



Violence, Trauma and Suicide Prevention

A Community Response Protocol

A shared commitment to community safety and well-being
through response to and prevention of violence,
trauma and suicide in Strathcona County

2022

Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge that the *Violence, Trauma and Suicide Prevention (VTSP) Protocol* is based on the comprehensive work of the North American Center for Threat Assessment and Trauma Response (NACTATR). The Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) and Traumatic Event Systems (TES) training and manuals of NACTATR are the foundation of this work. Specifically, we would like to thank J. Kevin Cameron for his guidance, insight and support in the development of this work.

We would also like to acknowledge the efforts of the Social Framework Leadership Table (SFLT) subcommittee who led this work for several months. Their knowledge, expertise and collaboration supported and informed the thoughtful development of this protocol and its related pieces.

The SFLT subcommittee includes representatives from:

- Alberta Health Services
 - » Children, Youth and Families, Addiction and Mental Health
 - » Intensive and Urgent Services
- Elk Island Catholic Separate Regional Division No. 41
- Elk Island Public Schools Regional Division No. 14
- Alberta Children's Services, Sherwood Park Office
- Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Sherwood Park Detachment
- Strathcona County Municipal Government
 - » Emergency Services
 - » RCMP and Enforcement Services
 - » Family and Community Services
- Strathcona Shelter Society Ltd. – A Safe Place

Finally, we would like to thank George Alvarez for providing his extensive knowledge of privacy and information sharing and supporting this essential component. Additionally, his guidance related to documentation practices, membership and general considerations for this protocol has proved invaluable as we set forth in this new way.

Foreword

The adoption of the *Violence, Trauma and Suicide Prevention (VTSP) Protocol* is an intentional shift in creating organizational and community environments that promote health, safety and well-being. Members and partners of VTSP work together, understanding the potential impacts of violence and trauma, and use this information to guide their services and support our community. This protocol lays the foundation for preventing and responding to violence and trauma in our community, including suicide. It provides processes to activate and follow that address specific events or risks, with the intention of taking actions that return the community to a safe and healthy environment that supports resident well-being.

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Introduction

Violence Trauma Continuum

The establishment of the *Violence, Trauma and Suicide Prevention (VTSP) Protocol* in Strathcona County acknowledges the dynamic relationship between trauma and violence, including suicide. Through research, we know that violence and trauma are fundamentally linked. By not taking an active role in supporting the community through violent and traumatic events, the “silence intensifies the impact of trauma, and trauma that goes unspoken, unwitnessed and unclaimed too often ‘outs itself’ as more violence to self or others.”¹ The intention of this protocol is to address violence, trauma and suicide collectively, as a community, to prevent or reduce harm and promote the well-being of all residents.



Purpose

The following protocol is an articulation of the commitment by Strathcona County community organizations to work together to prevent and respond to violence, trauma and suicide in our community. This protocol, built upon the foundations of Traumatic Event Systems (TES), Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) and Suicide Prevention and Response (SPR), promotes community safety and well-being, encourages dialogue and information-sharing, enhances effective relationships and creates shared understanding between the protocol partner agencies with the intention to provide a comprehensive, coordinated response.

This protocol is established with the assumption that community organizations can have an impact on public safety. It provides the framework for how and when members and partners² work together in the response to violence and trauma, or the threat of violence and trauma, with consideration of the event’s ripple effect throughout the community. The multidisciplinary approach and collective expertise of members and partners provides a robust community model to prevent trauma, violence and suicide.

This model will address the expressed or anticipated needs of the community as related to trauma and violence and as such, will fall within a spectrum of work that may be considered prevention, early intervention and/or intervention. Protocol members and partners will use the information at hand to determine the level of response required and will remain agile to continue to meet the emerging needs as the situation evolves.

1. Phillips, S. B. (2015). The dangerous role of silence in the relationship between trauma and violence: A group response. *International journal of group psychotherapy*, 65(1), 64-87.
2. The distinction between members and partners is articulated in the membership section of this protocol.

The main objectives of this protocol are:

1. To provide a shared mechanism for the community to collaboratively support residents' safety and well-being by using collective awareness to identify trends of concern
2. To provide protocol members and partners with an understanding of their authority and responsibility to share information surrounding an event, including sensitive information, with the objective of preventing harm and managing trauma in the community
3. To support prevention, intervention and/or recovery of a critical community event with the strengths of person-centered, systems-level perspectives

Document Structure

This document is an overarching policy that outlines how community organizations will act to create environments that support community safety and well-being in relation to violence, trauma and suicide or the risk of, including types of situations and events that would warrant activation of VTRA, TES, SPR or any combination thereof. This document also describes the intended outcomes, principles and privacy considerations that apply.

The following attachments outline the specific details and implementation steps for each area of the *VTSP Protocol*.

- Attachment A: Strathcona County Traumatic Event Systems (TES)
- Attachment B: Elk Island Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA)
- Attachment C: Strathcona County Suicide Prevention and Response (SPR)

Vision

The residents of Strathcona County are supported through the *Social Framework* and a community-based protocol that work together to disrupt cycles of violence and trauma and promote community safety and well-being.

Mission

All protocol members and partners commit to responding to violence or trauma that has the possibility of impacting the physical, emotional and/or mental well-being of Strathcona County residents individually and on a community level. The members and partners agree to collaborate for the common goal of reducing violence and the impact of trauma thereby disrupting the cycle of violence and trauma. To achieve this, all members and partners have a shared obligation to actively work together, share necessary information as authorized and provide a multidisciplinary approach that strives to prevent and respond to critical events and minimize further violence or trauma.

Outcomes

Protocol members and partners will implement this protocol wherein the individual, community or both may be client, with the intent of achieving the following outcomes:

- Acts of violence are prevented by a coordinated and timely response to a violent threat
- The impacts of traumatic events, violent threats and/or suicide are mitigated through a coordinated and timely response, ultimately inhibiting further violence and trauma
- Strathcona County residents are offered support services following a threat or event that endangers the life, health and security of individuals or the community
- Learnings from the work done within this protocol will support changes in policy and practices where appropriate



A Three-Part Protocol

To effectively prevent and respond to violence, trauma and suicide in our community, protocol members and partners must have a shared understanding of incident-specific processes to follow in the event of a critical situation, or the risk of a critical situation. The work of TES, VTRA and SPR, described below, outline how partners will function in a coordinated and timely manner to support individuals at risk, as well as the greater community.

Traumatic Event Systems – Supporting Those Who May Be Impacted

Traumatic Event Systems (TES), as developed by the North American Center for Threat Assessment and Trauma Response (NACTATR), is intended to support leaders in guiding human systems (i.e. organizations, community) through the impact and aftermath of traumatic events.

