

Life in the Family:

A Newcomer's Guide to Parenting Issues in Canada

Curriculum for ESL Classes

**BC Institute Against Family
Violence**

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to Parenting Issues
in Canada**

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BC Institute Against Family Violence

Acknowledgments

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Contents

To the Teacher	5
Part One – Looking After Each Other	7
Activity 1: Pre-video warmup.....	8
Activity 2: Comprehension questions to follow video, Part 1.....	9
Activity 3: Discussion to follow the video, Part 1.....	10
Activity 4: Writing.....	11
Activity 5: Reading.....	12
Activity 6: Vocabulary exercise.....	13
Part Two – Discipline in the Family	14
Activity 1: Pre-video warmup.....	15
Activity 2: Comprehension questions to follow video, Part 2.....	17
Activity 3: Discussion to follow video, Part 2.....	18
Activity 4: Writing and poster activity.....	20
Activity 5: Reading.....	21
Activity 6: Vocabulary.....	23
Part Three – Intervention	25
Activity 1: Pre-video warmup.....	26
Activity 2: Comprehension questions to follow video, Part 3.....	27
Activity 3: Discussion activities to follow video, Part 3.....	28
Activity 4: Writing activity.....	29
Activity 5: Reading.....	30
Activity 6: Vocabulary exercise.....	32
Answer Key	33
Teacher Notes: Canada’s Laws to Protect Children	37
Overview.....	37
General principles.....	37
Provincial law.....	37
Federal law.....	38
1. Child Neglect.....	38
2. Physical Discipline.....	41
3: Child Protection.....	41
Key Services across Canada	45
National.....	47
British Columbia.....	46
Alberta.....	47
Saskatchewan.....	49
Manitoba.....	50
Ontario.....	50
Quebec.....	51
Nova Scotia.....	51
Prince Edward Island.....	52
New Brunswick.....	53
Newfoundland.....	54
Northwest Territories.....	54
Yukon.....	54
Nunavut.....	55
Video Script	54

To the Teacher

Welcome to this curriculum package. It is designed for ESL teachers to use with adults who have recently come to Canada. It provides information and resources about parenting and discipline issues that may come up in newcomer families. It includes legally accurate information about the laws on child discipline and child abuse.

There are four parts to this package:

- Video
- Curriculum Guide
- Teacher Notes: Canada's Laws about Child Protection (*This is background information for the teacher only – this section is not for the students*)
- Key Services

Video

The video contains three five-minute taped scenarios:

- Looking After Each Other
- Discipline in the Family
- Intervention

Curriculum Guide

The curriculum guide contains classroom activities to use with the video. For each of the three five-minute parts of the video, the curriculum guide includes:

- a pre-video warmup activity
- comprehension questions to follow the video
- an interactive oral activity related to the video
- a writing activity
- a reading exercise
- a vocabulary exercise

The material is designed to offer flexibility. Many of the activities can be used in different ways. You can select the tasks suited to your students' level.

Teacher Notes: Canada's Laws to Protect Children

This section provides an overview of the Canadian laws to protect children. It will give you the information you need to discuss the legal issues in the curriculum. **If questions come up during class, the background information may provide the answers you need.**

The Teacher Notes contain the following:

- an overview of the laws about protecting children
- child neglect (review before teaching “Looking After Each Other”)
- physical discipline (review before teaching “Discipline in the Family”)
- child protection legislation (review before teaching “Intervention”)

Key Services

This provides a listing of key resources across Canada. You can use this section to let your students know where they can get information about parenting issues and referrals to services that provide support.

Part One – Looking After Each Other

At the end of this session, students will have:

- a better understanding of the legal facts about parental responsibilities and neglect
- an increased awareness of the question of whether older siblings are old enough/responsible enough to babysit

Activity 1: Pre-video warmup

Have students do this activity in small groups. Ask them to compare answers to stimulate discussion.

“It’s not easy”

Parents with young children living in a new country have many difficulties and pressures. Decide which is the most important. (Number them 1 to 12 in order of importance.) Try to think of some other difficulties as well.

- _____ Finding someone they trust to look after their children
- _____ Finding childcare they can afford
- _____ Getting jobs to support their young family
- _____ Finding a baby-sitter if they start school or get a job
- _____ Attending English classes as well as working
- _____ Working overtime
- _____ Finding activities for children to do that they can afford
- _____ Helping with their children’s studies
- _____ Adjusting to a new culture and language
- _____ Helping their children adapt to a new culture, language and school system
- _____ Finding out where to get help
- _____ Having problems taking children to school and picking them up afterwards because of work or school schedules and transportation difficulties

Activity 2: Comprehension questions to follow video, Part I

Have students answer the questions and then compare answers with a partner.

Write answers to the questions.

1. Who did the mother ask to look after the three-year-old boy?

2. What did the mother ask 10-year-old Reshma to do for her younger brother?

3. What was the crashing sound?

4. What did Reshma do?

5. Why did the older sister, Sonia, suddenly want to call home?

6. Why is Reshma not responsible enough to babysit?

Activity 3: Discussion to follow the video, Part 1

Give students, in pairs or small groups, the chart below. They may not agree on the answers. Discuss how we decide who is responsible enough to look after young children.

What do you think? Explain your reasons

	YES	NO	MAYBE
Do you think Reshma, 10, is old enough to stay at home alone for a short time (for example, while her mother runs to the store)?			
Do you think Reshma is old enough to stay alone all evening?			
Do you think Reshma is old enough to babysit Dev for a short time?			
Do you think Reshma is old enough to babysit Dev if a neighbour checks on them regularly?			
Do you think Sonia is old enough to babysit all evening?			

Continue the class discussion by asking the two questions Sonia asks at the end of the video scenario: "What should my mother do?" "What would you do?" Brainstorm answers.

How to find a babysitter: As parents of young children, you can ask if your babysitter has taken a Red Cross babysitter's course. Adolescents 11 years old or older are eligible to take the course. This helps prepare them for this important responsibility. For more information, contact your local Canadian Red Cross.

Activity 4: Writing

- A. Talk with a partner or small group. Think of the advantages (good things) about having older children look after younger ones as well as the disadvantages (bad things). Fill in the chart below.

Older children as babysitters

Advantages	Disadvantages

- B. Pretend you are the sister of Veena (Reshma's mother) and pretend you are writing an e-mail to tell her what you think she should do. Use the information you wrote on the chart above to explain your reasons.

Activity 5: Reading

Introduce this reading by asking students to brainstorm the basic needs of children (the things parents must give children). Write these on the board. Ask students to read the following article to find other basic needs.

Neglect of Children

Neglect means not giving enough attention. Neglect is also a legal term. In Canada, the law says a parent must give a child his or her basic needs. Child neglect means that a parent has not done this.

Here are some examples of neglect:

- Not giving a child enough food
- Not giving the child medical care when he/she is ill
- Leaving a child without enough supervision
- Letting a child use drugs or alcohol
- Not letting a child attend school
- Letting a child stay away from school without reason
- Not letting a child come home after he/she has run away

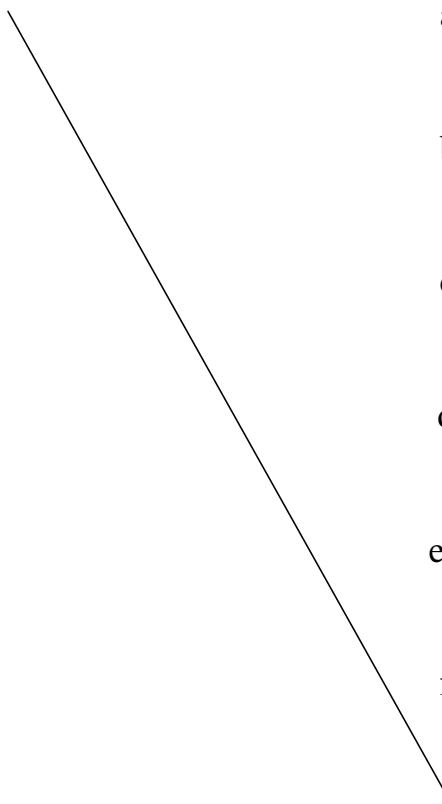
The law also says that parents have to protect their children from harm — physical harm and emotional harm:

- Physical harm means a child's body gets hurt (the child gets beaten, injured, bruised).
- Emotional harm means that a child's mind is being hurt (someone repeatedly says that the child is stupid or no good, yells at the child, laughs at the child or scares the child badly).

