

# Violence Against Children and Youth

Violence against children and youth refers to the violence, maltreatment or neglect that a child or youth may experience while in the care of someone they either trust or depend on, such as a parent, sibling, other relative, caregiver or guardian. Violence may take place anywhere and may occur within the child's home or that of someone known to the child.

*(What is Child Abuse?, 2009)*

Violence against a child or youth is never justifiable; all violence against children and youth is preventable.

*(World Report on Violence Against Children, 2006)*

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## Prevalence

Over the last decade, there has been a dramatic increase in both the reports of suspected child abuse and neglect, and the number of children found to be in need of protection. However, it is clear that many cases of child abuse are not reported to authorities.

Violence against children often remains hidden. In Newfoundland and Labrador, it is everyone's legal responsibility to report suspected or confirmed child abuse to their local Regional Health Authority or their local police.

## Neglect

Neglect is a prevalent form of violence against children and youth. Approximately 33% of all substantiated cases of child abuse are cases of neglect.

Between 1998 and 2003, the number of investigations of suspected child abuse and neglect in Canada doubled.

## Who are the Perpetrators?

Children and youth under 18 years of age are at greatest risk of being physically or sexually assaulted by someone they know. The rates of physical and sexual assault are highest when the accused is a friend/acquaintance or a family member.

## Witnessing Violence

Almost 40% of women assaulted by their spouse report their children witnessing the violence.

The Newfoundland and Labrador *Child, Youth and Family Services Act* serves to protect children who are living in a situation where there is violence. Witnessing family violence can have long-term psychological, emotional, cognitive, physical, developmental, and social impacts on a child.

## Youth Violence

Youth violence is any intentional physical, sexual or psychological assault on another person(s) by one or more young people aged 12 to 19 years. The most common perpetrators of youth violence are young heterosexual males.

Youth violence is not confined to any one subgroup of the youth population; it cuts across all racial, religious, gender and socio-economic backgrounds.

Approximately 37% of youth between the ages of 11 and 15 experience some form of bullying and 36% are involved in physical fights.

Approximately 26% of all youth court cases in Newfoundland and Labrador throughout 2006-2007 were for crimes against the person. Of that 26%, 48% were cases of common assault, 21% were cases of major assault, and 8% were cases of sexual assault.

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