

# Child Intervention: What do you need to know?

## What is Child Intervention?

Child Intervention is part of the Government of Alberta. We respond to concerns about the safety and well-being of children and youth in Alberta.

We are sometimes also referred to as “child intervention services”, “child welfare” or “child protective services.”

## What is the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act?

Child Intervention services are guided by the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* (CYFEA). This Act is based on a set of principles about children, families and communities.

These include principles like:

- The family is the basic unit of society and keeping the family together is a priority.
- A family is responsible for the care and supervision of their children. With the support of the community, most parents are able to protect their children from harm.
- A family can draw on informal community resources such as schools, public health, churches, youth groups, and other helping agencies to help them care for their children.

Intervention services are needed only when a parent can't adequately protect a child from harm, or the danger of being harmed, as defined by the Act.

When it becomes clear that a child's survival, security or development is at risk, we must become involved.

## How does Child Intervention get involved?

The well-being of children is everybody's job.

Parents are primarily responsible for the safety and well-being of their children, but everyone has a role to play.

Families, community members, or professionals should make a report if they are concerned about a child's safety and wellbeing.

We assess every call and referral to determine if a child is in need of intervention.

What supports can we provide?

- If a child doesn't need intervention but the family is facing challenges, we can refer the family to other services in or near their community.
- If a child needs intervention, we work with the family, extended family, community partners and other supports. We help parents identify what they're doing that is helping their child, and also what they need to improve so their children will be safe.

## So you don't always remove the child?

We believe children and youth should be safe, healthy and live with their families.

Every effort is made to support the family and allow the child to remain safely at home.

If the child does need to leave the home temporarily, we will always work with the family to meet the child's needs and make changes so they can return home as quickly as possible.

## What if the child can't be protected at home?

If a child can no longer remain in a home, we create a plan with the family, the child and other people important to them.

This plan provides them with stability, continuing care and ongoing personal relationships.

The plan always respects the child's heritage, culture and religion.

We work to keep kids with family or other people who know and care for them. Our goal is for the child to feel secure and develop healthy, permanent relationships.

## What if I'm a parent having trouble?

Raising children is difficult. Every parent struggles with things like juggling time, patience and resources.

Sometimes parents can say or do things that they don't really mean when they feel challenged. When these actions are repeated, it's ok to ask for help.

When parenting challenges are added to other stresses like looking for work, finding stable housing, experiencing family violence, or struggling with health concerns, it can be hard to manage on your own.

Your community has services that can help. These include daycares, schools, churches, youth groups and other helping agencies. We are here to support your family through any tough times.

When a referral is made about your family, 90% of the time we are able to support families over the phone or with a visit to your home.

We help you build connections, supports and plans so that your family feels less overwhelmed.

We want children to stay with their families and are here to support families in keeping their children safe and healthy. If your family is struggling, it's okay to ask us for help

## How does Child Intervention support families?

We can't be involved in your family without you knowing about it.

We help families in many different ways. Sometimes we are only briefly involved, like when families work with an intake worker or a safety assessment is completed. Sometimes we are involved long term. In these cases, we might ask you to create a safety plan or sign an agreement that shows that you are willing to work with us to make your home a safe and healthy place.

Sometimes we can't come to an agreement with a family or an agreement can't protect your child well enough. Then we might have to ask the court to make an order.

You'll be asked to appear in court. You'll receive a copy of any court application or court order about your family.

In these cases, we do everything we reasonably can to keep your family together. But we have to make sure your child is safe.

Our staff might have you work with an agency that will help arrange supports like counselling or parenting help at home. Your caseworker, your agency worker and other members of your community (including extended family) will help you create plans so your child can stay at home or return home as soon as possible.

We may also use our Family Enhancement Program to provide extra support by connecting you to your community and/or extended family. This program can reduce stress and build your confidence.

## What if my child can't be safe at home?

If your family needs more help, we may find a temporary place for your child to live while a casework team helps you make changes so your home will be safe and healthy.

If a child must leave your home, your extended family and close friends might be able to care for your children – this is called Kinship Care. If for some reason there is no family or friends available, we ask caring foster families, who receive plenty of training, to provide a safe home in the meantime.

Our goal is to keep families together or get children back to their family as soon as possible.

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## What is my duty to report?

If you believe that a child's survival, security or development is at risk, the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* requires you to report your concern.

**Call the Child Abuse Hotline** (open 24 hours a day) at 1-800-387-5437.

Your name is kept confidential. Only professionals who report concerns receive a call back once a referral has been assessed.

While parents are primarily responsible for the safety and well-being of their children, all members of our community have a role to play. That's why it is important to report anything that may be cause for concern.

## How can I find out more?

Contact your local Children's Services region or Delegated First Nation Agency to learn more about child intervention practice in your area.

To find contact information for your local office, go to [www.alberta.ca](http://www.alberta.ca) and search "Children's Services office".

To learn more about child abuse or neglect, go to [www.alberta.ca](http://www.alberta.ca) and search "child abuse".

For information for about legislation and children and youth rights, go to [www.alberta.ca](http://www.alberta.ca) and search "child and youth rights".