

App for Women at Risk of Lethal Violence from Intimate Partners

Partner Organization: Ending Violence Association of BC (EVA BC)

About the Partner Organization: The Ending Violence Association of BC (EVA BC) is a province-wide, non-profit, organization that has existed in BC for over 24 years serves as a resource for over 240 community-based services supporting victims/survivors of sexual assault, intimate partner violence, child abuse and criminal harassment. Our goals are to: provide support and training to the staff and volunteers of community-based victim/survivor serving programs in BC; undertake research, develop and distribute resources and tools to community programs serving victims/survivors in BC; educate the public on the needs of victims/survivors of violence; develop and maintain standards for the provision of service to those who have been victimized; foster the development of relevant cross sectoral initiatives across BC and support communities to maintain them; provide related education and training to criminal justice, health and social service system personnel; work in partnership with other provincial organizations, educational institutions and other key organizations in related fields to ensure cross sectoral collaboration and information exchange at the provincial level; engage in projects and programs that work toward the prevention of violence.

Context: Intimate partner violence against women and their children occurs in BC at alarming rates, with 29 Intimate partner violence-related deaths in BC in 2014, and 21 in 2015. On average there are approx. 400 women in high risk situations in BC at any given time. Women at high risk for lethal violence are at highest risk during the first 2-18 months after leaving a violent relationship. Although abusive partners can use technology as a means to locate women victims and continue perpetrating violence, it can also help to increase women's connections with family, police, and support, and decrease isolation.

A partnership between EVA BC, Securiguard, and Telus, in 2013, led to the development of the ground breaking SOS Response Personal Safety App. The revolutionary App could be downloaded to a smartphone and, when used, automatically send pre loaded risk related information and images (30 photos in 30 seconds), GPS location, and other valuable information to a live 24/7 professionally monitored security monitoring station. Armed with this vital information and visuals, trained operators instantly assessed and dispatched the police to the person's location. Pertinent information about risk that had been pre loaded into the App could then be brought up in real time, into the 24/7 monitoring system managed by a security company. For women deemed high risk for lethal violence, this could include information about protection orders, specific threats, and other critical information that would help both the police and the victim. Other Apps exist, some of which reside on smartphones, others of which are separate devices but no other App we have phone interfaces with a home alarm security system. When activated, a security monitoring centre assesses the situation and when needed calls police and at the same time send the pre loaded risk related information to the police while they are on their way to the points of danger.

The program was abandoned because of the platform changes that kept occurring with iPhone and other smart phone platforms. The security company made the difficult decision to abandon the program due to not having the resources to stay current with technology.

The challenge is to develop a mobile personal security App, designed to work as a 24/7 monitored alarm system, specifically for women at high risk of lethal violence from intimate partners. The goal is to increase safety for these women and their children, and prevent domestic violence related deaths. Once we have a new App, we will access the new security company and launch the App in BC. It is our hope and intention that such an App could be used throughout Canada or beyond.

Monthly subscription fees would make sense for us to cover the costs of ongoing maintenance. We would be very honoured to come and speak to you more about this challenge.

Please see links to video and posting about the program that was in place:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KRdzOUjMggA>

<http://blog.telus.com/our-customers/embracing-technology-to-keep-women-and-their-families-safe/>