

Gender-Based Violence Toolkit



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FOREWORD

A couple of years ago, we had the opportunity to host community consultations with the South Asian community to discuss gender based violence. The thoughts, opinions and recommendations shared in those consultations were shared with YWCA to incorporate into Canada's National Plan to End Gender Based Violence. At Laadliyan, we wanted to do more than just share our findings so we put together a Community Advisory Group of South Asian daughters to create something that was missing for our community members.

For us, this is not just a toolkit. It is a hand that we are putting out there for someone to take and reach out for help. We do not want anyone to go through gender based violence and for those who are experiencing it, we want them to know that we are here and you are not alone. We hope this toolkit provides those in need with helpful information that can encourage them to take the next step.

- Team Laadliyan



Meet the Authors

Manvir Bhangu is a youth leader, gender equity advocate, and community mobilizer. Manvir is the Founder and Executive Director of Laadliyan, Celebrating & Empowering Daughters. In 2018, Manvir was honoured with Brampton's Top 40 Under 40 award by the Brampton Board of Trade and in 2022, Manvir was awarded the Women Working in Social Activism on Behalf of Women and Children Award by the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO). In 2021, Manvir had the opportunity to co-author Canada's first ever State of Youth Report which highlighted the issues youth across Canada continue to face. She has been involved in various community based research projects with The Canadian Women's Foundation, The Wellesley Institute, Region of Peel, United Way and St. Michael's Hospital. She has a BA in Human Rights & Human Diversity and Criminology from Wilfrid Laurier University and a Masters from McMaster University in Globalization and the Human Condition.



Sharan Khela is a second-generation South Asian-Canadian woman living in Brampton, Ontario. She currently works as a Research Analyst at the Department of Canadian Heritage, and as a Research and Grants Coordinator at Laadliyan. In the past, she has worked as a Research and Policy Assistant at the Ryerson Leadership Lab, as an Advisory Committee Member for the Youth Secretariat's State of Youth report, and as a Research Associate for an Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism consultant. She is also completing her Master's of Public Policy and Administration at Toronto Metropolitan University. Sharan is passionate about advocating for gender equity, as well as raising awareness for issues such as gender-based violence in the South Asian community.

Meet the Authors

Pauline Bal is a South Asian Second-generation Canadian living in Hamilton, Ontario. In her professional life, she is an Oncology Pharmacist working in a regional cancer centre. In her personal life, she is passionate about advocating for women affected by gender based violence, breaking down the stigma related to divorce in South Asian communities, and fostering confidence in South Asian women.



Fatima Aamir is a current JD candidate at the University of Toronto Faculty of Law. She has an MA in Comparative Literature from the University of Toronto and a BA in Political Science from the University of British Columbia. Her literary and legal research interests lie in imagining liberation.

Zayn Dhillon is a first-generation South Asian Canadian from Brampton, Ontario. Currently, Zayn is a UX researcher within the EdTech industry and assisting on healthcare research within the engineering space. She is interested in how technology informs the human experience and how it can be used for positive social change, and hopes to explore that through various avenues.



Gurnoor Brar is currently finishing up her MSc. in molecular cell biology at York University. She is interested in understanding how a specific complex of transcription factors impact the downstream activity of a protein in neonatal cardiomyocytes. As an advocate for inclusive education, She aims to break down barriers and dispel stereotypes associated with pursuing a career in STEM as a woman of colour.

Meet the Authors

Bipandeep (Bipan) Abbat is an emergency physician in training at University of Toronto. She completed her undergraduate degree and medical school at McMaster University. Throughout training, she has had the opportunity to work with various marginalized populations. Bipan has a special interest in social advocacy, knowledge translation, and community engagement. She aspires to be a medical leader in her community and empower patients by helping them learn more about their health.



Kiran Jassal is a Community Mental Health Caseworker with extensive experience supporting vulnerable populations in clinical and community settings. Kiran holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology from the University of Toronto. Outside of work, she spends time volunteering for Kids Help Phone providing support to those experiencing a crisis. Being of South Asian descent, Kiran is committed to using a culturally-sensitive approach in understanding the subjective ways women and youth experience trauma within the South Asian community. Through all endeavours, Kiran's primary goal is to create a safe space reflecting compassion, understanding, and trust so that individuals can feel empowered to share their voice.

