

LUNA

CHILD AND YOUTH
ADVOCACY CENTRE

2013 – 2023:
A Decade of Impact





Our Purpose

To ensure those impacted by child abuse receive the support they need to heal, build resilience, and thrive; and to create communities where offenders are held accountable, and all children and youth are safe.

Our Core Values

We are one team.

Working together is what sets us apart. We bring our individual expertise and focus while relying on collaboration and partnership to ensure the best outcomes for the people we serve. We build trusting relationships with each other and those we serve by showing compassion, being respectful, and believing we all have strengths to contribute. In a trying field, we are there for one another.

We make a difference.

We are a beacon of hope for the people we serve, helping them to see their own strength and the possibilities of a brighter future ahead. We are a catalyst for positive change, approaching every interaction with compassion and empathy, and providing a safe space for those we serve to be heard, seen, and supported. We leverage and share our combined knowledge and expertise to build informed, engaged communities where everyone plays a role in keeping children and youth safe.

We are committed to diversity.

Our commitment to diversity is our promise to each other and the individuals and communities we serve. We believe in the inherent benefits of an inclusive and diverse organization that recognizes, embraces, and values all forms of diversity. We strive to remove barriers to inclusion in all aspects of our organization and service delivery, so that we may support, strengthen, benefit from, and contribute to the richness and complexity that is our community.

We strive for excellence.

We are innovators and strategic risk takers who challenge ourselves and each other so we can continue to grow and evolve as leaders in what we do. We are deeply committed to continuous learning and development, to research and evaluation, and to sharing our expertise and knowledge so we can have a greater impact on those we serve and our communities.

WHERE WE WORK, LIVE AND PLAY

In the spirit of reconciliation, Luna Child and Youth Advocacy Centre acknowledges that we live, work and play on the traditional territories of the Blackfoot Confederacy (Siksika, Kainai, Piikani), the Tsuut'ina, the Îyâxe Nakoda Nations, the Métis Nation (Region 3), and all people who make their homes in the Treaty 7 region of Southern Alberta.

Celebrating 10 Years

OVER A DECADE AGO, A SMALL GROUP OF COMMUNITY-MINDED LEADERS CAME TOGETHER with an ambitious vision to transform how child abuse is understood and addressed in Calgary. It was a turning point for our community that required immense barriers to be broken down, large complicated systems to work together like never before, and a fearless commitment to continuous innovation and change. The result of that shared vision and the hard work and perseverance that followed is the Luna Child and Youth Advocacy Centre.

What started as an idea of what could be possible, grew into a movement that involved the entire community stepping up to ensure children and youth who experience abuse have a safe place to be heard; with a team in their corner that will rally every available resource to help them heal, and where they can have hope for a brighter future.

Since first opening our doors in 2013 (then as the Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre), Luna has supported more than 15,000 children, youth, and families and is recognized as a centre of excellence in child abuse intervention and prevention throughout Canada and beyond. The impact we have made in our first ten years cannot be understated, and we are so incredibly proud of the legacy we continue to build with our Partners as we look ahead to the next decade of supporting young people, families, and communities impacted by abuse.



