

# Children and Youth Living with Family Violence

During the COVID-19 Crisis

The COVID-19 crisis is increasing risk for those living in homes where there is family violence. Social isolation, disrupted routines, possible financial &/or food insecurity, suspension of in-person schooling and ongoing uncertainty are exacerbating dangerous conditions for some children and youth who may not already be considered at risk.

Children and youth who experience physical, sexual, family violence and/or neglect no longer have a safe refuge at school or access to a trusted adult to talk to in person and watch out for them. An increase in mental health concerns for parents can impact children and youth, putting them at higher risk for family violence and child abuse.

Frontline agencies such as Kids Help Phone have seen a significant increase in children and youth accessing their services. There has been a 28% increase in conversations about physical abuse, 42% increase about anxiety or stress and a 48% increase about isolation (Kids Help Phone, 2020).

## Role of K-12 Educators, Counsellors, Administrators and Others in Schools

You are the adults in schools with whom young people have relationships and in whom they trust. During this period, with online or over-the-phone communication and/or instruction taking place, there are opportunities to check in. It is important to be aware that some students, including, but not limited to, those with existing vulnerabilities, may now be facing even greater challenges.



If you think a **child** or **youth** under 19 years of age is being abused or neglected, you have the legal duty to report your concern to a child welfare worker or children's aid agency ([phone numbers](#)).

Advise your school administrator after you have made the call.

## Messaging to Children and Youth

### Keep in mind

Proceed with caution. Many young people (especially those in elementary school) will have a parent or guardian present for any online contact with an educator. Email or chat contact may provide additional options to a phone or online communication platform.

If children or youth can speak safely, there are resources listed below as well as examples of questions you can ask. If you think the level of risk is high, get your school counsellor and/or administrator involved to discuss a personal safety plan if possible. If you know family violence or abuse is occurring, call a child welfare worker or children's aid agency ([phone numbers](#)). If danger is imminent, call 9-1-1.

### Possible check-in questions

- What have you been doing this past week?
- What has been enjoyable? What has been difficult?
- Is there anything you or your family need(s)?
- Do you have any concerns you would like to share?

### Possible school-based activities that could enable expression of emotions

- Draw a picture of how you are feeling during the current situation.
- Create a storyboard for a typical day of the past week.
- Can you describe or draw what makes you feel calm?
- Write a story about how you are spending your time.
- What is one positive thing you will remember about this time? What is one negative thing?
- Can you compare what you are experiencing with another time in history?
- What gives you hope at this time?

### Possible questions for parents

- How are you managing right now?
- Are you able to find some relief during your day?
- Do you need help meeting particular challenges?
- Is there anything we can do to help you meet your child's needs?

Other examples in reference list, along with reporting phone numbers and resources: [educ.ubc.ca/SOS](http://educ.ubc.ca/SOS)

## Resources

excerpted and modified from [childrenfirstcanada.org](http://childrenfirstcanada.org)

### Kids Help Phone (24/7)

**1-800-668-6868** or text **686868** (or PARLER en français) or [kidshelpphone.ca](http://kidshelpphone.ca)  
National support service – professional counselling, information and referrals  
Adults needing support re child welfare: text **SUPPORT** to **741741**

LGBTQ youth: text **LGBTQ** to **686868**

### First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line (24/7)

**1-855-242-3310**  
Culturally competent counselling in English, French and upon request in Cree, Ojibway, and Inuktitut

### Trans Life Line

**1-877-330-6366**  
Peer support by trans people for trans and questioning callers

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