Taranjot Kaur Dhillon is a Sikh woman researcher who is currently pursuing her PhD in Behavioural and Population Health in Applied Health Sciences in the Exercise and Body Image Lab under the supervision of Dr. Kimberley L. Gammage at Brock University in Ontario, Canada. She completed her undergraduate studies in Kinesiology and Masters in Applied Health Sciences. Taranjot focuses on qualitative and mixed methods research, knowledge translation, and body image in ethnic populations, specifically South Asian women, and hopes to expand on the body image literature. Outside of academia, Taranjot has an interest in community outreach, such as working with older and vulnerable populations and organizations that focus on marginalized populations and Gender-based violence prevention.



Meet the Authors

Harjit Kaur Sanghera is a second-generation Punjabi-Sikh Canadian. She currently resides in Mississauga, Ontario. Harjit completed her Honours Bachelor of Arts Degree at McMaster University. Shortly after, Harjit pursued a Masters of Science degree in Education at Canisius College in Buffalo, New York. Harjit is most interested in youth mental health initiatives, barriers faced by immigrant and refugee women, and the injustices and the lack of necessities of life for Indigenous communities. She is a certified intermediate and senior school teacher and as a LINC Instructor for newcomer adults in the Peel region. This Gender Based Violence Toolkit project is close to Harjit's heart – in teaching newcomer women, Harjit saw that there is inadequate awareness and services for newcomer women experiencing domestic violence.



Bidushy Sadika is a first-generation Bangladeshi Canadian woman living in London, Ontario. She is a PhD Candidate in Social Psychology, with a specialization in Migration and Ethnic Relations, at Western University, London, Ontario. She has acquired B.A. (Honours) in Psychology and M.A. in Culture, Health, and Human Development at University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Her research areas include intersectionality theory, gender roles and stereotypes, immigration and settlement, and race, ethnicity, and culture. Alongside publishing in peer-reviewed journals, Bidushy is employed in a contract-based research position under London; Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership (LMLIP), London, Ontario. Recently, she has worked in a project with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). Motivated by her personal experiences as a racialized immigrant woman, Bidushy is passionate to advocate for equity and justice toward individuals who are marginalized based on their immigration status as well as racial, ethnic, cultural, and gender identities.

Gender-Based Violence Toolkit

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Gender-Based Violence 101



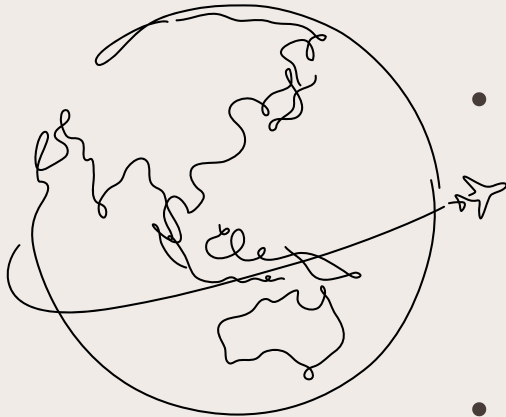
Definitions

- **Gender-Based Violence (GBV):** perpetrated against someone based on their gender, gender expression, gender identity or perceived gender (Status of Women Canada, 2020).
- **Intimate Partner Violence (IPV):** perpetrated by an intimate partner or ex-partner that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm (i.e., physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse, and controlling behaviours) (WHO, 2020).
- **Domestic Violence (DV):** perpetrated by intimate partners or family members against persons aged 16+ regardless of their gender and sexuality, and includes controlling, coercive, and threatening behaviour, as well as violence or abuse (Royal College of Nursing, 2022).
- **Violence Against Women (VAW):** perpetrated against women as an outcome of patriarchal norms and relations in the family that justify violence by favouring gender-based power dynamics and preparing men to preserve and protect their dominance (Lenton, 1995).



Statistics

- On average, in Canada every 6 days a woman is killed by their intimate partner (Statistics Canada, 2019).
 - In the COVID-19 pandemic, cases of DV and IPV have risen across Canada (Canadian Women's Foundation, n.d.; Region of Peel, 2020).



