



Sanare  
CENTRE

**SOUTHEASTERN ALBERTA  
CHILD ADVOCACY CENTRE**

**WELCOME GUIDE FOR  
CAREGIVERS**



# WELCOME

Welcome to the Southeastern Alberta Child Advocacy Centre. Coming here today is a step on the road towards restoring hope and security. We're here to ensure the best interests of your child remain everyone's top priority.

Our multidisciplinary team are dedicated to supporting children and youth throughout the entire process, from sharing their story to starting their journey toward healing. Our number one priority will always be the best interests, safety, security, and comfort of your child.

This guide will provide you with information about what to expect during your first visit and will provide resources to support you and your child. You are welcome to reach out to our team at any time if you have any questions or concerns.

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# Important Information & Phone Numbers

This page contains the names of your contacts who are available to lend strength and confidentially answer any questions you may have.

Sanare Centre hours of operation are Monday to Friday from 8 AM to 4 PM.

## To contact the Sanare Centre:

 info@sanarecentre.ca		] @sanarecentre
 sanarecentre.ca		
 403-548-2717		

**Questions about the support programs available for you and your child?**

Our Advocates will be happy to assist you. You can reach them by phone/text at **403-928-4459.**

## We're all here to help

Using the shared wisdom of our multidisciplinary team, we lend strength to the children and youth who come through our centre to share their stories. Throughout the entire disclosure, investigative, judicial, and healing process, our number one priority will always be the best interests, security, and comfort of your child. During your visits to the Sanare Centre, you may meet individuals from the following organizations:

- Sanare Centre Staff: Child Advocacy Centre, Clinical Program, Victim Navigation, Administrative Staff
- Alberta Health Services: Children's Mental Health Therapists
- Medicine Hat Police Services
- Victim's Services: MHPS Victim Assistance, RCMP Victim Service Unit
- Royal Canadian Mounted Police
- South Region Children's Services
- Alberta Crown Prosecution Services
- Off-site medical and mental health professionals
- Facility Dogs: Athena, Glory, and Sarabi

# A place where kids can tell

Every child has a story. It's our job at Sanare Centre to listen.

Sanare is Latin for "to heal" and speaks to the work our team does in, walking alongside people during their healing journey. In 2021, our Child Advocacy Centre joined under the umbrella of services offered at Sanare Centre.

Today, our multidisciplinary team works towards the common goals of supporting children and youth who have suffered abuse and creating a future where every child is heard.



Sanare Centre is located at:  
Unit #2,  
36 Strachan Ct. SE

## Travelling by City Transit?

We are located on Strachan Court, directly behind the Save on Foods store. The closest bus stop is **#S056 on Route 53 Ross Glen**. We are also walking distance from stop **#S106 on Route 61 South Ridge**.

For detailed directions on how to get to Sanare Centre please visit the City of Medicine Hat Transit website: [www.medicinehat.ca/transit](http://www.medicinehat.ca/transit)

## Need Help with Transportation?

Contact one of our Child Advocates to discuss any transportation needs.  
**403-548-2717**

