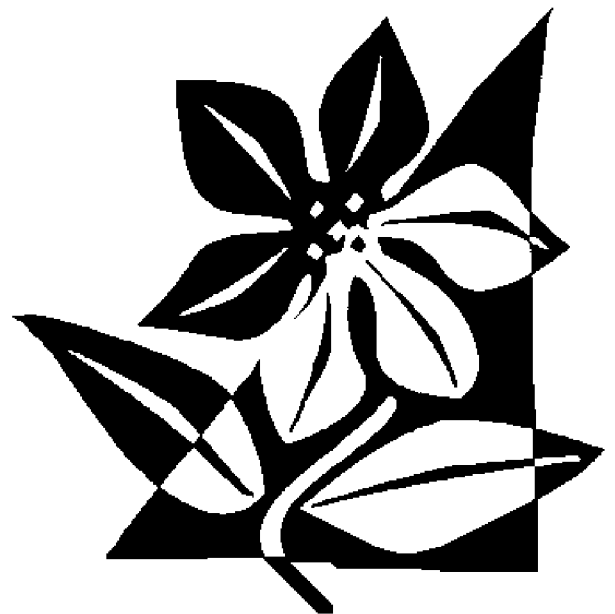


Awareness Information for People in the Workplace

Child Abuse



CHILD ABUSE:

AWARENESS INFORMATION FOR PEOPLE IN THE WORKPLACE

A guide for use by people interested in meeting together to discuss child abuse issues.

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**VIOLENCE À L'ÉGARD DES ENFANTS:
SENSIBILISATION DU PERSONNEL EN MILIEU DE TRAVAIL**

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CHILD ABUSE:

AWARENESS INFORMATION FOR PEOPLE IN THE WORKPLACE (English)

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CHILD ABUSE

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INTRODUCING THE CHILD ABUSE AWARENESS INFORMATION HANDBOOK...

THIS HANDBOOK WAS DEVELOPED IN THE BELIEF THAT: _____

- people get together to discuss issues that concern them;
- people learn by discussion with each other;
- learning can be facilitated within a peer leadership approach;
- a peer leadership approach demonstrates respect for people's experiences and life situations;
- people bring with them valuable skills and valid points of view that guide their interactions with others; and
- a peer leadership approach is appropriate in the presentation and discussion of basic material about issues that affect us all in our everyday lives.

FEATURES: _____

DESIGNED FOR INFORMAL GROUPS

This information was developed as one of a series of guides for use by people interested in meeting to discuss family violence issues.

BASED ON PEER LEADERSHIP

The material is organized in a simple, non-technical format to help the presenter, who is neither a content expert nor necessarily an experienced teacher or public speaker.

CONTAINS BASIC INFORMATION ON FAMILY VIOLENCE

The material is introductory and designed to be appropriate and of interest to the general public.

FOCUSES ON AWARENESS AND RESOURCES

The goal of this information session is to help people develop a greater awareness about child abuse, practical steps for help and the range of resources available in their own community, including services, programs and resource people

who have specialized and expert information on this topic.

DESIGNED IN A ONE HOUR FORMAT

The session takes about one hour, though groups may decide to take more or less time, or to carry over discussion to subsequent sessions.

FOR USE IN THE WORKPLACE AND OTHER SETTINGS

While the handbook is designed for use in the workplace, over a lunch hour, or before or after work, it may also be used in other settings in the community to guide informal discussions.

PART OF A SERIES

Handbooks on other family violence topics are available free from the National Clearinghouse on Family Violence.

HOW THE INFORMATION IS ORGANIZED

PLANNING THE INFORMATION SESSION

Goals, who might be involved, where and when sessions might take place, and how to set up a session are included in the first section. Note the page called TIPS FOR PRESENTERS, with suggestions and ideas on presenting the information in the handbook.

This section also contains background information from the National Clearinghouse on Family Violence, a blank CHILD ABUSE COMMUNITY RESOURCE LIST to be completed by the presenter and a sample POSTER for advertising the session.

STEP BY STEP GUIDE

This section is the guide to the presentation. It includes basic information, ideas for introductions, suggestions for what to say

on the topic, an agenda, quiz answers, activity ideas, handouts and guidelines on how to use the handouts.

PLANNING THE INFORMATION SESSION

GOALS

It is important to know what you hope to accomplish by holding an information session on child abuse. The goals of the information session are to help people:

- become aware there is violence and abuse in their community;
- talk about and begin to understand child abuse;

- learn practical steps for helping; and
- become aware of resources available in the community.

People in our society are concerned about child abuse. We can all take steps to make our community safer. A good place to start is by creating awareness in the workplace.

WHO?

Who plans an information session on child abuse? You can. You can organize a workplace information session by getting a group together and using this handbook as a guide to start a discussion.

It is a good idea to share the role of leading the discussion so that one of you is available to leave the group if someone becomes upset and needs private, individual support and information before

the session ends. Talking about child abuse is not easy and people who have been affected by it may need to talk to someone about places to go for help.

Be sure both of you review the STEP BY STEP GUIDE in advance of the information session. Afterwards, at the end of the session, allow additional time so that you can respond to any requests for information or help.

You are not expected to have all the answers to people's questions about child abuse, but you can refer them to the resource list of knowledgeable people in the community who can help. You don't need to be an expert to plan a session. You do need to:

- have an interest in the subject;
- read the enclosed materials; and
- complete the CHILD ABUSE COMMUNITY RESOURCE LIST.

Identify key people who may offer their support. Some workplaces have people

WHERE?

This guide is designed for use in the workplace, but could also be used in home or community settings. In some workplaces, such as schools, hospitals or social service agencies, there may be a policy or protocol in place describing the procedure for reporting suspected child abuse. If so, remind participants about this policy when you discuss section 5 of the STEP BY STEP GUIDE on, "If you suspect child abuse..."

In your workplace, check policy about use of meeting rooms. A quiet room is best. There may be a classroom or

WHEN?

