



September 17, 2010

## Alberta participates in National Child Abuse Awareness Month

*Edmonton...* October is National Child Abuse Awareness Month, a time to reflect on how we can all work together to help protect children and youth from being abused and neglected.

“Every child deserves to be safe and live free from abuse and neglect. That is why it is so important for Albertans to learn about and recognize the signs of abuse,” said Children and Youth Services Minister Yvonne Fritz. “I encourage anyone who suspects a child is being abused or neglected, to phone the confidential Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-387-5437, or contact their local Child and Family Services Authority, Delegated First Nation Agency or police.”

It is important for all Albertans to learn to recognize the signs of child abuse and neglect, and report any situation where they believe a child or youth may be abused or neglected. Reports from neighbours, teachers, friends, family members and health professionals are needed to help Children and Youth Services identify children and youth at risk and keep them safe.

Everyday, concerned citizens reach out and phone on behalf a child or youth whose family needed help to cope with challenges related to stress, parenting, addictions, domestic violence, criminal or mental health issues or poverty. There are a number of supports available through government and community programs to help families address situations that may lead to child abuse or neglect. For more information about preventing child abuse and providing nurturing, safe environments for children and youth, visit [www.child.alberta.ca](http://www.child.alberta.ca).

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**Background:** What is Child Abuse and How to Report It

### Media inquiries may be directed to:

Tom Olsen, Communications  
Children and Youth Services  
780-427-4801

[tom.olsen@gov.ab.ca](mailto:tom.olsen@gov.ab.ca)

To call toll free within Alberta dial 310-0000.

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## What is Child Abuse and How to Report It

The main types of child abuse include:

**Emotional abuse** may take the form of chronic exposure to alcohol or drug abuse, verbal attacks on a child's sense of self, repeated humiliation or rejection. Exposure to violence or severe conflict in the home, forced isolation, restraint or causing a child to be afraid much of the time may also cause emotional harm. Emotional abuse rarely happens only once and it is usually part of a pattern of interacting with a child.

**Neglect** is any lack of care that causes serious harm to a child's development or endangers the child in any way. Physical neglect is the failure to meet the child's day-to-day basic needs. This includes failing to provide adequate nutrition, clothing, shelter, health care and protection from harm. Emotional neglect is the failure to meet the child's ongoing emotional needs for affection and a sense of belonging.

**Physical abuse** is the intentional use of force on any part of a child's body that results in injuries. It may be a single incident or a series or pattern of incidents.

**Sexual abuse** is exposing a child to sexual contact, activity or behaviour. It includes any sexual touching, intercourse, exploitation or exposure and can be perpetrated by anyone, including a parent or guardian, caregiver, extended family, friend, neighbour or stranger.

Children and Youth Services may also become involved in emergency situations, including when the parents, youth or child are intoxicated, high or suicidal, or if a child has been abandoned.

### What contributes to child abuse?

Stress, poor parenting skills, lack of positive parent-child involvement, criminal or mental health issues, many children to care for and poverty are all factors that can lead to child abuse by parents, guardians, extended family, friends, neighbours, caregivers and strangers. Research also identifies domestic violence, lack of social supports, history of child abuse, and alcohol and drug abuse as the most frequent contributing factors in substantiated cases of child abuse. (MacLaurin, et al., 2005)

### What to do if a child discloses abuse:

- Listen to the child.
- Allow the child to explain what happened in his or her own words.
- Do not ask leading questions.
- Remain calm and neutral.
- Do not over-react, show horror or anger or any other reaction that would lead the child to believe the abuse or neglect was his/her fault.
- Support and acknowledge the child's feelings.
- Reassure the child.
- Tell the child you believe what you have heard.
- Comfort the child by saying that it was a good thing for him/her to tell you.
- Assure the child that you will do something to help.
- **CALL THE CHILD ABUSE HOTLINE: 1-800-387-5437 (KIDS) or contact your local Child and Family Services Authority, Delegated First Nation Agency or police.**

## What information will you need to provide?

- Your name and telephone number (all reports are confidential, however you can choose to remain anonymous).
- How long have you known the child/family?
- What is your relationship to the child/family?
- Information about the family.
- What is your concern about the child(ren)?
- What have you seen/heard?
- What has the child or others told you?
- Where is the child now?
- What have you done to support the child/family?
- What supports (formal or informal) are involved with the family?

## What happens once a report is made?

The information provided by the caller will be reviewed and may be referred for investigation as needed. Based on the outcome of the investigation, the child and their family may be referred to community supports, receive family enhancement services or actions to further protect the child may be taken, such as a voluntary agreement or court order.

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