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Calgary Dream Center's Women's Initiative caters to gender specific needs

In partnership with Aventa, the initiative hopes to bridge the gap between homelessness and addiction issues for women



METRO FILE PHOTO
The Calgary Dream Center

By: **Lucie Edwardson** Metro, Published on Fri Feb 26 2016

For more than a decade the Calgary Dream Centre has been leading Calgary men on a path to recovery from homelessness and addiction, and now, they've opened their doors to women too.

The Dream Centre hosted an open house Friday to officially launch their brand new women's initiative.





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Jim Moore

“People who are lost or broken reintegrated back into community so that they can live lives of purpose, that’s what dreams mean,” said Jim Moore, CEO of the Dream Centre. “This new program is the result of strong partnership, collaborations and friendships with others who’re united with us for a common cause for those most vulnerable to our society.”

The Dream Centre’s Women’s initiative was founded in partnership with many local and governmental groups. One of their main partners was the Aventa Centre of Excellence for women with addictions.



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Kim Turgeon

“Calgary Dream Center’s Women’s initiative brings together two like-minded agencies to support women’s needs first and foremost,” said Kim Turgeon, Aventa executive director. “Together we are building a collaborative approach from a trauma informed, genders responsive and holistic lens. As partners in women’s wellness we are leveraging each other’s strengths and expertise areas to advance common objectives for women.”

Diana Krecsy, president and CEO of the Calgary Homeless Foundation said the Women’s Initiative is inspiring because of the partnership between the Dream Centre and Aventa.

“The way they’re partnering as two organizations to create a bridge for clients with each others organizations focusing on its own area of expertise,” she said. “I think when you look at these big organizations doing something in a new way, that always benefits the client. Often what we forget is that you have to go from one program to another to get back into community and they’re creating bridges.”





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Diana Kretsy

Kretsy said the program will have life changing impacts for participants.

"Somebody's mother, somebody's sister, somebody's daughter is going to find their way home because of this initiative," she said.

Alina Turner, independent research consultant and a fellow at the University of Calgary's School of Public Policy was brought into the project in the planning phase to help them best understand housing needs for women with addiction issues.

"I looked at best practices and then designed a program that was suited locally for women's needs here," she said.

Turner said the main focus was establishing that the needs of women are very different than the needs of men.

"The literature was very clear that we couldn't just paste men's programs and assume it would work for women," she said. "There are very specific ways we've designed the program top to bottom to suite women's needs."

Turner said that includes their physical needs and trauma informed case management. She said although the Women's Initiative is a great start, the research showed that the need is much greater and hopes more resources such as the Women's Initiative will begin to come to fruition.