



MEDIA RELEASE

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**Reducing Barriers to Victims of Family Violence and Abuse
ActionDignity and Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter introduces multi-cultural programming
to serve diverse needs of the community**

Family violence and abuse is a serious issue in our community. With COVID-19, there has been increased numbers and risk of danger in cases. Individuals and families already face many barriers accessing support and the ongoing pandemic has made it even more challenging. As our community begins to re-open, individuals and families need to know where to turn.

To help reduce barriers for those seeking help, two non-profit organizations: **ActionDignity** and the **Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter** are partnering to support families and communities to build awareness, and improve access through the *Take A Stand* Cultural Program initiative.

The *Take A Stand* initiative by the Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter adopts culturally relevant programming by offering training in the first language. Trained ActionDignity facilitators will deliver these information sessions to groups, and organizations from the Filipino, Arabic, and Urdu/Punjabi/Hindi speaking communities. Individuals are invited to these group presentations.

"Family violence and abuse affects everyone from all cultures and backgrounds, says Kim Ruse, CEO of the Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter, "This collaboration with ActionDignity will make access to information and services inclusive to people from diverse backgrounds. By developing and implementing culturally specific programs, we help address barriers such as language, communication differences and other issues. Overcoming these barriers can be lifesaving."

This approach improves understanding and skills of community members to support people experiencing family violence. By expanding the capacity of the *Take A Stand* program, community awareness increases, as well as the capacity to effectively *Recognize, Respond, and Refer* individuals who have been affected by domestic violence and abuse.

"This is the pilot year for this meaningful collaboration and already, many community members are volunteering to be trained to facilitate the session to their communities. Clearly, there is a need for people to be aware of how to help increase this awareness. They want to help and be part of the solution. This partnership with the Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter proves that we can change systems and we can make things happen", says Humaira Falak, ActionDignity Program Coordinator.

"Preparing for the cultural programming roll-out was not just about translating the documents and the presentation slides. Production teams for each of the communities were formed and a cultural artistic process was employed to ensure that the cultural versions of the materials are as accurate as possible. The presentations were re-organized to suit each community's needs, culture, beliefs and behavior surrounding domestic and family violence", says Rubirose Ong, ActionDignity Program Coordinator.

Based on consultations with the community including youth participants; language, stigma, and racism have been identified as the main barriers in accessing services that can support families and individuals experiencing violence and to help build stronger relationships. ActionDignity and the Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter are determined to bridge this gap starting with information sessions in first languages, with more planned. There are other communities on standby for the next roll-out to deliver the same presentation in their first languages. **This partnership builds a community that is just and equitable for all, free from family violence and abuse.**

This project is generously supported by the **Calgary Foundation**.

For more information about the program and to book a presentation:

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