## Parking



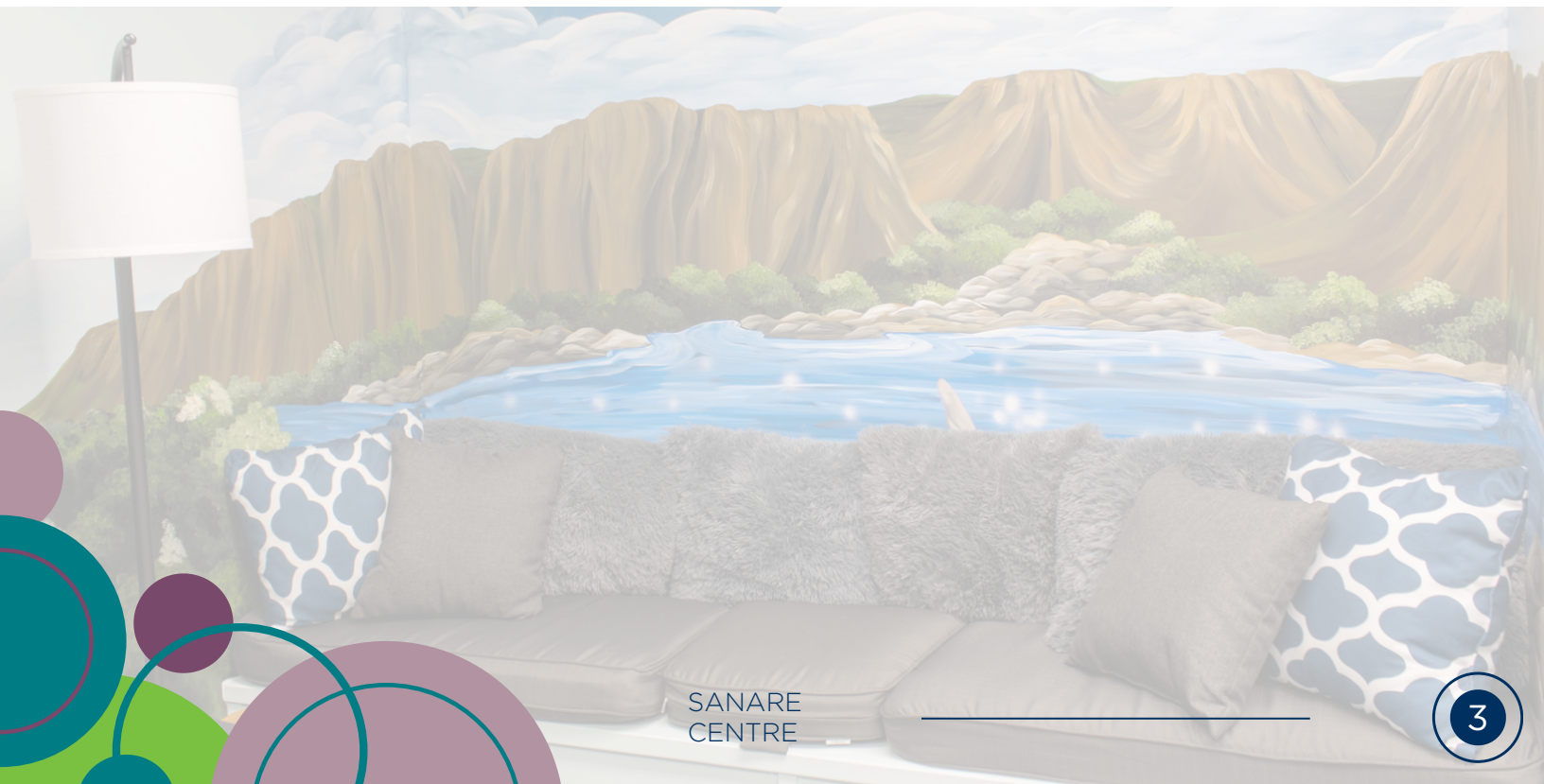
Parking is available directly in front of our building, there is also street parking available. Please do not park in the spaces marked in purple as those are reserved spaces for the laundromat.

# Entering Sanare Centre



You and your child's safety and wellbeing are a top priority. Sanare Centre is a secured facility, this means our doors are locked and only those who have scheduled appointments are granted access to our building. When you arrive, you will need to buzz to be let in. The door buzzer is located to the right of the front entrance (see picture). Our front desk staff will ask for your name and who you are here to see. Please let the staff know your name and that you are here for an appointment with the CAC.

After arriving at our centre, you and your child will be greeted by our staff and brought to the Family Room to wait. The person you are meeting with will be notified you have arrived. In the meantime, you are welcome to explore the Family Room and make yourself comfortable. This space is stocked with snacks, games and toys to keep you and child comfortable during your visit to the centre.





# Surrounding your child with support

Coming to the Sanare Centre has been your first step towards restoring hope and security.

