



commit2kids.ca



COMMIT TO CHILD PROTECTION

A guide for small to mid-sized organizations

A simple approach to building safer environments for children.

An easy-to-use guide to help leaders of small to mid-sized organizations protect the children in their care.

The Canadian Centre for Child Protection (protectchildren.ca) is a charitable organization dedicated to the personal safety of all children. Our goal is to reduce child victimization by providing programs and services to Canadians, including **Commit to Kids**. This program provides policies, strategies, and a step-by-step plan for creating safer environments for children – encouraging organizations to take an active, participatory role in protecting children in their care.

This easy-to-use guide – based on the Canadian Centre's original *Commit to Kids* program – is designed to help you better protect children. We recognize that some small to mid-sized community organizations have certain limitations (they're often stretched for time, have few paid staff, and limited resources at their disposal), and as a result, we have created this guide to provide you with a simple approach to building a safer environment.

Commit to Kids is a program
and a trade-mark of



CANADIAN CENTRE for CHILD PROTECTION®
Helping families. Protecting children.

SMALL STEPS CAN MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE



Research has shown that in 90 per cent of child sexual abuse cases, the offender is someone who is known to and trusted by the child and the community¹. Child sexual abuse can often go undetected even by the most responsible of adults. For these reasons it is essential for any organization that works with children to do more to protect the kids in their care.

We recognize that many child-serving organizations face barriers in implementing a safer environment for children. Examples include:

TIME AND RESOURCES:

⌚ “We’ve already got too many things to do.”

RELIANCE ON VOLUNTEERS:

⌚ “We don’t have the resources. We’re made up mostly of volunteers.”

ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS:

⌚ “We’ve never had a problem here.”

While child-serving organizations typically do criminal record and child abuse registry checks (where applicable), the vast majority of sex offenders do NOT have a criminal record. To be successful in providing a safer environment for children, organizations need to go beyond the record check process and take additional steps to ensure the safety of children in their care.



1. Snyder, H. N. (2000). Sexual assault of young children as reported to law enforcement: Victim, incident, and offender characteristics. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics. Retrieved January 12, 2009 from <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/pub/pdf/saycrlc.pdf>.

LEARN. PREVENT. RESPOND.

THREE EASY STEPS TOWARDS CREATING A SAFER ENVIRONMENT FOR CHILDREN

1. LEARN.

- ➲ **Hold a Group Discussion:** Get a group of three or more enthusiastic staff/volunteers together to discuss how your organization can better protect the children in your care. Talk openly about what your organization does now to protect children, and what type of things you could improve upon.
- ➲ **Watch our Training Video:** Take 15 minutes to watch the **Commit to Kids** training video available online at: commit2kids.ca. This video will help you learn more about what child sexual abuse is, behaviours you need to be concerned about, how to respond to inappropriate behaviour by staff/volunteers, and what to do to help prevent child sexual abuse from occurring in your organization in the first place.
- ➲ **Survey your Community:** We've created a simple survey to help you begin the discussion and dialogue in your community about creating a safer environment for children. To get you started, go to commit2kids.ca to download the survey and tailor it to suit your organization. You can distribute this questionnaire through your newsletter, parent contact email list, by handing it out to parents or leaving copies in a convenient location at your organization and encourage visitors to take part. Responses to this questionnaire will help guide your organization in better identifying areas that may be of particular concern to your community. Brainstorm on how your organization can address these concerns and explore how this may fit into a Code of Conduct (see Step 2).

2. PREVENT.

- ➲ **Create a Code of Conduct:** A code of conduct is a short, clear, and broad set of written statements that establishes boundaries for all staff/volunteers and outlines expectations for interactions with the children in your care. While this may seem like a daunting task, Commit to Kids has made it easy for organizations to create one. Go to commit2kids.ca to download the sample Child Protection Code of Conduct that you can easily tailor to meet the specific needs of your organization. While this is our suggested format, you can customize it to suit your needs.
- ➲ **Post your Code of Conduct:** Post your code of conduct around the office to help raise awareness and ensure it remains front and centre with all of your staff/volunteers. This will serve as a constant reminder of your commitment to the protection of children. You can also hand out your code of conduct to parents to let them know all of the steps you're taking to better protect their children.



3. RESPOND.

- ➲ **Establish Procedures for Responding to Concerning Behavior:** Having watched the **Commit to Kids** training video, you and your staff/volunteers will have a better understanding of what constitutes concerning behaviour. The next step is to create a list of protocols for coming forward with and addressing inappropriate behaviour. We have created a list of basic procedures to help get you started that you can download from **commit2kids.ca**. This easy-to-adapt form will help you establish rules for reporting concerning behaviour, how to keep records and documentation of inappropriate conduct, and how to follow up with regard to inappropriate behaviour demonstrated by a staff member/volunteer.
- ➲ **Communicate with your Community:** Now that you have taken important steps to create a safer environment for the children in your care — share it with the community. Whether you include information in a newsletter, email or letter, or hold an information evening, sharing this information will go a long way to instill even greater confidence in your organization and promote your commitment to the protection of children. Talk about the results of your questionnaire, encourage parents to watch our training video and to download our free parent guide (at **commit2kids.ca**), present an overview of your new Code of Conduct and protocols, and most importantly — ask for feedback!

OVERALL, THE GOAL IS TO ENSURE CHILDREN ARE PROTECTED AND THAT EVERYONE FEELS COMFORTABLE COMING FORWARD WITH A CONCERN.

COMMITTED TO KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE

In taking these three easy steps, you are demonstrating to your community that your organization is committed to keeping children safe. You are conveying to parents and the general public that your organization will not tolerate any inappropriate behaviour between staff/volunteers and children, that you have a code of conduct outlining expectations of staff/volunteers with regard to interactions with children, and that you have procedures in place to respond immediately if any inappropriate behaviour does occur within your organization.

Thank you for your commitment to child protection and for ensuring that your organization is kid-safe. We encourage you to visit our website at **commit2kids.ca** to learn more.

TOGETHER, WE ARE BUILDING SAFER COMMUNITIES FOR OUR CHILDREN.



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