Parenting in Canada

Canada has laws that relate to parenting, including physical discipline, supervision, protecting children from harm, neglect and violence. Here are some simple guidelines for parenting in Canada:

**Using force to manage behaviour:**
- Child must be between 2 and 12 years old;
- Force must be reasonable and its impact only “transitory and trifling” – not important/leaves no consequences, action is not specific to one event/cause;
- Person must not use an object, such as a ruler or belt, when applying the force;
- The person must not hit or slap the child’s head;
- The seriousness of what happened or what the child did is not relevant.

Using reasonable force to restrain a child may be acceptable in some circumstances. Hitting a child in anger or in retaliation for something a child did is not considered reasonable and is against the law.

**Supervision:** Supervision means looking after your child, monitoring their actions for safety. Young children are generally not able to care for themselves and need an adult with them.

- This includes while playing outside the house, or in the neighbourhood.
- This includes inside the home – young children should not be left alone or under the supervision of other young children.
- While there is no legal age defined for when children can remain unsupervised, child protection legislation promotes adequate supervision in relation to the child’s developmental age. In other provinces, the legal age is 12 to 16.

**Child Protection:** Refers to the laws that promote the safety and well-being of children. Children at risk of violence, neglect, physical/sexual/emotional abuse, exploitation, not receiving medical care or treatment, abandonment, left without adequate supervision, etc can be removed from their family home.

**Duty to Protect:** Everyone has a legal duty to report concerns or allegations of risk/harm to children (age 18 and under – new legislation). Concerns are reported to social workers with the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development with the Government of NL. Anyone can make a report – including family members, neighbours, teachers, medical professionals, other professionals.

If a social worker receives a report that a child may be at risk, they conduct an “investigation” – meaning they may talk to your child without parent(s) present, your child’s teachers, other family members. This is to find out if there IS any risk. A social worker will make every effort to work with a family to reduce/remove risk or harm to a child.

If every option is exhausted and there is still a high risk of harm or danger to a child – a social worker and the court system has a legal right to remove your child from your home and place them elsewhere (with an approved family member, with a foster home, group home). All decisions are made in the best interest to the child.