The primary role of the initial TES intervention is to take actions that lower the anxiety of the system as this model operates with the understanding that symptomology is increased when high levels of anxiety persist. TES provides a mechanism for the collective of protocol members and partners to respond and support the community through traumatic events. The circumstances of an event will dictate how far reaching the intervention needs to be.

Community-level traumatic events include, but are not limited to a traumatic event that involves:

- an impact and ripple effect that extends beyond a single organization
- an integrally connected community member with community influence/impact
- multiple individuals who are connected to multiple sectors
- one or multiple young people who attend school in Strathcona County
- high-profile violence, including violence where weapons are used or violence that is displayed via social media
- the potential for individuals to mimic the behaviour involved in the event
- occurrence in a public space
- wide media coverage, including social media
- an emergency or crisis of major proportion that affects all community members (e.g. terrorism, natural disaster, etc.)

For more information on the specific roles and actions to be taken, please refer to *Attachment A: Strathcona County Traumatic Event Systems*.

Elk Island Violence Threat Risk Assessment – High Risk and Worrisome Behaviours

**Note: This work outlines the VTRA response for a geographical area that extends beyond Strathcona County. As such, activations that take place within Strathcona County fall under the guiding work of the VTSP Protocol. Geographical areas beyond this are invited, but not required, to use this greater protocol within their communities. The Elk Island VTRA upholds the guiding principles, intended outcomes and information-sharing guidance and practice as outlined in the VTSP Protocol.*

The Elk Island Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) is intended to provide community organizations with a common threat assessment that encourages a comprehensive, multidisciplinary approach to violence prevention.

High-risk behaviours are those behaviours that cause concern for members of the community and may indicate that an individual is moving towards the risk of serious violent behaviour. Formal categories for immediate VTRA activation include, but are not limited to:

- serious violence or violence with the intent to harm or kill another person
- verbal or written threats to seriously harm or kill others or cause significant property damage (clear, direct, plausible)
- internet, website and social media threats to seriously harm others
- possession of weapons — including replicas
- bomb threats — making and detonating explosive devices
- fire-setting
- sexual intimidation or assault
- extreme cases of bullying and harassment
- gang-related intimidation and violence
- rehearsal behaviours or evidence of planning
- hate incidents motivated by factors such as race, culture, religion or sexual diversity

In many situations there are lesser, yet still worrisome behaviours present that should not be ignored. These include, but are not limited to:

- writing stories, journal entries and blog posts that contain violent content
- social media messaging
- drawing pictures of a violent nature
- making vague threatening statements
- unusual interest in fire
- significant change in anti-social behaviours — a change in baseline

As a primary standard for assessing these cases, we understand that the closer behaviours are to being realized, the greater the concern. In many cases, following up on worrisome behaviours results in good early intervention measures. To be thorough in evaluating and understanding needs, information gathering must take place and include, at minimum, core members, to get a fulsome understanding of the extent of the worrisome behavior. **If further information is obtained suggesting the person is violent, uttered threats, or is in possession of a weapon, VTRA should be activated to investigate the threat.**

For more information on the appropriate actions to be taken and specific roles, please refer to *Attachment B: Elk Island Violence Threat Risk Assessment*.



Suicide Prevention and Response – Understanding Suicide and Suicidal Risks

Suicide Prevention and Response (SPR) is a specific consideration in this protocol for a number of reasons. Suicide holds a potential link with homicide as well as a potential contagion effect in the community. Therefore, VTRA and/or TES should be activated in cases where one or more suicides are likely to have a ripple effect or large impact on the community. Some examples of this include:

- fluidity of an individual — i.e. movement between homicidal and suicidal domains
- suicide pact
- conspiracy of two or more — i.e. bullying or coercion into suicide
- multiple suicides in quick succession in a community
- suicide act or glorification by an individual with widespread influence — e.g. social media influencer

In some cases, suicide has a broad sweeping impact because of the profile of the individual or the manner in which it is carried out. The response to one or multiple suicides should be considered, in part, based on the evaluation of the impact or potential impact. Evaluation is required in order to conduct an appropriate and thoughtful response and to support the community in a trauma-informed manner. Not all suicides will require activation of the community-level response. This in no way detracts from the sadness of the event.

SPR, under the construct of this protocol, also requires members and partners to actively discuss the occurrence of suicides connected to their organization and services. This important information supports a more complete picture of the community well-being. Suicides, although seemingly unconnected or what may be considered “low profile,” can be viewed as a signal for further exploration when abnormal or unusual patterns appear.

Each organization should look to follow their own internal procedures for evaluating risk of suicide, safety planning and intervention. For more information about this work, please refer to *Attachment C: Strathcona County Suicide Prevention and Response*.



A Collaborative Work and Shared Commitment Approach

Guiding Principles

These principles have been drafted based on the collective expertise of protocol partners and members, experiences with implementation of the VTRA and identification of the strengths of the *Social Framework*. The *VTSP Protocol* and those participating are guided by the following:

Collective commitment:

We will undertake to follow the protocol and work together to build connection and strengthen the social fabric of the community for the benefit of its residents.

Respect:

We participate and share information with intention in ways that balance the privacy rights of individuals with the need to ensure a safe community.

Dignity:

We demonstrate compassion, dignity, trust and respect of families, the community and each other throughout all protocol activities.

Systems view:

We are committed to looking at the whole situation, context, research and systems with a trauma-informed lens to better understand root causes, identify solutions and action change.

Responsive:

We have an obligation to provide a timely, effective and efficient response to violence, trauma and suicide in the community that involves all members and partners.

Strengths-based:

We recognize that each resident has unique strengths and needs, and we will utilize those strengths to plan appropriate services, supports and communications.

Information-Sharing in an Integrated Partnership

The members and partners collaborating on the VTSP Protocol are committed to the sharing of relevant information to the extent authorized by law. All participants in these processes are bound by the legislation and policies that guide their agency or organization regarding confidentiality and information sharing. It is their responsibility to know the legislation, take it into account and guide actions accordingly.

For more information on the specific privacy requirements of your organization, please refer to the Information Sharing Matrix in Appendix 4.

The information shared through this integrated approach is intended as a harm reduction measure for Strathcona County residents. Information will only be shared with protocol members and partners in instances where that information:

- allows response to an emergency that threatens an individual's or the public's life, health or security
- averts or prevents a significant risk of harm to the health or safety of any person
- averts risk of harm to a minor's health and safety
- enables the affected parties to receive continuing treatment and care

In high-profile traumatic events, partners and members work together under a collective mandate of the "community as client." Any member or partner on the response team has the obligation to respond in the best interest of the community, with the intention of reducing harm. Importantly, protocol members and partners are equally as responsible for sharing information when required and authorized, as they are for not sharing information when it is not authorized.



