

Oct 2025

# Local 196 SPOTLIGHT



## Trauma-Informed Responses to Funding Cuts for Sexual Violence Programs

The Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton (SACE) is a cornerstone of trauma-informed care in Alberta, supporting children, youth, and adults who have experienced sexual abuse or assault.

Open 365 days a year, SACE not only provides crisis and counseling services but also works tirelessly to educate the public about sexual violence – which includes harassment, assault, child sexual abuse, and non-consensual photo sharing

Recently, SACE lost a \$1.8 million provincial grant intended to reduce their staggering 18-month counseling waitlist. With the grant, SACE successfully cut that wait time to just three months by hiring psychologists, social workers, and client care professionals.

Now, after the government's decision not to renew the funding in Budget 2025, layoffs have begun and wait times are expected to rise again.



### The statistics are sobering:

- 2 in 3 women, 1 in 2 girls, 1 in 4 boys, and 1 in 3 men in Alberta will experience sexual violence in their lifetime.
- 85–95% of survivors know their offender.
- 95% of sexual assaults are never reported to police.
- It wasn't until 1993 that spousal sexual assault became illegal in Canada.

***"This cut is more than just a number on a budget sheet – it's a direct attack on the safety and dignity of survivors."***

Julia Hayter, NDP Shadow Minister for the Status of Women

**“We were told to bring down the waitlist, and we did. We were told to increase access, and we did. Now those same staff who made that possible are being laid off.”**

- SACE CEO Mary Jane James

SACE has temporarily paused all intakes for the following services:

- Adult counselling
- Child and youth counselling
- Core therapeutic groups, including:
- Adult Survivors Healing from Abuse (ASHA)
- Men's Group
- Sexual Assault Survivors Support (SASS)
- Sitting in Solidarity
- refleQT
- Who I Am Now: Trauma & Healing in Adolescence

The Alberta government maintains that base funding remains stable at \$2.1 million per year, though SACE says only \$1.5 million has been distributed so far.

### The Ripple Effect on Community Nursing

For community health nurses, these cuts mean more than policy shifts — they mean longer waitlists, more complex client needs, and higher emotional strain. Nurses working in public health, mental health, and emergency care often support survivors during their most vulnerable moments. Without accessible follow-up care, the burden grows heavier for both clients and clinicians.

Trauma-informed practice reminds us that healing requires safety, trust, collaboration, and empowerment. When systems fail to fund that work, nurses and survivors both bear the cost.

UNA Local 196 recognizes the essential role that organizations like SACE play in community health. As nurses, advocates, and educators, we stand in solidarity with those providing compassionate, trauma-informed care to survivors across Alberta.

**Together, we call for sustainable funding and a trauma-informed approach to policymaking — because healing cannot happen on a waitlist.**

### References

CBC News. (2025, March 6). SACE says it's been forced to lay off staff after losing \$1.8M grant from province.

Global News. (2025, March 7). Alberta sexual assault centre says loss of provincial grant will increase wait times.

Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton (SACE). (2024). Annual Report.

Alberta Council of Women's Shelters. (2023). Statistics on sexual violence in Alberta.