



Saskatchewan Soccer Centre Club Excellence Saskatchewan Child Abuse Protocol – Information Sheet



Suspected child abuse must be treated seriously, and must be reported to Social Services, Child Protection/local First Nations Child and Family Services Agencies or police according to Section 12 of *The Child and Family Services Act*.

The Child and Family Services Act provides the mandate for the Ministry of Social Services and First Nations Child and Family Services Agencies to investigate suspected abuse and neglect of children by their parents, guardians or other adults in the household who provide day-to-day care and supervision of the child. Section 11 of the *Act* defines the circumstances in which a child is in need of protection.

Physical Abuse refers to all actions resulting in non-accidental physical injury or harm. This may include non-accidental injury, cruel or excessive corporal punishment (which may or may not cause physical injury), threats of physical harm, dangerous behaviour towards a child or in immediate proximity to the child (e.g., throwing objects, use of weapons).

Sexual Abuse and Exploitation occurs when a child has been or is likely to be exposed to harmful interaction for a sexual purpose by a parent, caretaker, any person in a position of trust and/or any other person. It can include both physical and/or non-physical contact. Examples include engaging a child in sexual acts, obscene acts, taking pictures of a sexual nature (sexual exploitation), pornography, voyeurism, exhibitionism and threatening sexual assault, as well as the utilization of “grooming” techniques (**Grooming** is defined as deliberate actions taken with the aim of befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child, in order to lower the child’s inhibitions in preparation for sexual abuse or exploitation of the child).

Physical Neglect refers to acts of omission on the part of the parent/caregiver. This includes failure to provide for the child’s basic needs and appropriate level of care with respect to food, clothing, shelter, health/medical, hygiene, safety and supervision as determined by the minimum levels of care standards.

Emotional Maltreatment refers to both emotional abuse and emotional neglect of the child. Emotional abuse includes excessive and overt rejection, criticism and excessive demands of performance for a child’s age and ability. Emotional neglect refers to the failure of the parent/caregiver to provide adequate psychological nurturance necessary for a child’s growth and development.

Exposure to Domestic Violence or Severe Domestic Disharmony refers to a child living in a situation where there is interpersonal violence, including children witnessing, hearing or being aware of violence perpetrated by one adult figure against another adult figure or another child.

Failure to Provide Essential Medical Treatment refers to a parent or caregiver failing to provide essential medical treatment or to remedy a mental, emotional or developmental condition of a child.

Duty to Report Suspected Child Abuse

The Child and Family Services Act (Section 12, Subsection 1 and 4) states that **every** person who has reasonable suspicion to believe that a child may be in need of protection shall report the information to a **child protection worker**, the Ministry of Social Services/First Nations Child and Family Services Agency,

or a **police officer**. Every police officer who has reasonable grounds to believe that a child may be in need of protection shall immediately report the information to a child protection worker.

The duty to report **applies** in spite of any claim to confidentiality or professional privilege (e.g., priest, religious clergy, etc.) other than solicitor/client privilege or Crown privilege.

Receiving Disclosures of Abuse from a Child

Regardless of the type of abuse a child reports, all disclosures must be treated in a similar manner. If a child makes a disclosure:

- Listen openly and control your reaction;
- Reassure the child that he/she is safe and this is not his/her fault;
- Do not correct language and let the child report the incident in his/her own words;
- Record what the child has reported and your observations; and
- Avoid making promises that cannot be kept (e.g., “I won’t tell anyone. I will keep this a secret.”)

It is not the responsibility of the person receiving the disclosure to decide whether the abuse has occurred. When the child is disclosing the abuse, **do not** ask leading questions or insert information. The circumstances must be conveyed in the child’s own words.

Reporting Abuse, Neglect, Interpersonal Violence

Time is of the essence in ensuring the safety and well-being of children.

- Report the suspected abuse, observations of suspected abuse and/or disclosure of abuse **immediately** to your local Ministry of Social Services or First Nations Child and Family Services Agency and/or to police. Do not wait until you have all information before calling to report the abuse. Tell the child protection worker or police officer as much information as you know.
- Even if you believe someone else is reporting the situation, you still have a duty to report.
- You have an ongoing duty to report child abuse, even if you know a report has already been made about a child. You must make a further report if there is additional reasonable suspicion that the child is or may be at risk of abuse. All incidents must be reported.
- If you believe the child or other children must be protected from further abuse, do not contact the alleged perpetrator – this is the responsibility of police.

What to Report?

Your report should include:

- Your name, telephone number and relationship to the child (*this information is confidential and may be provided anonymously; however, if the case is presented to court for a child protection hearing or criminal proceeding, those who identify themselves may be summoned to court*);
- Your immediate concerns about the child’s safety;
- The child’s location, the child’s name, age and gender;
- Information about the situation;
- Information about the family, caregivers and alleged offenders;
- Other children who may be affected; and
- Any other relevant information.

Two provincial acts that apply to child abuse are:

1. *The Child and Family Services Act* applies to children under the age of 16 and in exceptional circumstances youth ages 16 and 17.
2. *The Emergency Protection of Victims of Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Act* applies to children and youth under the age of 18.

The Criminal Code of Canada governs situations as it relates to criminal offenses perpetrated against children under the age of 18.

If you have doubt about where a report should be made based on the age of the child, a report should be made to both the Ministry of Social Services/First Nations Child and Family Service Agency **and** Police. These agencies will determine which legislation and investigation procedures apply.

After a report is made, child protection staff and police officers are responsible for the investigation of child abuse cases. Child protection staff will investigate to determine if there are reasonable grounds to find the child in need of protection. The police investigate to determine if a criminal offence has been committed and if there are reasonable grounds to lay charges under *the Criminal Code of Canada*. Other professionals (such as Child Protection Services, Police, Health, Victim Services, Education, Licensed Child Care Facilities, and the Ministry of Justice) play a critical role in assisting with the investigation, supporting the child during and after the investigation, and providing follow-up services.

For more information, please consult the Saskatchewan Child Abuse Protocol 2014 at:

<https://www.saskatchewan.ca/live/personal-and-family-support/child-protection-and-support/child-abuse-and-neglect>