

WHAT WE THINK MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY NEED TO KNOW to protect Ontario's children

Who is responsible for protecting Ontario's children? Everyone! Every Ontarian has a role in protecting children in our communities. Children's Aid relies on the support of the media and our community partners to inform the public about being alert to the signs of abuse and neglect and knowing who to call to help a child at risk of harm or a family in crisis. Everyone can support the well-being of children and families. Child safety and family welfare is not the job of one person, but of many:

1. Community members watch for signs of abuse, neglect, or family crisis.
2. Children's Aid responds to concerns for a child's safety and provides child protection, family support or referrals to other community services. Wherever possible, children should grow up in their own family as long as their safety can be assured.
3. Families, with the support of Children's Aid and other community services, work on keeping children safe and protected in the home.

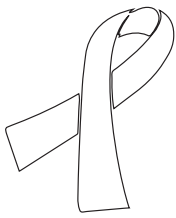
This collaborative approach unites communities to work towards the best outcomes for Ontario's children and families.

What is abuse and neglect? Abuse is against the law and occurs when a child is hurt intentionally, or when a parent or caregiver fails to protect a child in their care. Physical abuse and sexual abuse are clear examples of maltreatment, but so too is neglect – the failure to meet a child's basic needs for food, clothing, shelter, sleep, medical attention, education and protection from harm. Children can also be emotionally abused when their parent or caregiver attacks their emotional development and self-worth by constantly criticizing, teasing, bullying, rejecting or ignoring. Learn more, at www.useyourvoice.ca/en/protect/#/what-is-abuse.

What is domestic violence? Domestic violence is violent, abusive behaviour, which occurs within a child's home environment and includes, but is not limited to partner violence. Domestic violence can have a profound effect on children and may result in or raise the risk of child abuse or neglect.

What are the signs of abuse and neglect? Unexplained injuries, fear of a specific adult, difficulty trusting others or making friends, sudden changes in eating or sleeping patterns, poor hygiene, secrecy and inappropriate sexual behaviour may be signs of family problems and could indicate a child is being abused or neglected. Remember you don't need to be sure that a child is being abused or neglected – let your local Children's Aid Society know what your concerns are and we will determine if a child is in danger. Learn the signs of abuse by visiting www.useyourvoice.ca/en/protect/#/signs-of-abuse.





CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

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How to report abuse. If you suspect a child is being abused or neglected, it's your legal duty to report the situation to a Children's Aid Society, even if you've already reported it on a previous occasion. For the child's sake, don't delay, call the Children's Aid Society immediately. The phone lines are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. To learn more about your responsibility to report, visit www.useyourvoice.ca/en/protect/#/how-to-report-abuse.

The importance of supporting parents in the community. Child abuse and family crisis are community problems. Offer care and support if someone you know is struggling with parenting. Help prevent families from reaching a state of crisis by referring struggling parents in need of support to their local Children's Aid Society. To find your local Children's Aid Society, visit www.useyourvoice.ca/en/about-us/#/contact-your-local-cas.

What we think parents or caregivers need to know

How to create a safe community. It is important to teach children their rights. When children are taught they are special and that they have the right to be safe, they are less likely to think abuse is their fault and more likely to report an offender.

How to discipline without hurting. Discipline is meant to teach children how to behave, be safe and get along with others. Physical punishment is detrimental in that it teaches children that hitting is okay and it causes them to be afraid. Physical punishment often occurs because a parent is angry and frustrated. This is particularly dangerous, however, as it is easy to lose control and cause serious injury. To explore positive parenting resources, go to www.caselgin.on.ca/safe-effective-discipline.

Help is available. If you need help, ask for it. Nobody is perfect. Call your local Children's Aid Society for more information about parenting and services in your community. Visit www.useyourvoice.ca for more tips and information.

Additional ways to support child safety and family welfare

Educate yourself, your community, and the public. Invite your local Children's Aid Society to your workplace, classroom, community group or place of worship to give a presentation about child abuse and neglect and help spread the word that child welfare begins in the community.

Advocate for the well-being of children and youth. Family services such as affordable day care and housing, parenting centres and after school recreation programs provide essential support that can help prevent families from reaching a state of crisis. Ask your local elected leaders to support these initiatives.



Ontario Association of
Children's Aid Societies
The voice of child welfare in Ontario



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