

# THE RIGHTS OF YOUTH: NEGLECT AND ABUSE

April 2009

## Who is responsible to take care of me?

Your parents or guardians are responsible to support you until you are 18. They are required to provide for your care, education and well being. This includes proper food, a place to live, clothing, medical care and education.

## Neglect and Abuse

### What is neglect?

Generally speaking, **neglect** means not taking proper care of you, failing to give you the things you need to be safe and healthy. It can include, for example, a parent failing to provide proper childcare or medical attention to their child. Neglect may be the result of lack of parenting skills, or it may be happening because of serious problems that one or both parents have, such as an illness. It may go on for a long time, or it may only happen for a short time. It depends on the situation. If you feel you are being neglected, for whatever reason, you need to speak to an adult you are comfortable with and trust.

### Types of abuse:

Abuse of young people can include:

- physical abuse;
- emotional abuse which may be permanently disabling;
- sexual abuse and sexual exploitation with or without the child's consent.

Behaviours generally considered harmful for any child or youth may include:

- failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, or medical attention;
- cruel forms of punishment, such as locking you up for a long time without food or water;
- repeated put-downs, criticism and/or cruel jokes that are emotionally harmful;
- verbal threats of harm;
- exposing a young person to violence or fighting at home;
- physical harm, such as shaking, kicking, punching or being thrown; and
- inappropriate sexual contact with or without a child's consent

### Who should I talk to?

If you have been or are being neglected or abused, or fear that you will be, talk to an **adult you trust**, like a parent, doctor, nurse, teacher or counselor. Even if you are uncertain, talk to someone. If someone has touched you in any way that makes you uncomfortable, **tell someone!** You can also contact your local police or the child and family services agency in your area.



### What if I am being threatened if I tell?

If you or someone you care about is being threatened, you need to have courage and tell someone. Know that threats of harm are illegal and will be taken seriously by the people in authority.

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

1	NEGLECT AND ABUSE
3	RESOURCES
4	OFFICES THAT PROTECT THE RIGHTS OF YOUTH

### What will happen after I tell?

Every report of possible abuse or neglect is taken very seriously. Once a complaint has been received, a social worker and/or the police will investigate. The social worker may talk to you, your parents, to other people who know you, or to the police in order to help you and your family. The worker needs to make sure you are safe and will investigate to determine whether or not you are in need of protection.

When they find that you are in need of protection they can recommend one of several things:

- they can provide **help and support** to families in their home to deal with what is causing the problem;
- they can find **emergency shelter**, when a young person is in immediate danger or in need of care;
- they can find an **alternative home** for a young person whose safety and well-being are at risk; and
- in certain situations, they can also ask the adult who may be hurting you to leave the home.

Once a report is made, a child and family services worker will work with you and your family to ensure everyone is safe. This may mean living somewhere else for a time, but it could also mean the whole family is receiving help, such as counseling and support.



### When can I go back home?

Each situation is different. The most important thing for the social worker is to make sure you are safe in order for you to return home.

### Can I see my family if I am not living at home?

In most situations you can visit unless it is decided that it is not in your best interests.

### What if I don't feel like child and family services are doing what they should?

You can call the Office of the Children's Advocate.

### What will happen to the person who has hurt me?

Abusive behavior is against the law. Anyone aware of abuse **must** report it. Adults or other young persons who abuse a child or youth may be charged with a criminal offence. If found guilty there are a number of things that can happen to them, from receiving counseling to spending time in jail.

A parent or guardian who has neglected his or her child can get help from a child and family services agency. An agency social worker can help the parent get counseling or other support they may need to help them with their children.

Neglectful or abusive behavior is always harmful to children and youth and to the family.



**It is never your fault!**

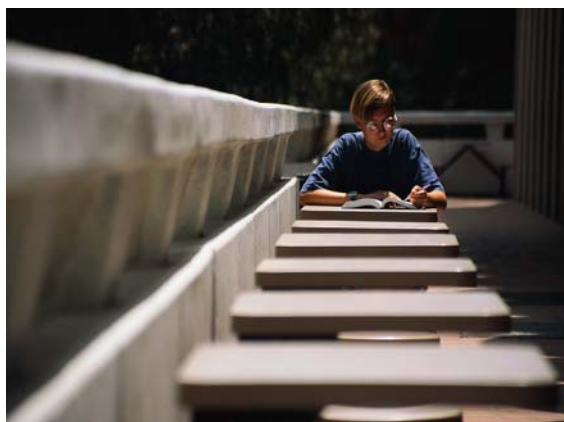
Young people are never responsible for the abusive actions others may take. You may feel responsible because you are somehow "making them mad", or "making them do it". An adult's abusive behavior is not your fault. It is the adult's responsibility to deal with the situation without hurting you!

### What if I am left home alone?

It is generally considered unsafe to leave children under the age of 12 home alone without reasonable provisions being made for their safety and appropriate supervision. For example, your parents may hire a caregiver to care for you while they are out.

After the age of 12, you cannot be left on your own for extended periods of time before you are ready. You and your parents will decide when you are ready to accept this responsibility.

Whether you are over 12 and alone, or under 12 and left with a caregiver, your parent or guardian must ensure that your basic health and safety needs are provided.



### What if I know of another young person who is being abused or neglected?

If you know of another child or young person needing help, talk to your parents or another adult you trust. It must also be reported to the police or a child and family services agency.