The STEP BY STEP GUIDE has been designed in a 55 minute format so that it can be used during a noon hour, at a shift change or whenever convenient. It is also possible that your employer may be willing to offer work time for the

on site with a special interest in issues affecting employees. Contact, in advance, representatives of any employee assistance, union counselling or occupational health programs or other resources such as well-being or health and safety committees. These people may be willing to help you organize an information session or might like to attend. In any case, they should know that the session is being planned, not only as a courtesy, but because they may experience an increase in the number of employees asking for help.

boardroom in your workplace that could be booked for the session. A separate section of a cafeteria or staff room may be suitable. If there is an employee assistance program or a union counsellor in your workplace, ask them for ideas about where to hold the session.

If you do not receive approval for a workplace meeting or if no suitable space is available, you can make arrangements to meet some place else like a library, YWCA, community centre or family place. Any of these may say "yes" to your request.

session. This is because family violence including child abuse, affects workers' lives, and may cause illness, absenteeism, and lack of concentration resulting in low productivity or possible injury.

HOW?

Decide on a time and place. Ask somebody else to help, and decide who will do what. Then:

1. *Let people know.*

You may decide to simply invite a number of people who you think may have an interest in child abuse. Or you can advertise, using posters on bulletin boards. But remember that permission may be required before putting up posters on bulletin boards in the workplace.

A sample poster is included in this handbook. To use "as is," enter the time

and location information, and then photocopy on brightly coloured paper.

About ten people is a good number for an information session, but more or fewer will work equally well. If you invite people, you will have a sense of how many are coming. A group can't be too small - you and someone else can use the guide effectively.

2. *Complete the CHILD ABUSE COMMUNITY RESOURCE LIST handout in advance*

This form is provided in the back of the handbook. It is very helpful to participants if local telephone numbers are written on the handout. So before the information session date, look up and fill in at least one emergency number and any community service information number that may be available. Any single enquiry number will be able to refer you to others.

Some key resources are available in nearly every town or community in our country. The telephone book is the best source

for these numbers but the local library or information centre may be able to tell you how to reach services that are in your area.

Telephone numbers are important because people who attend the information session need to know where help is available in their community. Some people may not say anything specific at the time, but having a list of resources to take away with them could make all the difference in the future.

3. *Do some reading and preparation in advance*

- read the TIPS FOR PRESENTERS;
- read the STEP BY STEP GUIDE;
- read the National Clearinghouse on Family Violence fact sheets on Child Abuse and Child Sexual Abuse included in this handbook;
- photocopy the completed CHILD ABUSE COMMUNITY RESOURCE LIST, agenda

and other handouts. Make enough copies for all the people you expect to attend the session. Post any spare resource lists on bulletin boards that are available for staff use in your workplace; and

- bring pencils and prepare pieces of paper or index cards for use in the EXAMPLES exercise.

Good luck with your awareness session.

TIPS FOR PRESENTERS

- 1.** You and the group are here to explore child abuse together. Be yourself. Your feeling comfortable and relaxed will help contribute to an informal, friendly atmosphere.
- 2.** Your role is that of a group facilitator, not an expert. **It is not up to you to come up with all the answers or solutions:** *"My role today is to help keep people on topic and make sure everyone has a chance to speak if they want to"*
- 3.** Adults bring to any learning situation a wide range of knowledge and experience. It is helpful to recognize and, if appropriate, acknowledge this; *"You've had a lot of knowledge about this issue, Jane..."*
- 4.** Child abuse is not easy to talk about. Feelings of sadness or anger may surface during the presentation. Acknowledging those feelings can be helpful. Say something like the following: *"That must have been very upsetting for you, Asif."*
- 5.** It's a good idea to follow the timing suggestions on the agenda. If the group is particularly interested in one topic, you may wish to ask for a group decision: should they proceed with the agenda or stay with the topic under discussion? *"We only have 10 minutes left and three more sections to cover. How would you like to proceed?"* Meeting again another day may be an option. Or you may decide not to complete the session but to give out the handouts.
- 6.** It's important to acknowledge **all** comments with a nod, smile or a brief *'Thanks'* whether or not the comments fit the agenda.
- 7.** Sometimes a group member may go off on a tangent, expressing strongly held beliefs they want to talk about. You may wish to say something like the following: *"I understand your concern about..., but today we are discussing.."* If the group member persists, acknowledge the concern, continue with the agenda, and ask the group member to speak with you after the session.
- 8.** From time to time, it may be helpful to refer back to key points made earlier in the presentation: *"Remember when we talked earlier about signs of emotional abuse?"*
- 9.** Some participants may experience strong emotions and want to talk to somebody privately. Have a partner who can assist you. This allows you to continue with the presentation while your partner offers support and information about help available in your community.
- 10.** Thank the group for coming: *"Child abuse is a tough subject to talk about. Concerned people like yourselves can make a difference. Thanks for coming!"*

STEP BY STEP GUIDE

1. AS PEOPLE COME IN...

Give them a copy of the agenda, the QUIZ, and the CHILD ABUSE COMMUNITY RESOURCE LIST.

- ask them to fill out the QUIZ;
- let them know the quiz will be discussed later;
- briefly go over the agenda with the group to let them know how the hour will be organized.

2. INTRODUCE YOURSELF AND MEMBERS OF THE GROUP (about 5 minutes)

Begin by introducing yourself and any co-presenter.

Mention:

- why you decided to organize this session;
- time limitations: "We have only 55 minutes for the session today and a lot to cover as you can see by the agenda...";
- that, if for any reason someone needs to leave during the session, they should feel free to do so;
- that child abuse is an emotional topic that some of us find hard to talk about;
- that there are programs which help prevent child abuse; and
- that people are invited to add comments or ask questions during the session.

Introduce group members.

Look over the group and decide:

- ask participants to turn to the person on their left and introduce themselves; then
- turn to the person on their right and do the same.