- Newcomer and immigrant women are at a higher risk of violence if they do not have employment or status as citizens in Canada (Amin and Bond, 2021).
- Due to the challenges that arise as a result of their vulnerable status, Newcomer and immigrant women feel compelled to stay with their abuser (Amin and Bond, 2021).
- **26%** of visible minority immigrant women in Canada experienced IPV in their lifetimes, compared to about half of non-immigrant women, whether they identified as a visible minority (47%) or not (48%) (Cotter, 2021).
- **3 in 10** visible minority women have experienced some form of IPV in their lifetime (Cotter, 2021).

Statistics

- 29% experienced psychological abuse; 13% experienced physical violence; and 6% experienced sexual violence.
- 15% experienced more than one type of abusive behaviour.
- In the past 12 months, visible minority women who had experienced IPV said that it had taken place on more than one occasion.
- **What about South Asian women in Canada?**
 - In 2018, **31%** of South Asian women in Canada experienced IPV since age **15** (Cotter, 2021).
 - In 2019, there was a significant number of DV homicides, family violence, and IPV in the South Asian community in Ontario (CASSA, 2020).
 - In 2020, COVID-19 stressors (e.g., unemployment and food insecurity) made South Asians vulnerable to increased family violence (CASSA, 2020).
- Additional research is needed to decrease the knowledge gap on family violence in South Asian communities in Canada (CASSA, 2020).



Understanding Healthy Relationships

- **Characteristics of Healthy Relationships**

- Healthy relationships are built on respect, effective communication and honesty. They provide opportunities for love and support.
- We can develop healthy relationships with anyone, including family, friends, and partners (dating or married).



Understanding Healthy Relationships

Healthy	Unhealthy
Having mutual respect, basic values, and a sense of equality	Being controlling and intimidating, and exercising dominance
Being honest, trustworthy, supportive, and understanding	Being hostile, telling lies and increasing dishonesty
Feeling safe and secure	Disrespecting, humiliating, and threatening the partner
Being yourself, maintaining individuality, and respecting boundaries	Being dependent with no sense of individuality or tearing down one's self esteem
Anger is controlled during disputes, calmly addressing the issue focusing on everyone's point of view	Fighting, blaming, gaslighting, and behaving unpredictably
Engaging in a relationship that emphasizes consent	Physical, sexual, emotional, and psychological violence
Maintaining good and assertive communication	Having poor communication that is passive or aggressive
Having a willingness to compromise and understand different perspectives	"I am right all the time" attitude and lack of accommodating behaviour

Red Flags In A Relationship

- **What are Red Flags?**

- They are warning signs that indicate unhealthy or manipulative behaviours in toxic or abusive relationships.
- By becoming aware of some common red flags, you can pause and reflect on the dynamic you share with that person.



- **Physical Violence** includes pushing and hitting that gradually becomes more frequent and involve severe abuse and the use of weapons which could end in murder.

- **Signs:** Does the abuser...

- Shove, slap, scratch, bite, choke, punch, kick or hit you?
- Intimidate you with guns, knives, or other weapons?
- Threaten to hurt or kill you?
- Lock you in or out of the house?
Leave you in a dangerous
- place or refuse to help if you're injured or ill?
- Pressure you to use drugs and alcohol?



Red Flags In A Relationship

- **Sexual Violence** includes unwanted sexual touching, forced sexual activity, marital rape, refusal to use protection from STD or an unwanted pregnancy, or a forced abortion.
 - **Signs:** Does the abuser...
 - Pressure you to have sex when you don't want to or do things sexually you're not comfortable with?
 - Force you to have sex with others or to watch others having it?
 - Prevent you from using birth control or pressure you to become pregnant when you're not ready?

- **Spiritual Abuse** includes using any religious or denomination beliefs to manipulate and control the partner.

- **Stalking** involves repeated behaviours that causes someone to reasonably fear for their safety or the safety of someone close. It is often carried out over a period of time.



