



GUIDE FOR PARENTS

3<sup>rd</sup>  
Edition

# PREVENTING VIOLENCE TOGETHER

FOR THE PROTECTION AND SAFETY OF CHILDREN



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

WHO WE ARE	3
PREVENTING VIOLENCE TOGETHER	4
SCOPE OF CHILD VIOLENCE IN THE ESTERLE REGION	5
RESPECT	8
ANGER MANAGEMENT	9
RECOGNIZING YOUR EMOTIONS TO PREVENT VIOLENCE	11
BULLYING	14
INTERNET MONITORING	18
SEXUAL VIOLENCE	21
RESPECTING PRIVACY	25
RESOURCES	27



## WHO WE ARE

Bulle et Baluchon is the center for training and resources regarding the prevention of violence against children. We aim to raise awareness, inform, and equip the population of the Eastern Townships regarding this issue.

Bulle et Baluchon offers workshops to children from 4 to 12 years old to reduce their vulnerability to all forms of violence. We also offer workshops for adults in the community who wish to gain a better understanding of this subject. Bulle et Baluchon listens, provides support, information, and referrals. For over 30 years, we have met with over 96,000 children and adults in the Eastern Townships.

**Visit our Web site to find out about all of the activities offered by Bulle et Baluchon!**

[www.bulleetbaluchon.org/en/](http://www.bulleetbaluchon.org/en/)



# PREVENTING VIOLENCE TOGETHER

The violence prevention program is an opportunity to raise awareness about and equip elementary school children to deal with violence. It's also the right time to mobilize parents to prevent such situations.

We know that parents, before anyone else, are dedicated to protecting and ensuring the safety of their children. The information in this booklet provides an opportunity for starting a conversation with them and helping them learn about the resources available to provide help and information.

Preventing violent behaviours is a responsibility that parents can share with other adults to help limit its impact by developing bonds of solidarity.



Ensuring the safety and protection of children is first and foremost the duty of adults! It's also a social responsibility; every adult must look after not only their child's well-being, but also that of every child in the community.

# SCOPE OF CHILD VIOLENCE IN THE ESTRIE REGION

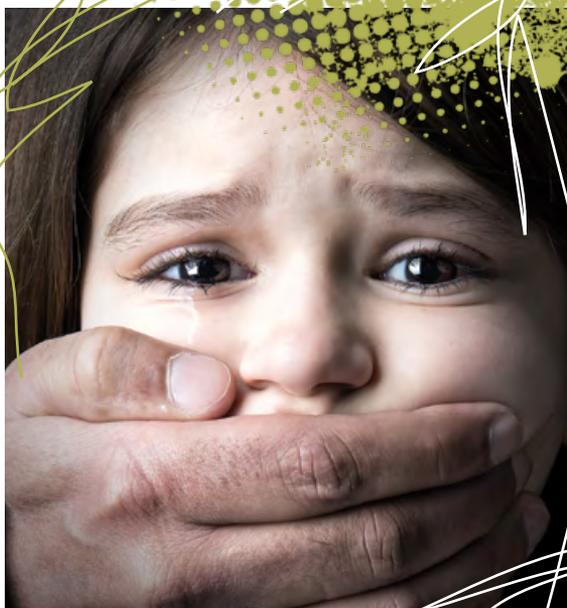
Before addressing the topic of preventing violence against children, it is important to understand its various forms and their definitions. Here is a non-exhaustive list of the types of violence, with particular emphasis on those that we address with children during the workshops.

## VERBAL VIOLENCE

All words aimed at humiliating, insulting, or scaring a child. It may take the form of blackmail, threats, or ridicule.

This may involve repeatedly telling the child “You’re mean, you’re unbearable, you’re lazy, you’re stupid, you’re just like your father and he is \_\_,” etc. The child may end up believing it and by repeating it, it can become psychological violence.

According to the 2014 study *Portrait de la violence dans les écoles du Québec* (portrait of violence in Quebec schools), the most common form of violence in elementary schools is when children insult each other (or call each other names).<sup>1</sup>



1 Beaumont, C., Leclerc, D., Garcia, N., & Bourgault Bouthillier, I. (2020). *Portrait de la violence dans les établissements d'enseignement québécois : changements entre 2013 et 2019* [Portrait of violence in Quebec schools: changes between 2013 and 2019]. Research report. Research chair *Bien être à l'école et prévention de la violence*, Faculty of education sciences, Laval University, Quebec, Canada.

## PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE

Psychological violence occurs through actions and behaviours. It is subtle, and can occur without the person touching or speaking to the child. During the workshops, we tell the children that psychological violence is a form of violence that is often repeated, such as a look, indifference (rejection), throwing an object, hitting the table, bullying, etc.

According to the Institut de la statistique du Québec (2018), 77% of children have experienced at least one episode of psychological aggression, and 48% will experience three or more. These episodes manifest themselves as, screaming or yelling at the child, swearing at the child, calling the child names (stupid, lazy, etc.) or threatening to spank them without doing so, etc.

Between the first study (2004) and the most recent one (2018), psychological violence against children has decreased from 52% to 48%.

## PHYSICAL VIOLENCE

Physical violence involves an act ranging from physically hurting a child to causing a physical injury, or even endangering their life. It may involve hitting, physical constraints, shoving, etc. Contrary to what you might think, physical violence does not always leave a mark. For example, pulling a child's hair or confining them. Repetition is also an aggravating factor. In addition, when an adult loses their temper and hits a child, it sends them the message that physical violence is an acceptable way to get their way.

- 26% of children have been subjected to minor physical violence. 7% have experienced repeated episodes (three or more times). Corporal punishment includes striking the child's bottom, hands, arms, or leg, with your bare hand.
- 3,4% of children of Quebec have experienced at least one episode of severe physical violence over the last 12 months preceding the investigation.<sup>2</sup>

2 Institut de la statistique du Québec. (2019, June). *La violence familiale dans la vie des enfants du Québec, 2018: Les attitudes parentales et les pratiques familiales* [Family violence in the lives of Quebec children, 2018: Parental attitudes and family practices]. Government of Quebec. <https://statistique.quebec.ca/fr/fichier/la-violence-familiale-dans-la-vie-des-enfants-du-quebec-2018-les-attitudes-parentales-et-les-pratiques-familiales.pdf>

## NEGLECT

This form of violence is not discussed with the children in the workshops. Nevertheless, we thought we should present it to you because according to the Director of Youth Protection/Provincial Directors' Report, in recent years, this has been the most frequent form of violence committed against children.

In the Estrie region, among children in care of the DYP, 33,7% of cases was about neglect or high risk of neglect in 17,2% of cases. This means that 50,9% of the DYP cases taken over were about this form of violence.<sup>3</sup>



The other forms of violence mentioned above consist of excessive words or actions, while neglect reflects a lack of thereof. It is an absence or lack of care regarding health, hygiene, diet, supervision, emotional needs, or education, which can hinder the child's development.

Sexual violence, bullying, cyberbullying, and stealing are forms of violence towards children that will be addressed later in this booklet.

3 Directors of Youth Protection. (2023). *En équilibre vers l'avenir* [Balancing towards the future]. Government of Quebec. [https://www.santemonteregie.qc.ca/sites/default/files/2023/06/bilandpl202351554\\_0.pdf](https://www.santemonteregie.qc.ca/sites/default/files/2023/06/bilandpl202351554_0.pdf)

# RESPECT

The concept of respect is one of the building blocks in preventing violence against children. In the workshops offered by Bulle et Baluchon, it is the first element we look at with them. Instilling the notion of respect in your child will enable them to develop their assertiveness and find peaceful ways of resolving conflicts.

As parents, we can also ask ourselves if, in our family, our children feel respected by the other family members. We are the first model from whom children draw inspiration when building their own values system.

Answering the following questions may lead to reflection on respect in your family. If you feel comfortable doing so, you may also share your answers with your child.

In our family, does my child feel respected?

- |   | TRUE | FALSE |
|---|------|-------|
| I listen to what my child has to say.                               |      |       |
| I give my child the opportunity to communicate.                     |      |       |
| I value my child's opinion.   |      |       |
| I make myself available to listen to my child.                      |      |       |
| I see every child as a unique person.                               |      |       |
| I allow my child to make choices.                                   |      |       |
| I show an interest in my child's projects.                          |      |       |
| I congratulate my child for their achievements.                     |      |       |
| I ask my child for their solution to problems related to them.      |      |       |
| I allow my children to settle their differences amongst themselves. |      |       |
| I let my child have their own privacy.                              |      |       |

## If you responded TRUE:

**8 to 11 times:** Your relationship with your child is based on respect and communication. You show your child all the respect they deserve.

