Issue 4 Winter 1999

Child WELFARE

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"…responsibility for the well-being of children is shared by the whole community."

Do you know your responsibilities under the *Child Welfare Act*? According to section 3, if you have reasonable and probably grounds to believe that a child needs protective services, you must promptly report the matter to Child Welfare.

Child protection services are provided by Child Welfare under the authority of the *Child Welfare Act*, but the responsibility for the well-being of children is shared by the whole community. Parents should be able to protect most children, with the support of extended family and the community. Professionals who work with children also play a key role in helping them grow up in a caring environment. Your early and supportive intervention can prevent child abuse and stabilize a family's situation.

A child who needs protective services

A child might need protective services if there are reasonable and probable grounds to believe that the child's survival, security or development is endangered because of any of the following:

- the child has been abandoned or lost
- the child's guardian is dead and the child has no other guardian
- the child's guardian is unable or unwilling to provide the necessities of life
- the child has been, or there is substantial risk that the child will be, physically injured or sexually abused by the guardian
- the child's guardian is unable or unwilling to protect the child from physical injury or sexual abuse
- the child has been emotionally injured by the guardian
- the child's guardian is unable or willing to protect the child from emotional injury
- the child's guardian has subjected the child to, or is unable or unwilling to protect the child from, cruel and unusual treatment or punishment
- the child's condition or behaviour prevents the guardian from providing adequate care appropriate to meet the child's needs

Recognizing abuse

The ***necessities of life*** include physical, emotional and social needs plus essential medical, surgical or other treatment.

Physical injury is substantial and observable injury to any part of the body caused by deliberate force. Evidence could include unexplained cuts, scrapes, bruises, welts, burns, scars, bites, fractures or head injuries.

Sexual abuse is inappropriate exposure or subjection to sexual contact, activity or behaviour, including prostitution-related activities.

Emotional injury involves both a cause and an effect. The cause must be rejection; deprivation of affection or cognitive stimulation; exposure to domestic violence; inappropriate criticism, threats, humiliation, accusations or expectations; or the mental or emotional or substance abuse condition of the parent. The effect must be substantial and observable impairment of the child's mental or emotional functioning.

Your legal obligation

You must report to Child Welfare if you believe a child needs protective services. If you fail to report, you might be guilty of an offense under the *Child Welfare Act* and liable to a fine or imprisonment.

To report, call the local Child Welfare office. After business hours, call the Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-387-5437. The Hotline is always open.

Under the *Child Welfare Act*, Child Welfare must not disclose your identity. However, you anonymity cannot be guaranteed if there is a police investigation.

Working together

Child Welfare is responsible for investigating reports that fit the definition of a child who needs protective services. They can let you know when an investigation is complete but no the details of their findings. If they find that the child needs protective services, they will either negotiate a voluntary agreement with the family or apply for a court order to provide services.

You might be involved in providing some of the protective services in partnership with the family, the child welfare worker and other service providers. The child welfare worker will manage the case by setting timelines and goals, and arranging for the tasks needed to attain those goals. It's important that you work closely with the case manager, reporting your progress or problems in meeting the treatment goals.

Ending child protection services

Child Welfare may be involved with a family only if the child needs protective services. So once the parents can resume protecting the child, Child Welfare closes its file and is no longer involved. The child and family might have other

problems and might benefit from further services provided by you or other professionals. Your support for the family could continue to be important in preventing the need for further intervention by Child Welfare.