Matching Response to Need

When the Strathcona County community is faced with a violent or traumatic situation, or the threat of one, the core members of the *VTSP Protocol* will be called together to respond in an information-gathering phase. This may be done under VTRA, TES or SPR if the circumstance warrants but may also be done within the *VTSP Protocol* as there may not initially be sufficient information available to determine activation of VTRA, TES or SPR. Additional community partners may be invited to this information gathering as appropriate.

Based on the information gathered and the resulting assessment, VTRA, TES or SPR, or a combination of two or more, may be activated. These activations will include protocol members and partners as appropriate and relevant to the situation at hand. This information-gathering phase helps determine which organizations are relevant to the response given their history of involvement, area of expertise and available services. Each response will be tailored to the circumstance at hand and members can be adjusted as the circumstance evolves, including members or partners that make up the response team. Ad hoc organizations are invited to participate in the response as appropriate and upon completion of the necessary paperwork. In these community-level response situations, protocol members and partners operate under the directive of the integrated strategy partnership.

It is important to note that regardless of which area is activated, the overarching protocol outlines the need to consider the event through the lens of community as client and to be mindful of the violence-trauma continuum.

If the situation does not require a community-level, collaborative response, individual organizations should follow their normal processes for consent and documentation when working with participants. A diagram (Appendix 2) provides example indicators to distinguish between an individual response and a community-level response for traumatic events.

For more information on requiring consent, see Appendix 5 for the consent decision tree.

Membership in the VTSP Protocol

Each agency and organization in Strathcona County holds valuable expertise and experience. As such, these groups may play an important role in community safety and well-being and the *VTSP Protocol*. Organizations and agencies also have varied capacities that impact their ability to uphold all commitments related to this protocol, therefore, three groupings of membership have been established.

Core members

Core members of VTSP are organizations who hold a broad mandate to provide service to a significant population within Strathcona County, have sufficient resources to uphold training commitments and have capacity to quickly respond when called upon under this protocol. Core members follow legislated practices related to privacy, documentation and record retention. These organizations will be called upon initially in all information-gathering activities with subsequent decision about participation in an activation based upon the situation at hand and response required. Core members sign their commitment to this protocol and hold responsibility to:

- Participate consistently in strategy-related work, including quarterly meetings, information-gathering phases and activations,
- Initiate or activate any of the affiliated protocols,
- Complete or support in the completion of documentation as appropriate (see Documentation section and Appendix 8: Documentation Guidance),
- Commit staff to be trained in the VTSP Strategy as well as VTRA, TES and SPR awareness (see Need for Training section) and
- Make time available for staff to fully participate in strategy implementation.

Community partners

Community partners are equally as critical to the implementation of this community-based work. These are organizations with an interest and desire to participate in the *VTSP Protocol* with lesser ability to uphold the entirety of the VTSP commitments or who may hold technical expertise and whose specialized knowledge is paramount in a comprehensive response model. While still required to uphold the standards of confidentiality outlined, these organizations, often non-profits or non-governmental organizations (NGOs), may also have less restrictive requirements for documentation or privacy legislation. The option to identify as a community partner helps reduce barriers to participation while upholding the principle of collective commitment. Similar to core members, community partners sign their commitment to this protocol. Community partners may initiate an activation with core members or be called upon to contribute to an activation by a core member.

Ad hoc organizations

Ad hoc organizations are community organizations or entities that have not signed commitment to the *VTSP Strategy* but may be invited to join specific conversations or TES/VTRA/SPR activations. These members are required to complete the Ad Hoc Member Nondisclosure Agreement prior to participation in an activation or in a meeting where private or sensitive information may be shared.

When signing the *VTSP Protocol*, signatories are committing to the entirety of this protocol, including the areas of TES, VTRA and SPR (see attachments). They also identify themselves as either core members or community partners. As noted in the description of the Elk Island VTRA, the geographical area of this extends beyond Strathcona County. As such, the option to sign and commit to only the Elk Island VTRA is made available for organizations located outside of Strathcona County. The Elk Island VTRA follows the same language to describe membership and follows like practices of VTSP.

Members and partners of this protocol recognize that collaboration and communication in the early stages of an actual or anticipated event is what will make this protocol successful and commit to:

- Providing a designated contact or alternate who is trained and available to support this work; core members must provide a designated contact who is available any time the protocol is activated (i.e. 24/7),
- Matching the resources to the risk,
- Taking actions seen as necessary to ensure immediate risk reduction, without delay, regardless of the involvement or availability of other protocol members/partners,
- Regard the “community as client” with a clear understanding that this is inclusive of the larger community as well as individuals and families, therefore impacts and responses should be considered for both audiences every time,
- Sharing information, knowledge and expertise with partners and members to address the root cause of the situation,
- Communicating in a timely way with all core members at the outset of an anticipated or confirmed incident,
- Understanding their commitment, role and expectations to ensure preparedness to participate in this protocol and related processes,
- Fostering trust with member and partner organizations to promote effective working relationships,
- Engaging in this strategy and the related protocol processes under the guiding principles of this agreement,
- Engaging in response reviews for learning, results and continuous improvement, and
- Identifying capacity-building activities and information sharing needed to support improved integration or coordination of the *VTSP Protocol* partners.

Need for Training

Training provides a foundation of understanding that ensures all those participating in the *VTSP Protocol* do so with common language, a well-developed understanding of process and expectations along with the ability to move fluidly through activations and respond in a timely way. Core members commit to having a trained staff member available to participate in activations at all times, including over the summer months. These trained staff will have completed VTRA and/or TES training through NACTATR and be familiar with the *VTSP Protocol*. Core members also understand the need for both service-level staff and leadership to be trained and available to participate in protocol activations, as appropriate based on the nature of the incident.

Community partners strive to follow the same training requirement. When community partners are unable to have staff or volunteers formally trained, orientation to the *VTSP Protocol* is expected and may be supported by the VTSP Lead Organization (defined in Appendix 1: Definitions) or any core member.

This requirement does not replace organization specific training and practices in the areas of violence threat risk assessment, trauma-informed practice and suicide risk assessment. Rather, this protocol is intended to bring together multidisciplinary teams under the theory and practice of VTSP. In addition to having formally trained staff, members and partners commit to sharing information and awareness about the *VTSP Protocol* within their organization, communicating with frontline workers as well as leaders. This practice increases the knowledge necessary for the identification of situations that may lead to an activation and thereby intervening in potentially harmful events.

Non-Work-Hour Cases

If a *VTSP Protocol* member/partner receives information regarding a traumatic event, serious violence or a clear threat during non-work hours for protocol partners, the RCMP will be called and the VTSP Lead Organization will be informed. Steps will also be taken to assess the situation and the VTSP Lead Organization will determine if protocol members/partners need to assist beyond regular work hours or if the non-police aspect of the case can wait until regular work hours.

