



Alberta government announces treatment beds for young women

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CALGARY- A Calgary addictions centre hopes to replace the crutch of alcohol and drugs with the embrace of healing, with eight new residential treatment beds announced today for young women.

Clients routinely wait six to eight weeks for spaces at Aventa, but an official with the province's lone women's-only addictions treatment facility said the centre has always strived to find beds immediately for pregnant women gripped by substance abuse, and at risk of harming themselves and giving birth to children with severe Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.

"They may not prevent it 100 per cent, but they may prevent the degree of FASD, and that's very important," said Mara Thorvalson, Aventa's clinical director.

The Alberta government announced today the opening of 20 new treatment beds for young Albertans — the eight at Aventa, and five for males and seven for female inpatients in the Edmonton area. Health Minister Ron Liepert said 20 new spaces may not sound like much, but the \$1.5-million investment will help hundreds of young men and women, often staying in rehab for three-month stints or shorter ones.

These are the first of 100 beds for addictions treatment promised last year by the Stelmach Tories, in response to a task force on community safety.

The province is on track to help fund the rest of them by 2010, Justice Minister Alison Redford told reporters.

It's part of the government's renewed efforts to tackle the root causes of crime and keep teens and young adults out of the justice system, so "we're doing a much better job than assuming everyone needs to go to jail," Redford said.

Aventa's new youth-only treatment beds opened last month, the first major expansion since it opened its 36-bed facility in the Mission neighbourhood four years ago.

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