Shortly after you arrive, one of our Advocates will come and explain what to expect during your visit and introduce you to members of our team who will be supporting your child during their visit. The role of the Advocates is to provide information, support and guidance during and after your child's visit to our centre. This may include connecting you and your child to community resources and programs to support your family's unique needs.

We are committed to surrounding you with support and advocating for the best interests of your child. We recognize that no two children are alike, and each situation and child deserves a unique and tailored approach. That's why we work with our partners to develop a plan that may include the following support services:

## Canine Support

We employ facility and therapy dogs who may be available to provide comfort and support to your child within our centre and at the Provincial and King's Bench Courts.

## Clinical Services

We will connect your child to a variety of counselling and trauma support professionals operating at the centre or in community.

## Court Preparation & Accompaniment

If your child's case proceeds to court, we will invite your child to take part in court preparation - an important step in addressing any myths or fears they may have towards the judicial process. Support will also be provided for you and your child within the criminal justice system if your child is required to testify.

# The Interview Process

What to expect and how to prepare.

During your child's visit to our centre they will meet with a Child Forensic Interview Specialist in one of our child-friendly interview rooms. Your child can choose to have one of our Facility Dogs join them during their meeting with the interviewer.

Interviews are recorded, so that those who have experienced abuse might not have to repeat their story. Our Forensic Interview Specialists conduct the interview and will speak to your child one-on-one. These professionals are highly skilled and take special care to avoid any further trauma to the child or youth being interviewed.

While your child is being interviewed, one of the Advocates will meet with you to discuss any questions you may have and discuss community resources and programs that can be of support to you and your child.

After your child's interview, the Investigator will meet with you to discuss the next steps in the investigation after the interview (these steps will vary depending on the outcome of the interview). You will be kept updated with relevant information and will be connected with any support you need moving forward.

## Important Details to Consider

- It is best not to discuss the interview before coming to the Centre as investigators will want the most unfiltered version of your child's story.
- Interviews are commonly prioritized based on the safety of the child and family, preservation of evidence, and the risk a suspect may pose to the family and public. Each case is unique and will take a varying amount of time to be closed.
- Caregivers should be aware that a case may possibly take months before an investigation is closed.
- Your child may not disclose during the interview and that is okay. A child or youth may not be ready to share their story, and since there is no time limit on charges for child abuse, it is better to take the time needed.

# Your Child's Healing

One of the best things you can do for your child is communicate that you love them, believe them, and are proud of them for sharing their story. Most importantly, they need to know they did nothing wrong.

Understanding your child's feelings and behaviors is an important step towards guiding them through the healing process. No one knows your child better than you, but below are some behaviors your child may or may not be going through:

- Regressive behaviors (toileting accidents after potty training, thumb sucking, reclaiming a stuffed animal as an older child).
- Sleep problems (fears prior to bedtime, especially if abuse happened in their bedroom).
- Low self-esteem.
- Wary of physical contact with adults.
- Separation anxiety when apart from primary caregivers.
- Behavioral extremes such as aggression or withdrawal.
- Flashbacks or the trauma seen as repetitive play in younger children.
- Nightmares with similar themes (monsters, scary people, etc.).
- Anxiety can often be reported as stomach aches or headaches.
- Inability to get along with same-aged peers.
- Dissociation (looks like attention problems for children or spacing out).
- Sexual acting out behaviors caused by the child making sense of what they experienced.
- Generalized anxiety (could be anxiety about one thing but can also be generalized to many things).
- Running away or school truancy due to anxiety or bullying.
- Appetite disruption (over or under eat to cope with overwhelming feelings).
- Self-harming behaviors (banging of head, picking scabs, cutting).
- Wearing clothing that is not appropriate for the season (such as heavy clothing in summer).

No two children experience trauma alike. Some children may experience many of the above, some may experience none of them. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you would like to discuss any behavior that you may be concerned about.



# Healing House

Sanare's Clinical Program offers a group for youth who have experienced sexual abuse/assault.

