



## Why educate the public?

In 1995, a survey identified the barriers to reporting child abuse included a lack of knowledge about where to report abuse, fear of retribution, and fear that the situation will get worse before it gets better. In 2008, a survey showed that there were still barriers to calling the Children's Aid. The survey suggests "While a majority (60%) say they are likely to contact their Children's Aid if they had young children and needed help or support, only a third (30%) would be very likely."

Ontario's Children's Aid educate their communities, including parents, about the role of the Children's Aid in the community so that children can be protected and families can get the services they need. Everyone has a role to play in keeping children safe. Children's Aid has an important message for everyone concerned about the well-being of children: "Help protect children in your community. Get involved with your local Children's Aid."

[useyourvoice.ca](http://useyourvoice.ca)

# It takes one call to save a child's LIFE.

- In 90% of the cases where Children's Aid must become involved, work is done with the family and the child stays at home.
- 156,000 calls about possible abuse and neglect of children and youth are received by Children's Aid each year.
- Last year, 78,500 referrals from concerned community members, teachers, neighbours were investigated by Children's Aid.
- Last year, 27,000 children and youth were in need of care and protection from abuse and neglect.
- 75% of families served by Children's Aid were satisfied with the services and supports they received.

# SIGNS OF ABUSE

It is important to realize that the presence of any one indicator does not mean that a child has been abused. In most instances, abused children will exhibit a number of behavioural and physical indicators. **It's not your responsibility to determine if a child is being abused.** Call your local Children's Aid to report known or suspected signs and indicators of abuse.

## PHYSICAL ABUSE:

Physical indicators:

- injuries that are not consistent with explanation
- presence of several injuries that are in various stages
- facial injuries in infants and preschool children
- injuries inconsistent with the child's age and developmental stage

Behavioural indicators:

- cannot recall how injuries occurred or offers an inconsistent explanation
- wary of adults
- may cringe or flinch if touched unexpectedly
- infants may display a vacant stare
- extremely aggressive or extremely withdrawn

## NEGLECT

Physical indicators:

- poor hygiene
- unattended physical or medical needs (i.e. dental work, glasses)
- consistent lack of supervision

Behavioural indicators:

- pale, listless, unkempt
- frequent absence from school
- inappropriate clothing for the weather, dirty clothes
- frequently does not bring a lunch

## EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Physical indicators:

- bed wetting that is non-medical in origin
- frequent psychosomatic complaints, headaches, nausea, abdominal pains
- child fails to thrive

Behavioural indicators:

- severe depression
- extreme withdrawal or aggressiveness
- overly compliant, too well mannered, too neat or clean
- extreme attention seeking
- displays extreme inhibition in play

## SEXUAL ABUSE

Physical indicators:

- unusual or excessive itching in the genital or anal area
- torn, stained or bloody underwear
- pregnancy
- injuries to the genital or anal areas (e.g. bruising, swelling or infection)
- venereal disease

Behavioural indicators:

- age inappropriate play with toys, self or others displaying explicit sexual acts
- age inappropriate sexually explicit drawing and/or descriptions
- bizarre, sophisticated or unusual sexual knowledge
- seductive behaviours

Visit [www.useyourvoice.ca](http://www.useyourvoice.ca) for more information on the signs of abuse.

## OCTOBER IS CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

Help protect children in your community



# TYPES OF ABUSE

Child abuse has many faces, and while all abuse hurts, different kinds of abuse can hurt in different ways.

**Physical Abuse:** A child is at risk of or has suffered physical harm inflicted by a person having charge of the child. It also occurs when a person fails to adequately supervise, protect, care for or provide for a child. Physical abuse also includes a pattern of neglect in supervising, protecting, caring for or providing for a child.

**Sexual Abuse:** A child is at risk of or has been sexually molested or sexually exploited by a person having charge of a child or by another person. It also occurs when the person having charge of a child knows, or should know, of the possibility of sexual molestation or exploitation by another person and fails to protect a child.

**Emotional Abuse:** A child is at risk of or has suffered emotional harm demonstrated by serious anxiety, depression, withdrawal, self

destructive or aggressive behaviours or delayed development and there are reasonable grounds to believe this harm results from the actions, failure to act or pattern of neglect by the person having charge of the child. It also occurs when a child exhibits the above serious behaviours and the person having charge of the child does not provide services or treatment to alleviate the harm. Emotional abuse can also include exposure to domestic violence.

**Neglect:** A child is at risk of or has been harmed as a result of the caregiver's failure to adequately supervise, protect, care for or provide for a child. Neglect also occurs when a child has a medical, mental, emotional or developmental condition that requires services or treatment and the person having charge of the child does not provide these services or treatment.

**Abandonment/Separation:** A child has been abandoned, a child's parent has died or is unavailable to exercise his or her custodial rights over a child and has not made adequate provision for a child's care and custody. It also occurs when a child is in residential placement and the parent refuses or is unable or unwilling to resume the child's care and custody.

**Caregiver Capacity:** No harm has come to a child and no evidence is apparent that a child may be in need of intervention. However the caregiver demonstrates, or has demonstrated in the past, characteristics that indicate the child would be at risk of harm without intervention. These characteristics can include a history of abusing/neglecting a child, being unable to protect a child from harm, problems such as drug or alcohol abuse, mental health issues or limited care giving skills.

Abused children do not always show obvious warning signs of abuse or neglect, but sometimes there are subtle indicators. Know the subtle signs of abuse and if you have any concerns at all about a child, please contact your local Children's Aid immediately.

## WHAT IS YOUR DUTY TO REPORT?

All Ontarians have an ongoing, legal obligation to directly and promptly contact their local Children's Aid if they suspect a child is or may be in need of protection. In addition, every person who performs professional or official duties with respect to children is subject to a penalty if they fail to report information related to a child they suspect is or may be abused or neglected. (CFSA s.72)

### Why call?

Ontario's children are precious and the most vulnerable citizens in society, they deserve a life free of fear and violence. Every Ontarian can protect children by being alert to the subtle and obvious signs of abuse and knowing who to call to help a child at risk of harm.

It's the right thing to do.

[useyourvoice.ca](http://useyourvoice.ca)

## WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU CALL

Your call is received by a child welfare professional who has been trained to listen to your concerns and ask questions before deciding how urgent the situation is and what type of intervention is needed.

IF A CHILD IS IN IMMINENT DANGER, A CHILD PROTECTION PROFESSIONAL WILL RESPOND IMMEDIATELY. WE ARE AVAILABLE 24/7, 365 DAYS A YEAR

Children's Aid professionals use comprehensive guidelines to determine the risk in each situation and then determine the kind of support and service needed to keep children safe in situations involving child maltreatment.

Children's Aid is required to place information regarding the investigation on a child protection provincial database.

Many factors are considered when determining how to investigate your concerns, including the age of the child, presence of physical injuries and other red flags that may indicate harm.

Every report received by Children's Aid is reviewed by a child protection professional who then consults with a supervisor to determine the appropriate response time. Individual circumstances and level of risk for the children involved determine the response times.

HELP PROTECT CHILDREN IN YOUR COMMUNITY  
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