

# **YOUR GUIDE TO SAFETY AND SECURITY**

## **CRIME PREVENTION GUIDE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

Calgary Police Service



# PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES PROGRAM

## ABSTRACT

\* In March of 1996, Chief Christine Silverberg of the Calgary Police Service received a letter from Mark Iantkow, a visually impaired staff member of the Independent Living Resource Centre of Calgary. His letter — which was headed: Are Calgary citizens with disabilities vulnerable? — was sent because people with disabilities were unable to find crime prevention programs that specifically addressed their unique concerns.

\* In August and September of 1996, Calgary Police Service representatives (Staff Sergeant Harvey Cenaiko; Acting Sergeant Jim Roberts and Ms. Ruth Steele, the Crime Prevention Unit Research Analyst) met with Mark Iantkow in regard to establishing a personal safety program for Persons With Disabilities (P.W.D.). Through discussions at meetings with members of the Independent Living Resource Centre, the Crime Prevention Unit identified a need for an easy-to-understand information pamphlet designed specifically for Persons With Disabilities.

\* Research was conducted and information gathered from across the country and overseas which showed that the material from other agencies was scarce and limited to print form. As a result, a draft pamphlet was produced by the Calgary Police Service which served as a "working" document from which to build upon. The Crime Prevention Unit and the Public Affairs Unit then conducted personal interviews, questionnaires and focus groups with members of the target audience and the information was specially modified to meet the needs of Persons With Disabilities.

\* The Calgary Police Service encountered some difficulty in finding a corporate sponsor to fund printing and design costs. This roadblock was mentioned during a conversation between members of the Crime Prevention Unit and Staff Sergeant Bob Darrah, a member of the Canadian Pacific Railway Police. The same day, Staff Sergeant Darrah came to the Crime Prevention Unit with Canadian Pacific Railway's unconditional offer of funding for this program.

\* In January 1998, the pamphlet was produced and distributed to various agencies serving people with disabilities.

\* In April 1998 April, the Canadian Pacific Railway sponsored the printing of the pamphlet in two alternate formats — braille and audio-cassette — at a cost of \$5,000. These braille and audio-cassette versions of the crime prevention guide are currently being distributed. Canadian Pacific Railway have indicated they will continue to unconditionally support the Calgary Police Service Crime Prevention Program for people with disabilities, including funding lesson plans and resource materials as required. Although the material has only been available for a few weeks, there has been an immediate and positive response not just in Calgary but in other Canadian centres such as Charlottetown, Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Fort McMurray, Edmonton and Lethbridge.

\* A selection process began in June 1998 to form a Persons With Disabilities Police Advisory Committee and to appoint a police coordinator and liaison officer for this group.

## SCANNING

1. Although Calgary, Alberta is one of the safest Canadian cities in which to live, many people still fear becoming a victim of crime. This is especially true for people with disabilities, who are particularly vulnerable to crime.
2. People from the disabled community in Calgary determined that it was impossible to find any crime prevention programs that effectively addressed their concerns. This prompted the first contact between the Calgary Police Service and people with disabilities in their joint effort to create a new crime prevention program tailored to the specific needs of the disabled.
3. Mr. Mark Iantkow, a visually impaired staff member from the Independent Living Resource Centre of Calgary, met with members of the Calgary Police Service's Community Policing Support Section in August 1996. This preliminary discussion indicated that there was a special need for crime prevention information to be made available to persons with disabilities because of their vulnerability.
4. Acting Sergeant Jim Roberts called a meeting of the Crime Prevention Unit and assessed the skills of the members to decide on the allocation of tasks for this special project. The budget for the unit was examined to determine the financial capacity of the unit to develop this program and telephone enquiries and Internet searches were conducted to find similar programs or any information on crime prevention programs for persons with disabilities. The response was minimal. Two booklets had been produced in Ontario and one agency in the United States had produced a booklet on abuse of persons in care.

The British Home Office had also produced a booklet dealing with abuse of disabled people by caregivers. None of the material appeared to meet the special needs of people who may be suffering from a wide range of disabilities.

5. A meeting was organized with people representing a diverse group of the disabled, including people suffering from the following disabilities:

- Schizophrenic Effective Disorder
- Visually Impaired / Blind
- Hard of Hearing / Deaf
- Spinal Chord Injury
- Stroke - Brain Injured
- Cerebral Palsy
- Paraplegic
- Quadriplegic
- Non-verbal

The purpose of this meeting was to determine if there was a need for a special crime prevention program. From the outcome of this meeting, it was clear that this was an especially vulnerable group whose needs were not being met by traditional crime prevention programs then available to the public through the Calgary Police Service.

## ANALYSIS

Research conducted by the Calgary Police Service's Crime Prevention Unit found that persons with disabilities may feel vulnerable and, as a result, may restrict their activities. They may also be unaware of basic personal safety guidelines and, for this reason, may become targets for criminals.

The Calgary Police Service's Crime Prevention Unit provides safety and security information to persons with disabilities, primarily through lectures coordinated with groups serving this community. Officers also provide information on an individual basis to people who call or visit police offices.

