

# Addressing the Subjects of Family Abuse and Parenting in Canada to Newcomers

Segment # 8 (17:54)

Facilitator: Mark Jacot

Presenting the Subject of  
Parenting in Canada to Newcomers

## **Present the Subject of Parenting in Canada following Family Abuse**

*Reminder – As in the family abuse session, use the “third person approach” in speaking about parenting. Avoid using “you” to ensure there is no blame inference.*

### **Begin by Explaining to Your Clients:**

- Canada recognizes there are good parenting practices in all countries and cultures
- The underlying theme and rationale is the same as the subject of family abuse: the protection and nurturing of the family. Also remind them that this information, like family abuse, is given to all newcomers.
- For some newcomers, parenting practices in Canada can be quite different from their own. This can cause stress within the family.
- Canada takes child protection very seriously and has enacted laws to protect all children within all families.
- The government is not trying to tell everyone how to parent their children and that you respect people’s parenting capabilities, but it’s important everyone knows the child protection laws.

# Rights and Responsibilities of Parents

## The Canadian Criminal Code States:

*Parents are under a legal duty to provide:*

*The “necessaries of life” for a child under the age of 16 years*

Those “necessaries of life” are defined as:

- Custody and supervision
- Caring for them (food, clothing and shelter)
- Physical and psychological protection
- Health and safety
- Education
- Financial support

Parents have the right to make all decisions necessary for their children's well-being. (i.e. healthcare, education, etc.)

- Provincial and Territorial child protection laws (age of majority)

# Parenting and Discipline

## Let your clients know:

- In Canada discipline is widely used within families to deal with unacceptable behaviour.
- How parents discipline their children is NOT a newcomer issue.
- Excessive and unreasonable physical discipline is against the law and could have repercussions within the family.
- Many parents in Canada and elsewhere don't use physical force or fear and intimidation to discipline their children.
- Parents in Canada and around the world believe that the best discipline is based on non-violent, “teachable”, and self-respecting moments.

**Again, remind your clients the government is not trying to tell everyone how to parent their children and that you respect all newcomers as parents, but it's important everyone knows the child protection laws and that they are there to protect all families.**

## Canadian Legal Definition of Physical Discipline

Section 43 of the Criminal Code states that:

- *a parent is justified in using force by way of correction towards his or her child as long as the force does not exceed what is “reasonable” under the circumstances.*
- What is “reasonable force”?

The Supreme Court of Canada defined "reasonable" as force that would have a "transitory and trifling" impact on the child, for example, giving a child one to two mild to moderate spanks, with a bare hand on the child's bottom and which does not cause physical harm or leave a mark, is not a crime.

- However, physical discipline is not considered reasonable where:
  - the child is under 2 years of age or is a teenager (over 12)
  - it involves the use of an object, such as a belt or ruler
  - it involves a slap or blow to the head
  - the child is injured

## Responding to Newcomer Parent's Questions

What does the government do if they believe a child is being physically abused?

- If an incident of spanking or other physical discipline is reported to the child protection authorities, social workers must investigate. If a child is being physically abused, they can intervene to protect the child and in severe cases the police may be involved.

Can I spank, pinch or slap my child?

- A light spanking on the bum of a child from the age of two to twelve with a bare open hand and that does not cause physical harm, **might** be permitted by law. However this, as well as pinching or slapping, may not be the best choice of discipline. There are better non-violent ways of teaching a child appropriate behaviour and it is easy to cross the line where it becomes abuse, and that could lead to an investigation.

## Responding to Newcomer Parent's Questions

- Steer clients away from all forms of physical discipline because proven not to be effective
- Using physical force or fear and intimidation in a child can create an adult who is disrespectful and uncaring, and uses the same to get what they want
- Discipline is most effective if given with respect and love, and in ways that are consistent and reasonable
- It's not easy adopting new parenting methods but let clients know that many thousands of newcomer parents before them have successfully made parenting adjustments — and they can too.



## **Non-Physical Forms of Discipline Used in Canada and Around the World**

- **Distract (young children)** - Remove the child from the immediate area (i.e. -bring them to another room)
- **Ignore (young children)** - If they have a tantrum don't pay any attention and they will often stop.
- **Timeout** - Send them to their room or a quiet spot for misbehaving and to think about what they did wrong
- **Take away privileges**-Remove activities the child enjoys (i.e.-TV, riding their bike, playing with friends)
- **Speak to the child about their behaviour and its consequences** - “Discuss” or “explain” to a child how their behaviour was inappropriate and give them advice about what should be done in the future.
- **Rewards and consequences** - Follow through with disciplinary consequences (i.e. removal of privileges) and ensure they fully understand why. Also reward them when they show responsibility, values and morals (i.e. - give greater independence, etc.). Focus on their good behaviour and provide ongoing positive reinforcement.



## Newcomers Making Parenting Adjustments

In a survey conducted by the Centre for Research and Education in Human Services, many newcomer parents:

- *Found it hard to raise children according to their old culture because of the dominating "Canadian" influence and reconcile their parenting with those of Canadians. They wanted their children to fit in, but not to act in the "Canadian" way.*
  - Not easy when a country's parenting practices are significantly different - and to maintain culture and traditions - and for children not act in the "Canadian way"
  - But children are changing as well and their adjustment is different than their parents
  - Children may be want more freedom to make their own decisions - they need their parents' support and guidance in making their adjustments and those decisions.
  - Encourage clients to be open and understanding to what their children are going through. The more parents support their children in their adjustments, the more they will be helping themselves in their parenting adjustments.

## Newcomers Making Parenting Adjustments

In a survey conducted by the Centre for Research and Education in Human Services, many newcomer parents:

- *Admitted that after being in Canada they were consciously making parenting changes, especially with regards discipline, and that these changes were mostly because of the changes in their children's behaviour and outside influences.*
  - Children quicker in making adjustments - less “tied into” previous customs and practices and more likely to adapt sooner than parents
  - Many newcomers recognize their parenting practices will change, but changes will be for the benefit of their families and themselves.

## Newcomers Making Parenting Adjustments

In a survey conducted by the Centre for Research and Education in Human Services, many newcomer parents:

- *Recognized that the process of changing parenting practices in Canada involves an often slow process of ongoing evaluation and adoption of both what newcomer parents knew as good and what they see as good in Canada.*
  - Key message to leave with clients
  - Good parenting practices in all cultures and countries
  - Newcomers need to concentrate on taking the best from both
  - Combining the best enhances parenting capabilities while abiding by all laws in Canada