**5 to 7 times:** Your relationship with your child shows a certain level of respect but you can improve it. Reconsider the statements that you checked "false" and try to adopt them.

**0 to 4 times:** It's time to address the situation. Talk about it with others; it's the best option.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Canadian Child Care Federation. (2023). *Respecting the Children in Our Care*. <https://cccf-fcsge.ca/ece-resources/topics/home-child-care/respecting-children-our-care/>

# ANGER MANAGEMENT

Is it acceptable to spank or perform any other act of violence when we're angry? A parent who punishes their child in this way shows them that it is sometimes acceptable to lose self-control and hit someone, including someone who is smaller than they are, and consequently, to deprive them of respect.



Anger, in itself, is not bad. It is an emotion just like any other that is healthy and even useful. But, anger can be destructive when it leads to physical or psychological manifestations. By adopting good techniques when we are angry, we set a good example for children when it comes to controlling our emotions.

Anger is usually a secondary emotion, meaning that one or many emotions are usually hidden behind. For example, when a parent sees their child running out into the street, without looking, as a car approaches at high speed, they might experience fear and stress. Then, anger might be felt, even though this emotion really stems from fear.

Anger can also be amplified by other factors such as fatigue, stress or conflictual relationships, among other things. Being aware of the underlying factors and emotions helps to better understand anger, and thus, find constructive solutions.

Thankfully, there are a multitude of techniques that can help you regain control of this overwhelming emotion.

- When we are angry, a chemical reaction in our body pushes us to react. Before doing something that we might end up regretting, it is wise to take a break and let the chemical reaction gradually subside.
- Recognizing the signs before anger takes over allows you to step back before coming to a point of frustration harder to manage.
- If anger takes over, do not try to discuss it until you have regained a sense of calm.
- Other tips: breathing deeply, relaxation techniques, counting to ten, leaving the room, etc.

Do not underestimate the impact of parents' anger on their children.

According to psychologist Egide Altenloh (2023), anger can affect children's mental and emotional health in many ways. Children may experience anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress and attachment issues as a result. They may also experience behavioural disorders such as aggressiveness, rebelliousness and delinquency.<sup>5</sup>

Other repercussions can have an impact on the children's self-esteem, self-confidence, trust in others and interpersonal relationships.

Most importantly, when we feel we have made a mistake, take a step back and reflect on it to improve your reaction in the future.

**Ligne Parents (services available in English):**

**1 800 361-5085**

**[www.teljeunes.com/en/parents](http://www.teljeunes.com/en/parents)**

5 Altenloh, E. (2023, March 8). *La gestion de la colère pour les parents* [Anger management for parents]. Psyris. <https://www.psyris.be/la-gestion-de-la-colere-pour-les-parents/#:~:text=de%20vos%20enfants-Votre%20col%C3%A8re%20peut%20affecter%20la%20sant%C3%A9%20mentale%20et%20%C3%A9motionnelle%20de,en%20raison%20de%20votre%20col%C3%A8re.>

# RECOGNIZING YOUR EMOTIONS TO PREVENT VIOLENCE

Your child's various experiences lead them to explore their feelings. To prevent violence, it is important for your child to be able to tell the difference between touches that give them pleasant feelings and those that evoke unpleasant ones.

They learn that just like their body, feelings belong to them and they have the right to refuse things that they find unpleasant. They have the right to be assertive and say NO.

Most children are capable of identifying a behaviour that embarrasses them or makes them feel uneasy, scared, or angry. To ensure the child's personal safety, they must learn to rely on their feelings and act accordingly. To act, they must learn to be assertive and say NO. Faced with a violent situation, they should refuse and not ask the aggressor for an explanation.

It is important to be attentive to what your child is experiencing by having them express their feelings to learn to understand them and explore various potential solutions with them if they find themselves in a violent situation.



If you wish, complete and discuss the following phrases with your child:

I'm happy when...

I feel angry when...

I'm scared when...

I feel sad when...

