



Youth Guide

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Welcome to Oak Child and Youth Advocacy Centre

Oak Child and Youth Advocacy Centre (Oak CYAC) is one of 11 operational and in-development Child and Youth Advocacy Centres (CYACs) in British Columbia. We follow the guidelines set by the BC Network of Child and Youth Advocacy Centres (BC Network). Oak CYAC is a partnership between a group of agencies in the North Okanagan who are committed to leading the response to abuse and violence against children, youth, and their families. The CYAC is an inclusive, friendly space where people who have experienced abuse, sexual assault, or witnessed a crime, can share their story with police and/or social workers, and be connected to support services. Our goal is to make this experience as comfortable as possible, and to support you throughout the process. One of the ways we do that, is by connecting you to a Child and Youth Victim Service Advocate (Advocate) or Victim Service Worker.

An Advocate provides support and assistance for children and youth **aged 18 or younger** who have been the victim of abuse, sexual assault, or witnessed a crime. Our Advocates can:

- Meet you before interviews or meetings with police and social workers, and offer support afterwards;
- Communicate with police and criminal justice personnel, as it relates to your case;
- Help you access Crime Victim Assistance Program funding and Victim Safety Unit;
- Provide you with support and information about what to expect in court, and about the criminal justice process;
- Provide accompaniment to court appointments, meetings and appearances, and provide you with support and information throughout the process;
- Help you write a Victim Impact Statement (VIS) for court;
- Provide accompaniment to forensic medical examinations;
- Give you information about your rights under the *Victims of Crime Act*; and,
- **Advocate** for you, making sure your rights are respected and your voice is heard.

What brings you to Oak CYAC

There are many reasons why people may come to Oak CYAC. We acknowledge that the circumstances that bring you here may be very difficult. It may be related to concerns of abuse, you may have witnessed a crime, or other similar reasons. Whatever the reason, our team is here to help.

The most common referral to CYACs is related to abuse, including:

- **Physical Abuse:** the intentional use of force against a person without that person's consent. It can cause physical pain or injury that may last a long time.
- **Sexual Abuse:** all unwanted sexual activity, such as unwanted sexual grabbing, kissing, intercourse, and fondling.
- **Emotional Abuse:** a pattern of behavior that uses words or actions to control, frighten, isolate, or diminish a person's sense of self-worth, or negatively impact a person's emotional development or well-being.
- **Neglect:** not providing essential requirements for a child's emotional, psychological and physical development, such as adequate shelter, clothing, food, cleanliness, medical care or protection from harm.

How you may be feeling

Regardless of what brings you to the CYAC, it is important to remember that everyone will react differently under similar circumstances. There is no normal reaction to look for, but you know yourself best, and if you have concerns about how you are feeling, we can help you find the right supports. Some feelings you may have:

- Sad
- Guilty
- Confused
- Embarrassed
- Angry
- Fearful
- Anxious
- Betrayed

Everyone will act differently when they have these feelings. You might notice that you deal with your feelings in the following ways:

- Upset stomach, change in appetite
- Easily startled
- Crying more than usual, or easily upset
- Mood changes, mood swings, or angry outbursts
- Changes in sleep pattern or upsetting dreams
- Irritability
- Not wanting to be alone
- Difficulty staying still or concentrating
- Increased fear of situations
- Thoughts about death or dying
- Highly active and alert
- Avoidance or numbness

Or, you may feel like yourself. We want you to know that however you are feeling, we are here to support you.

Remember:

- We believe you
- This is not your fault
- We're so sorry that this happened to you
- We will help to support you
- It's okay to cry, to be mad, or to feel upset
- We might not know why the person did this, but nothing about you made this happen
- We will help you figure out what the next steps are, and what things need to happen
- This doesn't even change your worth, or define you

Sometimes we forget to take care of ourselves when we are experiencing significant amount of stress or dealing with something that is upsetting. Try to:

- Do your best **not to dwell** on what you should have done differently.
- **Ask questions** if you're not sure what to do next, or need more information.
- **Be aware of your own feelings** and how they may be impacting you. If sharing your emotions feels comfortable, speak to a support person such as a friend, family member, or counsellor.
- **Let yourself go through the emotional process** in your own time. Don't let others tell you how long this takes or what the healing process looks like.
- At your own pace, **add parts of your normal routine** back into your day (going to school, seeing friends, attending organized sports or activities)

- **Seek out and utilize the supports** you feel comfortable with. Your Advocate can help you find support services that might be good for you.