In cases deemed high risk, core members and those identified as relevant community partners will be activated. In many cases, evening or weekend incidents continue to escalate into the workplace, school and community. Activating the protocol members/partners during non-work hours has proven especially useful in cases dealing with gangs, relational violence, family violence, sporting-event retaliations and/or weekend-party retaliations.



Communications

The need for timely and accurate communication is more vital than ever when considering how immediately accessible information has become by way of the internet and social media. It has been demonstrated consistently that communities find ways to fill the silent air space that can often surround sensitive matters related to violence or traumatic events. Therefore, it is important to provide accurate information from an appropriate authority while balancing the need for communication with rights of privacy and the boundaries of any ongoing investigation.

Core members and community partners will work collaboratively to evaluate and support communication needs and will take into consideration the statutes guiding the release of information. Observing “community as client” and always taking steps to lower the anxiety of human systems, communications shared will be factual, strengths-based, trauma-informed and facilitate actionable steps toward wellness and recovery.

A VTSP Communications Subcommittee will be developed, comprised of communications staff or delegates from core member organizations as well as those from community partners. This group will support development of communication strategies collaboratively, understanding that each member/partner may be positioned differently to share information and that consistent messaging from multiple protocol members and/or partners is in and of itself a tool in lowering anxiety and reducing traumatic impacts.

Documentation

The management of records and documentation must always be done in a manner that meets or exceeds the privacy and security requirements outlined in organizations' corresponding privacy legislation. How this takes place for unique events will be determined by the area of activation. Under VTRA, the responsibility for completing documentation falls to the initiating member. Under TES, this falls to the VTSP Lead Organization. Records from all activations and VTSP meetings will be held on a secure, shared online platform managed by the VTSP Lead Organization and made available to those for access within the bounds of privacy legislation.

As a guide, documentation will:

- Use the participant's words whenever possible
- Be created as quickly as possible after a conversation, within 24 hours
- Be factual, clear and concise, including what is said or observed
- Be respectful and consider the safety of the participant and the possible consequences of disclosure
- Be easy to understand by others
- Be complete to allow for the best assessments and future safety planning

During interviews with any parties, if there is more than one interviewer, there will be a decision as to who will record notes or if there will be an electronic recording. Activated members or partners will have access to a summary of the interview as needed, for example in the case of analysis of the interview and information collected. Interviewers are to use the standardized format, as laid out in the VTRA (Attachment B).

Please refer to Appendix 8: Documentation Guidelines for more detailed guidance.

Responsibility to Ongoing Practice

As identified previously, there is responsibility and purpose for core members and community partners to come together in a scheduled and consistent way to support and maintain the work occurring as part of the *VTSP Protocol*. Two different type of meetings will take place:

- One is intended for practitioners; meetings will take place three times annually with the following purposes:
 - » To review all *VTSP Protocol*-related activations since the last meeting,
 - » To engage in and provide transparent feedback about experiences and processes, seeking opportunities to learn and adjust as appropriate,
 - » To explore organizational or community trends as a preventative measure to support safety and well-being,

- » To engage in tabletop activities that offer the opportunity to practice protocol activations in a safe learning environment and
- » To build relationship and rapport with those at the table as a mechanism to support this work.
- The other is a bi-annual meeting that will take place for the leaders of participating organizations with the following purposes:
 - » To reflect upon and share about the impact of the *VTSP Protocol* within their organization,
 - » To explore challenges, successes and considerations related to VTSP,
 - » As appropriate, to engage in tabletop activities that offer the opportunity to practice TES activations in a safe learning environment and
 - » To build relationship and rapport with those at the table as a mechanism to support this work.

Additionally, on an annual basis, designates from each participating organization, including all participants of VTRA, will come together to share and review statistical data as well as successes and challenges of the *VTSP Protocol* and all areas of activation.

Review

A VTSP Protocol Subcommittee will be established to complete a review of the protocol and related areas of work, including an analysis of the areas of success and improvement, every five years, or more often if needed. This information will be used to shape the *VTSP Protocol* and may also be made available to support policy change as appropriate. The protocol should be re-signed upon completion of this review and update.

Conclusion

The work of the *VTSP Protocol* is instrumental in supporting the safety and well-being of residents in Strathcona County. A shared understanding and common approach supports two key functions: 1) the ability to prevent violence, trauma and suicide by way of having a more informed understanding of trends and risks in our community and 2) the ability to respond to instances of violence, trauma and suicide efficiently, with a holistic view of the impacts and a thoughtful, coordinated response. As organizations endeavour to shift to and embody a trauma-informed perspective of community as client and participate in this important work, we are reminded, by the outcomes of the *Social Framework*, that together, we can create sustained change in our community and support the safety and well-being of all.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Definitions

There are terms used throughout this protocol which may have various meanings for different disciplines. For the purpose of this protocol, here are the intended definitions for these terms:

Community as client: The collective mandate of protocol members and partners is to protect and maintain the safety and well-being of the community. This includes sharing information between protocol members and partners in the best interest of the community.

Community response: The community response happens as a secondary response to the origin of the traumatic or violent event. The community response does not take place at the event itself but supports the community through the psychosocial impacts and effects of the event.

Entitlement: Recognition that every individual is entitled to feel as affected by the traumatic event as they are. Individuals may react to an event that they are seemingly unconnected to because it rekindled a past traumatic experience. All reactions should be treated as legitimate responses to the traumatic event.

VTSP Lead Organization: The VTSP Lead Organization is the coordinator of the *VTSP Protocol*. The VTSP Lead Organization is the first point of contact for activation of any area within the protocol and they will support and facilitate the coordinated response to a threat or event.

Social Framework: The *Social Framework* is a mechanism for community partners to build connections, align efforts and provide seamless service delivery for children, youth and families in Strathcona County. The *Social Framework* provides a channel to bring together the knowledge and expertise of community partners to work towards a safe, supported and connected community.

Suicide Prevention and Response (SPR): Preventative steps that can be taken to support a healthy community by identifying individuals who may be at risk of suicide and providing early intervention, support, referrals and connections for them and their families. SPR also considers the impact that multiple suicides have on the well-being of the community.

Trauma: The response to a deeply distressing or disturbing event that overwhelms an individual's ability to cope, causes feelings of helplessness, diminishes sense of self and the ability to feel a full range of emotions and experiences.³ In this context, a traumatic event is not contained within the system where it occurs; it affects multiple systems and requires the resources of multiple disciplines and agencies to respond.