In many countries, it is very common to have older children take care of the young ones. Most Canadians believe that children need to be 12 years old before they are old enough to babysit. Every situation can be different. It is the parents' responsibility to decide whether someone, young or old, is responsible enough to look after young children.

Activity 6: Vocabulary Exercise

Match the words with the meanings.

- | | |
|----------------|----------------------------|
| 1. supervision | a) not giving basic needs |
| 2. responsible | b) guard, defend |
| 3. harm | c) of the body |
| 4. abusing | d) of the mind |
| 5. physical | e) trustworthy |
| 6. emotional | f) hurt |
| 7. neglect | g) watching, directing |
| 8. protect | h) harming, treating badly |
- 

Part Two – Discipline in the Family

At the end of this session, students will have:

- an understanding of the current views and laws about child discipline
- an understanding of the difference between discipline and abuse

Activity 1: Pre-video warmup

Give small groups of students copies of one or more of the following situations. Have one student record the group's comments on the chart below, and another report to the class.

What would you do?

Why was the parent angry?	What would you do?	What result would you expect if you did this?

Paramjeet noticed that her 16-year-old daughter had been wearing makeup and “suggestive” clothing to school – a low-cut tank top and tight pants. One morning when her daughter walked into the kitchen in a see-through shirt, Paramjeet told her daughter that she needed to change into something appropriate for school. The daughter went to her bedroom while mumbling, “Crazy old woman.”

Carlos' son is always late – late for dinner, late to get up, late for school, late to hand in homework. The night before his son had to take a Grade 12 Provincial Examination, Carlos went to his son's room and told him that it was time to go to bed if he wanted to get up on time. As usual, his son only stared at the computer screen while his rap songs continued blaring from the speakers. Carlos felt that talking to his son was like talking to a wall. He couldn't stand it any longer.

Mrs. Kim ran into a friend when she was shopping with her son, James. Her friend soon started to talk about her son's problems at school, and Mrs. Kim wanted to support her friend. She said that James was the same. Before she could go on, James got really angry and yelled at his mom, saying, "You're all like that, you never care about our feelings. You talk about your sons like crap!"

The Chens have been in Canada for about three years, and their children are already speaking English to each other. Mrs. Chen has made it a rule that only Mandarin is spoken at home. One day, the children got into an argument and Mrs. Chen tried to stop them, speaking Mandarin. The children went on shouting at each other in English, and their mother didn't know what was going on. All of a sudden, Mrs. Chen burst into tears because she was totally frustrated. She said that it was ridiculous that she could not understand or talk to her own children in her own home.

A woman was shopping at a drug store with her two-year-old child. When they walked by the candy section, the child insisted on having a chocolate bar. The mother said, "no" and continued to walk, but the child wouldn't leave. The mother grabbed the child and put him in the buggy, but the child would not stop screaming. He screamed so loudly that people from the store stopped and stared at the mother.

Mr. Haddad's son is turning 17 in four months, but his son has been begging for driving lessons and a car. Mr. Haddad made it clear that since they can't afford to buy another car, his driving lessons can wait. One day, a policeman appeared at their door with the boy. He had been stopped for driving without a licence.

Activity 2: Comprehension questions to follow video, Part 2

Have students answer the questions and then compare answers with a partner. Note: After the students answer the comprehension questions, explain that the father has likely broken Canadian law. A blow to the head of a young teenager, including pinching and ear pulling, is likely against the law. See [Teacher's notes page 37](#).

Write answers to the questions.

1. What did the son, Lawrence, say when his mother asked him for his report card

2. What did Lawrence say when his mother said he probably forgot to bring his report card home?

3. How did the father react to Lawrence?

4. What did Mrs. Stevens say about parents hitting their children?

5. Who is Mrs. Stevens and why did she talk to the children about this?

6. Is Lawrence's sister worried about his behaviour? Why? Why not?

Activity 3: Discussion to follow video, Part 2

Ask the students to do both parts of this activity in small groups. Ask students to think of a few more statements/examples. Use their answers as a springboard for discussion of the video and of community resources available to help the family.

- A. Lawrence, his parents and his older sister are all worried and upset. Read what they say. Talk in your group and decide who says each thing. Lawrence? Sister? Father? Mother? You may decide that more than one person might say some of these things. Add two more ideas on the lines at the bottom.

Write your answers on the lines. Be ready to explain your answers.

- "I feel embarrassed to have this problem." _____
- "Canadian parents don't discipline their kids enough." _____
- "I'm worried about making him more angry." _____
- "I wish I knew why Lawrence finds school difficult." _____
- "I would like to learn to control my anger." _____
- "Lawrence behaves very badly. He's a real brat." _____
- "I worry Lawrence will grow up to be a bad person." _____
- "My parents don't understand me." _____
- "If my mother were here, she'd help me with my son." _____
- "Why does that teacher tell children about the law?" _____
- "He's my son. This is my problem." _____
- "Who could I ask for help?" _____
- "Lawrence does need to learn respect." _____
- " _____ " _____
- " _____ " _____

- B.** There are many different people Lawrence’s family can ask for help. Each could help in a different way. The results may be different. Decide what the results (good and bad) might be. Write these. You can also add your own ideas for the help relatives or other people can give.

Who	Help/Action	Results
Teacher	Give advice but report to social services.	<i>The teacher will suggest places to get help. A social worker might visit the family.</i>
Immigrant Agency	Talk over problem. Give advice/referrals.	
Social Services	Give Lawrence a safe place to stay away from family. Teach father other ways to discipline.	
Counsellor Psychologist	Talk over problem. Try to help father and Lawrence change their behaviour.	
Community Centre or Neighbourhood House	Provide parenting classes or support groups of other parents.	
Relatives		
Other people		

Activity 4: Writing and Poster Activity

Ask students to work alone first to write their lists. Then provide newsprint and felt pens for each group to design a poster.

How can Lawrence's parents discipline him without hitting him?

A. Write a list of six or more things you would do. Think of different kinds of things:

- Ways to help Lawrence improve his school marks
- Ways to set rules and boundaries for him
- Ways to teach him to be respectful
- Ways to discipline him to stop his bad behaviour

B. Share your list with a group. Choose the best ideas from your lists. Design and make a poster to give parents ideas about disciplining children.

Activity 5: Reading

Introduce the reading by comparing the posters showing different ways to discipline a child. (Or brainstorm these ways if your class didn't do the writing/poster activity.) Follow up with the true/false questions to check comprehension.

Understanding the Law on Physical Punishment

Discipline is teaching a child to follow the rules of parents and society and helping him/her learn self-control. Canadians believe that it is important to discipline children. There are many ways to discipline children without spanking or hitting them. Parents may simply remove a small child from the room. Many parents take away an older child's privileges, for example, watching TV or playing with friends.

It is not always against the law to spank a child on the bottom with your hand, but it depends on the situation. Parents have to decide whether spanking a child is necessary in a particular situation. The law says it is the responsibility of the parents to make sure the child is safe from harm. When adults get angry, they can lose control and hit a child harder than they intend. If a parent hits a child too hard, or when a child is hurt, a social worker can investigate. If people think that the child might be hurt, they may call a social worker.

When someone reports that a child might be hurt, social workers have to check if the child is safe. Their job is to find out what really happened. The social worker may:

- decide there is no problem
- give the parents some advice about discipline
- tell parents how to find help like parenting classes
- protect the child if he or she is being abused

If you hit your child and someone thinks it is a crime, they may call the police. You will need to explain why you hit your child. If the police officer does not think you had a good reason, the officer may charge you with a crime.