- does everyone already know each other?
- is the group so large that introductions will take too much time?
- will some people feel uncomfortable going through an introduction exercise?

If any of these points apply, skip this section and move on to the Overview section. If you decide to do introductions, a quick way to ensure that every one has met at least two people is to:

3. CHILD ABUSE: AN OVERVIEW

(about 10 minutes)

Begin by defining "child".

You could say:

In the teen years, being legally defined as a "child" varies from province to province with the range between 16 and 19 years of age. Abuse happens to both boys and girls from infancy to late adolescence.

Then clarify what we mean by child abuse.

You could say:

Child abuse includes the physical, emotional, or sexual mistreatment or neglect of a child by a parent, guardian or caregiver which may result in physical injury or emotional and psychological harm to the child. Both boys and girls are at risk, as well as children and young people who are physically and developmentally challenged.

There are families in our communities from many different cultural backgrounds. Keep in mind that what has been tolerated in another country may be defined as abuse in Canada.

Acknowledge that child abuse is an emotional issue.

Discussing child abuse can affect people in different ways. They may be concerned because of personal experience from their past or because of a present situation of

which they are aware. Sometimes during a presentation on child abuse, people remember forgotten events from their own childhood. Strong feelings may surface.

You could say:

Any kind of abuse or neglect is hard to talk about. Talking about child abuse can bring up memories from our own childhood. Or, we may become anxious about our own children or grandchildren. If concerns surface for you, please see me after the presentation and we can look at the CHILD ABUSE COMMUNITY RESOURCE LIST together.

Clarify what the term "child abuse" includes.

You could say:

The term "child abuse" includes: physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect. Although we recognize different forms of abuse, it is important to remember that a child experiencing one form of abuse may also be experiencing other forms.

Physical abuse is the deliberate use of force on a child's body which may result in an injury. Physical abuse is often connected to punishment or confused with discipline.

Emotional abuse refers to persistent attacks on a child's sense of self. Examples include humiliation, isolation, rejection, intimidation and name-calling.

Sexual abuse includes any sexual exploitation of a child whether consented to or not. It includes any behaviour of a sexual nature towards a child by an older child or adult.

Neglect consists of omission on the part of the parent or caregiver to provide the basic necessities such as food, clothing, shelter, or to provide adequate medical care or adequate supervision to prevent injury.

Ask the group for questions or comments on the information so far. Then go on to discuss SIGNS OF CHILD ABUSE.

4. EXAMPLES: SIGNS OF CHILD ABUSE
(about 15 minutes)

You are going to ask them to identify some of the possible clues that would suggest a child is being abused.

In the following exercise, you are going to ask the group to think of a situation involving child abuse.

Begin by handing out pencils and blank pieces of paper or index cards.

You could say:

How do we know if a child is being abused or neglected? Are there **signs** to look for? Let's see if we, as a group, can come up with some clues that might suggest to us that a child is being abused.

Give participants directions.

You could say:

Think of a situation of child abuse that you know about personally or have heard about. Take a minute and write down some of the **signs** that might signal abuse. I will collect the cards and read some of them aloud.

Collect the cards and read some or all of the signs out loud. As you read each sign, ask what kind of abuse this sign might suggest. For example:

"This person mentions many small burns on the hands."

"What kind of abuse might this suggest?"
(Physical abuse.)

Now give out the SIGNS OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT handouts. Go over the handouts with the group.

You could say:

Awareness of signs which may indicate that a child is being abused is the first step in stopping the abuse. It is important to keep in mind that child abuse is usually a pattern of behaviour, rather than an isolated incident. If you are unsure that what you have noticed is abuse, consult your local child abuse prevention agency.

You, as a group, have already mentioned some possible signs of abuse. Let's look more closely at signs of physical abuse and neglect, of sexual abuse and of emotional abuse.

Begin by discussing SIGNS OF PHYSICAL ABUSE

You could say:

Children often have minor bumps and bruises. Physical abuse may be indicated by injuries in various stages of healing or by a series of injuries.

Signs of physical abuse may include:

- bruises, welts or abrasions, especially to the head or face;
- burns, especially in patterns or lines, small, circular burns, rope burns;
- fractures and dislocations, especially in children under two years; and
- delays in seeking medical attention.

Now go on to discuss: SIGNS OF NEGLECT

You could say:

Neglect may best be identified by looking at the overall emotional and physical well-being of a child. Does the child often appear unkempt and uncared for?

Signs of neglect may include:

- clothing inadequate for the weather;
- children who often appear hungry, listless, and tired;
- frequently unattended physical or medical needs (hair, teeth, eyes, ears);
- inadequate supervision or child care arrangements that place the child at risk; and
- irregular attendance at school.

Then discuss SIGNS OF SEXUAL ABUSE

You could say:

Four main areas of a child's body may show signs of sexual abuse: the vagina, the penis, the anus and the mouth. Or sexual abuse may leave no physical signs at all.

Sexual abuse is difficult to identify because children often are abused by a parent, relative or caregiver who has threatened the child into "keeping the secret."

Signs of sexual abuse may include:

- bruising, sores or injuries to the genital area;
- detailed knowledge of sexual behaviour inappropriate to the child's age;
- acting out sexual behaviour during play;
- venereal disease;
- anxiety, hopelessness, depression;
- self-mutilation;
- drug and alcohol abuse;
- running away from home;
- promiscuity, prostitution;
- pregnancy; and
- suicidal behaviours.

Then discuss SIGNS OF EMOTIONAL ABUSE

You could say:

Emotional abuse destroys a child's self-image. Keep in mind that emotional abuse may accompany other forms of abuse, including sexual or physical abuse or neglect. Emotional abuse includes clusters of both physical and behavioral symptoms and occurs over a period of time.

However, some of the following signs may also be an indication of other kinds of upset in a child's life, such as loss of a pet, illness, or death in the family.