Healing House is an 8-week open group for youth aged 14-17. Participants can join this group at any time from September through May to attend eight sessions. Healing House helps youth recognize that they are not alone in their experiences and provides connections and support through education and activities related to the group curriculum.

Some of the topics discussed in group are coping and grounding strategies, facts and fiction about sexual violence, how our bodies react to trauma, emotions and self-compassion, and boundaries.

**For more information, or to schedule an intake please ask your Child Advocate.**



# Your Healing

You play an important role in your child's healing, but please don't forget to check-in with your own well being.

Abuse can affect the child's entire support system and we have resources in place to ensure everyone is given the services they need. If you need help, we can connect you with counseling or other services that meet your unique needs.

Sanare offers a group for parents and caregivers, the **Inter-generational Healing Group (IGH or IGH-TIP)**: a trauma-informed approach to parenting. This 15-week group provides participants opportunity to build or add to their toolkits for enjoying more positive outcomes in their parenting journey and strengthening their parent/child relationship(s). IGH is open to all genders and may include adults in traditional or non-traditional parental or caregiver roles, including extended family, foster parents, or others. These adults may be concerned that trauma from their past, and/or trauma experienced by a child in their care may be negatively impacting their relationships, and/or be adults supporting the parenting role of other adults where trauma has been a significant factor in the family history. **For more information, please ask your Child Advocate.**

If you need help, please reach out. You can access support 24/7 by texting or phoning:

**Alberta's One Line for Sexual Violence at 1-866-403-8000.**

You can also access the Get Support Now chat between 9am-9pm at [www.aasas.ca](http://www.aasas.ca)

**Distress Line at 403-266-4357**

(HELP). You can also access the online chat portal at [www.distresscentre.com](http://www.distresscentre.com)



# All kinds of questions. All kinds of answers.

Whatever questions you may have, we will do our best to help answer them.

Our team is committed to supporting you and your child throughout the entire process. We are happy to help answer any questions you may have at any point. The following are some common questions we hear.

## What should I say to my child?

- Tell your child that you believe them, that it is not their fault, they are brave for telling (even if they don't feel brave), and that you are getting them the help that they need.
- Let them know ahead of time that they will be coming to Sanare to meet with someone and share their story.
- Sanare Centre and our multidisciplinary team are here to help make sure kids are safe. The doors are locked, and people need an appointment before they are let in. There are Police Officers and Children's Services staff who work here. The Police Officer that may be talking to your child will not be wearing their uniform; they just want to know you and your story. However, there are Police Officers who visit Sanare who do wear a uniform and so you may see them as well.
- After your visit, let your child know how brave they were for coming.

## Can I talk to my child about what happened?

- After the interview has been completed, yes!
- Avoid pressuring your child into talking about what happened but let them know you are there for them if they want to talk and that it's also okay if they don't.

## What should I say to my other children?

Child abuse does not just impact the child who is experiencing the abuse, it also impacts their siblings and families in a significant way. It is important to recognize that while you may be facing feelings of fear, anxiousness, and worry, your other children may be feeling the same way. No two children are the same and each one of them may experience different feelings and react in different ways. Giving your children a safe place to share their feelings, and spending time together is very important. It can be a scary time for the whole family.

Your other children do not need to know the specific details of what happened to the child who experienced abuse, but they do need to know that they are going to be safe and cared for. Recognizing your child's needs and worries will help you to answer their questions.

## How can I stay strong for my child?

Many caregivers feel overwhelmed, scared, or unsure about how to support and protect their child during this process. You are one of your child's most valuable resources. Let your child know that no matter what happens, you are going to do your best to be there for them. Some examples of this might be:

- Reassure your child that the professionals involved are here to help and will do everything they can to ensure your child is safe.
- Your child may not want to talk about how they are feeling, but it is important to let them know that whenever they are ready to talk, you are going to be there for them. Let your child know that if they don't want to talk to you about how they are feeling that you will help them find someone that they can talk to.
- When they do want to talk it is important that you listen to your child and support their feelings without asking for details. Allowing your child to lead the conversation without having to answer questions will help create safety for your child to express their feelings.
- In supporting your child, it is important to ensure your needs are also met. The team at Sanare are here to help you connect to the resources and supports available to your family.

