



# Orientation to Ontario

## Child Abuse

**Child abuse** is when a parent or caregiver causes harm to a child or teenager and it can be physical, emotional or sexual and includes neglect. This is illegal in Canada. The Children's Aid Society (CAS) investigates all reports of child abuse and ensures children live in a safe and supportive environment.

**Physical Abuse** – any act that causes harm or injury. It includes hitting, punching, kicking, burning or other harmful acts such as withholding food as punishment or locking a child in a room.

**Spanking** – hitting a child lightly with an open hand to correct their behavior. It is legal in Canada but follow these guidelines:

- Do not spank a child because you are angry.
- Do not use an object or enough force to cause injury or a mark
- Do not spank a child younger than 2 years and older than 12

Parents and caregivers should find other ways to discipline their children.

**Emotional Abuse** – can hurt a child's development and cause problems later in life. The most common forms include:

- withholding affection or not allowing children to socialize with friends
- children witnessing domestic violence
- regularly criticizing, humiliating, yelling and screaming.

**Neglect** – not providing the basic needs to a child. Adults are required to provide the following:

- food, shelter, clothing and medical care
- supervision and facilitating regular school attendance
- love, support.

If parents or other caregivers do not meet their children's basic needs, they are guilty of abuse. If parents have trouble caring for their child, because of stress, health or financial problems, the Children's Aid Society and other government agencies will help to make sure that the children are well cared for.

**Sexual Abuse or Molestation** – any sexual interaction involving children.

This includes physical and non-physical sexual contact. It is often a family member or family friend that sexually abuses a child or teenager. Sexual abuse may be committed by adults, teens or other children.

Child pornography and forced prostitution are common examples of sexual abuse. Creating, possessing or viewing child pornography on the Internet or in hard copy is a serious crime.

**AGE OF CONSENT** – children under the age of 16 cannot legally consent to sexual activity, even if they agree to participate.

- Having sex with a child under the age of 16 is statutory rape and is a very serious crime.
- No one under the age of 18 can consent to work in prostitution or pornography.

**Consent for Marriage** – in Ontario you must be 18 years old to marry without parents' permission.

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No one can be forced or tricked to marry at any age, and any married person can get a legal divorce in court, even if the spouse disagrees.

### CONSEQUENCES OF CHILD ABUSE

If the Children's Aid Society thinks your children are in danger, they can take them away temporarily or permanently, depending upon the seriousness of the abuse. The abuser can be arrested.

Every adult in Ontario is required by law to report child abuse and all reports are confidential. Children should report abuse to a teacher, doctor or another trusted adult.

### TO REPORT CHILD ABUSE

Call **211** and ask for the local Children's Aid Society phone number.

Visit Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies at [oacas.org](http://oacas.org)

If you think a child is in immediate danger, call **9-1-1** and ask for the police.

Report child exploitation to Cyber Tip at [cybertip.ca](http://cybertip.ca)