Signs of emotional abuse may include:●

- sleep disturbances;
- physical complaints with no medical basis (headache, nausea, pain, muscle twitches, stomachaches);
- behaviour inappropriate to age (acting younger or older than their stage of development);
- acting out behaviour (aggressive or out-of-control);
- overly compliant behaviour (anxious to please);
- low self-esteem; and
- depression or suicide attempts.

5. IF YOU SUSPECT CHILD ABUSE

(about 5 minutes)

If you suspect child abuse, what should you do?

Begin by telling participants about the laws relating to child abuse.

You could say:

Every province has its own child protection laws which require that abuse or neglect of a child be reported. If you suspect that a child is being abused or neglected, **it is your responsibility** to report your concerns to the child welfare agency, social service department or police in your community. Anonymous reports are accepted and acted upon.

People who report suspected abuse cannot be sued unless their intent is to cause trouble. The "best interests" of children are the main concern of protection laws and services. It is the responsibility of the appropriate authorities to decide if a child is being abused.

6. RESPONDING TO A DISCLOSURE

(about 10 minutes)

Begin by explaining what is meant by the term "disclosure."

You could say:

When a child tells you about abuse, it is called a **disclosure**. A child you know may tell you about an abuse situation, either theirs or that of someone they know. What do you do? How do you respond to the child?

Now give out the RESPONDING TO A DISCLOSURE handout.

Go over the handout with the group.

RESPONDING TO A DISCLOSURE

- Listen to the child as openly, calmly and quietly as you can.
- Don't make promises you can't keep.

Tell the child:

- that you believe them;
- that you are glad they told you;
- that it is not their fault;
- that you will do your best to find help; and
- that you cannot keep this information a secret (it is the law that this information must be reported).

Then:

- immediately report the disclosure to local child protection services.

7. DISCUSS THE QUIZ (about 10 minutes)

Ask participants to find the QUIZ they completed earlier.

Read each question and answer aloud.
All are FALSE.

1. Witnessing violence in the home has little effect on children.
2. Most children are abused by strangers.
3. Children lie about being abused.
4. Few boys are sexually abused.
5. Some of the responsibility for abuse rests with the child.

Depending on time, you may want to encourage discussion after each point. Not everyone will agree with the answers or they may raise what seem like unrelated issues. If this happens, some responses you might use are:

- "What do others think?"
- "That sounds like a topic for another discussion."
- "I'll write down that question and contact someone who can give us more information on that topic."

Fact: Children who grow up in a violent home will be affected by it for the rest of their lives. Being abused or witnessing the abuse of others causes emotional and psychological harm to children that will affect their ability to learn, to develop confidence and self-esteem and to get along with others.

Fact: Children are most often abused by parents, relatives, or other trusted adults, not strangers. In nine out of ten cases, the offender is either related to or known to the child.

Fact: There is little evidence that children lie about abuse. If a child tells you about abuse, believe them and report the disclosure. Children are more likely to deny abuse and take back truthful statements than to make false reports.

Fact: Both boys and girls are sexually abused. One out of every two girls and one out of every three boys is likely to experience some form of sexual abuse.

Fact: No child deserves abuse regardless of their behaviour. Adults are responsible for their actions towards children. Children are never responsible for abuse.

6. Spanking is an effective way of disciplining a child.

Fact: Shaking a baby can cause severe and permanent injury or death.

8. Child abuse is more common in certain ethnic groups or in low income neighbourhoods.

9. Nothing can be done to protect children from abuse.

Fact: Physical punishment is not effective discipline. Spanking can escalate to abuse.

7. Shaking a baby does not harm the baby.

Fact: Child abuse crosses all social, cultural, ethnic, religious, and economic boundaries.

Fact: A great deal can and is being done:

- School prevention programs teach children how to protect themselves.
- Services for parents, like family resource centres and parenting classes, offer information and support.
- Provincial and national child help telephone lines give children a place to call for help.

**8. WIND UP: WHERE DO WE GO FROM
HERE? (about 5 minutes)**

During the last 5 minutes of the presentation, you may want to ask the group if they would like to meet again to:

- continue discussion on child abuse (particularly if you ran out of time and did not finish the session);
- invite a community resource person to talk about child abuse issues, parenting and what services are available in the community;
- view a video on child abuse recommended by a local community resource person;
- discuss plans to encourage the local school board to develop and implement child abuse prevention programs; and/or
- discuss another family violence topic such as wife abuse, or abuse and neglect of older adults. Session guides are available free from the National Clearinghouse on Family Violence.

Mention that you will be available for the next few minutes should anyone have a question or concern.

If someone has a specific concern, make sure they know about any employee assistance program or union counselling that may be available in your workplace. Refer to the **CHILD ABUSE COMMUNITY RESOURCE LIST** for other suggestions of where to go for help.

Thank the group for coming to the session.



Child Abuse and Neglect

Information from ...

The National Clearinghouse on Family Violence

What is Child Abuse?

Child abuse refers to the mistreatment or neglect of a child by a parent, guardian or care giver which results in injury or significant emotional or psychological harm to a child.

Child abuse is expressed in several different forms:

Physical Abuse is the deliberate application of force to any part of a child's body which results in, or may possibly result in, a non-accidental injury. It may involve a single incident or a pattern or series of incidents. Child physical abuse is unique among the various aspects of family violence because it is often connected to or confused with punishment.

Child Sexual Abuse occurs when a child is used for the sexual gratification of an adult or adolescent. It involves the exposure of a child to sexual contact, activity or behaviour, and may include invitation to sexual touching, intercourse or other forms of exploitation, such as juvenile prostitution or pornography. Aside from this definition child sexual abuse is not addressed in the context of this fact sheet. A separate fact sheet addressed exclusively to the subject of child sexual abuse is available from the National Clearinghouse On Family Violence.