Keeping your child safe is priority. If you need help, the team at Sanare Centre are available to provide information, education, and resources that can support you.

## What if I'm having difficulty processing what has happened and struggling to support or believe my child?

Hearing your child disclose abuse can feel overwhelming for parents and caregivers. It can be hard to process and accept what has happened to your child as most cases of child abuse are committed by someone the child knows. These people are often individuals that are known and loved within the family.

When your child discloses abuse by someone you may know and love, it can feel shocking and may create mixed emotions such as love, anger, disbelief, confusion, and fear. People who harm children groom not only the child victim, but the whole family. It is not uncommon to feel confusion, grief, or any other emotion you may be experiencing, upon learning that someone you know and trusted has harmed your child. These feelings can be amplified if the parent or caregiver has their own history of trauma.

We know that children who are well supported have better long-term adjustment and overall well-being. Your love and support is critical to helping your child heal. If you need help to connect to resources to navigate your own healing or to learn ways to support your child's healing, we can assist you.

## What does my child need now?

When a child has experienced a trauma, they need to know that they are not alone and that their feelings are normal. Connecting with support can help your child feel like they are not alone and that hope, and healing is possible.

Children need a safe space where they can express what they are feeling in a child friendly way (such as through art or play) and know that they will be supported and cared for. They need to know that big emotions are normal and be given space to express and talk about what they are feeling. Every child has their own unique healing journey and will need space and time to make sense of what happened to them as they begin their journey towards healing.

## What is involved in a criminal investigation?

In a police investigation, your child will be asked about the alleged abuse by an interviewer with specialized training. The goal of the investigation and interview with the child is to gather all the relevant information about what occurred so that the investigative team can gather all the evidence needed to proceed with the case, and to ensure protection and safety of the child.

## What is the purpose of recording my child's forensic interview and where will this recording be used?

The Advocate or Interviewer will let your child know that there is a camera in the interview room. The camera is there so that the investigators can review the interview afterwards and the officer assigned to your child's file can observe the interview. Sometimes, the child may need to come back to Sanare to talk with the investigator again, this does not mean they did not do a good job the first time. The Investigator may want to ask different questions to find out more about what your child said.

## How long does the court process take?

The court process often takes a significant amount of time. It is not unusual for cases to take from months to years to be concluded. The length of the process does not mean that your concerns are not being taken seriously, there are many influences in the length of time a court case can take. This includes things such as: legal representation for an alleged offender and collecting appropriate paperwork (medical information, etc.). Know that you do not have to face the court process alone, there is support for you and your child during this time.

## Is there anything else I should know?

If you ever need urgent support, there are crisis lines you can access at anytime from anywhere in Alberta.

**Alberta's One Line for Sexual Violence:** 1-866-403-8000

**Distress Centre:** 403-266-HELP (4357) or [www.distresscentre.com](http://www.distresscentre.com)

**Kid's Help Line:** 1-800-668-6868, Text: 686868, [www.kidshelpphone.ca](http://www.kidshelpphone.ca)

# Next Steps

Following your first visit to Sanare Centre, we will begin to develop your child's personalized care plan.

In addition to our support programs, please take the time to consider if you would like support with the following services:

- 1** We can schedule regular care calls to provide support, general updates on the status of your case and ensure your questions are answered.
- 2** We can assist you in scheduling transportation to and from your Sanare Centre appointments or court dates.
- 3** We can help you with a request for financial assistance for your child through the Victims of Crime Assistance Program. These funds can be used for support such as Emergency Financial Assistance, Counselling, and Physical Injury Support and Services.
- 4** We can assist you in drafting and filing your Victim Impact Statements.

If there are any additional services you think we may be able to assist you with, please don't hesitate to contact us.

# Notes



## Services My Family Would Like to Connect With:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
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## Service Providers My Family is Connected to:

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