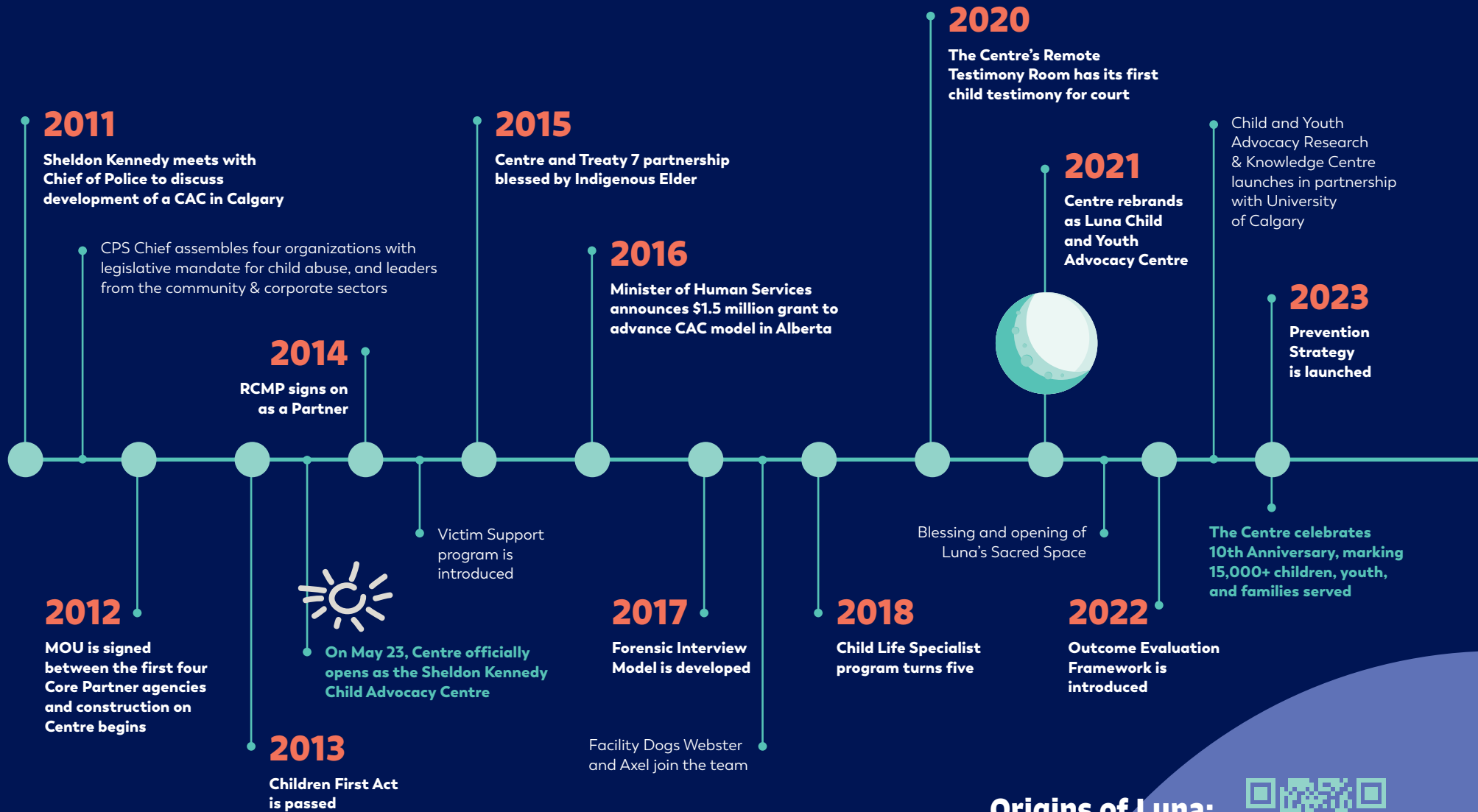
“

What I think Luna represents, to this day, is that people really believed and could see what a difference the Centre would make; and I think when you dream big and believe in something, you just don't see the obstacles.”

Debra Mauro

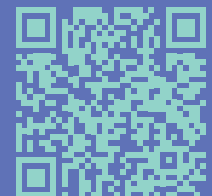
Luna Founder and Board Member (2012-2021)

Building a Legacy: A Timeline



Origins of Luna:
Building a Child Advocacy Centre

SCAN THE QR CODE OR [CLICK HERE](#)
TO SEE HOW IT ALL STARTED!



Making a Difference:

Reflections from Partners

LUNA IS A COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIP made up of more than 130 professionals from Alberta Health Services (AHS), Alberta Justice and Solicitor General, Calgary Police Service (CPS), Children and Family Services (CFS), the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), and the Luna non-profit staff, including the Victim Support team. For ten years now, these Partners have been working together at the Luna Centre as one integrated team, providing the strongest possible response for children, youth and families impacted by abuse.

Alberta Health Services

“The AHS medical and therapy teams, in the 10 years since the Child Advocacy Centre came into being, have been able to work in a much more collaborative manner with each other and with the other Partners at the CAC. This allows our teams to intervene early, support families at risk, and help from a positive perspective, building on strengths for the future together. This has created a better experience for our most vulnerable patients and families, allowing them to start the journey more quickly to recovery.”