Neglect describes acts of omission which significantly impede a child's emotional,

psychological, or physical development. Physical neglect consists of the failure to adequately meet a child's needs for nutrition, clothing, accommodation, medical care and protection from harm. Emotional neglect is defined as the failure to satisfy the developmental needs of a child to feel loved, wanted, secure and worthy. It ranges from passive indifference to outright rejection.

Emotional Abuse involves persistent attacks on a child's sense of self. Emotionally abusive behaviour is usually chronic, and is often part of a pattern of dysfunctional child rearing. Habitual humiliation, rejection or the constant reiteration that a child is stupid or bad can actively undermine a child's sense of worth and self confidence. Other emotionally abusive acts include, forced isolation, intimidation, exploitation, terrorizing or routinely making unreasonable demands on a child.

How Widespread is the Problem?

The true prevalence of child abuse is difficult to assess, as only the most extreme cases tend to come to the attention of the professional community. Also, the failure to recognize child abuse, and in some instances the failure to acknowledge its reality, leads to nonreporting.

The nature of the problem, its secrecy and shame, the legal sanctions which it can entail, and the young age and relative dependency of its victims

all serve to reduce voluntary reporting. Furthermore, while the number of child abuse cases handled by social agencies can be calculated, the actual incidence of undiscovered and unreported abuse can only be estimated.

There are no national statistics for child abuse in Canada. Each province and territory compiles its own figures, according to its own definitions. In some provinces, suspected cases are combined with confirmed ones, emotional abuse is not distinguished from physical abuse, etc.

- A national family violence survey done in the United States revealed that nearly 1.5 million children are very severely abused each year.¹ The American study distinguished very severe violence (kicking, burning, scalding, threatening or attacking with a knife or gun) from severe violence, which it defined as "hitting a child with an object". When this latter measure was added it estimated that 6.9 million children are physically abused each year.²
- In Ontario, the Children's Aid Society statistics for 1983 indicate that there were 3,546 child physical abuse investigations, for 1984 there were 4,340, and 5,824 by 1986.³
- A report by Saskatchewan Social Services noted that underfeeding, or caloric deprivation, causes over 50% of the cases of "failure to thrive" in infants. That figure does not include failure to thrive due to organic causes or a feeding error on the parents' part.⁴
- More pervasive and less easily detected than physical abuse is child neglect. A Nova Scotian Task Force on Family and Children's Services found that 70% of the children on child welfare caseloads had or were suffering from neglect.⁵

Facts to Consider

The Victim

- Child abuse is not confined to any one group or social class; it cuts across all ethnic,

religious, social and economic backgrounds. Although, it is usually those families of lower socioeconomic status who come to the attention of the public authorities.⁶

- Potentially the most serious cases of child abuse involve preschoolers or infants.⁷ Infants, in abusive homes, are particularly at risk as they are totally dependent, vulnerable, non-verbal and require a considerable amount of parental attention and patience.
- Children generally want to tell about their abuse so it can be stopped, but they are often afraid that they will not be believed or protected, or are fearful of the possible consequences of disclosure.
- The effects of child abuse are far reaching and profound, it appears that it can have very serious social consequences including, but not limited to, delinquency, criminality, mental illness, developmental delays and teenage pregnancy.⁸
- Victims of child abuse are at considerable risk of suffering from language delays, learning disabilities, mental illness and brain damage. Similarly, children who are brought up in an abusive home are more likely to sustain undernutrition or suffer growth delays.⁹
- "Failure to thrive" in infants is sometimes the result of neglect, leading in extreme cases, to development delays and even death.
- While physical assault cases are more likely to come to the attention of the public authorities, neglect can represent an equally serious risk to a child, moreover, the incidence of neglect is higher than that of physical abuse.¹⁰
- Child abuse has received considerable public attention in recent years, neglect has not. Any significant effort to alleviate child neglect would have to address the need for adequate income, affordable daycare, accessible family support services, employment programs and other resources that are requisite for a positive family milieu.

- A study done in Toronto with adolescent runaways found that nearly 75% of them had been physically beaten as children.¹¹
- Victims of childhood abuse are at a greater risk of becoming abusers themselves. A recent study done for Correctional Services Canada found that 75% of abusive husbands came from violent abusive families.¹²
- A study done with male adolescent prostitutes found that 72% of them had been subjected to physical or emotional abuse by family members.¹³
- Many abusers view themselves as victims. They feel that they have lost control of their children and their own lives. When confronted with what they perceive to be disrespectful behaviour from their children they lash out in an effort to establish control.¹⁶
- Child-abusing parents frequently have unrealistic expectations about their children's, including their infant's, developmental ability. They often demand a level of physical, social and emotional maturity which is inappropriate given the age of their children.

The Abuser

- Case histories of abusive parents frequently reveal that as children, they were made to feel unloved, unwanted, unappreciated and unworthy. Their low self-worth often stems from a self-fulfilling prophecy initiated by their parents: told they were "no good", maltreating parents tend to believe this and continue to do things which support that perception.
- Abusive parents are often afraid or emotionally unable to ask for help from outside support systems, even when the resources are available.
- The vast majority of abusive parents have themselves been abused as children, however not all victims of abuse go on to assault children. Previous victimization is not the cause of child abuse, rather it is a significant contributing factor.
- All ages, economic groups and social classes are represented in the backgrounds of abusers. However, a number of researchers have demonstrated that, given the same injury or condition, children from low income homes are much more likely to be reported as being abused than children from middle or upper income families.¹⁵ As a result it is not surprising that abusers from low-income families are disproportionately represented in official reporting data.

Reporting Child Abuse

Child abuse is sometimes mistakenly thought to be a private family matter. It is not. If you have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is being abused or neglected, promptly report your concerns to the child welfare agency, provincial/territorial social services department or police force in your community.

Reporting is neither difficult nor time-consuming. In all cases, the person reporting is protected from any kind of legal action provided the report is not made out of malice. If necessary, a report can be made anonymously.

