

How Do I Report to a Child Welfare Worker?

- Call the Ministry for Children and Family Development to speak to a child welfare worker (see contact information on back of pamphlet).
- The child welfare worker will ask about:
 - Details of the child and the child's family
~ eg. age, name, address, phone number, parents, family members
 - What the child said/did that concerned you
 - Any information the child gave about the alleged abuser
- Your name will be kept confidential, unless authorized by law to be revealed.

What Can I Do to Prevent Abuse?

- **Educate yourself:** understand that **child abuse is a reality**, learn to **recognize the signs** of abuse, and **know how to respond**.
- **Teach children** to recognize abuse, to know it is wrong, and to know whom to talk to if abuse happens.
- Know that it is very difficult for children to speak out when they are abused. They may delay telling for a long time.
- **Take children seriously if they disclose abuse and act.** If you have **any** doubt, err on the side of protecting the child and report your concerns.
- For those dealing with children outside of a parent/caregiver role, follow these guidelines - and expect others to as well:
 - Only have private conversations with a child when necessary, and then, if possible, in a public/open space with others nearby.
 - Do not be alone with a child, including in vehicles, buildings, rooms, or restrooms. Remain where others can observe and accompany you.
 - Do not share sleeping quarters with someone who is not a son or daughter.
 - Use child-appropriate language in the presence of children.

Where Can I Get Help?

- **Ministry for Children & Family Development (MCFD)**
Chilliwack MCFD: 604-702-2311
Agassiz MCFD: 604-796-1044
MCFD After Hours Line: 1-800-663-9122
(available 24 hours)
- **Chilliwack Police Department (non-emergency)**
604-792-4611
- **Church and School Officials**
Please see the church website (www.nrcchilliwack.org) for up-to-date church officials, principal, and school board president contact information.
- **Helpline for Children**
For matters concerning child abuse, anyone can call the Helpline for Children 24 hours at: 310-1234 (no area code needed).
- **Kids Help Phone:** 1-800-668-6868

Call 9-1-1 if a Child Is in Immediate Danger

Sources/Additional Resources

- Full BNRC Child Abuse Policy available for reading on the church website:
www.nrcchilliwack.org
- More information can be found in the following BC Government Publications:
 - *"Responding to Child Welfare Concerns - Your Role in Knowing When and What to Report"*
www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/public-safety-and-emergency-services/public-safety/protecting-children/childabusepreventionhandbook_generalpublicbooklet.pdf
 - *BC Handbook for Action on Abuse and Neglect*
www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/public-safety-and-emergency-services/public-safety/protecting-children/childabusepreventionhandbook_serviceprovider.pdf
- **Canadian Centre for Child Protection**
www.protectchildren.ca; 204-560-2083

Identifying &
Responding to

CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT

Information for Parents &
Community Members

What is Child Abuse?

In British Columbia, a child is defined as **anyone under the age of 19**. This includes those who are **youth**, defined as children ages 16 years up to 19 years.

Anyone can be an abuser: parents, caregivers, relatives, siblings, friends, or others who know the child (eg. coaches, teachers, religious leaders, youth group leaders, babysitters, etc.) **Adults or significantly older/more powerful children** can be abusers.

Abuse of a child can occur in many forms, including:

• Physical Abuse

A deliberate, non-accidental physical assault or injury by a person that results in, or is likely to result in, physical harm to a child. This can include hitting, kicking, slapping, choking, biting, shoving, etc., and using unreasonable force to discipline a child.

• Sexual Abuse

The use of a child for sexual gratification by a person. This can include sexual touch or invitation to touch for sexual purposes, intercourse (vaginal, oral, anal), menacing or threatening sexual acts, obscene words/gestures, deliberately exposing a child to sexual activity/material, etc.

• Sexual Exploitation

A form of sexual abuse that happens when a child is encouraged, manipulated, or coerced to engage in sexual acts for the stimulation, gratification, financial gain, or personal benefit of another person. This also includes prostitution and the production of pornography.

• Emotional Abuse

A pattern of destructive behaviors or verbal attacks towards a child. This can include rejecting, terrorizing, ignoring, isolating, humiliating, insulting, scapegoating, exploiting, threatening a child, etc.