– **Natasha Tiemstra, Executive Director and Dr. Jennifer Macpherson, Facility Director, Alberta Children’s Hospital**

Alberta Justice and Solicitor General

“The Luna Child Advocacy Centre has meant that child witnesses are able to participate in the trial process and they are better able to tell the Court what has happened to them. That is because they are better prepared for the Court process through their attendance at Luna, better supported by the resources available through Luna, and they have more flexibility to choose whether to give their evidence at the Court House or through the remote testimony rooms at Luna. The supports and choices provided at Luna about how to give testimony means the Calgary Prosecutions Office has more comfortable witnesses better able to communicate what happened to them. Luna has been invaluable in preparing witnesses to give evidence and putting together quality prosecutions.”

– **Peter Mackenzie, Calgary Chief Crown Prosecutor**



Core Partners:

- Alberta Health Services
- Alberta Justice and Solicitor General
- Calgary Police Service
- Children & Family Services
- RCMP

Calgary Police Service

“CPS has remained a dedicated Partner of the Luna Centre for the past 10 years. Together, with the common goal of building resilience in the communities we serve, we continue providing essential resources and supports to victims of abuse. Our partnership allows for a fulsome investigative response to allegations of abuse while connecting victims and their families with the wrap-around supports provided by the CYAC to ensure a healing path forward.

We remain humbled and extremely proud of the collaborative and integrated work delivered every day by the exceptional trauma-informed professionals within Luna. They prioritize the needs and voices of the youth who walk through their doors, who are at their most vulnerable. The protection of our children and youth is the most important type of work, and when preventative efforts are not enough, the Luna Centre steps in with exceptional multidisciplinary care and guidance.”

– **Paul Cook, CPS Deputy Chief & Luna Board Member**

Children and Family Services

“Children and Family Services has been proud to be a Partner at the Luna Centre. The welcoming atmosphere and the supports provided have allowed victims of abuse to feel at ease when having to work through some of the most traumatic experiences of their lives. The ability to work with other Partners with a wraparound approach has allowed children and families to have their needs addressed without having to repeatedly tell their story and has allowed for mindful trauma-focused planning. Being co-located with Partners has allowed all of us to gain a better understanding of who can support children in each area of their development; it has allowed for better understanding of Partner mandates and education of other systems to help children and families outside of the Centre, which promotes healing and success.”

– **Bonda Thompson, Regional Director, Children & Family Services**

Luna

“Having a backbone organization like Luna be responsible for coordinating and stewarding this incredible partnership has ultimately improved response times and outcomes for kids and families, and significantly reduced the likelihood that children and youth will slip through the cracks that can occur when organizations and systems work in silos.

We’ve built a true collaborative partnership and community of skilled practitioners by ensuring that the people on the frontline who do this work have the training, expertise and support they need to best help families. And because we have large systems working together at all levels, we’ve been able to quickly adapt and respond to the changing needs and emerging issues in the community, and work together with Partners and supporting Ministries to address issues at the frontline, system, and policy levels so that vulnerable children and youth receive the absolute best and most effective services when they need them most.”

– Karen Orser, Luna CEO

Royal Canadian Mounted Police

“The RCMP partnership with Luna Centre is, in a word, essential. As tragic as the circumstances are surrounding child abuse, the integrated multi-disciplinary service of the Luna Centre provides the best possible support for both the children and their families. What began as a single investigator working in the Centre has now grown to 3 RCMP members in Luna with additional RCMP officers serving in each of the CACs throughout the province.

Relationships are at the heart of a co-located multidisciplinary team and the fantastic facilities of the Luna Centre provide an excellent environment for building those relationships. Alberta is on the leading edge of the continued evolution of the CAC model with Luna at the forefront of this change. The benefits of the wrap around support provided by the Partners are clear for victims, their families, local RCMP detachments and the community as a whole. The Alberta RCMP looks forward to continuing to work with Luna long into the future!”

– Trevor Daroux, RCMP Chief Superintendent & Luna Board Member

Education

FROM THE BEGINNING, A STRONG PARTNERSHIP WITH ALBERTA EDUCATION

has also been a critical component of our work at Luna. Our collaboration with Calgary Board of Education, Calgary Catholic School District, and various other school districts in the communities that Luna serves, have allowed us to engage on the issues that are important to schools, ensure school staff are connected to Luna and have the support and resources they need, and that children and youth who come to Luna are supported in their schools.