Where to go for Support Services

Contact your local:

- child welfare agency
- police department
- social service agency
- hospital
- mental health centre
- distress centre
- or other community service organizations that provide counselling and support to children and families.

What can be done to Prevent Child Abuse?

- Most abusive parents do not consciously set out to harm their children. Therefore, if efforts to assist troubled families are enhanced, parents at risk of abusing may be reached and helped before they resort to violence.
- Encourage your local school board to develop and implement child abuse prevention programs. Abused children tend to repeat the pattern of abuse, and prevention is one of the most effective instruments in arresting the cycle of violence.
- If a child tells you about an abusive situation or experience respond in a supportive manner, showing the child that he or she is believed, and ensure that the occurrence is promptly reported to the appropriate authorities.
- You can assist by teaching children how to recognize and say no to abusive or exploitative behaviour.
- You can ensure that children and adults know where they can obtain information and assistance to prevent an abusive or neglectful situation from developing.

Suggested Reading

- *Child Abuse: A Shared Responsibility: A Handbook for Youth and Recreation Personnel*, Linda Reid, Toronto: Ministry of Community and Social Services, 1985 (aussi disponible en français).
- *Child Abuse: Implications for Child Development and Psychopathology* David A. Wolfe, *Developmental Clinical Psychology and Psychiatry*, Vol. 10, Beverley Hills: Sage Publications, 1987.
- *Child abuse and neglect law: A Canadian perspective*, Douglas J. Besharov, Washington, D.C.: Child Welfare League of America, Inc., 1985.

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- *Child Abuse: Discussion Paper* prepared by Andy Wachtel for: "Working Together: 1989 National Forum on Family Violence" 1989 (aussi disponible en français).
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- *Protection de L'enfance: réalite de l'intervention*, Robert Dubé and Marjolaine St-Jules, Montréal: Gaétan Morin editeur, 1987.
- *The Psychologically Battered Child* James Garbarino, Edna Buttman and Janis Wilson Seeley, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1986.

Audiovisual: The Family Violence Prevention Division of Health and Welfare Canada has compiled over 50 films and videos on family violence, which can be borrowed free of charge through the regional offices of the National Film Board.

Endnotes

1. Murray A. Straus and Richard J. Gelles, *How Violent are American Families? Estimates from the National Family Violence Resurvey and Other Studies*, 1988, p. 26.
2. Ibid, p. 31.
3. John Meston, *Child Abuse in Canada: Implications for Child Care Policy* Ottawa: Canadian Child Welfare Association, June 1988, p. 4.
4. Saskatchewan. Department of Social Services. Child Protection Branch, *Health Professions: Child Abuse and Neglect* Regina: Saskatchewan Social Services, 1979, p. 4.

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9. H.P. Martin, "Abused Children - What Happens Eventually", in *Child Abuse: A Community Concern*, Kim Oates (ed.), New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1982, pp. 156-7.
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11. Mark-David Janus, Arlene McConnack, Ann Wolbert Burgess, and Carol Hartman, *Adolescent Runaways: Causes and Consequences*, Toronto: D.C. Heath & Co., 1987, p. 14.
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13. D.K. Weisberg, *Children of the Night: A Study of Adolescent Prostitution*, Toronto: D.C. Heath and Co., 1985, p. 49.
14. Bonnie Hutchinson, *Breaking the Cycle of Family Violence*, Ottawa: The Correctional Service of Canada, 1988, p. 12.
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For further information and publications on child abuse or on other family violence issues, contact:

**National Clearinghouse on Family Violence
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or call the toll free number, 1-800-267-1291



Child Sexual Abuse

Information from ...

The National Clearinghouse on Family Violence

What Is Child Sexual Abuse?

Child sexual abuse occurs when a child is used for the sexual gratification of an older adolescent or adult. It involves the exposure of a child to sexual contact, activity or behaviour, and may include invitation to sexual touching, intercourse or other forms of exploitation, such as juvenile prostitution or pornography.

Child sexual abuse is a criminal offence in Canada. The Criminal Code clearly stipulates what behaviours are criminal and the Canada Evidence Act defines what evidence may be admitted in court.

How Widespread Is the Problem?

As child sexual abuse is largely a hidden crime, its prevalence is difficult to assess. The nature of the problem, its secrecy and shame, the criminal penalties it entails, and the young age and dependency of its victims all serve to lessen voluntary reporting. Research evidence consistently reports that most children do not disclose their abuse; even when they do, families may be reluctant to seek assistance.

There are no national statistics for child sexual abuse in Canada. Each province compiles its own figures according to its own definitions. In some provinces, suspected cases are combined with confirmed ones, while in others sexual abuse is not distinguished from physical abuse.

The most extensive study of child sexual abuse in Canada was conducted by the Committee on Sexual Offences Against Children and Youth (Badgley, 1984). It claims that:

- Fifty-three percent of females and 31% of males have been victims of one or more unwanted sexual acts.¹
- Approximately four in five of those incidents happened to the victims when they were children or youths.²
- A national population survey done for the Badgley Report found approximately three in four victims to be girls and that one in four to be a boy.³
- Dr. Ken Finkel in an article in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* estimated that 25% of women and 10% of men are sexually abused before the age of 16.⁴
- In Metropolitan Toronto alone it has been estimated that over 2000 children may be sexually abused each year.⁵

Facts to Consider

The Victim

- Victims of child sexual abuse come from all social, ethnic and economic groupings.

