

Background: Avalon Sexual Assault Centre

The Avalon Sexual Assault Centre (Avalon) is a non-profit, community-based, feminist organization working to eliminate sexual assault/abuse, and to change the current socio-political culture that fosters sexism, social injustice and other forms of oppression. Avalon has been at the forefront of direct service delivery, social justice advocacy, education, professional training and support for victims and survivors of sexualized violence since 1983. Avalon is the only sexual assault centre in HRM and the longest running full-spectrum sexual assault centre in Nova Scotia.

Avalon's programs and services include: individual counselling; support and therapy groups for women and trans people 16+; sexual assault nurse examiner(SANE) program; community/legal education and training program; support, information and referral for victims/survivors, non-offending parents, service providers and the general public; advocacy; prevention and awareness education and resource distribution, as well as professional consultations and training.

Sexualized violence in Nova Scotia

Sexual assault levels in Nova Scotia are significantly higher than the national average. Avalon has seen a recent upswing in demand for our services. The increase is partially due to increased awareness of sexualized violence as a result of the Liberal government's 2015 Nova Scotia Sexual Violence Strategy, in combination with a number of high profile sexual assault cases in the media. Avalon is pleased with the visibility these factors have contributed to the organization and its cause. However, the visibility has also created increased demand on Avalon for our services and a need for more resources.

Community members have identified sexualized violence as an important issue for the incoming Nova Scotia government to address. Wait lists for counselling at Avalon have reached the six-month mark and many victims of sexualized violence are not receiving the support they need to begin healing. There is a crucial need to ensure Avalon can sustain all programs and services as well as a need for sustainable services throughout Nova Scotia.