“Working together with Luna Child and Youth Advocacy Centre has meant that school staff have access to a coordinated team of experts and resources that build staff capacity in understanding what child abuse is, the impacts of this trauma and how to respond and support each child or youth in a school environment. Because of this work, we can support identification of concerns faster, always with the hope of decreasing the impact on children and youth while ensuring their well-being at school is cared for.”

– Joanne Pitman, Superintendent, Calgary Board of Education

“The Calgary Catholic School District is proud to be a partner with the Luna Centre. Our support helps fund an Educational Liaison who is the link between the Centre and schools. In the past, school officials may not have known that a child was a victim of abuse. Now, with permission from the family, the school is informed so that counselling and other layers of support can be provided. We also thank Luna for the collaboration in creating a Professional Development course that all CSSD employees are required to take to better understand their professional responsibility to “Recognize, Report and Respond to Child Abuse.” In working together, the Luna Centre and School Systems are better able to make a positive difference.”

– Dr. Bryan Szumlas, Chief Superintendent, Calgary Catholic School District

Our Impact: 10-Year Snapshot

In the last decade, **24,842 cases** of reported child abuse have been triaged by all Luna Partners and expanded programs.

7,713 JICAT

(Joint Investigative Child Abuse Team of CPS, CFS)

2,736 RCMP

5,467 CARRT

(Child at Risk Response Team)

3,855 AVIRT

(Alberta Vulnerable Infant Response Team)

2,790 POST

(Prenatal Outreach Support Team)

2,281 AHS

(Child Abuse Service, Suspected Child Abuse & Neglect Team)

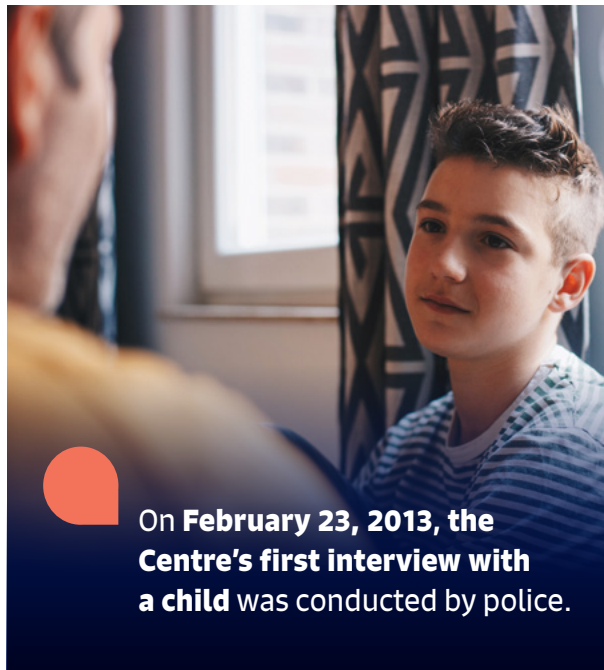
On average, **92%** of child abuse cases assessed at Luna are assigned to one or more partners, and **59%** receive a collaborative response from two or more partners.



MORE THAN

15,000

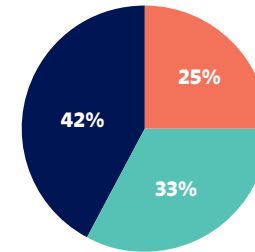
children and youth and their families have been supported by Luna since the Centre first opened its doors in 2013.



On **February 23, 2013**, the Centre's first interview with a child was conducted by police.

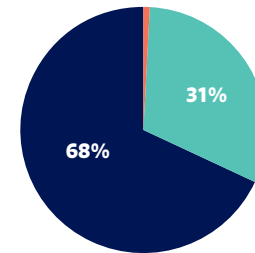
The Children and Youth We Serve

Luna's focus is on the 15% of child abuse cases that are considered the most severe and complex, requiring an elevated level of collaboration, joint planning, integrated practice, and communication amongst Partner organizations.