- Children are not capable of giving informed consent to sexual activity, since they cannot understand or predict the consequences of adult-child sexual contact.
- Children are more vulnerable to sexual abuse beginning in the preadolescent stage between the ages 8 to 12.⁶
- Children who are isolated from others, with few friends and little contact with brothers and sisters, are at a greater risk of victimization. Some abusers are able to take advantage of a child's isolation, while others manage to isolate the child. Some children may isolate themselves because they feel different or afraid of being stigmatized.
- The closer the social relationship, not necessarily the biological one, between the child and the abuser, the greater the potential trauma to the child. Sexual assault by a trusted neighbour, for example, might be more damaging than abuse by a distant uncle.
- Children find it difficult to break the silence. In a child's world, adults control most of the resources and they seem to know all the answers. If the abuser threatens the child or someone the child loves, the child will seldom question the power of the adult to carry out the threat.
- Children invariably want to tell about their abuse so that it can be stopped, but they are often afraid that they will not be believed or protected, or are afraid of the possible consequences of disclosure.
- Especially in cases of incest, enforced secrecy and a child's fear of destroying the privacy and security of the family are such powerful obstacles to disclosure that children rarely reveal their sexual victimization until they are adults. Many never tell even then.
- There is little evidence that many children deliberately make false allegations or misinterpret appropriate adult-child contact as sexual abuse.⁷
- In the few recorded cases where children have made false allegations, it has almost always been the result of manipulation by an adult.
- False denials of sexual abuse and recanting a disclosure of abuse are much more common than false reports.⁸
- Children sometimes recant truthful allegations of abuse. This is not surprising in the light of the imbalance of power between the offending adult and the child.
- A recent study of child victims as courtroom witnesses noted that children's statements are, in general, coherent and that they accurately reflect the time and causes of the event.⁹
- Sexual abuse can have long-term adverse consequences. A study done in Toronto on adolescent runaways found that 75% of the females and 38% of males had been sexually abused as children.¹⁰

- Adult women sexually molested as children are more likely than non-victims to manifest depression, self-destructive behaviour, anxiety, feelings of isolation and stigma, poor self-esteem, a tendency toward revictimization and substance abuse.¹¹

The Abuser

- Most offenders are not strangers. Studies reveal that in nine out of ten cases the perpetrator is either related or known to the victim.¹²
- More than 90% of the reported abusers are male.¹³
- All the research into child sexual abuse indicates that it is the offender who initiates the sexual activity. The responsibility for the abuse rests with the offender.
- Offenders use a number of strategies to gain access to children and to enforce their victim's silence, including threats, force, bribery, acts of cruelty, and other forms of physical and psychological coercion.
- Incest offenders are similar to the non-offending population with respect to level of education, religion, occupation, intelligence or mental status. Abusers are found among all ages, economic groups and social classes.¹⁴
- Most sexual abuse takes place in the context of an ongoing relationship between the abuser and the child. This affords the offender an opportunity to exploit the child's wants and fears. An incestuous father, for example, may give his daughter special privileges or presents to have her remain silent.

Reporting Child Sexual Abuse

Anyone who has reasonable grounds to believe that a child is being sexually exploited or abused should immediately report these concerns to the child welfare agency, provincial social services department or police force in the community. In all cases, the person reporting is protected from any kind of legal action, provided the report is not made out of malice.

Where to Go for Support Services

Contact your local:

- child welfare agency
- police department
- hospital
- social service agency
- mental health centre
- sexual assault centre
- transition home
- distress centre
- or other community service organizations that provide counselling to children and families.

Many of these organizations are listed among the emergency telephone numbers on the first page of your local telephone directory.

What Can Be Done to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse?

- Lawyers, psychologists, doctors, social workers, police and other professionals who provide assistance to the victims of child sexual abuse should receive specialized training.
- Children can best be protected by giving them the knowledge and skills necessary for their safety and well-being, and by creating an atmosphere in our communities where they feel safe enough to come forward if they are being mistreated or abused.

- Children who are well informed about inappropriate touching, who are taught to trust their feelings about situations and people, and who know where to get help if they require it are less likely to be victimized by any type of assault.
- Prevention education is of particular importance for children who have been sexually abused, as they are at a higher risk of revictimization than are children who have not been sexually assaulted.

Suggested Reading

For Children

- *A Better Safe than Sorry Book A Family Guide For Sexual Assault Prevention* by Sol and Judith Gordon. New York: Ed-U Press, Inc., 1986.
- *Am I The Only One? A Young People's Book About Sex Abuse*, by Dennis Foon and Brenda Knight, Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre Publishers, 1985.
- *No More Secrets For Me* by Oralle Watcher, Boston, Mass.: Little, Brown & Co., 1986.
- *The Secret of the Silver Horse* Ottawa: Department of Justice, 1989.
- *The Silent Scream: The Sexual Abuse of Children*, by Linda Halliday. Toronto: University of Toronto, Guidance Centre, Faculty of Education, 1985.

For Adults

- *A Safety and First Aid Manual for the Prevention and Treatment of Child Sexual Abuse*, by Carla Van Dam. Campbell River, B.C.: M.D. Angus and Associates Ltd., 1987.
- *Child Sexual Abuse Prevention in Canada: A Guide to Prevention Programs and Resources*, by Robert Dubé *et al.* Montréal: Hôpital Sainte-Justine 1988.

- *Protecting Your Children from Sexual Assault: Little Ones' Parents' Teaching Guide*, by William Katz. Toronto: Little Ones Books, 1983.
- *What to Do if a Child Tells You of Sexual Abuse. Understanding the Law* Ottawa: Department of justice, 1988.

Audio-visual: The Family Violence Prevention Division of Health and Welfare Canada has compiled over 50 films and videos on family violence, which can be borrowed free of charge through the regional offices of the National Film Board.

Endnotes

1. Robin Badgley *et al.*, *Sexual Offences Against Children* (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services, 1984), p. 180.
2. *Ibid*, P. 175.
3. *Ibid*, p. 198.
4. Ken Finkel, *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, Feb. 1, 1987, P. 245.
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6. David Finkelhor, *A Sourcebook on Child Sexual Abuse* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1986), p. 64.
7. Jon R. Conte, *A Look at Child Sexual Abuse* (National Committee for the Prevention of Child Abuse, 1986), p. 13.
8. *Child Abuse Prevention* (Toronto: Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services, 1987), p. 10.