I feel alone when...

Similarly, for your child to fully understand that they have the right to be respected, to say no if a form of contact is unpleasant to them or makes them uneasy, we must give them the right to say no to a hug or kiss they do not want from a family member.

For example, an uncle who smells of tobacco or maybe has a beard that is prickly! We should never insist that our child give a kiss if they don't do it spontaneously. If you give your child permission to refuse contact that they don't want, they will understand that they can say no to someone who asks your child to follow them and say no to an adult who wants to fondle them.

**It is important that your child learn to be assertive in their relationships with others, and they need your help to do so. Here are three situations in which your child must make a decision; help them address these problems:**

**SITUATION NO. 1: A child wants to take your apple at school.  
How do you feel? What do you do?**

**SITUATION NO. 2: A stranger offers you five dollars  
to go with them to their car and help them carry boxes.  
How do you feel? What do you do?**

**SITUATION NO. 3: Your uncle asks you to hug him and  
you don't want to. What do you do?**

**Web sites to learn more:**

<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca> • <http://www.cdpedj.qc.ca/en/>

**Books:**

DUCLOS, Germain. What Should I Know about my Child's Self-esteem?,  
CHU Sainte-Justine, 2009, 72p.

FABER, Adele & Elaine MAZLISH. How to Talk so Kids Will Listen & Listen so Kids Will Talk,  
Scribner, 2012, 384p.

GREENWOOD, Elinor. My Mixed Emotions - Help Your Kids Handle their Feelings,  
DK Publishing, 2018, 80p.

SANDERS, Jayneen. Body Safety Education: A Parent's Guide to Protecting Kids from Sexual Abuse,  
Educate 2 Empower Publishing, 2015, 64p.

SILVERBERG, Cory & Fiona SMYTH. Sex is a Funny Word, Seven Stories Press,  
2015, 159p.

## TO HELP MY CHILD ASSERT THEMSELVES

To learn to be assertive, your child needs to be taken seriously when they talk about a situation, to be accepted, and to be treated with dignity. A child who is able to assert themselves shows strong self-confidence, another important aspect in preventing violence against children.

Check the appropriate boxes

ALWAYS

SOMETIMES

OFTEN

RARELY

- Do I let my child know they are an important person?
- Do I put myself in their place to gain a better understanding?
- Do I avoid fighting with my child in front of their friends?
- Do I take the time to listen to what they have to tell me?
- Do I help my child express their feelings?
- Do I ask my child their opinion?
- Do I help my child identify their strengths?
- Do I avoid needlessly criticizing them?

	ALWAYS	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	RARELY
Do I let my child know they are an important person?				
Do I put myself in their place to gain a better understanding?				
Do I avoid fighting with my child in front of their friends?				
Do I take the time to listen to what they have to tell me?				
Do I help my child express their feelings?				
Do I ask my child their opinion?				
Do I help my child identify their strengths?				
Do I avoid needlessly criticizing them?				

Among these different behaviours, you may have answered “sometimes” or “rarely.” Choose one of them and try to improve it. Parenting is learned in the field!<sup>6</sup>



6 Laporte, D. and Sévigny, L. (2015). *Comment développer l'estime de soi de nos enfants, Guide pratique à l'intention des parents d'enfants de 6 à 12 ans* [How to develop our children's self-esteem, Practical guide for parents of children aged 6 to 12 years old]. Éditions CHU Sainte-Justine.

# BULLYING<sup>7</sup>

## BULLYING

According to the Government of Quebec, bullying is:

a form of violence and should not be tolerated. It is defined as an action, intervention or comment that threatens, hurts, humiliates or deprives another person of their dignity. Individuals or groups that engage in bullying behaviour exert power over their victims, and the victims find it difficult to defend themselves.

Bullying generally refers to behaviour, words or actions that:

- May be intentional or unintentional
- Are repeated
- May be direct or indirect
- Are intended to harm or hurt
- Occur where an imbalance of power exists between two or more people, for example, within relationships of power or control.

