

## SUMMARY OF LEGAL REQUIREMENTS FOR REPORTING SUSPICIONS OF CHILD ABUSE: BRITISH COLUMBIA

There are laws in British Columbia under the *Child, Family and Community Service Act* about what must happen when a person suspects that a child may have been abused or is at risk for 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 British Columbia who believes a child may have been abused or is at risk for abuse is required to immediately report the information to a director<sup>1</sup> or a person designated by a director.

### HOW OLD IS A CHILD IN BRITISH COLUMBIA?

In British Columbia, a person is a child from birth until his/her 19<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 to cause trouble for anyone.

### FAILURE TO REPORT

If a person fails to report to a director, or knowingly reports false information, s/he can be charged with a fine of up to \$10,000 or imprisonment of up to 6 months, or both.

### CONFIDENTIALITY

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

---

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