

Looking out for our 12-18 year olds

Boscoville supports the recommendations of the Commissioner, Ms. Régine Laurent, and the Government of Quebec to increase our collective vigilance for children at risk of abuse while currently confined within their families.

Abuse involves negligent, violent, or abusive acts that jeopardize the safety or development of the child. In adolescence, this can result in inappropriate parenting practices such as resorting to physical correction, denigrating or insulting, ignoring physiological and emotional needs, exposing the adolescent to domestic violence, putting excessive pressure or having excessive expectations of the adolescent, not intervening when the adolescent is endangered, etc.

Why are some children more vulnerable at the moment?

Child abuse has long lasting impacts on many different spheres of youth development and functioning, so it is important that we all take responsibility and keep our eyes open. This is especially important given our current living conditions as certain risk factors, like stress, social isolation, and job loss, can

- place families who were previously secure in a vulnerable situation;
- exacerbate the risk factors in vulnerable families.

Families are currently experiencing a higher level of stress than usual given that confinement combines both proximity and limited access to support structures. Youth are relying heavily on their parents to meet their needs and the safety net provided by schools, sports clubs and extra-curricular activities are currently weakened, which unfortunately places some youth in a very vulnerable situation.

How to remain vigilant in the face of child abuse

Maintain a connection with the youth. The quality of the youth's social support network and the frequency of positive interactions with others is a protective factor. It is essential to keep in touch with the adolescents in your group or your class, to contact families, to offer support when possible, or to refer to various organizations that are still active during the crisis.

Signs to spot abuse

During your telephone or virtual communications, do not hesitate to ask questions directly to parents about their current situation and stay alert to signs of distress. Also, ask to speak directly to the student to hear from them.

Knowing the signs of maltreatment in school-aged children makes it easier to spot them. In addition to a youth's disclosure of an abusive situation, here are some indications of abuse that you should pay attention to when talking on the phone or online with youth.

- The youth says that the family regularly lacks food.
- The youth has visible marks on their body or shows signs of self-harm.
- The youth has depressive symptoms or expresses suicidal thoughts.
- The youth says that they have regular and intense conflicts with their parents.
- The youth says they were kicked out of his house.
- The youth says that they go out despite the instructions for social distancing.
- The youth shows excessive fear or anxiety.
- The youth themselves down makes negative self-directed comments.
- The youth's behavior seems to have changed suddenly.

Remember, it is entirely normal for your contact with the youth to elicit many emotions ranging from joy to sadness to anger. Your students miss you, their friends, and their routine. Be proactive and listen carefully.

What to do if you are concerned about a child

Whatever the context, it is important that you share your concerns about the child's safety.

You can:

- Call the DYP for a consultation without necessarily making a report.
- Ask for help from your colleagues, educational advisors, or the management of your daycare.

If a child discloses an act of abuse, try to;

- Do not promise to keep what he/she tells you a secret.
- Let the youth speak freely and don't ask too many questions.
- Let them know that they have made a good decision to tell you about what they experienced.
- Let them know that you believe them.
- Listen actively to the youth without judgment.
- Remain warm and reassuring.
- Stay calm and in caring contact with him/her (leading questions may trigger or influence the youth).
- Write down the words the youth spoke as soon as you can.

Report any concerning situations that compromise the safety and positive development of the youth.

To make a report you can contact the DYP offices in your region. In case of emergency, call 9-1-1.

Who to contact for family support

If you think that a child and their family are going through a particularly difficult time, there are lots of organizations that can offer them the support that they need.

Here are some organizations that are offering phone or online services

SOS violence conjugale : 1 800-363-9010

Tel-Aide : 514 935-1101

Jeunesse, J'écoute : 1 800-668-6868 ou <https://jeunessejecoute.ca>

Tel-jeunes : 1 800-263-2266 (tel), 514 600-1002 (message texte) ou <https://www.teljeunes.com/Accueil>

LigneParents : 1 800-361-5085 <http://ligneparents.com/>

Suicide Action Montréal : 1 866-277-3553

Première Ressource (aide aux parents) : 514 525-2573 <https://premiereressource.com/>

Info-Social : 811

Centre de Référence du Grand Montréal : 211

PRO-GAM : 514 270-8462*

* Exceptionally, psychological follow-up for all