• Neglect

A failure to provide for a child's basic needs (such as adequate food and shelter, supervision, protection from risk, and medical care) to the point where a child is – or is likely to be – harmed.

* Note: If you are aware of a child living in a situation where domestic abuse is occurring, you must report this to a child welfare worker.

How Do I Know If Abuse or Neglect May Be Happening?

There are two main ways to know if a child is experiencing abuse or neglect:

1. Disclosures of Abuse or Neglect

- **Direct Disclosures:**
Children may share their experience of abuse or neglect directly by making specific statements.
- **Indirect Disclosures:**
Children may convey what they are experiencing indirectly, such as through ambiguous/indirect statements, hints, or questions. Others may disclose indirectly through their writing, art, or behaviour.

2. Indicators of Abuse or Neglect

- Indicators are “warning signs” that abuse or neglect *may* be happening; they do not necessarily mean that abuse and neglect *are* happening (ie. there could be causes other than abuse/neglect for these indicators).
- If you see warning signs, call a child welfare worker, who will help you to know whether the indicators you see are cause for concern.

Some examples of indicators of abuse can include*:

Physical Abuse	Sexual Abuse & Exploitation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unexplained bruises or fractures, bruising in unusual places, or different colored bruises. • Welts, cuts, burns, bite marks, or repeated injuries over time. • Any injuries to an infant who is not yet mobile. • Afraid or reluctant to go home, attempts to run away. • Flinches when touched. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irritation, pain, bleeding in genital or anal area; sexually transmitted diseases. • Expresses age-inappropriate /unusual sexual knowledge. • Forces/coerces another child to engage in sexual play. • Is secretive about “new” friends, activities, phone calls, or Internet use; has unexplained gifts, clothes, or money.
Emotional Abuse	Neglect
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent psychosomatic complaints (headaches, stomach aches, nausea, etc.). • Extreme attention-seeking behaviours. • Severe depression, possibly suicidal. • Severe anxiety or worries. • Severe self-destructive or aggressive behaviour. • Extreme fear of failure or fear of consequences of actions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor/inadequate nutrition; persistent hunger. • Unusually delayed medical/dental care. • Consistently inadequate clothing for weather conditions. • Often left alone & unsupervised at home. • Age-inappropriate caregiver role for a parent or siblings. • Appears sad or has “flat” effect; does not respond to affection or stimulation.

*Please see “Additional Resources” section for publications with further examples of indicators of abuse.

How Do I Handle a Disclosure?

If a child discloses abuse or neglect to you, follow these steps to gather the basic information to report:

- **Be calm and listen non-judgmentally.** Do not react with shock, disbelief, outrage, or fear.
- **Go slowly.** Do not interrupt. Let the child tell at his/her own pace. Use gentle, non-leading questions (eg. “Can you tell me more about that?”).
- **Reassure** the child that:
 - *s/he has done the right thing by telling you*
 - *s/he is safe with you and not in trouble with you*
 - *you are sorry the abuse has happened to him/her*
 - *you will do what you can to help him/her*
 - *you know others who can be trusted to help solve the problem*
- **Get only the essential facts.** Do not interview the child beyond the point where you have reason to believe abuse or neglect occurred.
- **Tell him/her** what will happen next. Do not make false promises.
- **Write down** what the child said as accurately and as soon as possible after the disclosure. If possible, use his/her exact words.
- **Report** this information promptly to a child welfare worker. If the child is in immediate danger, call 9-1-1.
- Do **not** talk to the alleged perpetrator.
- **Maintain confidentiality.** Only share the information with those who need to know – ie. child welfare workers and/or the police.

What Do I Do if I Suspect Abuse or Neglect?

- **If you have reason to believe that a child has been, or is likely to be, abused or neglected, you are legally responsible to report your concerns promptly to a child welfare worker.**
- The person making the report is not responsible for determining whether the abuse/neglect actually happened or is likely to happen. This is the responsibility of the child welfare worker.
- Even if you believe someone else is making the report, or if the child recants or asks you not to report, **you must still report** the abuse or neglect.
- Call the police if you believe the child is in immediate danger.