the children and their families as they deal with the aftermath of abuse and begin the process of rebuilding their lives. This individualized support begins when a child is first interviewed and will continue throughout the investigation, intervention, prosecution and healing process. They support the children at pre-trial meetings and court preparation sessions and serve as liaisons to update families and answer any questions they have about the trial process. These volunteers are the “good neighbors” who demonstrate to the children that they do not have to face the intimidating court processes and challenges of rebuilding their lives alone – they are in a community that cares.

**Child at Risk Response Team (CARRT) –
First Responders for Children at Risk**

CARRT was established in 1995 to provide intervention for families in crisis. The Zebra Centre Child at Risk Response Teams, which are comprised of an EPS Constable and an Edmonton & Area Child & Family Services investigator, are the first responders to reports of abuse and provide front-line services to children in need. Specially trained to assess child abuse and empowered respectively by the Criminal Code of Canada and Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, these teams are able to take immediate action to protect the child from further abuse.

**Off-Site Child and Adolescent Protection Centre (CAPC)
– Administering Specialized Medical Services to Abused Children**

The Zebra Centre works closely with the Child and Adolescent Protection Centre at the Stollery Children’s Hospital. This Centre offers our community specialized medical intervention for abused children to ensure compassionate treatment as well as collection of forensic evidence.

Trauma Screening

Zebra has a network of clinical psychologists that addresses immediate needs for intervention with children, provides short-term counselling and follows up with families to offer referrals for ongoing care. A psychologist also provides professional guidance to other members of Zebra’s multi-disciplinary team as well as to non-offending parents and guardians on measures to take to protect the children’s mental health.

Statistics:

- In over 90% of child abuse cases, the offender is a family member, friend or someone else that these children know well.
- One out of three little girls and one out of five little boys are subject to sexual abuse by an adult before they reach the age of 14.

Statistic Sources: Public Health Agency of Canada, Gavin DeBecker, Protecting the Gift (New York, Dial Press) 1999 and Zebra Centre records.