Traumatic Event Systems (TES): A multiple stakeholder model that allows information from several sources to be combined to deliver community-level support. This allows the creation of a complete view of the impact of trauma on individuals and communities. The model also addresses the impact of trauma on human systems and provides an approach to mitigate the effects. The TES model acknowledges the inextricable link between trauma and violence.

Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA): A community-oriented, strategic process which makes use of the expertise of community organizations and encourages a multidisciplinary approach to violence prevention. Trained VTRA teams work from the perspective that serious violence is an evolutionary process and therefore pre-incident information can help to identify and prevent serious violence. VTRA allows community members to legally share information about the individual of concern before a major incident occurs.

3. Integrated Listening Systems: <https://integratedlistening.com/what-is-trauma/>

Appendix 2. Determining Response Level – Individual or Community

This diagram provides example indicators to distinguish between an individual response and a community-level response. Please note both responses may apply.



Appendix 3: Membership List

VTSP Lead Organization: Family and Community Services, Strathcona County
Contact: 780-464-4044

Membership includes: ⁴

Core Membership

- **AHS**
 - » Children, Youth and Families, Addiction & Mental Health
 - » Intensive and Urgent Services
- **Alberta Children's Services**
- **Elk Island Catholic Schools**
- **Elk Island Public Schools**
- **North American Center for Threat Assessment and Trauma Response**
- **Sherwood Park – Strathcona County Primary Care Network**
- **Strathcona County**
- **Strathcona County RCMP**

Community Partners ⁵

- **Boys & Girls Club Strathcona County**
- **Heartland Alliance Church**
- **New Horizons School**
- **Parents Empowering Parents (PEP) Society**
- **Robin Hood Association**
- **SAFFRON Centre Ltd.**
- **Strathcona County Library**
- **Strathcona Shelter Society Ltd. A Safe Place**

4. New organizations who are interested in becoming members will need to:
- Be approved by the membership;
- Demonstrate their commitment to following the strategy and related protocols through their signature;
- Ensure their staff have received the appropriate/identified training.

5. Community partners may refer situations to the core members and may participate as required but are not expected to have responsibility for managing protocols nor the information and documentation on behalf of the other participants.

Appendix 4: Information Sharing Matrix

The following matrix is meant to guide who can disclose what information to whom. Note the use of the term “anyone” reflects that the legislation authorizes the disclosure of information to any person.

However, it is incumbent on the strategy partners and members to clearly establish the parameters of their collaboration, and who would be considered a partner, or ‘anyone,’ for the purposes outlined. It should also be recognized that there is a membership including core members and community partners and additional members may participate on an ad hoc basis, dependent in part on the specifics of the situation. Organizations and their staff need to understand what legislation (if any) they are subject to, and how it applies to them.

Who (organization)	Is disclosing what	To whom
Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP)		
Public bodies , including municipal and provincial governments, school authorities, and anyone acting on their behalf (employee as defined in Act)	Personal information that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> averts risk of harm to a minor’s health and safety averts or minimizes imminent danger to the health or safety of any person is for the purpose collected, and a purpose consistent to it helps determine service or program eligibility is authorized to be disclosed by Alberta’s or Canada’s legislation is necessary for a common or integrated program or service is identified and authorized with consent of the individual is in respect to a minor or their parent/guardian if there is a reasonable belief it is in the best interests of a minor 	Can be shared with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> anyone who requires the information to address harm anyone who requires the information to address danger anyone involved in fulfilling the purpose anyone who requires it to determine eligibility anyone identified in the legislation another public body involved in the integrated program or service anyone authorized by the consent to fulfill purpose law enforcement, an organization providing services to a minor, another public body (or any prescribed person or body)

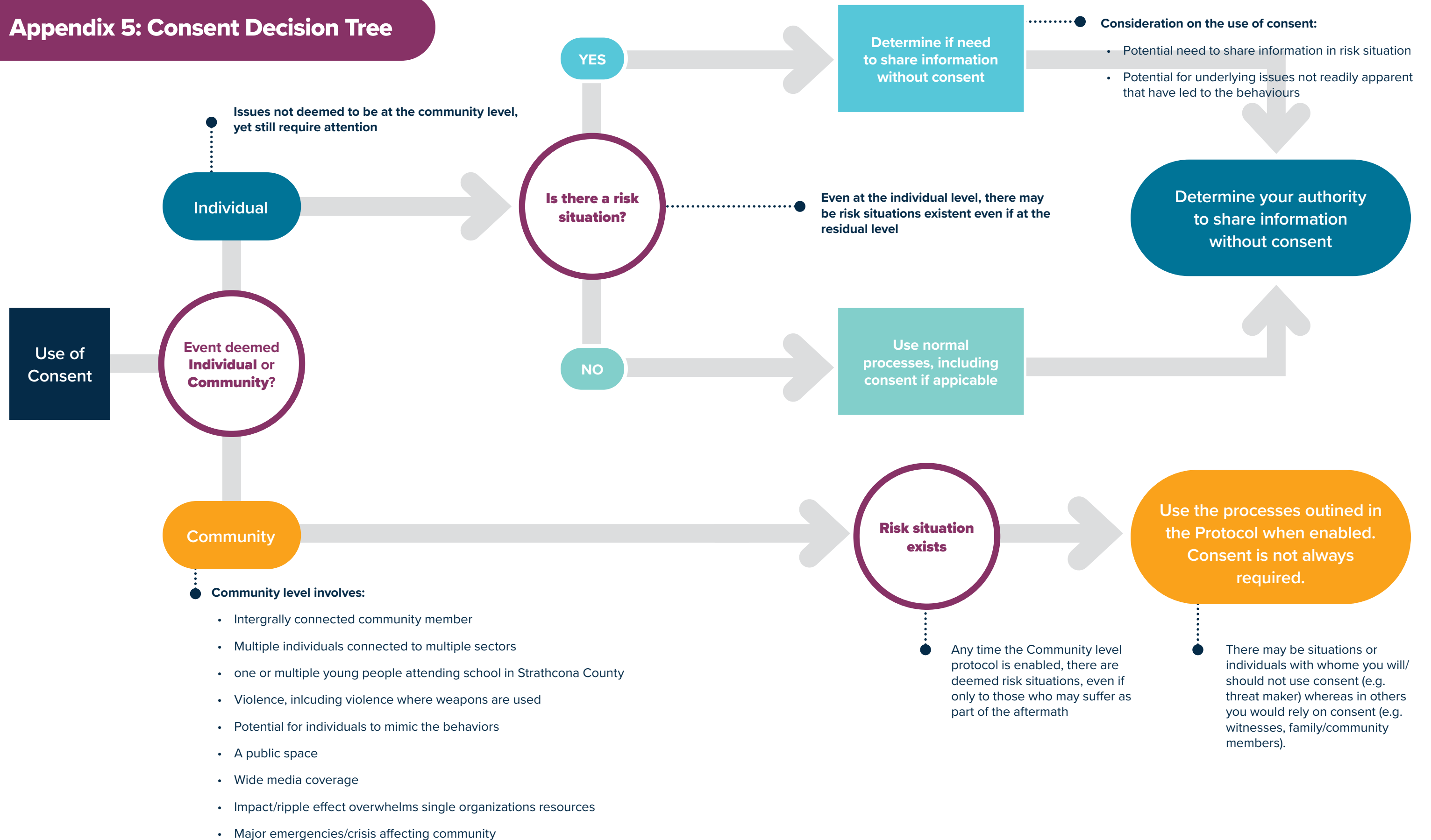
Who (organization)	Is disclosing what	To whom
Health Information Act (HIA)		
Health information custodians , including Alberta Health Services, physicians and other regulated or defined health care providers, and anyone acting on their behalf (affiliate as defined in Act)	Health information that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> averts risk of harm to a minor’s health and safety averts or minimizes a risk of significant harm to the health or safety of any person enables the individual to receive continuing treatment and care is authorized to be disclosed by Alberta’s or Canada’s legislation if custodian determines it’s in the best interests of an individual who lacks the mental capacity to provide a consent is identified and authorized with written consent of the individual information that the custodian reasonably believes relates to the possible commission, and that will protect the health and safety of Albertans 	Can be shared with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> anyone who requires the information to address harm anyone who requires the information to address danger a person responsible for providing continuing treatment and care anyone identified in the legislation anyone who can address the issue requiring the information and acts in best interests of the person anyone authorized by the consent to fulfill purpose a police service or the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General

