



AD.1.12.1 Protection of Minors Procedure

Schedule A Definitions of Abuse

Child abuse, as defined by the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* and where child intervention services may become involved, "is any act of maltreatment of a child by a parent or guardian that results in injury or harm"¹.

There are many different forms of child abuse and a child may be subjected to more than one form. Child abuse may not always be obvious and children may be uncomfortable or unable to tell anyone about what is happening to them. Children may even be unaware that what is happening to them is actually abuse. Abuse may occur once or it may occur repeatedly over time. The form of abuse may change over time or it may escalate in type, severity, frequency, or duration. Child abuse can be perpetrated by anyone, including a parent or guardian, caregiver, extended family member, friend, an older child, neighbour or stranger.

A child who has been abused may or may not show any behavioural or emotional reaction to the abuse. Because children commonly delay telling anyone about chronic or acute abuse, all disclosures should be taken seriously².

The following are definitions of the four main types of abuse to which a child may be subjected:

Physical abuse is the deliberate use of force on any part of a child's body that results in injuries or that puts the child at risk of being injured. It may be a single incident or a series or pattern of incidents. It may include beating, hitting, shaking, pushing, choking, biting, burning, kicking or assaulting a child with a weapon or object³. It may include the dangerous or harmful use of force or restraint against a child.

Sexual abuse is the exposure or involvement of a minor to sexual contact, activity, or behaviour. It may include sexual touching, intercourse, or exploitation. It may include taking pictures of a child without clothing on, forcing a child to watch others engage in sexual activities, inappropriate sexual comments or talk, child prostitution or child pornography⁴.

Emotional or psychological abuse involves harming a child's sense of self or harming a child's mental or social development or welfare. It involves acts (or omissions) that result in, or place a child at risk, of serious behavioural, cognitive, emotional or mental health programs⁵. It may include humiliating, shaming, ignoring, rejecting, isolating, exploiting, or intimidating a child. Exposure to violence, drugs, alcohol abuse or severe conflict in the home, forced restraint, or causing a child to feel afraid much of the time may also cause emotional harm.

Neglect is the failure to provide for the child's basic physical, psychological, or emotional needs. This could include failure to provide adequate and appropriate nutrition, clothing, shelter, cleanliness, medical care, education, supervision, or protection from harm. Emotional neglect includes failing to provide a child with love or affection, safety, and a sense of worth and belonging⁶.



Duty to Report

Under the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act any person who has “reasonable and probable grounds” to believe that a child is being harmed or in danger of being harmed by their parent or guardian, has a legal obligation to report it. If you are concerned for the safety or wellbeing of a child in Alberta, or know or suspect that a child is being abused, has been abandoned, or is being neglected, you need to contact the proper services. Under the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, you could be fined for not reporting when a child is in need of intervention services⁷.

Who to Call:

You can call any of the numbers below to discuss your concerns about the wellbeing or safety of a child.

Child Abuse Hotline (open 24 hours a day): 1-800-387-5437

Southern Alberta Child Intervention Services: 1-800-638-0715.

Footnotes.

1. Alberta Human Services <http://www.humanservices.alberta.ca/abuse-bullying/14841.html>
2. Alberta Human Services <http://www.humanservices.alberta.ca/abuse-bullying/14841.html>
3. <http://publications.gc.ca/collections/Collection/J2-295-2002E.pdf> (Department of Justice, Government of Canada)
4. <https://www.childhelp.org/child-abuse/>
5. <http://publications.gc.ca/collections/Collection/J2-295-2002E.pdf> (Department of Justice, Government of Canada)
6. Childhelp <https://www.childhelp.org/child-abuse/>
7. Alberta Human Services <http://www.humanservices.alberta.ca/abuse-bullying/15393.html>