Red Flags In A Relationship

- **Verbal, Emotional, and Psychological Abuse** include the threat to report to authorities and harming children and pets; isolation from others; gaslighting; inducing fear by lying; and using fear, guilt and isolation to instill a feeling of helplessness that further ties the woman to the abuser.
 - **Signs:** Does the abuser...
 - Embarrass or put you down? Call you names?
 - Control what you see, where you go, or what you do?
 - Isolate you from your family and friends?
 - Prevent you from making your own decisions?
 - Blame you for relationship problems and disagreements?
 - Attempt to stop you from pressing charges?
 - Threaten to commit suicide?
 - Threaten to divorce you to harm your PR status?
 - Justify violent behaviour through self-victimization?
- **Financial Abuse** includes stealing and/or controlling money, credit cards, property and possessions.
 - **Signs:** Does the abuser...
 - Destroy or steal your property?
 - Take your employment income, or refuse to give you money for expenses?



Recognizing Gender-Based Violence

- **Importance of Recognizing Gender-Based Violence**

- Anybody can be abused and experience gender-based violence, no matter their background, identity, or circumstance.
- Women, girls, and gender-diverse individuals are at a higher risk.
- It is incredibly difficult for individuals to share when they have experienced rape, harassment, or other forms of GBV.



Recognizing GBV allows individuals to seek the correct legal, medical, police and social service resources

*****Please see our "Navigating GBV Related Institutions" toolkit to explore many resources related to the services mentioned above*****



Recognizing Gender-Based Violence

How to recognize when well-being is being impacted negatively?

- **Do you or they...**

- *Apologize for the abuser's behaviour or become angry and defensive about it?*
- *Cancel plans last minute and avoid loved ones?*
- *Call in sick for work more often than not?*
- *Try to cover up bruises?*
- *Use drugs or alcohol to cope?*



- **Are you or they...**

- *Sad, withdrawn, or afraid?*
- *Nervous about talking or just being yourself when the abuser is there?*

- **Are you or they in an abusive relationship to...**

- *Avoid breaking up the family and/or being blamed for it?*
- *Fulfill duties as a wife/girlfriend/female partner?*
- *Maintain permanent residency in Canada?*
- *Be financially solvent?*

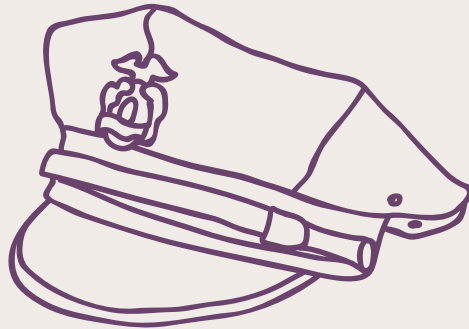




Navigating Institutions for Gender-Based Violence



POLICE SERVICES



***DISCLAIMER:** This section provides an overview of information when consulting with Police Services. Our hope for this information is to create more ease and answer questions for those considering or requiring some guidance when contacting any Police Service.

*This information should not be relied on as the only source of advice, please consult **legal services (see page 21)** and **social services (see page 34)** for additional support.

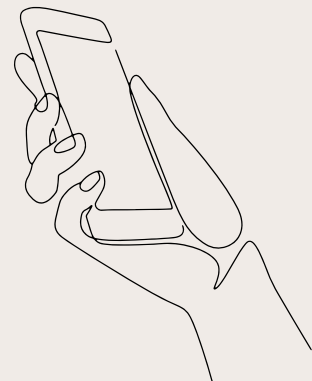
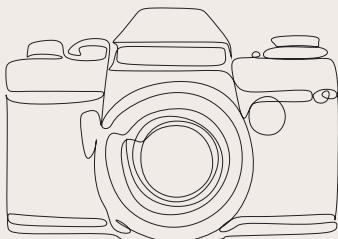
Police involvement can occur voluntarily or involuntarily depending on the situation or pattern of situations. The information in this section highlights both possibilities.

Police Services

How to access police services	Emergency Phone Number: 9-1-1
Peel Region Police (Non-Emergency Line): 905-453-3311	Peel Region Police - Special Victims Unit: 905-453-2121 (Ext. 3460)
Peel Region Police - Victim Services of Peel: 905-568-1068	Caledon OPP (Non-Emergency Line): 905-584-2241

- **Reasons to access police services**

- Documenting potential abuse and threats.
- Preventing immediate harm/danger to yourself or your children.