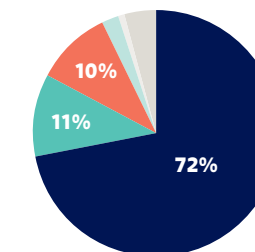
Age

- 12 - 17 years
- 6 - 11 years
- 0 - 5 years



Gender Identity

- female
- male
- trans gender, non-binary, other 1%



Type of Abuse

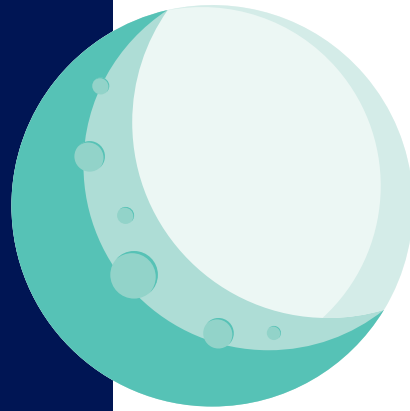
- sexual abuse
- physical abuse
- problematic sexual behaviour
- neglect 2%
- witness to domestic violence 1%
- other/not specified 4%

94% of offenders are known to the victim, of which **64%** are within the family.

Luna has played a leadership role in the national movement of child advocacy centres to ensure that all children and youth who experience abuse, no matter where they live in Canada, have access to the expertise and highly specialized supports and services provided by a CAC.

In 2014, the first national meeting of CACs was co-hosted at the Luna Centre by Sheldon Kennedy and the Honourable Rona Ambrose, placing the issue of child abuse on the public health agenda. Just a year later, Luna helped initiate the process to develop and adopt National Guidelines for CACs in Canada and is currently part of a national committee to form a Canadian association of child advocacy centres. Today, **Luna is one of nine CACs in Alberta and more than forty across Canada.**





Child abuse impacts over half of all people in Canada.

Before reaching their fifteenth birthday, 6-in-10 Canadians experience some form of maltreatment, and in Alberta, it is closer to 7-in-10¹. The known long-term impacts of child abuse on health, social, and economic outcomes further highlight the need for a specialized and effective response.

Children and youth who experience sexual abuse and severe physical abuse and neglect require coordinated supports from multiple systems, including law enforcement, mental and physical health, child intervention, schools, and justice. The child advocacy centre model was developed to respond to those 15% of child abuse cases that require such a multidisciplinary response.

Prior to the introduction of a child advocacy centre in Calgary, children and families experienced multiple entry points to large, complicated systems, and the responses were often siloed, resulting in breakdowns in transitions of care and services. With limited information sharing and little to no data collection to drive improved outcomes, children and youth were at risk of experiencing prolonged traumatization.

Light When You Need It Most: *Why Child Advocacy Centres are Necessary*

FOR THE LAST TEN YEARS, LUNA HAS PROVIDED A SAFE SPACE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH to share their experiences of abuse and access the support of a multidisciplinary team of experts throughout the disclosure, investigation, and judicial process, and along all phases of their healing journey.

The introduction of a child advocacy centre was a leap forward for child abuse intervention in Calgary. The new integrated model effectively broke down the silos and gaps between systems by bringing them together as one team and allowing them to share information, expertise, and resources in real-time to mobilize the strongest possible response. This has meant that children are safer, and that they and their families are receiving the full support they need to heal.

With Luna operating as a separate legal entity, it also made it possible to achieve goals no single Partner could accomplish on their own. By building a reputation as leaders in child abuse prevention and intervention, we have been able to engage the community, build strong relationships with decision and policy makers and community partners, advance research-based practices, and continually strengthen the expertise and effectiveness of our multidisciplinary team.

Along with our fellow CACs across Canada, Luna is committed to prevention and enhancing awareness and education about child abuse, ensuring everyone understands and plays their role in keeping young people safe.

¹ Danielle Bader and Kristyn Frank, "What do we know about physical and non-physical childhood maltreatment in Canada?" *Statistics Canada* (2023).

The Journey Through Luna

Luna's multidisciplinary team includes experts from a variety of fields, working together to help children, youth, and families along every step of their journey.

Assessment:

Children and youth are referred to Luna through a report received by police (CPS or RCMP), Children and Family Services, or through a medical referral from AHS. Since information sharing agreements are in place, a unified team with representatives from police, Children and Family Services, health, and Luna's Victim Support team reviews each report and determines what type of response is needed.