### Examples of indirect bullying:

- Excluding someone from a group
- Isolating someone or making them less popular by spreading rumours about them
- Revealing secrets, speaking behind someone's back or writing unpleasant things about them

This type of behaviour can be difficult to identify but is just as harmful as direct bullying

The report from the research group SEVEQ (2018) indicates that in 2017, in elementary schools, an average of 51,7% of students reported being insulted or called names.<sup>8</sup>

7 Government of Quebec. (2023, March 3<sup>rd</sup>). *Bullying*. <https://www.quebec.ca/en/family-and-support-for-individuals/violence/bullying/about>

8 Beaumont, C., Leclerc, D., and Frenette, E. (2018). *Évolution de divers aspects associés à la violence dans les écoles québécoises 2013-2015-2017* [Development of various aspects of violence in Quebec schools 2013-2015-2017]. Laval University. [https://www1.sites.fse.ulaval.ca/fichiers/site\\_chaire\\_cbeaumont/documents/RAPPORT-FINAL-2013-2015-2017.pdf](https://www1.sites.fse.ulaval.ca/fichiers/site_chaire_cbeaumont/documents/RAPPORT-FINAL-2013-2015-2017.pdf)

## CYBERBULLYING

“Cyberbullying is a type of bullying that is found in digital media. It may occur through different types of platforms, such as social networks, blogs, online games, instant messages, text messages and email. While generally associated with young people, cyberbullying can affect people of all ages.

Acts of cyberbullying may take various forms, such as denigration, isolation, insults, rumours or threats, and they may be committed against another person in a direct or indirect manner.

Sometimes, the person targeted by cyberbullying may not know the identity of the person committing the act.”<sup>9</sup>

According to a study by McAfee online protection company, 57% of Quebec children admitted to having been victims of some form of cyberbullying via social medias, websites, text messages, group chats or online games.

The study shows that 22% of youth in Quebec hid the situation from their parents.



Thus, we believe it is important to make young people aware of the issues related to Internet use, while listening to what they are experiencing.

For more information, you can visit:

<https://media.mcafeeassets.com/content/dam/npcld/ecommerce/en-ca/docs/fact-sheets/fs-cyberbullying-in-plain-sight-2022-canada.pdf>

9 Government of Quebec. (2023, March 3<sup>rd</sup>). Cyberbullying. <https://www.quebec.ca/en/family-and-support-for-individuals/violence/cyberbullying>

## STEALING

According to the pan-canadian website [CliquezJustice.ca](https://cliquezjustice.ca) on legal information, stealing is defined as “a violent behaviour of robbery. If someone steals your things (goods or money) or tries to steal goods or money from you using scare tactics such as threats, strenght or blackmail, that is stealing.”<sup>10</sup>

According to the INSPQ, in 2017<sup>11</sup>:

- 2,4% of elementary school students in Quebec reported having had their personal belongings stolen 2-3 times a month.
- For 17% of students, they mentioned that it happened to them 1-2 times a year.

### Is your child a victim of bullying or stealing?

- They are afraid to go to school or even refuses to go or to participate in school-related group activities.
- They sometimes change their route to and from school.
- Their interest in school and their marks are declining.
- Their clothes or personal belongings are damaged or misplaced.
- They regularly ask for money or maybe steal it?
- They have injuries that they don't want to explain.
- They are sad, discouraged, anxious, or withdrawn.
- They don't invite many friends over and rarely get invited over to friends' houses.
- Their usual behaviour has changed.
- Their self-esteem is decreasing (doesn't think they are good in school, compares themself to others).
- They have unexplained headaches, stomach aches, or other illnesses.
- There are changes in their normal sleeping habits.
- They avoid the cafeteria or playground.
- They are reluctant to talk about what happens at school.
- They express suicidal thoughts, want to run away, or drop out of school.

10 *Intimidation [Bullying]*. (2021, March 1<sup>st</sup>). CliquezJustice.ca <https://cliquezjustice.ca/vos-droits/intimidation>

11 INSPQ. (2019, December 6). *L'intimidation vécue par les jeunes [Bullying among youth]*. <https://www.inspq.qc.ca/en/node/15382>

Your child has experienced some elements from the previous list? Tell them what you've noticed about their behaviour and examine the situation with them. Ask them what their classmates do, who they are spending time with.... If they are a victim of bullying or stealing, encourage them to denounce it and assure them that you'll help them. Be there for your child when they report it at school or elsewhere! Listen to them, trust them, highlight their strengths, encourage their contacts with new friends, and don't encourage them to be violent as this may only escalate the situation.