Police Services

- **What to expect PRIOR to the police's arrival?**

- Information to provide dispatch/officer (If safe):
 - History of abuser/perpetrator
 - Criminal record, and any detail/history of current threats
 - Access to weapons
 - Cause for harm? (To self, others - i.e., children)
- Write down everything you can remember and key information you would like to provide to the police

- **What to expect DURING the police's arrival**

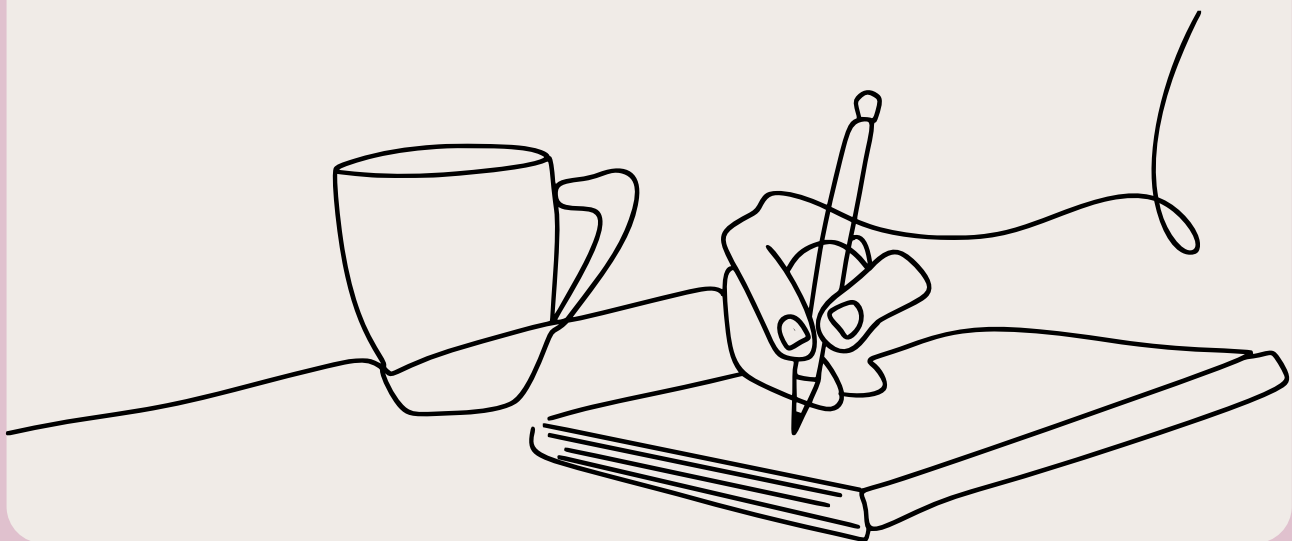
- Conduct investigation (Advise when charges may be laid).
- Gather evidence: Statements and take photos (bruises, damage etc.)
- Risk Assessment.
- Mandatory Arrest/Charge Policy (can de-escalate/escalate situation).
 - Speak to officers, understand all of your rights and options.
 - Get copy of "Conditions of Arrest Report".
- Escort to hospital/medical services.
- Children Services may be contacted if children involved.



Police Services

Know your RIGHTS

- Interpreters/support for language help are allowed.
- Ask questions.
- Safety planning and accessible support
- Be sure to make note of the names, badge numbers, and contact information of the police officer(s) you talk to.
- Reporting is your decision: You can stop at any point.
- Your privacy and safety will be considered at all steps, however, additional steps that will require legal assistance can be considered.
- Restraining Orders and Peace Bond
- Request a “Premise History” on your address.