Exercise: True or False?

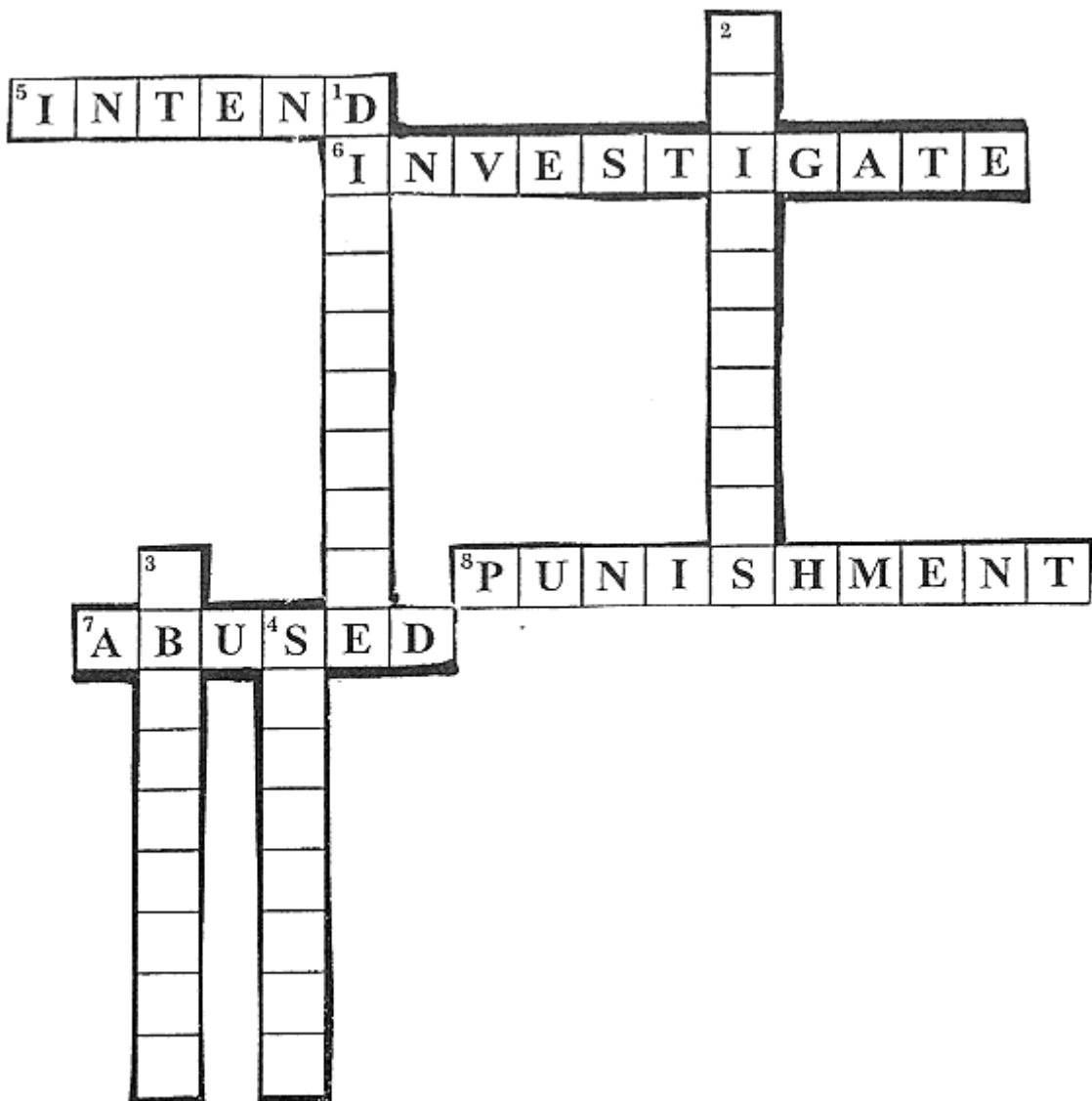
- | | T | F |
|--|----------|----------|
| 1. It is always against the law to spank a child. | ___ | ___ |
| 2. There are many ways to discipline children. | ___ | ___ |
| 3. When a parent hits a child too hard, or when a child is hurt, a social worker may get involved. | ___ | ___ |
| 4. A neighbour can call the social worker if he or she thinks that the child might have been hurt. | ___ | ___ |
| 5. If someone calls a social worker, the worker must check if the child is safe. | ___ | ___ |
| 6. If a social worker is called, the worker always takes the child away. | ___ | ___ |

Activity 6: Vocabulary

Ask students to work in pairs. Give one student the across puzzle and the other the down puzzle.

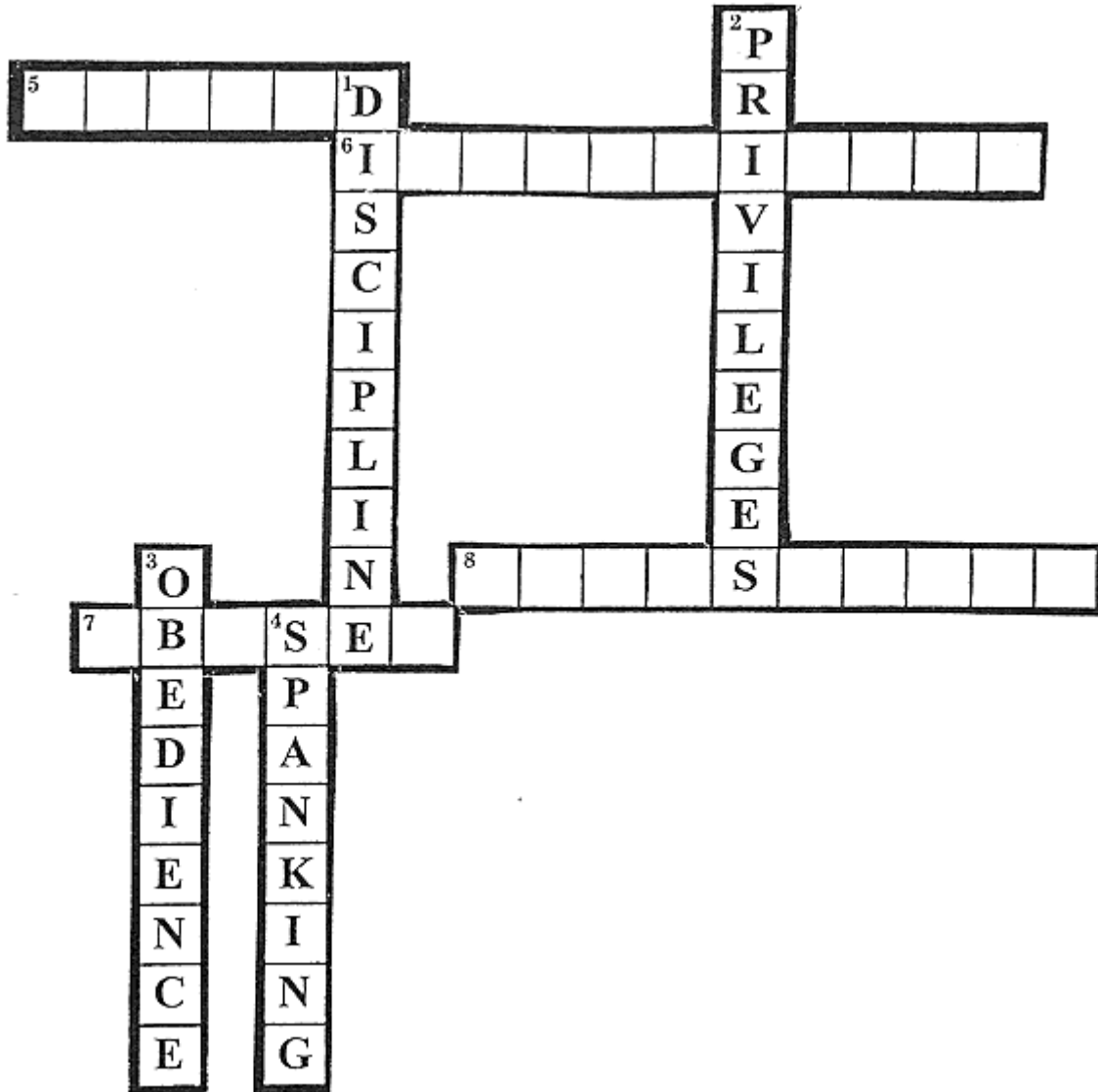
Don't show your puzzle to your partner. Explain the meaning of your words to your partner. When your partner explains a word, write it on your puzzle.