### **Does your child engage in bullying or stealing?**

- They are often irritable, aggressive, or angry towards others.
- They defy your authority and object to the house rules.
- They take things that don't belong to them.
- They have taken money without your permission.
- They have a tendency to blame others.
- They make their own rules and attempt to impose them on others.
- Has a parent of one of your child's victims contacted you?
- They think that aggression is a good way of defending themselves, being assertive, or resolving conflict.
- They think that the victim deserves it, they have difficulty showing compassion (ex: they don't feel responsible for hurting someone else).
- They often demonstrate a false image of self-confidence and self-assurance.
- They lack interpersonal skills.
- They perceive hostility where there is none.

### **IF SO...**

It's obvious, something isn't right! Talk to your child about their behaviour and tell them you disagree. Together, find a way to fix the damage that was done, guide them and ask for help from a member of the support staff at their school or from the CSSS.



### **For more information:**

Kids Help Phone: <https://kidshelpphone.ca/>

# INTERNET MONITORING

Despite all the advantages of the Internet as an extraordinary tool for education, information, and communication, there are also very real risks that your child could be exposed to undesirable materials or contact. Scenes of gratuitous violence, hateful propaganda, cyberbullying, pornography, and Internet luring are the most serious potential risks.

Moreover, through forums, gaming, instant messages, etc. online predators can try to contact children, gain their trust, then lure them in some way. Tell your child about this danger.

**For the Internet to remain a fun and enriching tool for your family and for your child's protection, safety measures must be taken into consideration.**

- Encourage family members to use technology in common areas of the home.
- Make sure your child's username is a pseudonym that doesn't indicate information about their identity.
- Establish open communication with your child about what they are interested in on the Internet, what makes them embarrassed or uneasy, what they do, and who they talk to.
- Show them you trust them. Tell them the sites they can visit, taking their interests into account.
- Activate the parental control software on your computer.
- Educate your child to be careful by asking them to never give out personal information, specifically their name, address, or photo, the name of the school they go to, etc.
- Remind them that they shouldn't answer any messages that make them uneasy. Tell them to let you know if the situation arises.



- If they want to organize a meeting with a friend they met on the internet, it can only occur in a public place and in your presence only.
- Be a role model for children. Be safe on the Internet.
- Set out rules for Internet use with your child (time of day, duration, sites permitted, etc.). Research conducted by MediaSmarts shows that in homes where parents have clear rules against certain kinds of activities, young people are far less likely to engage in them.
- Use a password to restrict the time of Internet access.
- Share your e-mail address with your child (when they are younger); that way you can check who is sending them messages.
- Use parental control software that filters and blocks access to offensive sites. Friend or follow your child on social media.
- Guide your child towards supervised chat sites (for example: Messenger Kids) and encourage them to decline private conversations.
- Don't let your child use the camera or instant message with strangers, as these conversations or videos can be saved and kept on the Internet forever.
- Explain to the child that they shouldn't post pictures or videos of themselves or people they know on the Internet. If they do so, they must first get consent.
- Explain to the child that there is no privacy on the Internet.

## THE EFFECTS OF PORNOGRAPHY ON YOUR CHILD

The law is simple, pornography is prohibited for minors, but it has never been so easy to access. The Internet, movies, and TV are all sources that are accessible to everyone, including children. In this respect, it would be wise for parents to be more vigilant and concerned about the images and references their children are exposed to.

The raw, often violent, sexual footage, which is essentially genitalized and stripped of emotions, may disturb the child and trigger anxiety and disgust with regards to their own origins. It may also spark an obsession with questions of a sexual nature or cause them to adopt games with much more sexually explicit content. It can also create confusion or anxiety regarding relationships between men and women.

In short, it is not at all desirable to entrust the sexual education of our children to pornographers or to let our children model their emotions and understanding on adult sexual fantasies.

In addition to the recommendations mentioned in terms of protection against Internet luring, parental control software can serve to strengthen your child's protection. Your Internet provider can better inform you on this topic.

When it comes to screen time, be vigilant, set clear rules, and above all, maintain contact with your child. Communication is your most valuable protection tool!



# SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Just as we take every precaution to tell our children to look both ways before crossing the street, telling them about the risks of sexual violence will make them more able to protect themselves. It's true that we run the risk of the child becoming suspicious of the adults around them, but it's a small risk compared to the impact that being a victim of sexual violence could have on their life.

Sexual assault is a sexual act, with or without physical contact, committed by an individual without the consent of the victim or, in some cases, and especially when children are involved, through emotional manipulation or blackmail. It is an act that subjects another person to the perpetrator's desires through an abuse of power, the use of force or coercion, or implicit or explicit threats. Sexual assault violates the victim's fundamental rights, including the right to physical and psychological integrity and security of the person.<sup>12</sup>

## According to the INSPQ:

- In Quebec, approximately 1 out of 9 women and 1 out of 20 men reported to have been sexually assaulted by an adult before the age of 15 years old.
- Young people represent the majority of victims of sexual offences recorded by the police.
- In almost 9 out of 10 cases, sexual assaults were committed by someone known to the victim (family member, acquaintance, friend or intimate partner).<sup>13</sup>

12 INSPQ. (2018, January). *Sexual Assault: What is It?*. <https://www.inspq.qc.ca/en/sexual-assault/understanding/what-is-it>

13 Lachapelle, M, Gagné, D., and Poitras, D. (2022, May 12). *Prevalence of sexual abuse among children and youth*. INSPQ. <https://www.inspq.qc.ca/en/sexual-assault/statistics/youth>

## MYTHS REGARDING SEXUAL VIOLENCE<sup>14</sup>:

### IN GENERAL, WE THINK THAT

Sexual assault is a serious issue but affects only few people.

Boys who have been sexually assaulted during childhood will commit sexual assaults in adulthood.

Children who are victims of sexual violence will bear the scars of this treatment for the rest of their lives.

Many children make up stories of sexual violence.

### HOWEVER

Population surveys show that sexual assault is a problem of significant magnitude, particularly among minors in Quebec and throughout North America.

Even though about a quarter of sexual aggressors are believed to have been sexually assaulted in childhood, the majority of victims of childhood sexual abuse will not become sexual aggressors.

Sexual violence may have major short- and long-term effects on children who are victims of it, but some conditions, including support from those around them, can facilitate the victim's adaptation. It should be known that a number of victims of childhood sexual violence experience few scars once they have reached adulthood as they have protective factors that help them cope with the trauma.

Children very rarely make deliberate false accusations of sexual violence.



14 INSPQ. (2016, October). *Myths and Facts*. <https://www.inspq.qc.ca/en/sexual-assault/understanding/myths-and-facts>

## THE AGGRESSOR'S TRICKS

The aggressor, often known by the victim's family, generally makes their first contact gently. They offer gifts, suggest outings... all kinds of little treats to exploit the child's need for attention and affection. The child feels important, liked, and appreciated.

Next, they persuade the child to caress them or to be caressed. The actions are presented as a secret game, as care that will be good for them, or as gestures of love. The child feels uneasy, is confused, and senses that everything isn't "okay" but doesn't know how to react.

The secret and silence are imposed. The child is unhappy, and feels guilty and ashamed. The aggressor manipulates the child with threats: "If you tell your mom, she'll die," "You don't want me to love you?" or "You don't love me anymore?" etc.

The child is scared, feels guilty, responsible, and ashamed, and will keep the secret because they don't want to hurt the people they love.

## THE CONSEQUENCES OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

All forms of sexual violence leave scars; this is why it's important for the victim to get help. Learning about living in a community and the ability to build healthy relationships are compromised.

Withdrawal, eating disorders, declining academic performance, behavioural problems, depression in childhood and adulthood, problems with sex, alcohol, drugs, delinquency, abuse of medication, etc. are but a few of the impacts that victims of childhood sexual abuse may experience if they don't receive the necessary help.

The signs that a child may be a victim of sexual violence are: the presence of bruises; irritation or redness on their body; sudden behavioural changes, for example a calm child may suddenly show aggression; trouble concentrating; tendency to isolate themselves; loss of interest in games they used to enjoy; unusual apprehension towards certain adults or places; refusing to undress in certain places or a tendency to overdress;

trouble sleeping; fears; bed wetting; unacceptable sexual behaviours such as unsuitable seduction mind-sets, sexually explicit drawings, or sexual vocabulary that is too advanced for their age. Although these signs don't allow us to conclude that the child is a victim of sexual violence, they are all indicators that something isn't right. Provide the child with the means to express themselves and to get help.