What to say to others

If you have struggled with the question of what you should be telling others about your situation, you are not alone. Many people are unsure of who to talk to, and what to say. You do not need to tell anyone about what is happening if you do not want to. If you are unsure about which friends or family members to speak to, we encourage you to talk about this with your Advocate or Victim Service Worker.

If you would like to speak with a friend or family member, here are a few things to consider:

- Will this person be a good support for you, or will they create more stress for you?
- Will they respect you and your privacy, or are they likely to share your story with others?
- How does this person usually react to troubling or stressful news?
- How much information does this person need to support you; do they need to know everything, or just some basic or limited information?
- Has the investigator (police or social worker) asked you not to share information with anyone outside of the investigation team?

When you've chosen someone who can support you, remember:

- You do not need to explain or defend yourself.
- They are not entitled to know anything more than what you think they should know.
- You can choose to tell them as much or as little as you like.
- You can be clear about what you need and/or want from them.
- You can ask them to keep this information to themselves.

If family, friends, or acquaintances are asking for information that you are not comfortable giving, you can tell them:

- "Out of respect for my privacy, I'd rather not talk about it"
- "I am going through a difficult time right now, but I have a team to support me"
- "I've been told that I can't talk about it until the investigation is over"

What happens next

Your Advocate or Victim Service Worker can provide support, as well as service referrals for you. If you choose to have Oak CYAC contact you after your initial visit, they can continue to provide support as your journey progresses, either over the phone or in-person. The Advocate can also act as a liaison or contact with other agencies, making sure all relevant agencies involved are keeping your best interest at the forefront of the case.

If the investigator (police officer or social worker) lets you know that the investigation is over and your file is closed, you can still continue to get support from Oak CYAC. You may still feel you need support, even if the investigation was closed.

If you have further questions about what happens next, we encourage you to contact your Advocate or Victim Service Worker.

Crime Victim Assistance Program (CVAP)

Your Advocate can assist with filling out paperwork or application for CVAP funding. This funding provides a wide range of benefits to assist victims, immediate family members of victims, and certain witnesses, in coping with the effects of violent crime, where same or similar benefits are not available from another source.

You do not have to wait for charges to be laid or for the offender to be convicted before applying for benefits.

You can read more about CVAP online: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/justice/criminal-justice/bcs-criminal-justice-system/if-you-are-a-victim-of-a-crime/victim-of-crime/financial-assistance-benefits>

Important Contacts

Advocate or Victim Service Worker Name: _____
778-475-2920 extension 301 or 302

MCFD Social Worker Name: _____
250-558-2700
(for child protection emergencies dial 1-800-663-9122)

RCMP Member Name: _____
250-545-7171 RCMP file # _____
(for emergencies dial 9-1-1)

(Other) _____ Name: _____

(Other) _____ Name: _____

To make a child protection report, please call:

Ministry of Children and Family Development (24-hour line): 1-800-663-9122

To report a crime, please call 9-1-1 in an emergency

Vernon RCMP non-emergency line:	250-545-7171
Armstrong RCMP non-emergency line:	250-546-3028
Enderby RCMP non-emergency line:	250-838-6818
Lumby RCMP non-emergency line:	250-547-2151

If you are looking for more support services, please call:

Youth Integrated Service Hub (YISH)	https://cmhavernon.ca/youth-services/youth@cmhavernon.ca 236-426-1403
Youth Safe House:	250-260-7077
RCMP Victim's Assistance:	250-260-7171
Vernon Women's Transition House (24-hour line):	250-542-1122
Stopping the Violence Counselling:	250-558-0334 (Vernon) 250-546-6744 (Armstrong)
Women's Outreach Program:	778-212-3259 (call or text)
Community-Based Victim Services:	250-542-3322
North Okanagan Youth and Family Services:	250-545-3572
Family Resource Centre:	250-545-3390
Kid's help phone:	1-800-668-6868
Crisis Line:	1-888-353-2273

Your notes/questions