9. John C. Yuille, Mary Ann King and Don MacDougall, *Child Victims and Witnesses: The Social Sciences and Legal Literatures*(Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services, 1988), p. 21.
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11. Angela Browne and David Finkelhor, *Impact of Child Sexual Abuse: A Review of Research* (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services, 1989), p. 12.
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This document was prepared under contract by Gordon R Phaneuf. Contributions of the following are gratefully acknowledged: Ross Dawson, Institute for the Prevention of Child Abuse; Catherine Ryerse, Canadian Child Welfare Association; Dr. Frederick Mathew, Central Toronto Youth Services; Andy Wachtel, United Way of the Lower Mainland; Alberta Office for the Prevention of Family Violence; Barbara Merriam and Femrny Mes, Health and Welfare Canada.

For further information on child sexual abuse or on other family violence issues, contact:

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or call the toll free number, 1-800-267-1291

CHILD ABUSE COMMUNITY RESOURCE LIST

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Write in local telephone number here

CHILD PROTECTION SERVICE _____



POLICE/RCMP _____



911 (if available), or
local detachment number:

HOSPITAL EMERGENCY _____



Some of the following resources will be available in your area. Telephone numbers can be found in the telephone book, via Information Services in your community, or by asking representatives of any union counselling or employee assistance programs.

Community Information Services _____



Family Service Agencies _____



Mental Health Centre _____



Sexual Assault Centre _____



Transition House/Shelter _____



Crisis/Distress Line _____



Kids Help Phone _____



1-800-668-6868 (national toll-free line)

Community Public Health Services _____



Family Support Centres _____



Parent Support Groups _____



Child Abuse Prevention Programs _____



Native Organizations & Programs _____



Schools, Teachers, Counsellors _____



Lawyers, Legal Resources, Legal Aid _____



Provincial/City Health Units _____







Remember: if a particular resource is unable (or unwilling) to help, try other resources until you find the help you need.

CHILD ABUSE

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

A 55 MINUTE DISCUSSION

What is child abuse?

How does it affect us?

Is there help in our community?

WHEN? _____
Time and date

WHERE? _____
Location/address

For more information contact: _____
Name(s)

Telephone

Session material is based on information from the
National Clearinghouse on Family Violence,

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Canada, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 1B4.

CHILD ABUSE:

AWARENESS INFORMATION FOR PEOPLE IN THE WORKPLACE

AGENDA

Introductions

Child Abuse: An Overview	10 minutes
Examples: Signs of Child Abuse	15 minutes
If You Suspect Child Abuse	5 minutes
Responding to a Disclosure	10 minutes
Discussing the Quiz	10 minutes
Wind Up: Where do we go from here?	5 minutes

QUIZ ON FAMILY VIOLENCE

Circle your response: TRUE or FALSE

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| 1. Witnessing violence in the home has little effect on children. | T | F |
| 2. Most children are abused by strangers. | T | F |
| 3. Children lie about being abused. | T | F |
| 4. Few boys are sexually abused. | T | F |
| 5. Some of the responsibility for abuse rests with the child. | T | F |
| 6. Spanking is an effective way of disciplining a child. | T | F |
| 7. Shaking a baby does not harm the baby. | T | F |
| 8. Child abuse is more common in certain ethnic groups or low income neighbourhoods. | T | F |
| 9. Nothing can be done to protect children from abuse. | T | F |

SIGNS OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

SIGNS OF PHYSICAL ABUSE

Children often have minor bumps and bruises. Physical abuse may be indicated by injuries in various stages of healing or by a series of injuries.

Signs of physical abuse may include:

- bruises, welts or abrasions, especially to the head or face;
- fractures and dislocations, especially in children under two years; and
- burns, especially in patterns or lines, small, circular burns, rope burns;
- delays in seeking medical attention.

SIGNS OF NEGLECT

Neglect may best be identified by looking the overall emotional and physical well-being of a child. Does the child often appear unkempt and uncared for?

Signs of neglect may include:

- inadequate clothing for the weather;
- inadequate supervision of child care arrangements that place the child at risk; and
- children who often appear hungry, listless, and tired;
- frequently unattended physical or medical needs (hair, teeth, eyes, ears);
- irregular attendance at school

SIGNS OF SEXUAL ABUSE

Four main areas of a child's body may show signs of sexual abuse: the vagina, the penis, the anus and the mouth. Or sexual abuse may leave no physical signs at all.

Sexual abuse is difficult to identify because children often are abused by a parent, relative or caregiver who has threatened the child into "keeping the secret."

Signs of sexual abuse may include:

- bruising, sores or injuries to the genital area;
- self-mutilation;
- detailed knowledge of sexual behaviour inappropriate to the child's age;
- drug and alcohol abuse;
- acting out sexual behaviour during play;
- running away from home;
- venereal disease;
- promiscuity, prostitution;
- anxiety, hopelessness, depression;
- pregnancy; and
- suicidal behaviours.

SIGNS OF EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Emotional abuse destroys a child's self-image. Keep in mind that emotional abuse may accompany other forms of abuse, including sexual or physical abuse or neglect. Emotional abuse includes clusters of both physical and behavioral symptoms and occurs over a period of time.

However, some of the following signs may also be an indication of other kinds of upset in a child's life, such as loss of a pet, illness, or death in the family.

Signs of emotional abuse may include:

- sleep disturbances;
- physical complaints with no medical basis (headache, nausea, pain, muscle twitches, stomachaches);
- behaviour inappropriate to age (acting younger or older than their stage of development);
- acting out behaviour (aggressive or out-of-control);
- overly compliant behaviour (anxious to please);
- low self-esteem; and
- depression or suicide attempts.

RESPONDING TO A DISCLOSURE

- Listen to the child as openly, calmly
- Don't make promises you can't keep.

Tell the child:

- that you believe them;
- that you are glad they told you;
- that it is not their fault;
- that you will do your best to find help; and
- that you cannot keep this information a secret (it is the law that this information must be reported).

Then:

- immediately report the services.