The response might include support from a single partner, referral to another response team, or entry into the Luna system to receive the multi-partner intervention. Once it is determined that a child needs support from multiple partners, the team works together to create a support plan, and the family is contacted by someone from our team of Victim

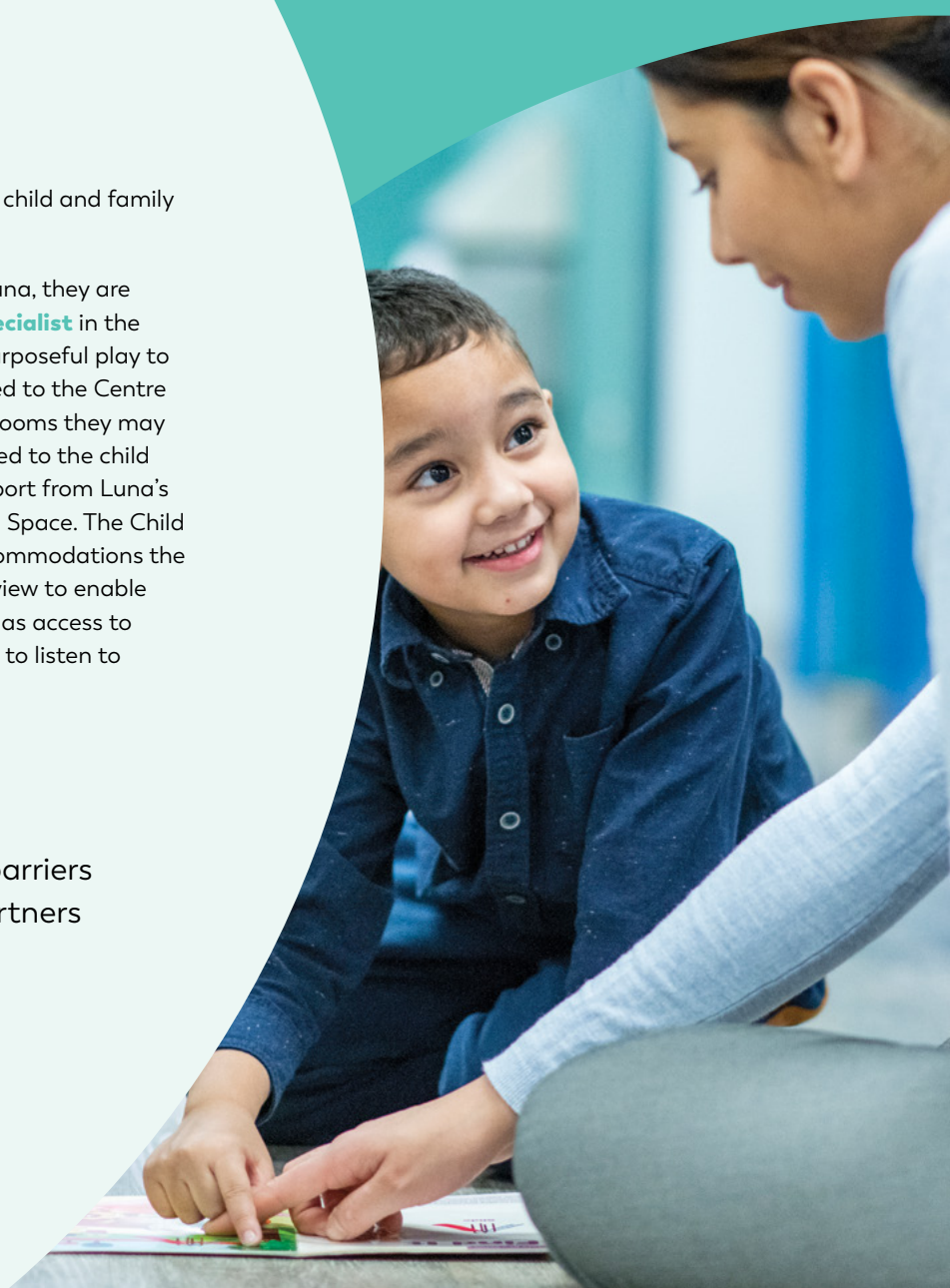
Support Coordinators who helps the child and family navigate their entire journey.

