

	Abbotsford Police Department Policy and Procedure	
	Operations	Incident Response
	II.B.310	Vulnerable Communities

DEFINITION

- (1) **Vulnerable Communities** - individuals (including but not limited to victims, witnesses, accused persons and others who interact with law enforcement) who may be at a higher risk of bias, being misunderstood, exploitation and violence. Examples include, but are not limited to:
- Indigenous Canadians
 - Individuals having experienced sexual assault or intimate partner violence (particularly those who have had long-term exposure to violence)
 - Persons with precarious, unstable, or no housing
 - Recent immigrants of diverse ethnic, religious and racial backgrounds
 - Sex trade workers
 - Victims/survivors of human trafficking
 - Elderly individuals
 - Individuals with mental, cognitive and/or physical disabilities
 - Children & youth
 - Individuals who misuse substances
 - Individuals lacking proficiency in the English language
 - Individuals who may be less inclined to report or speak to police because of precarious legal status (e.g., victims or witnesses who have outstanding warrants against them, or with precarious immigration status)
 - Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, two-spirit, non-binary or any diversity of sexuality and gender identity-based individuals

POLICY

- (2) The Abbotsford Police Department (AbbyPD) is committed to protecting the safety, security and fundamental universal human rights of all people and is mindful that some of its interactions will be with members of Vulnerable Communities. AbbyPD recognizes that people belonging to Vulnerable Communities live with complex needs and may face societal prejudice, and will

strive to serve the community in a manner that is fair and free from actual or perceived bias. The personal circumstances/characteristics of the victim, reportee or incident reported will not diminish police response.

- (3) All Interactions with members of Vulnerable Communities will take into account how their unique and personal circumstances may affect their interactions with AbbyPD. All AbbyPD personnel, as much as possible and as reasonable to the circumstances, will be guided by the goal of preserving human dignity and not further victimizing or retraumatizing involved parties.
- (4) AbbyPD recognizes that many members of Vulnerable Communities are overrepresented in the criminal justice system. If deemed appropriate to the circumstances, AbbyPD may consider alternatives to law enforcement that still achieve desired outcomes. For non-violent crimes where public safety is not a concern, education or referral to programs (e.g. restorative justice or supportive intervention) may be considered as suitable. Such diversion can assist in addressing the disproportionately higher rate of those belonging to Vulnerable Communities entering or remaining in the criminal justice system.
- (5) AbbyPD recognizes the value of community resources that seek to serve, support and advocate for the unique needs of Vulnerable Communities. Where a person is receptive to accepting information about community resources, AbbyPD may, where appropriate, provide such information and facilitate connections to these services.

The above constitutes policy approved by the Police Board on October 3, 2023.