Who (organization)	Is disclosing what	To whom
Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA)		
Private and not-for-profit organizations (engaged in commercial activities)	Personal information that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> allows response to an emergency that threatens an individual's or the public's life, health or security is authorized to be disclosed by Alberta's or Canada's legislation is identified and authorized with consent of the individual a reasonable person would consider is clearly in the interests of the individual and consent of the individual cannot be timely obtained or not reasonably be expected to be withheld by person to assist in an investigation 	Can be shared with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>anyone</i> who requires the information to respond to the emergency <i>anyone</i> identified in the legislation <i>anyone</i> authorized by the consent to fulfill purpose <i>anyone</i> who requires it to address the matter that is in the individual's best interests law enforcement or a public body conducting an investigation
Who (organization)	Is disclosing what	To whom
Privacy Act (Federal)		
Federal institutions including the RCMP and Health Canada	Personal information that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the public interest in disclosure clearly outweighs any invasion of privacy that could result from the disclosure would clearly benefit the individual to whom the information relates is for the purpose collected, and a purpose consistent to it is for any purpose in accordance with an act or regulation of Parliament with the consent of the individual 	Can be shared with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>anyone</i> who requires it to address the matter that is in the public interest <i>anyone</i> who requires it to address the matter that would benefit the individual <i>anyone</i> involved in fulfilling the purpose <i>anyone</i> identified in the legislation <i>anyone</i> authorized by the consent to fulfill purpose

Who (organization)	Is disclosing what	To whom
Children First Act		
Defined Service Providers (Government Departments, educational bodies as defined in FOIP, Police Service as defined in <i>Police Act</i> , agencies providing services to a child under an agreement with a public body)	Personal information of a child or of their parent/guardian that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> is necessary for enabling or planning services or benefits to a child, if the disclosing service provider determines it is in the best interests of the child 	Can be shared with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> another service provider who requires it to plan or enable services or benefits to the child
Custodians under the HIA	Personal information of a child that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> in the opinion of the service provider is in best interests of the child, and not contrary to the express request of the child 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to the parent or guardian of the child
	Health information of a child that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> is necessary for enabling or planning services or benefits to a child, if the disclosing custodian determines it is in the best interests of the child in the opinion of the disclosing custodian is in best interests of the child, and not contrary to the express request of the child 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a service provider who requires it to plan or enable services or benefits to the child to the parent or guardian of the child

Beyond the above, information may need to be collected from other sources, including parents, friends, classmates, etc. While they may not be subject to any legislation that prescribes their authority to disclose information, there should be authority for it to be collected, and they should be advised as to that authority. Information that is collected directly from the individual it is about should generally be provided notice (including purpose for the collection, how it will be used and the name of a person who can respond to questions about the collection).

Appendix 5: Consent Decision Tree



Appendix 6: Privacy Legislation and the Rights of a Minor to Provide Consent

Privacy legislation assumes that each individual has the rights and powers under the legislation, unless they do not have the capacity to understand and apply those rights, and if someone else has those rights. A child who has the capacity to understand can make their own decisions vis-à-vis their information, and a parent does not necessarily take those rights over. The following table identifies how privacy legislation in Alberta addresses this.

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

Provision	Notes
1(n) “personal information” means recorded information about an <i>identifiable individual</i>	‘Identifiable individual’ is not limited by age, and the act does not otherwise address this.
84(1)(e) if the <i>individual</i> is a minor, by a guardian of the minor in circumstances where, in the opinion of the head of the public body concerned, the exercise of the right or power by the guardian would not constitute an unreasonable invasion of the personal privacy of the minor,	This section allows one to ‘step into the shoes of another’ provided that they have the authority to do so. In the case of a minor the head (may be delegated) must determine that allowing exercise by a guardian would not be an unreasonable invasion of the minor’s privacy, and a guardian would not automatically be granted those rights or powers. Note that the guardian must have legal status. A parent would generally be deemed to have such status unless it was removed.

Health Information Act

Provision	Notes
1(1)(i) “diagnostic, treatment and care information” means information about any of the following: (i) the physical and mental health of an <i>individual</i> ; (ii) a health service provided to an <i>individual</i> , including the following information respecting a health services provider... and includes any other information about an <i>individual</i> that is collected when a health service is provided to the <i>individual</i> , but does not include information that is not written, photographed, recorded or stored in some manner in a record;	Health information in this act revolves around an ‘individual’ as the primary entity. The act does not place parameters around an individual by age or any other criteria. The section goes on to include other information about an individual that may not under other circumstances be deemed ‘health information,’ provided it is collected when a health service is provided.