When children and youth come to Luna, they are first greeted by Luna's **Child Life Specialist** in the child-friendly space. Here, there is purposeful play to reduce stress, and the child is oriented to the Centre and shown pictures of the different rooms they may be in. Additional supports are provided to the child and family if requested, such as support from Luna's Facility Dogs or access to the Sacred Space. The Child Life Specialist also learns of any accommodations the child needs during the forensic interview to enable them to share their experience, such as access to therapeutic objects, or taking breaks to listen to calming music.

Luna was the first CAC to introduce a **Child Life Specialist** to its multi-disciplinary team. Each year, Child Life supports an average of **730 interviews and 15 medical exams**.

In **2013**, the passing of the **Children First Act** effectively removed barriers for the sharing of information between systems, allowing Luna's Partners to work as a fully integrated, collaborative team.

Of the **24,000+ cases triaged through Luna** in the last ten years, on average, **92%** have been assigned to one or more Partners, and **59%** received a collaborative response from two or more Partners.



Luna has conducted approximately **800 forensic interviews** per year, and over **200 case conferences** in the last decade.



Investigation:

The first stage in an investigation is an interview conducted by forensic interviewers from Calgary Police, Children and Family Services, RCMP, or Luna's Director of Forensic Services. The interview provides evidence that is needed to proceed with criminal charges. The goal is to conduct high-quality, multi-partner interviews so that the child only shares their experience one time. While the child is in the interview, a Victim Support Coordinator will check-in with the family to provide any support that is needed.

Medical:

The AHS Medical Team at Luna will review each case of suspected abuse, often consulting with investigators to determine if an exam is needed. The exam can be an important part of the investigation because it can shed light on what happened to the child. In cases where an exam is necessary, our Child Life Specialist will first explain the process using age-appropriate language and child-friendly versions of some of the medical equipment used. The exam itself is carried out by one of the pediatricians on-site. If a medical exam is not needed, the pediatricians may still provide consult support to the team during the investigative process.

In the last ten years, **372 medical exams and 762 phone consults** have been carried out by AHS at Luna.



Blessed by an Indigenous Elder and designed with artwork highlighting Indigenous history and culture, Luna's **Sacred Space** opened in **2021**, providing a quiet space for families to gather and smudge.



The AHS Therapy team provides over **3,500 onsite and virtual therapy sessions** per year to individuals and families.

Therapy and Ongoing Support:

After the initial intake and investigative processes, the child and family receive ongoing supports which can last through the judicial process and beyond. This may include support both from the AHS Therapy team as well as Victim Support. Luna partners with the Child Abuse Service, an outpatient clinic at the Alberta Children's Hospital to provide custom therapy best suited to the child.

The Victim Support team connects with the family on an ongoing basis to check-in on how they are doing, ask what types of supports they need, and assists with referrals to Luna programs and services as well as additional community supports.



Luna's **Victim Support** program was first launched in **2014**, providing **over 6,000 referrals** for victims and families. The Victim Support team works closely with Partners to ensure children and families have ongoing wrap-around support and access to resources throughout all phases of their journey at Luna.

More than **15,000 court supports** have been provided to children and their families as they have gone through the judicial process.

Judicial Process:

As a case moves forward through court, the family receives updates from one of the Court Coordinators from the Victim Support team. These coordinators liaise directly with the Prosecutor to follow the case through the judicial process.

The child may provide their testimony either in-person at the court or through remote testimony at Luna. Two Remote Testimony Rooms with secure connections to court allow children and youth to testify in a familiar environment without having face-to-face contact with the accused. While testifying, the child can receive supports from Luna for both in-person and remote testimony, including Facility Dog support and Victim Support.

Throughout a child's journey at Luna, the goal is to reduce further trauma by minimizing the number of times the child is required to share their experience, all while providing personalized wrap-around support from caring experts in a safe space and helping caregivers and families to navigate the process and access supports.

The first child testimony in Luna's **Remote Testimony Room** took place in **2020** and a second room was introduced soon after. Since then, **145 remote testimonies** have been booked at Luna.



The Next 10 Years

WITH SUPPORT FROM OUR COMMUNITY, LUNA HAS ACCOMPLISHED SO MUCH OVER THE LAST TEN YEARS, and in many ways, we are just getting started.

