

**The Violence Against Women Advocate Case Review (VACR)** is a collaborative oversight model which enables independent, arms-length reviews of sexual assault investigations *that did not proceed to charges*.

In this model, local police services enter into a legal agreement with sexual violence experts from community-based sexual assault centres/gender-based violence agencies to review each sexual assault file that has been closed without charges. Reviewers provide feedback to police on specific files as well as note trends or system operations related to sexual assault investigations. Reviewers look for complete investigations, policy and procedural steps, an understanding of the impact of trauma on victims, and the implications of that trauma on their behavior during and post assault.

The model introduces and embeds a critical new step in the investigative process:

**Report → Investigation → Clearance → VACR → Police Response (Feedback Reassessment, Action)**

VACR is one tool created by police services and sexual violence advocates to identify and address some of the challenges faced by the criminal justice system in holding sexual violence perpetrators responsible for their actions. This structured, quarterly review process aims to:

- Reduce unnecessary case attrition at the police level and improve conviction rates and the ability of the system to hold perpetrators accountable, and;
- Build trust between victims of sexual assault and police services by demonstrating institutional transparency through participation in a collaborative VACR process working closely with community-based sexual assault centres/gender-based violence agencies.

Through collaborative work during the reviews, community-based agencies who are sexual violence specialists and can bring the perspective and needs of sexual assault victims to the case review. This lifts the burden away from individual victims to draw attention to issues or concerns and shifts it to trained reviewers. While victims still have the right to file a complaint or make an inquiry, many do not have the emotional or physical energy, procedural knowledge, or information needed to do so. Also, because reviewers are looking at all closed files, they are able to identify recurring patterns or system-wide issues - something that is not always possible for police forces to detect when concerns are addressed individually when a complaint is made to the force.

A VACR process is currently being used by approximately 28 Canadian police services and has been operating since 2017, when an Ontario police service implemented the first Canadian VACR review process. In Saskatchewan, VACR has been in operation since 2019 when the Regina Police Service and the Regina Sexual Assault Centre entered a VACR agreement. There are currently six police services operating a VACR process in Saskatchewan - Regina, Saskatoon, Moose Jaw, Prince Albert, Estevan, and Weyburn.

Our VACR Project with the **(list Police Force)** began in **(insert year)**. We would like to thank the **(insert name of Police Force)** for their invitation to participate in this work through a collaborative partnership with us. The implementation of this review project evidences their openness to feedback and a commitment to ensure that they are accountable to victims of sexual violence.