Health Information Act - continued

Provision	Notes
1(1)(k) “health information” means one or both of the following: (i) diagnostic, treatment and care information; (ii) registration information;	This section defines health information to include the information listed in 1(1)(i) and 1(1)(u).
1(1)(u) “registration information” means information relating to an individual that falls within the following general categories and is more specifically described in the regulations: (i) demographic information, including the individual’s personal health number; (ii) location information; (iii) telecommunications information; (iii) residency information; (iv) health service eligibility information; (vi) billing information, but does not include information that is not written, photographed, recorded or stored in some manner in a record;	This section defines registration information to include information about an <i>individual</i> that may not under other circumstances be deemed ‘health information.’
22(2) A custodian may collect individually identifying health information from a person other than the individual who is the subject of the information in the following circumstances: (b) where the individual who is the subject of the information is unable to provide the information and the custodian collects the information from a person referred to in section 104(1)(c) to (i) who is acting on behalf of that individual;	This section authorizes a custodian to collect information about an individual from the guardian of a minor if the minor is not able to provide it themselves and they do not understand neither the nature nor the consequences of exercising the rights and powers under the act (s.104(1)(c).
33 A custodian may disclose individually identifying health information to the individual who is the subject of the information or to a person referred to in section 104(1)(c) to (i) who is acting on behalf of that individual.	This section authorizes a custodian to disclose information about an individual to the guardian of a minor if the minor is not able to understand neither the nature nor the consequences of exercising the rights and powers under the act (s.104(1)(c).

Health Information Act - continued

Provision	Notes
34(1) Subject to sections 35 to 40, a custodian may disclose individually identifying health information to a person other than the individual who is the subject of the information if the individual has consented to the disclosure.	This section allows disclosure with consent of the individual. It would need to be used in tandem with section 104(1)(b) if the individual is under the age of 18 and deemed to understand both the nature and the consequences of exercising the rights and powers under the act. If they do not the guardian could consent (s.104(1)(c).
135(1) A custodian may disclose individually identifying diagnostic, treatment and care information without the consent of the individual who is the subject of the information (n) if that individual lacks the mental capacity to provide a consent and, in the opinion of the custodian, disclosure is in the best interests of the individual	This section allows disclosure without consent of the minor individual if the minor lacks capacity to provide consent and the custodian is of the opinion that the disclosure is in the best interests of the minor. Note that this section allows for disclosure of a minor’s information without the consent of a guardian.
104(1) Any right or power conferred on an individual by this Act may be exercised (b) if the individual is under 18 years of age and understands the nature of the right or power and the consequences of exercising the right or power, by the individual, (c) if the individual is under 18 years of age but does not meet the criterion in clause (b), by the guardian of the individual	This section describes where the rights and powers under the act may be exercised by a minor, or by a guardian of the minor if the minor does not understand the nature nor the consequences of exercising those rights and powers.

Personal Information Protection Act

Provision	Notes
1(1) (k) “personal information” means information about an identifiable individual;	‘Identifiable individual’ is not limited by age, and the act does not otherwise address this.
61(1) Any right or power conferred on an individual by this Act may be exercised (b) if the individual is under 18 years of age and understands the nature of the right or power and the consequences of exercising the right or power, by the individual; (c) if the individual is under 18 years of age but does not meet the criterion in clause (b), by the guardian of the individual;	This section describes where the rights and powers under the act may be exercised by a minor, or by a guardian of the minor if the minor does not understand the nature nor the consequences of exercising those rights and powers.

Privacy Act (Federal)

Provision	Notes
8 (1) Personal information under the control of a government institution shall not, without the consent of the individual to whom it relates, be disclosed by the institution except in accordance with this section.	This section identifies the need for consent of an individual, but does not place any parameters or criteria, such as age, on the definition of the individual.
Regulations 10 The rights or actions provided for under the Act and these Regulations may be exercised or performed (a) on behalf of a minor or an incompetent person by a person authorized by or pursuant to the law of Canada or a province to administer the affairs or estate of that person;	This section of the <i>Privacy Regulations</i> authorizes the rights or actions under the act to be exercised on behalf of a minor by someone authorized to do so under laws of Canada or a province.

Taken together, the legislation would allow a minor to exercise the rights and powers that are afforded to an individual under the applicable legislation, provided that they have the capacity to understand those rights and powers and the consequences of exercising them. The person defined or delegated under the legislation must make that determination.

There is not a default position that the guardian of a minor would always need to provide consent for the disclosure of information about the minor. There may even be situations where it is not in the best interest of the minor to involve the guardian, or worse yet, the guardian’s actions may have led, at least in part, to the situation evolving as it has.

That said, it may at times be in the best interests of all to ensure the guardian is engaged in the discussions as they may well need to provide ongoing support or deal with the consequences of the situation.

Appendix 7: Consent and Privacy Statements

Protocol members and partners should review the decision making around the use of consent. (See Appendix 5: Decision Tree.) While it is applicable in many situations, consent forms are not necessary in all circumstances.

Participant Consent Form	
<p>Authorized by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Health Information Act (HIA) • The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP Act) 	
Individual's Information	Full legal Name:
	Also know as:
<p>I understand that everything discussed in my interview will be managed in a confidential manner and is collected for the purposes of preventing or responding to threats and risks to the health and safety of members of the community.</p>	
<p>Information may be disclosed to the following (VTSP Core Members):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strathcona County (Family and Community Services; Emergency Services; Enforcement Services; Victim Services) • Elk Island Catholic Schools • Elk Island Public Schools • Alberta Children's Services • Alberta Health Services (Children, Youth & Families; Intensive and Urgent Services) • Strathcona County RCMP • North American Center for Threat Assessment and Trauma Response <p>for the purposes of preventing, responding to and supporting individuals affected by threats to the health and safety of individuals and the community. Additionally, information may be disclosed with the following VTSP community partners or ad hoc members for the same purpose:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • 	
<p>I understand why I have been asked to disclose my individually identifying information and am aware of the risks and benefits of consenting, or refusing to consent, to the disclosure of my individually identifying information. I understand that I may revoke this consent in writing or electronically at any time.</p> <p>I understand that notwithstanding my consent, information may be disclosed as required by law, including where necessary to prevent harm to the health and safety of individuals.</p>	
Effective Date:	Expiry date under HIA (if any)
Signature of client/authorized representative. *	X
<p>*If you are signing on behalf of the individual, the following information must be provided:</p> <p>Name of Authorized Representative: _____</p> <p><small>Source of Representative's Authority (HIA s.104(____) or FOIP Act s.84(1)(____))</small></p>	

Appendix 8: Documentation Guidelines

As there will be a number of organizations participating in the *Violence, Trauma and Suicide Prevention Protocol*, there may be various means in which the documentation created in response to an event is managed, especially if the lead responsibility for initiating or managing any of the protocols falls or can fall on any one of the core members.

In addition to the central or main set of documentation that is maintained by the VTSP Lead Organization, there will likely be information that is documented by each of the participating organizations, especially where they may have a role to play and responsibility to act on or follow through on any required actions. Given the highly sensitive nature of the information that is collected about an event and those involved in the event, including the threat maker(s), potential victim(s) and others impacted, it is incumbent that the information be managed in a secure and confidential manner.

