



You Can Help Prevent and Respond to Abuse in Your Community

I think somebody I know is being abused. I would like to help, but I'm not sure what to do or say. How can I support a person who is living with abuse?

You are not alone.

Most people feel they should do something to help a **friend, family member, co-worker or neighbour**, who is experiencing family violence – but they just don't know how. The first step is learning to recognize it. In order to prevent and respond to abuse, you must be able to identify the warning signs, name the abuse, and reach out to individuals experiencing abuse. No matter who is being abused, you can be part of the solution.

One of the best ways to prevent and respond to abuse is by **working together with other people in your community**. Hundreds of social service agencies, volunteer groups and professional organizations and others are working in communities throughout New Brunswick to prevent and respond to family violence. Find out who is involved in addressing this issue. Learn what is being done in your community and elsewhere. Become a volunteer, or make a contribution to support these efforts.

Where to Get More Information

You can find out about the services and supports that are available in your community by looking in the front section of your local telephone directory, or by contacting the nearest women's shelter or family violence outreach coordinator.

For general information and resources on family violence on the Internet check out:

Public Legal Education and Information Service of New Brunswick

www.legal-info-legale.nb.ca or call 1-888-236-2444

Government of New Brunswick Violence Prevention

www.gnb.ca/0012/violence/index-e.asp or see Province of New Brunswick Home page, select key word - Violence Prevention

Provincial Caring Partnerships

www.violencepreventionnb.org

Healing Journey: Family Violence Prevention in Aboriginal Communities

www.thehealingjourney.ca

Family Violence and the Workplace

www.toolkitnb.ca

Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research

www.unbf.ca/arts/CFVR/

The National Clearinghouse on Family Violence, Family Violence Prevention Unit

www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ncfv-cnivf/familyviolence

Canadian Red Cross RespectED: Violence & Abuse Prevention

www.redcross.ca/respected





Safer Families...Safer Communities

Here are some ways that you can help someone who is being abused:

What YOU can do

Find out more about the issue of family violence, the different forms of abuse, and the warning signs that somebody is a victim of abuse

Find out about the services and supports in your area such as the transition house, family violence outreach, health and mental health services, legal services, and so on. Your ability to give support may depend on your knowledge.

Ask her about abuse in private. Don't ask about abuse in front of others, especially a partner or children.

Reach out and let her know you are willing to listen to her. Offer what help you feel comfortable giving. Never be judgmental. (See Notes 1 and 2)

If you think a **child is being mistreated, you have a legal duty to report it to child protection at 1-888-992-2873 (A B U S E)** or emergency after hours **1-800-442-9799**.

Ask her what she needs to be safe. Give her the transition house telephone number so she can call (anonymously if she wishes to) for support. **Her immediate safety is the most important concern.**

Ask if there **are firearms in the home** and if she knows where they are kept.

Ask her if she is **concerned about the welfare of her pets/animals**

If you are not in a position to provide support, **know where the victim can turn for help.**

Do not get discouraged if she leaves and returns to the abuser. No matter what the woman decides to do—or not do—about the abuse, it is important to **continue to be supportive.**

What YOU can say

Name the abuse that is happening. Do not make excuses for the partner's behaviour, blame her or make it seem like a normal experience.

Offer to help her explore her options and **provide information and contact numbers for services and supports** for the entire family

Let her know **you believe her** and make it clear that no one deserves to be abused – It's not her fault!

Where possible, **tell her that you can help** with such things as transportation, babysitting, giving her some money, letting her make phone calls or use your computer, offering her a place to stay, and so on.

Tell her that **children exposed to family violence may be considered victims of child abuse.** Explain that **anyone** who suspects a child is living in an abusive home has an obligation to report it to child protection.

Encourage her to **make a safety plan** and to **contact agencies that can help her.** If she feels she is in immediate danger, tell her she can use your phone to call the police (911) or the nearest women's shelter – or you can call for her.

Tell her that she is at **increased risk of harm** and that she should consider telling the police about the firearms. Mention that there is a toll-free number she can call to report her concerns about a firearm - Canadian Firearms Program - 1-800-731-4000

If she cannot take animals with her and is concerned they will be harmed, offer to look after her pet if possible, contact the local SPCA or ask the local women's shelter if they can help find a safe haven for her pets.

Tell her about **others who can help her** – a community service provider in the area of health, social service, law enforcement, and education or justice services. Remember, **he may be looking for help too and may need services and programs to help him end the violence.**

Tell her that you **believe in her strengths** and that you are willing to help whenever she needs you.



Note 1: If you don't feel comfortable dealing with the issue of abuse, try to understand why. Examine your own experiences, values and attitudes. Do you see the abuse as normal or do you minimize its affect? You may need support for your own experiences of abuse.

Note 2: If you are a professional, **familiarize yourself with the many tools that are available to you.** There are a variety of professional training programs, protocols and other resources that address screening, risk assessment, documentation, referrals, follow-up support, and other areas of professional responsibility. Be sure to **document the abuse or your concerns thoroughly.**

You can be part of the solution.

This Safer Families...Safer Communities Fact Sheet is published by:



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To learn more on this topic, you can contact the following local organization(s):

