

## Family Relationships and Living Safe in Canada

*The Allies in Action Project educates newcomers to Canada about domestic abuse/family violence and how to maintain healthy family relationships.*

### What is Abuse?

“Abuse is an action, or deliberate behaviour, that a person (or persons) in a position of trust/authority uses (their) power and control to cause physical, emotional, psychological, financial and sexual harm over another person. This person could be a spouse, family member, friend or care giver.”

It includes many different forms of physical and emotional abuse, as well as neglect carried out by family members or intimate partners. It may also include a single act of violence, or a number of acts that form a pattern of abuse.

### What is Abuse in Family Relationships?

Family violence and abuse are among the most frequent forms of interpersonal violence that are carried out against women and children.

1. For Elders –theft, forgery, extortion, assault, intimidation, threats, and failure to provide the necessities of life are examples of criminal offences under the Criminal Code of Canada. Note: very few criminal offences against seniors are brought to the Criminal Justice System.
2. For Children – A child is considered anyone under 19 years old in BC. Child abuse (also called “child maltreatment”) is an extreme form of physical, sexual, or psychological maltreatment or neglect of a child or children, especially by a parent or other caregiver.
  - Many cases of child abuse are unknown since children are often afraid to report an incident to the police because the abusers are too often a family friend or relative.
  - About one-third of all juvenile victims of sexual abuse cases in the USA are with children younger than 6 years of age.
3. For Spouses – Types of abuse that are considered criminal offences in a spousal relationship:
  - Physical assault – when your partner hits or hurts you or threaten to do this
  - Sexual assault – when anything sexual happens that you don’t agree to
  - Criminal harassment – when your partner forces unwanted and constant attention on you

## What does Canadian Law say about Abuse?

Within Canada's Constitution and Charter, the Charter of Rights & Freedoms are rights and freedoms for everyone living in Canada to enjoy.

- Men and women have the same rights and responsibilities under Canadian law. Responsibilities refer to expectations that anyone who lives in Canada should follow.
- Everyone has the right to life, liberty, and security and the right to not be deprived of it.
- Everyone who lives here has a responsibility to follow the law.

Abuse is considered a crime under the Criminal Code of Canada.

- In Canada, it is against the law to abuse anyone for any reason; whether it's your mother, child, husband or sister or any person.
- In Canada, there is a legal obligation to report the known or suspected abuse. Failure to report can result in charges laid, as well as a fine of up to \$10,000.