In 1996, the Crime Prevention Unit was approached by an organization representing people with disabilities. Through discussions with members of this organization and others, the Crime Prevention Unit identified a need for an easy-to-understand information pamphlet that would be distributed to organizations and agencies for persons with disabilities by the Calgary Police Service, by other City of Calgary departments serving this community and through public libraries. It would also be given to people attending lectures to reinforce safety and security messages. This type of material is not currently available in Canada.

Members of the disabled community have told crime prevention officers they are concerned about moving around the city safely, especially when using public transportation. Calgary Police Service public affairs personnel and crime prevention officers conducted personal interviews, developed questionnaires and staged focus groups with members of the target audience who said they also wanted information about home security, automobile safety and prevention of abuse and fraud. The original booklet text, which had focused on general personal safety, was therefore expanded to include these segments.

In January 1998, an open discussion took place in Calgary with approximately 50 people representing many disabled groups. The objective of the meeting was to determine the extent of fear of crime and the level of concern people with disabilities had in dealing with the justice system and to devise a strategy to deal with the problem. This was a structured focus group in which five experienced facilitators were on-hand from the City of Calgary and the Calgary Police Service.

The outcome of this meeting determined that there should be a committee formed called the "Persons With Disabilities Police Advisory Committee" which should be made up of representatives from the various disabled communities and the Calgary Police Service. The purpose of the committee would be to promote effective two-way communication, promote education and awareness, identify and resolve crime and safety concerns and increase police awareness of disability issues.

## RESPONSE

1. Initially, the possibility of developing and delivering a special crime prevention program for persons with disabilities through the police district field offices was considered. This strategy was soon discarded, however, when the special needs of this community were taken into account.

2. The Calgary Police Service Public Affairs Unit produced a communications plan to develop and produce a new pamphlet entitled "Your Guide to Safety and Security - Crime Prevention for Persons With Disabilities." A focus group representing various disabled people was formed and a meeting called. After much research, a tentative rough layout of the pamphlet was prepared and presented to the focus group to determine if it met the needs of the target audience. Due to the nature of the disabilities of the many groups represented, this meeting was long, protracted and difficult — although ultimately extremely productive. For instance, one of the participants, a non-verbal quadriplegic, could only communicate through movement of her eyes and by pointing a mini-flashlight (attached to her eye glasses) at the letters and numbers on a light sensitive vertical keyboard. The information thus dictated was then relayed by her caregiver. The results of this focus group were analysed by the Public Affairs Unit. The text was revised and some new segments were added.

There was some difficulty in finding a corporate sponsor to fund printing and design costs. Acting Sergeant Roberts approached his Canadian Pacific Railway Police counterpart, Staff Sergeant Bob Darrah, who responded immediately with Canadian Pacific Railway's offer of unconditional funding for the project.

The pamphlet was produced in September 1997 and was well received by the disabled community. However, it was quickly realized that persons who were blind were unable to access the information. Research was conducted and a producer and printer were contracted to translate the information into braille and audio-cassette formats. Funding was again sought and provided by Canadian Pacific Railway. The new formats have been produced and distribution began in May 1998.

As a result of developing this new crime prevention program, it was discovered that fear of crime and concerns about the justice system among the disabled communities was far greater than had been previously imagined. Staff Sergeant Cenaiko has made available the necessary manpower and technical resources to complete this work so far. Staff Sergeant Cenaiko has also provided the terms of reference necessary for the People With Disabilities Advisory Committee, as well as prepared a recommendation for the implementation of a police Coordinator and Liaison Officer for the People With Disabilities Advisory Committee.

## ASSESSMENT

The response to the pamphlet in its three formats -- print, braille and audio-cassette -- has been overwhelmingly positive. Due to effective media coverage, calls have been received in the Crime Prevention Unit from throughout Calgary as well as from across Canada, including Prince Edward Island; Toronto, Ontario; Winnipeg, Manitoba; Saskatoon, Saskatchewan; Fort McMurray, Alberta; Edmonton, Alberta; Lethbridge, Alberta; and Medicine Hat, Alberta. These requests for information have come from support groups for the disabled as well as from individuals. One such call, a message left on Acting Sergeant Roberts' voice mail box, simply said, "My name is Wally Brown. I am blind and have just received a copy of your audio-cassette. I just want you to know that your program is the best thing the police have done for blind people like me and it is much appreciated. Thank you. This call does not need a response, so I won't leave my telephone number."

This program is still new. The police liaison officer will be appointed in mid-July 1998. The selection process is currently underway to pick the Police Advisory Committee members, which has many more interested applicants than positions available. A monitoring procedure will also be set up to evaluate the program through the new Persons With Disabilities Police Advisory Committee.

The Crime Prevention Unit of the Calgary Police Service has been commended by the Alberta Justice Minister for its efforts in developing the Persons With Disabilities Program and for producing the crime prevention guide in its print, audio-cassette and braille formats.



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