

## SUMMARY OF LEGAL REQUIREMENTS FOR REPORTING SUSPICIONS OF CHILD ABUSE: ALBERTA

There are laws in Alberta under the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* about what must happen when a person suspects that a child may have been abused or is at risk of abuse. Below is a summary of these laws. **You are responsible for reporting suspicions of child abuse, not for proving whether or not child abuse has occurred. It is the responsibility of a child protection agency to investigate, with police where necessary, and decide on the best plan for the child.**

### DUTY TO REPORT

A **person** in Alberta who believes that a child may have been abused or is at risk for abuse must immediately report the information to a director.<sup>1</sup>

### HOW OLD IS A CHILD IN ALBERTA?

In Alberta, a person is a child from birth until his/her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

### PROTECTION FROM LIABILITY

If a person reports suspected child abuse, s/he cannot be sued if it is proven that the report was made in good faith, and not intended to cause trouble for anyone.

### FAILURE TO REPORT

If a person fails to report to a director, there is a possibility of a charge and a fine of up to \$2,000, or imprisonment of up to 6 months if the fine is not paid.

In addition to the above penalty, if a person who works with children has known about and not reported a suspicion of child abuse, an appropriate governing body of the profession or occupation of that individual will be notified.

### CONFIDENTIALITY

There are some relationships that are considered confidential such as a doctor and patient or between clergy and members of the congregation. However, if child abuse is suspected, this confidence cannot be kept. No matter what the relationship between people, a person must always follow through on the duty to report suspicions of child abuse.

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<sup>1</sup> A **director** refers to the child protection authorities in your province, and not to staff within your own program/agency.