## **WHAT TO DO IF MY CHILD REVEALS THAT THEY ARE A VICTIM OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE?**

Here are a few techniques that will help you and your child when they tell you.

1. Find a calm place that is safe and private.
2. Listen to your child and believe them. Stay neutral. Respect their periods of silence.
3. Assess the urgency: are they safe?
4. Ask the child what they have done themselves up to this point (to assess their support network, strengths, and limitations).
5. Assure the child that you care about them, that this won't change your relationship, and that they are not at fault (your child isn't responsible for the situation).
6. Let your child know they have the right to be safe.
7. Try to remain calm and control your own emotions if you are overcome with anger or pain. Your reaction can make a difference in whether or not your child will continue to confide in you. If you are not able to stay calm in front of your child, you can tell them that your reaction is not their fault.
8. To avoid influencing what they're saying, don't suggest answers. Let them explain what happened in their own words.

To stop the aggressor's actions, and to protect your child and possibly other victims, you have the duty to file a report with the Director of Youth Protection (DYP) or your municipality's police force. Gather your strength and seek the appropriate resources.



Shoving, fighting, bullying, insults, stealing someone's lunch or hat, and sexual violence, may be part of your child's day-to-day world, at school and elsewhere. And that doesn't include the scenes of violence shown on TV that they are exposed to. In short, one day or another, your child will be faced with one or several forms of violence. It is important that they recognize it and know how to judge the situation and thus make a decision and protect themselves. **It's our role as adults to inform them and give them the tools they need to deal with all types of violence.**



# RESOURCES

## ORGANIZATION

## TELEPHONE/WEB SITE

## SERVICES

### Centre jeunesse de l'Estrie (CJE)

819-566-4121  
(24/7 reporting)  
1 800 463-1029

Protection and/or intervention services

### CJE complaints service

1 866 917-7903

If you are unsatisfied with the CJE's treatment of your report

### CALACS - Agression Estrie

Centre d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel

819-563-9999  
[calacsestrie.com](http://calacsestrie.com)

Direct support service for teenage girls or women who are victims of assault

### Municipal police force

819-821-5555  
(Sherbrooke)

To file a report and ensure the safety of all (adults and children)

### Child psychiatry at the CHUS

819-346-1110  
ext. 14000

Psychological assessment and monitoring of victimized children

### Your region's Centre de santé et de services sociaux (CSSS)

Support for parents and victimized children

### CAVAC Crime Victims Assistance Centre

819-820-2822  
[cavac.qc.ca](http://cavac.qc.ca)

Accompaniment and information on the justice system

### L'Escale de l'Estrie

819-569-3611  
[escaleestrie.com](http://escaleestrie.com)

Shelter for women who are victims of violence and their children

### CIVAS Centre d'intervention en violence et agressions sexuels de l'Estrie

819-564-5127  
[civas.ca](http://civas.ca)

Individual and group interventions for adolescent and adult aggressors

### Le Seuil de l'Estrie

819-821-2420  
[leseuil.qc.ca](http://leseuil.qc.ca)

Support service for men experiencing marital problems or issues with violence towards those around them

### Ligne Parents

1 800 361-5085 (24/7)  
[ligneparents.com](http://ligneparents.com)

Intervention service open to all parents of children and youth ages 0 to 20

[quebec.ca/en/family-and-support-for-individuals/violence/bullying/about](http://quebec.ca/en/family-and-support-for-individuals/violence/bullying/about)

Government of Quebec's website on bullying

[mediasmarts.ca](http://mediasmarts.ca)

Canada's centre for digital and media literacy

[cybertip.ca](http://cybertip.ca)

Information centre for the safety of children on the Internet: tipline for reporting the online sexual exploitation of children

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This booklet is an adaptation of *Ensemble, prévenons les abus, pour la protection et la sécurité des enfants*.

1255 Daniel Street, Suite 131  
Sherbrooke QC J1H 5X3  
819-822-6046  
info@bulleetbaluchon.org  
[www.bulleetbaluchon.org/en/](http://www.bulleetbaluchon.org/en/)