Across puzzle



Down puzzle

Don't show your puzzle to your partner. Explain the meaning of your words to your partner. When your partner explains a word, write it on your puzzle.



Part Three – Intervention

At the end of this session, students will have:

- an awareness of possible intervention in a family situation
- a better understanding of the legal facts about the child protection laws in Canada
- an understanding of the responsibilities of parents in Canada

Activity 1: Pre-video warmup

Ask students to think about the way they were raised. They may think of discipline, rules, responsibilities, etc. Compare these things to the way they are raising/would raise their children in Canada. Have students circulate and talk with six people and fill in the grid.

Many parents raise their children as their parents raised them. Sometimes parents have other ideas or new ways. What would you do with your children that is the same as your parents did? What would you do differently?

Name	Something I'd do the same	Something I wouldn't do

Activity 2: Comprehension questions to follow video, Part 3

After they write answers to the questions, ask students to compare answers with a partner or small group.

1. Why did Dan, a social worker, visit Mr. and Mrs. Scekcic?

2. What did Mr. Scekcic say when Dan asked him about Andre's bruises?

3. When Dan asked Mr. Scekcic whether he hits his son, what did he say?

4. Why did Mr. Scekcic say, "It's not *your* business to tell us how to treat our children?"

5. What was Dan's answer?

6. What do you think the mother was thinking?

Activity 3: Discussion activities to follow video, Part 3

Ask small groups of students to discuss the question of whether or not Andre is safe at home, writing their comments on the chart below.

Do you think Andre is safe at home?

<i>Reasons “Yes”</i>	<i>Reasons “No”</i>

Continue the discussion by asking the students, “When the social worker, Dan, comes back, how do you think the story will end?”

Activity 4: Writing Activity

Ask students to write in their journal from the point of view of one of the family members in the video.

Think about the three people in this family: Andre, Andre's father, and Andre's mother. Choose one of these people and pretend that you are that person.

Write about the problem only from that person's point of view. For example, if you pretend to be Andre, write only what *he* thinks, not your own or others' opinions.

Activity 5: Reading

To introduce this reading, use the students' comments in the previous discussion (whether Andre is safe and how the story might end). Check comprehension with the questions.

Understanding Child Protection

Canadian laws recognise the importance of the family, and the right of parents to live with their own children. Parents must keep their children safe, provide for their physical and emotional needs, care for them adequately (that means they are not abandoned or neglected), and protect them from any physical, emotional, and sexual harm.

When a social worker receives a report, he or she must investigate. A social worker only visits if someone thinks a child is not safe.

When the social worker visits the family, he or she will talk to the parent(s) and their child separately. The social worker will listen to each person's opinion – both parents, the child, and anyone else involved.

A social worker does not always decide that a child is in danger. The social worker may give advice or suggest parenting courses or other kinds of help.

If the social worker believes the government should protect the child, there will be a hearing in court. The judge in court decides if the child should be moved to a safe place or if the child is safe enough at home.

Parents should get a lawyer to help them in court. If they cannot afford a lawyer, they should ask for help from legal aid. (Legal aid may give them free help or advice). The government may also appoint a lawyer for their child.

Find the answers to these questions in the reading.

1. What are four things the law says a parent must do?

2. What are three things social workers might do when they visit a family?

3. When will a social worker visit a family?

4. Who makes the final decision to take away a child?

Activity 6: Vocabulary Exercise

Circle a word in the two paragraphs to match each of the meanings below.

1. taken away
2. meeting for a judge to listen to both sides
3. a place where disputes are settled by a judge
4. a person trained in the law
5. about the law
6. help

If a social worker believes that a child must be removed from his/her home, there must be a hearing in court. The judge in court decides if the child should be moved to a safe place or if the child is safe enough at home.

Parents should get a lawyer to help them in court. If they cannot afford a lawyer, they should ask for help from legal aid. (Legal aid may give them free help or advice).

Check your answers with a partner, then with the class.

Answer Key

Part One – Looking After Each Other

Activity 2

1. Reshma /10-year-old daughter
2. Give him food, give him a bath, put him to bed before 8 p.m.
3. Dev dropped the tin of cookies.
4. She told Dev to look at a book or watch TV/ picked up the cookies
5. To check that Reshma and Dev were okay alone.
6. Too young/ doesn't watch Dev closely/ seems not interested

Activity 6

1. g
2. e
3. f
4. h
5. c
6. d
7. a
8. b

Part Two – Discipline in the Family

Activity 1

Why was the parent angry?

- Paramjeet – daughter wears makeup and inappropriate clothes
- Carlos – son is always late and doesn't listen to or talk with his father
- Mrs. Kim – her son yelled at her for saying bad things about him when she had been trying to help her friend feel better
- Mrs. Chen – she can't understand her children
- A woman – her child wanted a candy bar and screamed when the mother said, "no"
- Mr. Haddad – police stopped son for driving without a licence

Activity 2

1. "No way I'm bringing that thing home."
2. "I'm not stupid, you know. I told you that the teacher hasn't given us ours. Holy shit! Are you deaf or something?"
3. He grabs his ear, hits his head, and says, "You are being disrespectful."
4. It's wrong/ parents shouldn't hit their children/ if parents keep hitting and hurting their children, a social worker will take them away.
5. Teacher/ counsellor. Schools in Canada teach children about these laws.
6. Yes. She says he's a brat/he needs to learn respect/he talks back/he lies to his parents

Activity 3 *(These are probable answers - answers may vary)*

"I feel embarrassed to have this problem." *Mother*

"Canadian parents don't discipline kids enough." *Father Mother*

"I'm worried about making him more angry." *Lawrence Sister Mother*

"I wish I knew why Lawrence finds school difficult." *Mother Sister*

"I would like to learn to control anger." *Father*

“Lawrence behaves very badly. He’s a real brat.” *Sister*

“I worry Lawrence will grow up to be a bad person.” *Father Mother*

“My parents don’t understand me.” *Lawrence*

“If my mother were here, she’d help me with my son.” *Mother Father*

“Why does that teacher tell children about the law?” *Father*

“He’s my son. This is my problem.” *Father*

“Who could I ask for help?” *Sister Lawrence Mother*

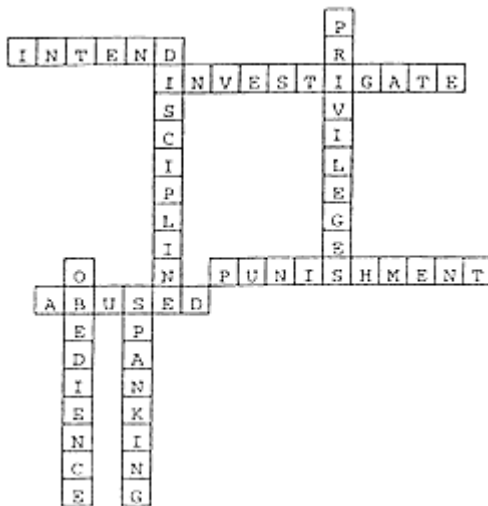
“Lawrence does need to learn respect.” *Sister Mother Father*

Activity 5

1. F
2. T
3. T
4. T
5. T
6. F

Activity 6

Answer to Crossword



Part Three – Intervention

Activity 2

1. He had a report that Andre had bruises/ to find out what happened.
2. Young boys always are hurting themselves.
3. Well, sometimes I do. Never hard.
4. He's my son/ "We are raising him as our parents raised us."
5. In this case it is our business.
6. *Answers will vary* – She's afraid of her husband's anger, too. She's protecting her husband. She's worried what will happen to Andre, etc.

