



NIAGARA REGIONAL POLICE SERVICE CHILD ABUSE INVESTIGATIONS



A guide to assist parents and caregivers of children who have been abused.

Frequently Asked Questions:

What can we expect? Who can help? What happens after the interview?

NIAGARA REGIONAL POLICE SERVICE – CHILD ABUSE UNIT

- Investigation of all allegations of sexual assaults and physical assaults by a caregiver, involving children who are under the age of sixteen years. (at the time the matter is reported to police).
- Police Detectives who are specially trained to conduct child abuse investigations.
- Conduct joint investigations with Family and Children's Services (FACS) Niagara.
- Interviews of child victims are conducted at the Child Advocacy Centre and are electronically recorded.
- Responsible for the criminal investigation, gathering of evidence, interviews of all potential witnesses and the determination if reasonable grounds / sufficient evidence exists to support criminal charges. The laying of criminal charges is solely the responsibility of the police investigator.
- When making a decision to lay charges, the police investigator will take into account the evidence gathered, the wishes of the victim and/or their parents or caregivers and any consultations with the Crown Attorney.
- In the event criminal charges are laid, the police will be responsible for arresting the suspect and initiating the court process. The investigator will consult with the victim and/or their parents or caregiver regarding any interim release conditions they may wish to recommend with respect to the suspect.
- The police officer-in-charge will be responsible for the investigation and any subsequent court case. If you have any questions, please contact the officer-in-charge or the Victim Witness Assistance Program.

FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES NIAGARA

- Responsible for the welfare of children under the age of sixteen-years-old in Niagara.
- In cases of physical or sexual abuse, they will conduct joint investigations with the NRPS Child Abuse Unit.
- The child protection worker will be present with the child victim at all interviews and any subsequent medical appointments.
- The child protection worker will be responsible for coordinating with the parents and/or caregiver any medical examinations that may be required.
- During the course of an investigation, if the child protection worker deems a child victim to be at risk, the worker may apprehend the child victim and place them in a place of safety.
- The child protection worker, in consultation with the parents and/or caregiver, will make a determination as to whether the child victim requires counseling or therapy.
- As a result of an investigation, the child protection worker may place the name of a perpetrator on the Ontario Child Abuse Registry.

CROWN ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

- Responsible for all criminal prosecutions before the courts.
- Once charges are laid and the matter is ready to go to court, the Crown will meet with the child victim, to introduce themselves to the child and to go over the child's evidence.
- Responsible for addressing any special concerns such as the use of electronically recorded statements in court, child-friendly testimony facilities, use of a screen to shield the child's view of the accused, or any other special needs.
- Will keep the victims and/or their parents or caregivers informed of any plea arrangements or discussions.
- Represent the public interest.

VICTIM WITNESS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

- Will contact you shortly after charges are laid, and will inform you of the services they provide.
- Will be responsible for assisting in the preparation of child victims for court.
- Will be present with the child victim for Crown interviews and all court appearances.
- Will be a support person in the court room for the child victim, if required.
- Will keep the victim and/or parents or caregiver informed of all court appearances of the accused.
- Will assist with the preparation of the victim impact statement for court.

MY CHILD HAS BEEN ABUSED...WHAT DO I DO NOW?

- Find out from the Investigator or Child Protection Worker what your child has disclosed during the interview.
 - Do not interview or question your child for answers. You will only be traumatizing them further by making them relive what happened.
 - Be supportive of your child, no matter what your own feelings are about the allegations.
 - Do not hesitate to call the investigator or child protection worker if you have questions or wish to forward new information to them.
 - As a result of your child being abused, you may observe some of the following changes: sleep disturbances, mood swings, flashbacks, depression, bed wetting, anger, guilt, self blame, fear or embarrassment. You should seek professional help for your child if these conditions occur.
- *You or other members of your family may also suffer, as a result of the abuse. You should also consider counseling for yourself or your family to help cope with the situation.*
- *Most importantly, the investigator and child protection worker will take into consideration the best interests of your child at all times when making decisions about the investigation.*

Support Services In Niagara

Niagara Regional Police Service	905-688-4111	Child Abuse Unit Ext. 5100
Family and Children's Services Niagara	905-937-7731	Toll Free 1-888-937-7731
Niagara Health System	905-684-7271	Sexual Assault / Domestic Violence Treatment Program – Niagara Ext. 45300 Children and Adolescent Outpatient Mental Health Program Central Intake Ext. 46573 (18 and Under)
Pathstone Mental Health	905- 384-9551	Child Counseling Services
Niagara Regional Sexual Assault Center	905-682-7258	24 Hour Crisis / Information Line 905-682-4584
Victim Witness Assistance Program	905-685-2671	Court Information and Witness Preparation Service
Victim Services Niagara	905-688-4111	Ext. 5084 / 24 Hour Crisis Line 905-682-2626
Niagara North Crown Attorney's Office	905-685-4293	
Niagara South Crown Attorney's Office	905-732-1327	
KIDS HELP LINE	1-800-668-6868	