There is still a great deal of work left for us to do as we strive to realize our vision of a world where all those impacted by child abuse receive the support they need to heal and thrive; where offenders are held accountable; and all children and youth are safe. Below are some of the exciting projects and areas of focus that are ushering in Luna's next decade of impact.

The **Canadian Child and Youth Advocacy Research and Knowledge Centre**, created in partnership with the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Calgary and Alberta Children's Hospital Research Institute, will generate and integrate new evidence and knowledge about child and youth advocacy into everyday practice. We are excited to officially launch the Centre nationally, and to begin research projects that will enhance outcomes for children, youth, and families.

Luna's newly implemented **Evaluation Framework** defines the outcomes and indicators we will hold ourselves accountable to as a CYAC. The framework, which was developed with the support of PolicyWise for Children & Families, is evidence-informed and aligns with the National Guidelines for CACs/CYACs in Canada. This focus on outcomes is significant as it is allowing us to strengthen the evidence for how Luna and the child advocacy centre model impacts children, youth, families, and the community. The Evaluation Framework demonstrates Luna's commitment to the advancement of practice excellence based on outcomes and enables us to better understand the impact of the intervention services and supports we provide.

Luna's **Child Abuse Prevention Strategy** is an important step in establishing the Centre as a leader in child abuse prevention. The strategy focuses on: Building child and youth safe cultures through awareness raising and education; Enhancing collaborative approaches to prevention; and strengthening and mobilizing the evidence base through research and evaluation. We are excited to live into this strategy and to continue to refine it in response to what is learned through the partnerships and coalitions, engagement with diverse groups, and through research and ongoing learning.

Advocacy continues to be a foundational focus of our work at Luna as we collaborate with Partners and policy-makers to ensure young people are safe at home and in their communities, and that Alberta has a strong, coordinated response to child abuse, with interventions rooted in excellence and in the best interest of children and youth.

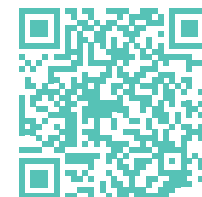
Diversity is our strength, but we know there is always so much more work we can do to become stronger allies and advocates, and to better serve our diverse communities. Our commitment to **Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and De-Colonization** is stronger than ever, as we work to embed this focus into our policies, practice, and values as a child and youth advocacy centre, so that all members of the community feel safe, represented, and seen when they come to Luna.

Thank You for Being the Light

In all that Luna has accomplished over the last ten years, none of it would have been possible without the incredible support we have received from the community. Our donors, funders, volunteers, community partners, and champions have empowered Luna to support more than 15,000 young people and families impacted by abuse; helped us address needs and gaps in services; and allowed us to leverage their networks and platforms to elevate the issue of child abuse and amplify the voices and experiences of children and youth.

Luna is a testament to what can be accomplished when the community rallies around a shared goal. We want to thank all of those in the community for their generosity, dedication, and support over this last decade. We are eternally grateful for every individual and organization that has played any part – big or small – in building our legacy up to this point, and we are humbled to have you by our side as we move into the next ten years.

To learn more about how you can **Be the Light** by getting involved with Luna, scan the QR code or visit lunacentre.ca/support-the-centre.



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The work of the Luna Centre is as critical today as it was ten years ago when the founding board and community came together to forever change the way we address and respond to child abuse. We continue to build on that incredible legacy with dedication to advancing as a centre of excellence, and a renewed commitment to our vision of a world where all children and youth are safe and thriving. It is our obligation to never lose sight of that vision and to continue working tirelessly to make it a reality.”

Nancy Foster, Luna Board Chair

“

Thank you for listening and hearing what my daughter said. The fear of a child – and their parent as well – is that they will not be believed.

I know that it cannot be easy to hear the things you hear, and to see the pain that these children experience, but it is people like you who are making our world safer, day by day.

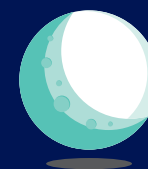
When she is old enough to understand, it will be a great comfort to her when I tell her that she was always believed. And when I explain that Luna was key in keeping her safe and ending the abuse, I know that you will always be seen as pivotal in her young life.

When we first met you, my child, who was normally full of life, had no light in her eyes. Now, I see that spark for life fully lit again.

Thank you. From every part of me, I am filled with gratitude.

- Parent whose child and family was supported by Luna

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