Activity 5

1. keep children safe
provide their physical and emotional needs
care for them adequately
protect them from physical, emotional, and sexual harm
2. give advice
suggest parenting courses or other help
decide the child is in danger
3. when he receives a report and thinks a child is not safe
4. a judge in court

Activity 6

1. removed
2. a hearing
3. court
4. lawyer
5. legal
6. aid

Teachers' Notes: Canada's Laws to Protect children

These teachers' notes summarize how the laws in Canada aim to keep children safe and protect them from harm.

The overview outlines the general principles upon which the laws are based, and describes the areas of provincial and federal law. The three sections examine child neglect, physical discipline, and the ways children are protected from abuse. These sections include questions and answers to help you deal with student issues.

Overview

General principles

Canadian laws to protect children are based on a number of key principles. Two important principles are:

- The law must protect the best interest of the child. The child's safety must always come first.
- The family is a basic unit of society. The child's family is usually the best place for the child to be.

When these two principles conflict, the best interest of the child comes first.

For example, if a child is at risk of serious physical abuse by a parent, the government may take the child from the parent. If the risk to the child is not very serious, the government will try to support the family and protect the child at the same time.

Provincial law/Territorial law

Each province has a law about child protection. The law focuses on whether the child is at risk and needs protection from abuse.

Under this law, the provincial ministry responsible for child protection has a duty to investigate any cases of possible abuse. If the ministry gets a report of child abuse, one of the ministry's social workers will investigate.

How a social worker can intervene

- The social worker may ask the parent to make a written agreement with the ministry about how to keep the child safe.
- The social worker may ask the parent to place the child with other family members or in foster care until the parent has been able to make changes.
- The social worker may apply to the court for a supervision order. (For details, see the section “Child Protection”).
- If the problem can’t be quickly resolved or if the child is at risk, the social worker may remove the child from the home.

Federal law

If the child protection ministry believes that a child has been physically or sexually abused, they must tell the police. When the police become involved, there will be a criminal investigation. Police will look to see if the parent committed any criminal acts defined in the Criminal Code of Canada. The Criminal Code is a federal law that applies across the country. It prohibits child abuse and neglect.

If there is evidence that the parent has committed a crime under the Criminal Code of Canada, the parent will be charged and tried. A parent who is found guilty can be sent to jail, and/or receive a fine or probation, and have a criminal record. The trial judge will consider committing a crime against one’s child an aggravating factor in deciding the sentence and this may result in a more serious penalty for the convicted parent.

1. Child Neglect

Child Neglect is the failure to provide for a child's basic needs. Neglect can be physical, emotional, or educational.

The following are some examples of neglect.

Physical neglect *can happen if a parent:*

- refuses to get necessary health care for a child, or delays getting it
- abandons a child, expels a child from the home, or refuses to take back a runaway child
- fails to provide adequate supervision

Emotional neglect *can happen if a parent:*

- consistently ignores the child's needs for affection
- fails to provide needed psychological care
- abuses a spouse in the child's presence
- gives a child permission to use drugs or alcohol

Educational neglect *can happen if a parent:*

- allows the child to consistently stay away from school
- does not enrol a school-age child in school
- does not take care of a child's special educational need

What the law says about child neglect

In each province, cases of child neglect come under that province's child protection policy. The wording of the policies differs from province to province, but the practice of child protection authorities is generally the same.

Overall, the provincial child protection laws are consistent across the provinces. They state that parents must ensure that children are:

- kept safe
- have their physical and emotional needs met
- have necessary health care
- aren't abandoned or neglected
- are protected from physical harm, emotional harm, and sexual abuse or exploitation

However, there are a few important differences among provinces.

- Manitoba and Newfoundland stipulate that a child under the age of 12 should not be left alone. In other provinces, general social work practice is that a child under the age of 10 should not be left alone.
- Some provinces have a policy that witnessing domestic violence is grounds for child protection. In other provinces, this can be grounds for child protection, even though it is not explicitly stated in the provincial policy.

Questions that parents are likely to ask

How old does my child have to be before he/she can be left alone?

Manitoba and Newfoundland explicitly state that children under the age of 12 should not be left alone. This is only a guideline. Even children over the age of 12 who are left alone in unsafe conditions may be found to be in need of protection.

Other provincial laws do not explicitly state the age at which children should not be left alone. However, child protection agencies usually see the age of 10 as the minimum age that a child may be left alone.

What will the government do if they believe I am neglecting my child?

If a child is being neglected, the government can do a number of things. Please see “How a social worker can intervene” in the overview.

Is neglecting a child a crime?

It can be. The child protection ministry’s first concern is to make sure that the child is safe. But where the neglect is serious and results in harm to the child, the ministry may refer the case to the police. The police will investigate. If there is evidence of criminal negligence, the police will charge the parent under the Criminal Code of Canada.

Criminal negligence involves doing anything, or omitting to do anything that it is that person’s legal duty to do, and shows wanton or reckless disregard for the lives or safety of other persons.

Every parent has a legal duty to provide for a child while that child is under the age of 16 years. In other words, a parent is under a legal obligation to act reasonably in the care of their child. Criminal negligence is found where the parent acts in such a way as is a marked departure from the care that is expected of a reasonably prudent parent in the circumstances.

Criminal negligence has been found in cases where:

- a parent does not take reasonable step to protect a child from abuse by the other parent
- a parent does not provide the necessities of life, such as necessary medical procedures or medicine

A parent who is found guilty of criminal negligence can be sent to jail, and/or receive a fine or probation, and have a criminal record. In addition, the child may be placed in the care of a family member or foster parent.

2. Physical Discipline

Using physical methods to control children's behaviour is called physical discipline. It includes such behaviour as spanking, hitting, slapping, kicking, strapping, belting, caning, hair pulling and pinching.

Canadian law allows parents to use “reasonable force” when physically disciplining their children. Physical discipline that is not reasonable is against the law.

What the law says about physical discipline

Under provincial child protection policies, provincial governments may decide a child needs protection where the following circumstances exist:

- if the child has been, or is likely to be, physically harmed by the child's parent
- if the child has been, or is likely to be, sexually abused or exploited by the child's parent
- if the child has been or is likely to be physically or sexually abused by a person other than the parent and the parent knew or should have known of that possibility but failed to protect the child
- if minor physical discipline is accompanied by excessive yelling, this may constitute abuse

In cases of physical abuse, the police will investigate whether the abuse constitutes a criminal offence or if it is a child protection matter.

The Criminal Code of Canada prohibits child abuse under the criminal offence of assault.

A person commits an assault when he or she:

- applies force intentionally to that other person, directly or indirectly
- attempts or threatens to apply force to another person

Hitting or spanking a child fits under this definition. However, the law creates a specific exception for parents. Section 43 of the Criminal Code states that a parent is justified in using force by way of correction towards his or her child as long as the force does not exceed what is “reasonable” under the circumstances.

What is “reasonable force”? Whether or not physical discipline is reasonable will always depend on the particular circumstances of the case and these will be assessed against contemporary community standards and not those of the parent. Although courts have differed about what constitutes “reasonable force”, the prevailing law is that giving a child one to two mild to moderate spanks, with a bare hand on the child’s bottom and which does not cause physical harm, is not a crime. However, physical discipline is not likely to be considered reasonable where:

- the child is under two years of age or is a teenager;
- it involves the use of an object, such as a belt or ruler;
- it involves a slap or blow to the ear; or
- the child is injured.