### RESOURCES

#### CHILD AND FAMILY ALL NATIONS COORDINATED RESPONSE NETWORK (ANCR)

835 Portage Avenue  
Winnipeg, MB R3G 0N6  
Ph: 944-4200  
Toll-free: 1-888-834-9767  
944-4050 (after-hours emergency calls only)

#### WINNIPEG POLICE SERVICES

151 Princess Street  
Winnipeg, MB R3B 1L1  
Child Abuse Office Line: 986-6378  
Dispatch Line: 986-6222  
(or in an emergency call 911)

#### ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE (RCMP)

Outside of Winnipeg, call your local RCMP

## OFFICES THAT PROTECT THE RIGHTS OF YOUTH

### OFFICE OF THE MANITOBA OMBUDSMAN

#### Winnipeg

750 - 500 Portage Avenue  
Winnipeg, MB R3C 3X1  
Ph: 982-9130  
Toll-free: 1-800-665-0531  
Fax: 942-7803

#### Brandon

202 Scotia Towers  
1011 Rosser Avenue  
Brandon, MB R7A 0L5  
Ph: 571-5151  
Toll-free: 1-888-543-8230  
Fax: 571-5157

[www.ombudsman.mb.ca](http://www.ombudsman.mb.ca)

### OFFICE OF THE CHILDREN'S ADVOCATE

100 - 346 Portage Avenue  
Winnipeg, MB R3C 0C3  
Ph: 988-7440  
Toll-free: 1-800-263-7146  
Fax: 988-7472

[www.childrensadvocate.mb.ca](http://www.childrensadvocate.mb.ca)

### MANITOBA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

#### Winnipeg

7th Flr -175 Hargrave Street  
Winnipeg, MB R3C 3R8  
Ph: 945-3007  
Fax: 945-1292

#### Brandon

Provincial Government Building  
353 -340 Ninth Street  
Brandon, MB  
R7A 6C2  
Ph: 726-6261  
Fax: 726-6035

#### The Pas

2 Flr - Otineka Mall  
PO Box 2550  
The Pas, MB R9A 1K5  
Ph: 627-8270  
Fax: 623-5404

TOLL FREE: 1-888-884-8681

TTY: 1-888-897-2811

*Collect calls accepted in all locations*

[www.manitoba.ca/hrc](http://www.manitoba.ca/hrc)

The content of this publication may be subject to change. Check the websites of the Manitoba Human Rights Commission, Ombudsman or Children's Advocate for updates.

### Office of the Children’s Advocate

The Children’s Advocate represents the rights, interests and views of children and youth who feel they are not getting the services they need from a child and family services agency or department.

An advocate is someone who speaks with you and for you. Advocacy is about supporting and helping to make sure you are heard and taken seriously.

While the Office of the Children’s Advocate may respond to parents and other adult’s concerns, its first concern is for children and youth.

The Office of the Children’s Advocate will do its best to help you and support you whenever you have a concern. More specifically, the Advocate:

- can listen; give you information about how you can solve your situation on your own; help you say what you want to say; call someone for you and explain what you want or need; and assist you in participating in decisions that affect your life.
- may also: arrange a meeting with all the people involved and try to sort things out; work to change the system for all children and youth having the same problem; and work with the community to promote and support advocacy for all children and youth.

Information about the Office of the Children’s Advocate, *The Child and Family Services Act* and *The Adoptions Act* can be found on its website [www.childrensadvocate.mb.ca](http://www.childrensadvocate.mb.ca).

### Office of the Manitoba Ombudsman

The Manitoba Ombudsman investigates complaints from anyone who feels he or she has been treated unfairly by departments or agencies of the provincial or a municipal government.

There are also laws in Manitoba that require the provincial and municipal governments, school divisions, hospitals and health professionals such as doctors, to respect and uphold your information access and privacy rights. The Ombudsman investigates complaints about your access to information and privacy rights under those laws.

If you feel a decision or action of someone in government that affects you was wrong or unfair, or if you have questions about your information access and privacy rights, you may contact the Ombudsman’s Office. There is an intake officer you

can speak to and who will listen to you. You can discuss your complaint privately.

If your concern is something they can investigate, they will explain the process. If it is not something that they can investigate, they will try to refer you to someone who can help.

Information about the Manitoba Ombudsman, *The Ombudsman Act*, *The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and *The Personal Health Information Act* can be found on its website [www.ombudsman.mb.ca](http://www.ombudsman.mb.ca).

### Manitoba Human Rights Commission

The Manitoba Human Rights Commission deals with complaints of **discrimination** and **harassment** in a number of areas of public life, including:

- employment;
- rental of housing; and
- public services and facilities such as stores, hospitals, schools and recreation programs.

Manitoba’s *Human Rights Code* is designed to promote equality of opportunity and to protect against discrimination based on:

- ✓ age;
- ✓ ancestry (including colour and perceived race);
- ✓ nationality or national origin;
- ✓ ethnic background;
- ✓ religion or religious association or activity;
- ✓ sex (including pregnancy);
- ✓ gender-determined characteristics;
- ✓ sexual orientation;
- ✓ marital or family status;
- ✓ source of income;
- ✓ physical or mental disability (which includes circumstances related to your disability, such as reliance on a wheelchair);
- ✓ political belief, activity or association.

Information on the Commission and *The Manitoba Human Rights Code* can be found on its website [www.manitoba.ca/hrc](http://www.manitoba.ca/hrc)

