

# WHAT IS FAMILY VIOLENCE AND HOW TO PREVENT IT

November is Family Violence Prevention Month, which means it is a time to raise awareness and have an open conversation about family and domestic violence. This topic is particularly important for rural communities in Alberta.

## Stats:

- Rural Alberta communities report twice the number of cases of family violence compared to Alberta urban areas.
- Alberta has the third-highest rate of self-reported family violence among all the Canadian provinces.

While these statistics are alarming, it is important to note that family violence is preventable. Something we can do to help is educating ourselves about and recognizing the signs of family violence.

**What is Family Violence?** Family violence is any form of abuse or neglect that one may experience from their family member or from someone that they are/were in an intimate relationship with. It can be a single act of violence or a reoccurring act that forms a pattern of abuse.

There are many kinds of abuse that can be considered family violence, including:

- Physical: use of force against someone with the intent to hurt them.
- Financial: using money or property to control or exploit a family member.
- Neglect: failing to provide basic needs to dependents.
- Sexual: forcing sexual activity on a member of the household.
- Emotional/ Psychological/ Verbal: the use of words and actions to control, isolate, and/or frighten a family member.

## What are the Signs of Family Violence?

There are many indicators that could signal to you that someone you know is experiencing violence at home. For instance, adults may withdraw from family and friends; stop doing activities they used to enjoy; show signs of depression or anxiety; hint about abuse; and have unexplained bruises or other injuries. Children may also show indicators of abuse, which may include being left alone for long periods of time; acting aggressively towards others; withdrawing from others; being fearful of parents' reactions; and having unexplained bruises or other injuries.

## How can you help someone that has or is experiencing abuse?

There are many ways that you can help someone who is experiencing violence. Here are just a few:

- 1) Let the victim know that you believe them and that it is not their fault.
- 2) Provide them with resources to local shelters, outreach, or counselling services:
  - FCSS Counselling Services: (587) 370-3728 or [counsellingservices@fcss.ca](mailto:counsellingservices@fcss.ca)
  - 24-hour Family Violence help line 310-1818
- 3) If the victim is looking for additional supports, share with them a template of a personalized escape plan. An escape plan may include information such as who to call, where to go, and a list of items that can be hidden in a bag, including ID, Birth Certificate(s), cash, important phone numbers, health care card(s), prescription(s), a change of clothes, and so on. For an example of a template, visit <https://bit.ly/3frXjrp>
- 4) If finances are an issue and are preventing the family from fleeing, you can refer them to the Escaping Abuse Benefit, which covers costs related to escaping from an abusive situation. They can visit the following website <https://www.alberta.ca/family-violence-costs-leave.aspx> or call [1-866-644-5135](tel:1-866-644-5135) for more information.

It's important to know that your safety and comfort is important as well. Take care of yourself, only offer support that you feel comfortable with, and never intervene in an abusive situation of a family member, neighbour, or friend without the support of the authorities.

If you or someone you know is experiencing abuse, it is okay to ask for help. If you or someone you know is ever in immediate danger, please call 911.

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To learn about FCSS programs visit our website: [www.fcss.ca](http://www.fcss.ca)

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