Although reasonable physical discipline may be legal, governments and experts advocate against spanking or physically disciplining children for a number of reasons. Parenting experts have suggested that there are more effective ways of teaching children about self-control and appropriate behaviour, such as withdrawal of privileges or removing a child from the room. The parent may cross the line where spanking becomes abuse, and risk government intervention.

Even though a certain act of physical discipline may not be a crime, that same action may result in a child protection investigation under provincial law. Child protection workers can consider circumstances beyond the spanking itself. For example, if the spanking is accompanied by excessive yelling, the child protection worker may decide that the child is in need of protection.

It is advisable for parents to avoid physical discipline altogether, so they do not run the risk of legal consequences.

Questions that parents are likely to ask

What does the government do if they believe a child is being physically abused?

If an incident of spanking or other physical discipline is reported to the child protection authorities, social workers must investigate. If a child is being physically abused, the government can intervene in a number of ways. Please see, “How a social worker can intervene” in the overview.

Severe physical abuse may also lead to a police investigation and criminal charges under the Criminal Code of Canada.

Can I spank my child?

A light spanking on the bum of a child over the age of two with a bare open hand and that does not cause physical harm, might be permitted by law. However, for a number of reasons, this is not the best choice of discipline. First, there are better ways of teaching a child self-control and appropriate behaviour. Second, it is easy to cross the line where spanking becomes abuse, and that could lead to an investigation.

What about other forms of physical discipline...?

Although a slap or pinch may be seen as reasonable by a parent, a judge could find it is not reasonable in this situation and therefore not legal.

The courts look at all the circumstances to decide whether the force was reasonable and used for correction. A parent who uses this form of physical discipline runs the risk that a judge in court will find it to be unreasonable or done out of anger, rather than for correction. In this case, child protection may be necessary.

3. Child Protection

The goal of provincial child protection legislation is to protect children from future risk of harm. The legislation aims to maintain the family as a basic unit of society while also protecting the best interest of the child.

Questions that parents are likely to ask

How do child protection authorities decide when to investigate?

All Canadian jurisdictions, except for the Yukon Territory, have mandatory reporting laws. This means that anyone who suspects that a child is being

physically, sexually, or emotionally abused or neglected is required to report their suspicions to the provincial ministry responsible for child protection. The Yukon Territory has a general discretionary reporting provision.

Each province has a ministry that is responsible for child protection and they have a legal duty to look into all reports about children who have been or are in danger of being abused or neglected.

What happens when a child protection authority investigates?

When the child protection authorities receive a report that a child may be at risk, a social worker looks into the report. He or she may decide to investigate the case.

The social worker may inspect the household, and interview the parents, the children, and anyone else who may have information on the child's safety.

The social worker will interview the child in private. The social worker will bring an interpreter if the parent or child does not speak English.

The social worker will decide either that the child is safe or that the child is at risk and in need of some type of protection.

- If the social worker decides the child is safe, the child protection authorities may close the file.
- If the risk is minor, the social worker may connect the family with support services, or may have the family sign an agreement to ensure the safety of the child.
- If the risk is more serious, the child protection authorities will seek a court order for intervention.

There are a number of possible outcomes of an investigation. Please see, "How a social worker can intervene" in the overview.

What are some examples of child protection concerns?

The paramount concern is protecting the best interest of the child.

The following are examples of factors that the courts have considered in deciding whether a child is in need of protection:

- parental irresponsibility
- neglect
- alcohol or drug abuse

- poor coping skills
- criminal conduct
- physical or sexual abuse
- emotional abuse
- suicidal tendencies
- unstable or unsafe home environment
- psychiatric illness
- inadequate supervision of children

What rights does a parent have when a social worker interviews the parent and inspects the household?

A parent has the right:

- to have a family member, friend or advocate present
- to ask questions
- to ask for answers in writing
- to get the social worker's name, phone number, and address
- to get the name of social worker's supervisor
- to be told what actions the child protection authorities may take
- to tell their side of the story
- to get information about services available
- to give the social worker the names of people to talk to about the family
- to get a copy of the social worker's report
- to get legal advice
- to contact the social worker after the meeting to give or receive more information

What happens if the social worker takes a child away?

The child protection authority has the discretion to remove a child from the home before they get a court order. If they remove a child from the home, they must present the child's circumstances at a court hearing.

The court notifies the parents about the court hearing, but the amount of notice varies from province to province.

Before the court hearing takes place, a court may make a temporary order about who has custody of the child for now. (This may be called an “interim order” for custody.)

What happens if the authorities want a supervision order?

A court hearing will be held if the child protection authorities want a supervision order without removing the child. They ask for a supervision order where they think a child will be safe if the parents take certain steps.

What happens at the court hearing?

At the court hearing, the parents have an opportunity to tell the court what they think should happen.

The child protection authorities must present a plan of care for the child.

- The court may order that the child remain in the parents’ (or another person’s) care with a supervision order;

or

- The court may order that the child protection authorities have temporary custody of the child while the family takes certain steps to change things so that the child will be safe. When these steps are taken, the authorities will return the child. If the family does not take these steps within a certain period of time, the child protection authorities may apply to the court for a continuing custody order.

Parents who do not agree with an order may wish to appeal. In that case, they should see a lawyer. The child protection authorities may also appeal.

Should I get a lawyer?

If the child protection authority removes a child, parents should get legal help as soon as possible. If they cannot afford a lawyer, they should go to legal aid. Most legal aid plans cover child protection matters. The government may appoint a lawyer for your child.

Key Services across Canada

The following organizations are a good starting point for information and referral in your province. They may help your students find support with parenting issues.

NATIONAL

National Clearinghouse on Family Violence

Phone: (613) 957-2938

Toll-free: 1-800-267-1291

Population and Public Health Branch
Health Canada

Jeanne Mance Building

Address Locator: #1907D1

Tunney's Pasture

Ottawa, Ontario

K1A 1B4

Website:

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/familyviolence/>

The National Clearinghouse on Family Violence is a national resource centre for individuals seeking information about violence within the family and looking for resources to address it.

The Clearinghouse offers a referral and directory service of resource people and organizations working in the area of family violence. This service is free of charge.

All services and publications are provided free of charge throughout Canada in both English and French.

Parent Help Line

1-888-603-9100

<http://www.parentsinfo.sympatico.ca/>

A 24 hour – 7 days/week hotline where parents can receive information, referral and speak with professional counselling staff.

Services are in English and French.

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Parent Support Services of BC

Phone: (604) 669-1616

Crisis Line

Toll-free: 1-800-665-6880

Fax: (604) 669-1636

201-1155 West Pender St
Vancouver, British Columbia
V6E 2P4

Website:

www.parentsupportbc.ca/index.html

Email: parent@radiant.net

BCCF provides a toll-free referral service for individuals looking for counselling, education, and support for families.

BCCF also has a collection of resource materials covering a wide range of issues of interest to parents.

Staff is English speaking and parents are expected to bring an interpreter with them if they participate in parenting programs.

Vancouver & Lower Mainland Multicultural Family Support Services Society

Phone: (604) 436-1025

Fax: (604) 436-3267

5000 Kingsway Plaza - Phase III
306-4980 Kingsway
Burnaby, British Columbia
V5H 4K7

Website: <http://www.vlmfss.ca/>

Email: againstviolence@vlmfss.ca

The bilingual, bicultural workers at VLMFSS are fluent in 20 languages and are able to provide support, counselling, information, and referral services to women.

Their staff is fluent in Amharic, Arabic, Cantonese, Gujarati, Czech, Farsi (Persian), Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Polish, Punjabi, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, Tigrania, Urdu, Vietnamese, and Visayan.

ALBERTA

Calgary Immigrant Aid Society

Phone: (403) 265-1120

Fax: (403) 266-2486

12th Floor, 910 - 7th Avenue S.W.
Calgary, Alberta
T2P 3N8

Website: www.calgaryimmigrantaid.ca

Email: info@calgaryimmigrantaid.ca

Information, referral, orientation, interpretation, translation, and supportive counselling services for immigrants and their families. Programs include family resource centre, parent groups, family program, counselling, cultural celebrations and recreation, and outreach.