Responsibility to act as the Lead Organization for any of the protocols will be limited to one of the core members, each of which will already have in place their own records and information management policies and processes. It is expected that those policies and processes would apply in the activation of the protocol. The guidance provided here is meant to augment and not replace them, but should there be some misalignment between them, both areas should be reviewed to determine the best approach required to meet expectations.

Minimum expectations:

1. All personal and third-party information collected about individuals and organizations impacted or involved in an event must be managed in a secure and confidential manner. Secure manner means that the information is protected from unauthorized access through means that are appropriate to the level of sensitivity.
2. Only those individuals and organizations that are participating members in an activation should have access to the information. The degree of access may depend in part on their role and area of responsibility.
3. Individuals and organizations who are ad hoc participants may require access to certain information, depending on their role. They are required to sign confidentiality and non-disclosure agreements (See Confidentiality Agreement for Protocol Participation, Ad Hoc Member Nondisclosure Agreement, Appendix 9 and 10 to the *VTSP Protocol*).

4. All information collected and managed by any member organization must be managed in such manner that it is only available to those who require it.
5. Some information may be subject to additional requirements, for example if disclosed by another organization with additional restrictions. That information should be clearly labeled as such and managed accordingly.
6. Information that is to be shared through electronic means, including but not limited to email, text, etc., must be undertaken in a secure manner. Examples of this include through the use of encryption or password protected attachments. Where such is not available, identifying information (including that which may be contextually identifying) should not be included in the message or transmission.
7. Once the event has been deemed closed, the main or central file should be retained and disposed of by the VTSP Lead Organization as per their retention and disposition requirements. However, it is expected that such retention should be for a minimum of 11 years.

Information and records that are in the control of core members other than the central file must also be retained and disposed of in accordance with existent policies and practices of the holding organization. Community partners and ad hoc participants are required to dispose of information when it is no longer required given their area of responsibility.

At a minimum, retention and disposition must occur in a secure manner.

8. Should a formal access request be made for any of the records or information held by any of the participating protocol members and/or partners, it is expected that consultation occur with the other protocol members and/or partners as part of the response process.

Appendix 9: Confidentiality Agreement

Confidentiality Agreement for Protocol Participation

All participating partners and members of the *Violence, Trauma and Suicide Prevention (VTSP) Protocol* shall hold strictly confidential information concerning the operations of the protocol, personnel, acutely elevated risk situations and interventions that are identified as confidential. Information identified as confidential shall not be discussed in public or disclosed to anyone who is not directly involved in the *VTSP Protocol* or specific activations. Sharing information among members and/or partners will be done in a confidential setting only (whether in person, by phone, electronically or virtually).

Declaration of Confidentiality

I, _____, from _____ have read and

Full Name (please print)

Agency Name (please print)

understood the Confidentiality Agreement and agree that I will keep strictly confidential any information obtained through my involvement in the VTSP Protocol. I will not disclose this information or knowledge to anyone outside of the VTSP Protocol unless it is required to avert harm. This information will be used in good faith and in consideration of the best interest of the individual and community. I understand that the VTSP Protocol operates under the principle of confidentiality and participation in this work necessitates respecting this value. I agree if I leave the VTSP Protocol and/or the current member or partner organization, whether actively involved with the response or not, to keep all information confidential that occurred during the time at the VTSP Protocol and/or with the protocol member or partner organizations.

- *When in doubt as to the confidentiality of certain information, no disclosure shall occur without confirming with the source of said information that such disclosure has been authorized.*

Signature

Date

Appendix 10: Ad Hoc Member Agreement

Ad Hoc Member Nondisclosure Agreement

Participants Name: _____

Organization and position (if relevant): _____

Relationship to event: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number(s): _____ Cell: _____

Email: _____

Date: _____

1. I acknowledge that I will be given access to confidential information presented during the *Violence, Trauma and Suicide Prevention (VTSP) Protocol* activations and proceedings.
2. I understand and acknowledge that all information presented will be held in the strictest of confidence. I will not disclose this information or knowledge to anyone outside of the *VTSP Protocol* members or partners present unless it is required to provide services by my home organization. This information will be used in good faith and in consideration of the best interest of the individual and community.
3. I promise to only take notes on a need-to-know basis and only if the members participating in the *VTSP Protocol* discussion identified my home organization to be directly involved in the situation the information pertains to. I promise to only take notes if the note taking is lawful.
4. I agree to adhere to the above conditions as well as to the policies regarding confidentiality set out by my home organization.

Participant's Signature: _____

Witness Signature: _____

Date: _____

Protocol Signatories

The *Violence, Trauma and Suicide Prevention Protocol* was signed on March 16, 2022 in Strathcona County as a formal commitment to collaboratively support community safety and well-being.

Core Members

Clay Golden, Regional Manager for

**Kathi Campbell, Regional Director
(Edmonton Region)**

Alberta Children's Services



Mark Snaterse, Executive Director
of Addiction and Mental Health for

**Tracy Palmquist, Director
(Edmonton Zone)**

Alberta Health Services,
Children Youth and Families,
Addiction and Mental Health



Mark Snaterse, Executive Director
of Addiction and Mental Health for

Pamela Coulson, Director

Alberta Health Services,
Intensive and Urgent Services



Paul Corrigan, Superintendent

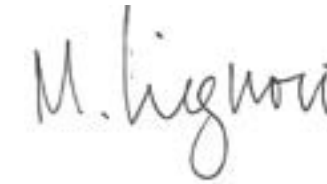
Elk Island Catholic Schools




Protocol Signatories

Core Members

Mark Liguori, Superintendent
Elk Island Public Schools



J. Kevin Cameron, Executive Director
North American Center for Threat Assessment and Trauma Response



Farah Albert, Executive Director
Sherwood Park-Strathcona County Primary Care Network



Mayor Rod Frank
Strathcona County



Dale Kendall, Superintendent
Strathcona County RCMP



Protocol Signatories

Community Partners

Ty Roed, Executive Director

Boys & Girls Club Strathcona
County



Wade Gardiner, Pastor of Kids, Youth
and Young Adults for

**Mike Shellenberg,
Executive Pastor**

Heartland Alliance Church



**Lori Vigfusson, Vice Principal,
Learning Support**

New Horizons School



Lerena Greig, Executive Director

Parents Empowering Parents (PEP)
Society



Protocol Signatories

Community Partners

Ann Marie LePan,
Chief Executive Officer

Robin Hood Association



**Kiara Warkentin, Director of
Justice, Research and Outreach**

SAFFRON Centre Ltd.



Sharon Siga, Director

Strathcona County Library



Karen Kadatz, Executive Director

Strathcona Shelter Society Ltd.



