

# Child Protection Services

*The Child and Family Services Act* requires the Ministry of Social Services, Child and Family Programs, to provide services to families where children are believed to be in need of protection. The goal of child protection services is to maintain children in their family home whenever possible and, if a child must be removed for their protection, to reunite families as soon as possible.

For children and families living on-reserve, child protection services are provided by First Nations Child and Family Services Agencies.

## What is child abuse and neglect?

Abuse and neglect refers to circumstances that may be harmful to a child's physical, emotional or psychological health.

- **Physical abuse** — any action, including discipline, causing injury to the child's body.
- **Sexual abuse** — any action involving a child in sexual exploitation or sexual activity including touching, exposure, using a child in the making of/or viewing pornography.
- **Emotional maltreatment** — expecting a child to be able to do things he or she cannot do, embarrassing or insulting a child, making hurtful comments about a child's appearance, intelligence, size, ability, etc.

- **Neglect** — failing to provide a child with enough food, proper clothing, shelter, health care, or supervision.
- **Domestic violence** — exposing a child to a pattern of abusive behaviour or threats of abusive behaviour by one caregiver against another (hitting, kicking, restraining, slapping, throwing objects, intimidation, stalking, etc.).

## Factors that can lead to abuse and neglect

Parenting is difficult. Child abuse and neglect occurs across all socio-economic, cultural, religious and ethnic groups. Though certain factors are commonly associated with abuse and neglect, the presence of these factors will not always result in abuse and neglect. Factors may include:

- marital, personal or financial problems;
- alcohol, drug or other substance abuse;
- unaddressed mental health issues;
- lack of a support network (family or friends);
- poor or over-crowded housing;
- lack of knowledge about child development;
- inappropriate discipline;
- little or no experience caring for children;
- demands of caring for a child with special needs; and
- being abused or neglected as a child.

## Can abuse and neglect be prevented?

Child abuse and neglect can be prevented by supporting parents to:

- understand what is normal child development and what they can expect at certain ages;
- enhance their parenting skills, including how to use age appropriate discipline;
- learn how to resolve family conflicts;
- learn to cope with stress;
- recognize and seek assistance for drug, alcohol, gambling or other addictions; and
- recognize and seek assistance for mental health and other health related issues.

## How can I help stop child abuse and neglect?

**As a parent** — If you feel unable to safely parent your children, call the nearest office of the Ministry of Social Services.

**As a member of the community** — If you believe a child may be neglected or abused, you have a **legal responsibility** to report your concerns. You may report them to your nearest Ministry of Social Services office (*north, centre or south regions listed on the back page*), First Nations Child and Family Services Agency or local police/RCMP.

A person reporting suspected neglect or abuse is not required to provide their name.

## What happens when I make a report?

Reports of abuse or neglect are investigated by trained, professional staff. If a child is found to be in need of protection, the caseworker has the responsibility to ensure services are provided to both the child and family.

## What are the signs a child may be abused or neglected?

There are usually signs a child is being abused or neglected. Signs may be visible, or the child's behaviour may lead to concerns about abuse or neglect. Often, one sign is not enough, but several signs or patterns indicate abuse or neglect. The following chart lists a number of physical and behavioural indicators.

	Physical Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
Physical Abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>injuries (bruises, cuts, burns, bite marks, fractures, etc.) that are not consistent with explanation offered</li> <li>the presence of several injuries over a period of time</li> <li>any bruising on an infant</li> <li>facial injuries in preschool children (e.g., cuts, bruises, sores, etc.)</li> <li>injuries inconsistent with the child's age and development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>cannot recall how injuries occurred, or offers an inconsistent explanation</li> <li>reluctant to go home</li> <li>frequent absences from school</li> <li>fear of adults</li> <li>may cringe or flinch if touched unexpectedly</li> <li>may display a vacant stare or frozen watchfulness</li> <li>extremely aggressive or withdrawn</li> <li>extremely compliant and/or eager to please</li> </ul>
Emotional Abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>bedwetting and/or diarrhea which is non-medical in origin</li> <li>frequent psychosomatic complaints: headaches, nausea, abdominal pain</li> <li>insufficient weight gain or inappropriate weight loss</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>extreme withdrawal or aggressive behaviour, mood swings</li> <li>overly compliant; too well-mannered; too neat and clean</li> <li>extreme attention-seeking behaviours</li> <li>poor peer relationships</li> <li>severe depression, possibly suicidal</li> <li>running away from home</li> </ul>
Sexual Abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>unusual or excessive itching in the genital or anal area</li> <li>pregnancy or sexually transmitted infection</li> <li>injuries to the genital or anal areas (e.g., bruising, swelling or infection)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>age-inappropriate sexual play with toys, self, others (e.g., replication of explicit sexual acts)</li> <li>age-inappropriate, sexually explicit drawings and/or descriptions</li> <li>bizarre, sophisticated or unusual sexual knowledge</li> <li>involvement in sexual exploitation</li> <li>cruelty to animals</li> <li>fear of home, excessive fear of adults</li> <li>depression or other mental health challenges</li> </ul>
Neglect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>abandonment</li> <li>unattended medical or dental needs</li> <li>lack of supervision</li> <li>hunger, inappropriate dress, poor hygiene</li> <li>persistent health conditions (e.g., scabies, head lice, diaper rash or other skin disorder)</li> <li>developmental delays (e.g., language, weight)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>displays fatigue or listlessness, falls asleep in class</li> <li>steals food</li> <li>reports that no caregiver is at home</li> <li>frequently absent or late for school</li> </ul>
Domestic Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>physical injuries (bruising, burns, fractures, etc.)</li> <li>bedwetting</li> <li>headaches, abdominal complaints</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>aggressive or antisocial behaviours</li> <li>depression, including suicidal ideation</li> <li>fearful and withdrawn</li> <li>frequently absent or late for school</li> <li>poor social relationships</li> <li>low self-esteem</li> </ul>

## Contact Us

To report all incidents of suspected, observed, or disclosed child abuse and/or neglect from anywhere in the province, please contact your nearest 24-hour provincial child protection intake line:

Prince Albert (North)	1-866-719-6164
Saskatoon (Centre)	1-800-274-8297
Regina (South)	1-844-787-3760

## After Hours Crisis Services

Prince Albert	306-764-1011
Saskatoon	306-933-6200
Regina	306-569-2724
Other Communities	Local Police/RCMP