Staff speak Arabic, Cantonese, English, French, Gujurati, Hebrew, Hindi, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Polish, Punjabi, Romanian, Russian, Spanish, Urdu, Yiddish and languages from the former Yugoslavia.

SASKATCHEWAN

Regina Open Door Society Inc

Phone: (306)-352-3500

Fax: (306)-757-8166

1855 Smith Street
Regina, Saskatchewan
S4P 2N5

Website:
nonprofits.accesscomm.ca/reg.open.dr/
Email: rods.admin@accesscomm.ca

RODS is a non-profit society that offers a wide range of settlement services to immigrants and refugees.

Staff members are able to provide assistance in the following languages; Arabic, Chinese, English, Farsi, Spanish, and Vietnamese, and a host of other languages through their translation program.

Parenting Education Saskatchewan

Phone: (306) 934-2095

Fax: (306) 934-2087

214 - 510 Cynthia Street
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
S7K 4A7

Website:

www3.sk.sympatico.ca/famserv/

Email: famserv@sk.sympatico.ca

Supports a network of parent related support services throughout the provinces.

Information/referral services are available in English only.

For information in languages other than English, contact the Regina Open Door Society listed above.

MANITOBA

The Family Centre

Phone: (204) 947-1401

Fax: (204) 947-2128

401- 393 Portage Avenue
(Portage Place)
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3B 3H6

Website: www.familycentre.mb.ca

Email: staff@familycentre.mb.ca

Offers counselling and community services, in-home family support and family education, special needs family childcare, information and referral, education, early childhood resource centre.

Over 30 languages spoken by staff.

ONTARIO

Centre for Information and Community Services Ontario

Phone: (416) 292-7510

Fax: (416) 292-9120

3852 Finch Ave. East, Suite 301,
Scarborough, Ontario
M1T 3T9

Website: www.cicscanada.com

Email: cics@cicscanada.com

Provides settlement services to newcomers to Canada, including parenting programs and a 24-hour hotline in 5 languages where a parent can receive information and referral services.

Information is available in the following languages: Cantonese, English, Mandarin, Russian, and Tamil.

QUEBEC

For information on services in Quebec, please contact:

National Clearinghouse on Family Violence

Phone: (613) 957-2938
Toll-free: 1-800-267-1291

Population and Public Health Branch
Health Canada
Jeanne Mance Building
Address Locator: #1907D1
Tunney's Pasture
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 1B4

Website:
<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/familyviolence/>

The National Clearinghouse on Family Violence is a national resource centre for individuals seeking information about violence within the family and looking for resources to address it.

The Clearinghouse offers a referral and directory service of resource people and organizations working in the area of family violence. This service is free of charge.

All services and publications are provided free of charge throughout Canada in both English and French.

NOVA SCOTIA

MISA Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association

Phone: (902) 423-3607
Fax: (902) 423-3154

Suite 200 - 2131 Gottingen Street
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3K 5Z7

Website: <http://www.misa.ns.ca/>
E-mail: info@misa.ns.ca

Provides settlement services and information/referral to other support programs in Nova Scotia.

Services are available in Arabic, Bosnian, Croatian, Dinka, Norwegian, Slovakian, Spanish, Polish, Russian, and Vietnamese.

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Prince Edward Island Family Resource Centres

Phone: (902) 892-8744

Fax: (902) 892-3351

C.H.A.N.C.E.S.

16 Brighton Road

Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island

C1A 1T4

Website: <http://www.frcpei.ca/>

Email: Chances@isn.net

Offers programs and services to parents, including information and referral to programs across Prince Edward Island.

Programs are in English.

For information in languages other than English, call the P.E.I.

Association for Newcomers to Canada, listed below.

P.E.I. Association for Newcomers to Canada

Phone:(902) 628-6009

Fax: (902) 894-4928

179 Queen Street

P.O. Box 2846

Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island

C1A 8C4

Website:

<http://www.isn.net/newcomers/>

Email: newcomers@isn.net

Offers settlement services to newcomers and information and referral to a wide range of community services for parents.

Their six staff members speak and provide services in following languages: Bosnian, Croatian, Farsi, French, German, English, Italian, Persian, and Serbian

Board Members also speak Hungarian and Spanish.

NEW BRUNSWICK

Family Services Saint John

Phone: (506) 634-8295

Toll Free: 1-800-360-3327

Fax: (506) 652-1477

255 Metcalf Street

Saint John, New Brunswick

E2K 1K7

Website:

<http://www.familyservicesj.com/>

Email: info@familyservicesj.com

Provide a wide range of individual and family counselling, group and community based programs and services.

Offer information and referral to services in New Brunswick in English only.

Multicultural Association of Fredericton

Phone: (506) 454-8292

Fax: (506) 450-9033

123 York Street, Suite 201

Fredericton, New Brunswick

E3B 3N6

Website: <http://mcaf.aloak.ca>

Email: mcaf@mcaf.nb.ca

Provides information and appropriate referrals to cross-cultural resources and to resource people representing diverse cultural and racial communities.

The multilingual staff of the Multicultural Association of Fredericton are able to provide on-site interpretation for newcomers in: Albanian, English, French, German, Macedonian, Mandarin, Persian (Farsi), Spanish, Serbo-Croatian, Sign Language (ASL), and Turkish.

NEWFOUNDLAND

Brighter Futures Coalition of St. John's and District

Phone: (709) 739-8096

Fax: (709) 753-8097

P.O. Box 28146

64 New Penneywell Road

St. John's, Newfoundland

A1B 4J8

Offers complete resource information on parenting services/programs in Newfoundland.

Services in English only but will access translators when necessary.

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

Yellowknife Women's Centre

Phone: (867)873-2566

5610 Franklin Ave,

Yellowknife, North West Territories

X1A 1E7

Offers information and referral services to programs and services in the Northwest Territories.

Services are provided in English only.

YUKON

Yukon Family Services Association

Phone: (403) 667-2970

Fax: (403) 633-3557

4071 - 4th Avenue

Whitehorse, Yukon

Y1A 1H3

Website:

<http://www.ycod.yk.ca/yfsa.html>

Provides counselling services, parenting programs and information on local parenting resources.

NUNAVUT

Government of Nunavut

Phone (867) 360-4603
Toll Free: 1-888-252-9869
Fax: (867) 975-6099

P.O. Box 1000, Station 204
Iqaluit, Nunavut
X0A 0H0

Website: <http://www.gov.nu.ca>

Most comprehensive resource for information and referral to community services.

Nunavut Kamatsiaqtut Help Line

In Iqaluit call: (867) 979-3333
Toll Free: 1-800-265-3333

Toll-free information, referral and help line from 9 p.m. to midnight daily.

**Tabata Productions:
"Life in the Family"**

**"Life in the Family":
A Newcomer's Guide to Parenting Issues in Canada**

Video Transcript

"Life in the Family": A Newcomer's Guide to Parenting Issues in Canada

Part 1: Looking After Each Other

VEENA (from the next room)
Reshma, don't forget that Dev will need to eat in an hour. I've left some chicken on the stove.

RESHMA
Hmm.

VEENA
And don't forget to give him his bath before he goes to bed. And that should be no later than eight.

VEENA (in Punjabi)
Reshma, do you hear what I'm saying?

RESHMA
Yes, I hear you. I'll give Dev his dinner in an hour. And I'll give him his bath before he goes to bed.

VEENA
Good. I must go or I'll miss my bus.

VEENA
Your sister is at band practice tonight. So if you need her, you can run down to the school to get her. I must go. Bye, bye.

SONIA
Rina, can I use your phone. I have to call my little brother and sister to make sure they're okay.

RINA
Sure

DEV (looking bewildered).
The cookies fell.

RESHMA
Dev! What're you doing? You shouldn't be in here! And you shouldn't be eating cookies now either.

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SONIA (through the answering machine speaker)
Hello? Reshma, are you there? Pick up the phone.

RESHMA
Dev. Just sit down and read your book. Or watch TV if you like.

RINA
C'mon! I only have 20 minutes left until the end of the month

JACKIE
C'mon Rina, were going to be late for band practice.

SONIA
My mom says I don't have to, but I always call my sister before going to band practice. I want to make sure she and Dev are okay. I know how hard it is to look after a kid. I used to look after Reshma when she was a baby. I know we probably shouldn't be looking after each other when we're so young, but we have to. Mom has to work.

My counselor Ms Stephens says young kids shouldn't look after their younger brothers and sisters. If they're too young and someone finds out, a social worker may come to the house, she says. I told my mother this, but she says it's not a problem. She says that, in India, the older girls always look after their younger brothers and sisters.

Besides, we have to look after each other. My mom wants us to go to university she also wants our grandparents from India. So she works all the time. And we help out. It's what we have to do.

In Canada, the law says parents must protect their children from abuse, neglect and harm. A child protection worker will respond to a report that a young person is looking after a young child.

But many parents think it is important that the older kids look after their younger brothers and sisters. It teaches them responsibility. Besides, many of us don't have a choice. Our families can't afford babysitters all the time.
So what should our family do? What would you do?

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Part 2: Discipline in the Family

EDNA

I'm sorry I'm late. I missed my bus.

MOTHER

Lawrence, did you bring your report card home today?

LAWRENCE (barely audible)

No way I'm bringing that thing home.

MOTHER

Lawrence, I didn't hear you.

LAWRENCE

I said, no. I told you we didn't get it yet.

MOTHER

But Edna and Sara have theirs. Where is yours?

LAWRENCE (sarcastically)

I guess they forgot.

MOTHER

I don't think they would forget. Maybe it is you who has forgotten?

LAWRENCE

I'm not stupid you know. I told you that the teacher hasn't given us ours. Holy shit. Are you deaf or something?

FATHER

You are being disrespectful!

LAWRENCE

Don't touch me!

MOTHER

Don't talk to your father that way! You must show respect!

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SARA

Baba! You shouldn't hit Lawrence like that. They will take him away if you do.

MOTHER

Sara, you shouldn't talk to your father that way. It's not your place to tell him what to do.

EDNA

But mom. Sara's right. Baba shouldn't hit Lawrence like that. Ms Stevens said it's wrong.

FATHER

Ms Stevens does not understand our way.

EDNA

She does understand our culture! She's also Chinese. She says that parents in Canada shouldn't hit their children. She says if parents keep hitting and hurting their children, then a social worker will take them away.

FATHER

But that's not right! They should not be allowed to take away children because we teach them respect. Canadian parents give their children too much freedom.

EDNA

Well, Ms Stevens says it's wrong.

MOTHER

Edna, be quiet. Don't talk back to your father like that.

EDNA

Baba doesn't want us to talk back to him or to our mom. He says it shows a lack of respect. But sometimes we just.. we forget. Especially Lawrence. He makes Baba very mad.

Ms. Stevens says that it's wrong to hit children. She says that teachers shouldn't and parents shouldn't - even if it's their own kids.

But my parents don't listen. They think Canadian parents don't discipline their kids enough. They

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EDNA (CONT'D)

say that if they don't discipline us, then we will end up like those children on the news, throwing rocks at the police.

I don't know. I think everyone's right. Baba shouldn't hit Lawrence like that. But Lawrence is such a little brat. He does need to learn respect. He's always talking back to Mom. And he lies to them. And by the way, he does have his report card. He just doesn't want to show them because he got bad marks.

It's hard for my parents. They want us to grow up well and they want us to be successful. But in Canada, the government might take Lawrence away if Baba keeps hitting him and leaving those awful marks.

In Canada, parents can discipline their children. However, they cannot harm or injure their children. A soft spanking or slap with the hand on the bum will usually not be against the law.

But if a child is hurt, or at risk of being hurt, then the government can become involved to protect the child from further harm.

(On Camera)

What should my parents do? How can they discipline Lawrence without hitting him? What would *you* do?

Part 3: The Intervention

MARIA

Is he here yet?

MICHAEL

Yes, he came about five minutes ago. We've been waiting for you.

MARIA

I'm sorry. It's always hard for me to get away from the office.

MICHAEL

Maria, this is Mr. Lakoff.

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DAN

Dan, please.

MARIA

Please, have a seat. Has Michael offered you anything yet?

DAN

Yes. Michael offered me some coffee. But I'm fine. Thank you very much.

Well, as I told you on the phone Mr. and Ms Scekic, I am from the Ministry of Family Services. Now we've had a report that Andre has had some bruises on his arm. As you know, I've talked with Andre. And my job is to find out what really happened. So I'm here today for you to help me understand how your son got those bruises.

MICHAEL

As I told you on the phone, Mr. Lakoff, Andre is a young boy. Young boys are always doing ..doing many things. They are always hurting themselves.

DAN

That is true Mr. Scekic. But I have spoken with Andre. And when I asked him how he got the bruises, he said that he couldn't remember.

Mr. and Ms Scekic, can you tell me how Andre got those bruises?

We were wondering if something is happening at home.

(Looking up)

It's always difficult to ask questions like these.

MICHAEL (interjects)

I do not understand. Are you asking me if I hit Andre?

DAN

I'm was wondering if you use physical force to discipline Andre, yes.

MICHAEL

Well, sometimes I do. Never hard.

**Tabata Productions:
"Life in the Family"**

MARIA

Children must learn to respect and obey their parents.

DAN

No one disagrees with you, Ms Scekcic. But we have to be careful *how* we teach respect and obedience.

In Canada, we have laws that protect children from being harmed ...

MICHAEL (Sitting forward, getting agitated)

We are not harming him. We are raising him as our parents raised us.

DAN

Mr. Scekcic. I understand. However, we have to ask these questions in order to determine how Andre got these bruises. Now, as I've said we've already talked with Andre ...

MICHAEL

But it is *not* your business to tell us how to treat our children!

DAN

In this case, it is our business. When someone reports something like this, we ...

MICHAEL (standing up)

Who reported this?

DAN

I'm afraid I can't tell you that.

MICHAEL

There is nothing to look into. He is learning to be a good student and a responsible man. We do not want him to be running wild.

DAN

As I mentioned on the phone, I will need to come back and speak to your other children as well as Andre. And I would like to do this tonight, if possible, as I know Andre is a bit anxious

MICHAEL (abruptly leaving the room)

This is crazy!

**Tabata Productions:
"Life in the Family"**

DAN

Ms Scekcic, I know this is hard, but perhaps you could tell me how ...

MARIA (Standing up)

Now if you don't mind, I have to start getting dinner ready. The children will be home soon.

DAN

I understand. Ms Scekcic, we all believe that the best place for our children is at home, with their parents. But our child protection laws are in place to ensure our children's safety. As I mentioned, I will have to return to follow up this evening

MARIA

(Moving toward the front door. Dan follows.)
Thank you, Mr. Lakoff.

DAN

Thank you, Ms Scekcic. I will be back this evening, after dinner, to follow up. I have to make sure that Andre and the other children are safe. Good bye.

ANDRE

The social worker told me he'd be meeting my parents today. I sure hope things will be okay at home tonight.

He asked me if everything is okay at home. I told him everything was fine. My Dad just gets angry. He wants us to do well. And he's having a hard time these days.

But I don't like it when he hits me. He grabs my arms so hard it hurts.

But then, I don't want to be taken away

There are laws in Canada that make sure children are safe from harm.

If someone like a teacher thinks a child is being harmed or is not safe, then they have a duty to contact child protection authorities. When someone makes a report, a child protection worker does have to look into it.

My parents want me to be responsible and well behaved. But the Canadian law is confusing to them. They don't understand how complete strangers can tell them how to raise their children.

So what should my dad do? What would you do?