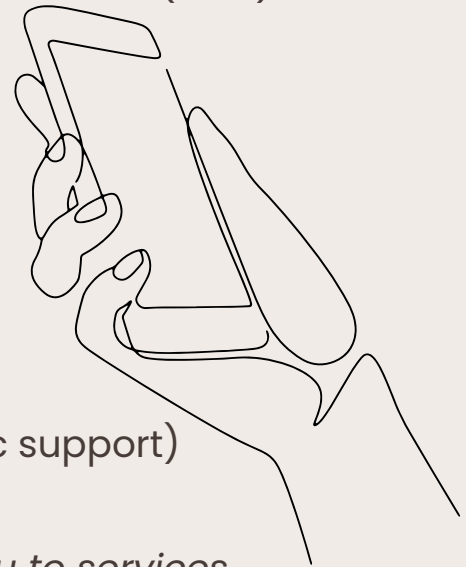
Police Services

Community Contacts (Peel)

- 24/7 Support:
 - **Trillium Health Centre**, 905-848-7580 ext. 2548
 - **Victim Services of Peel**, 24-hour Line: 905-568-1068
- **Shelters:** Armagh House, Embrace, Family Life Resource Centre
- **Children Services:** Peel Children's Aid Society, Family Services of Peel
- **LGBTQ+:** Hope 24/7, Peel Children's Centre (PCC)

Community Contacts (Ontario)

- Victim Support Line
 - **Toll Free:** 1-800-579-2888
 - **GTA:** 416-314-2447
- Talk4Healing (Indigenous-specific support)
 - **Toll Free:** 1-855-554-4325
- *Ontario Helpline: Help connect you to services in your community*
 - **Telephone:** 211
 - **Toll Free:** 1-877-330-3213
- 24/7 Crisis-line
 - **Telephone:** 905-278-9036
 - **Toll Free:** 1-888-811-2222



"What If?" for Accessing Police Services

Scenario 1*: *"How do I know if reporting/calling the Police is the right option?"*

- Possible Outcomes
 - If you feel that your safety, your children's or others safety is at risk or harm has occurred, contact the Police

Scenario 2: *"What may happen if Police involvement occurs?"*

- Possible Outcomes
 - Arrest and Detainment
 - *Potential deportation - For those without legal status in Canada

Scenario 3: *"If my spouse/partner is arrested, how long will that arrest be, and can they return home?"*

- Possible Outcomes
 - Discretion of the arresting officers (Ask about options)
 - Contact victim services/Stay with a loved one

Scenario 4: *"I don't feel safe at home, what are my options?"*

- Possible Outcomes
 - Contact victim services/Stay with a loved one
 - Contact legal services
 - Restraining order/Peace bond

Disclaimer SALCO has also provided a disclaimer that several police forces may charge victims of abuse when abusers make allegations - this is known as double charging. SALCO dealt with 53 double-charging cases in 2021, as they helped victims navigate the criminal justice system to get charges against themselves dropped.



"What If?" for Accessing Police Services

Scenario 5: *"If I fear for my children's safety, what can I do?"*

- Possible Outcomes
 - If immediate danger, call 9-1-1
 - Children Services may be contacted if Police become involved
 - Contact victim services/Stay with a loved one
 - Contact legal services

Scenario 6: *"What if I decide I no longer want charges to be laid?"*

- Possible Outcomes
 - Once a report is made, there is a chance charges may be laid with or without your support, especially if a criminal offence has occurred.
 - If you decide to change your mind about wanting charges to be laid, let the police officers know.



Scenario 7*: *"As a survivor, I'm worried about my legal status in Canada, will contacting the Police affect this?"*

- Possible Outcomes
 - Police Services' role is to enforce the law and ensure the safety of the individual regardless of legal status.
 - Contact Police Services if/when you need assistance.

Disclaimer It is important to note that police have an obligation to execute immigration warrants by law. Thus, if you are out of status and have an active immigrant warrant, you could be detained as police are obligated to execute that warrant. It is important to consider your identity and status in Canada.

"What If?" for Accessing Police Services

Scenario 8: "If my spouse/partner is arrested, how long will that arrest be, and can they return home?"

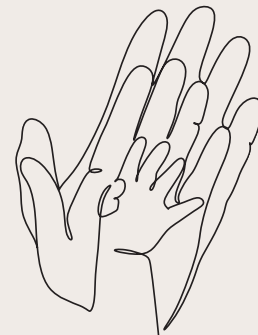
- Possible Outcomes
 - If immediate danger, call 9-1-1.
 - If children involved, Children Services may be contacted.
 - Contact victim services/Stay with a loved one.
 - Contact legal services and look into a Protection Order.

Scenario 9: "I feel like the Police could have done more, or I do not feel like I had enough Police assistance, what are my options?"

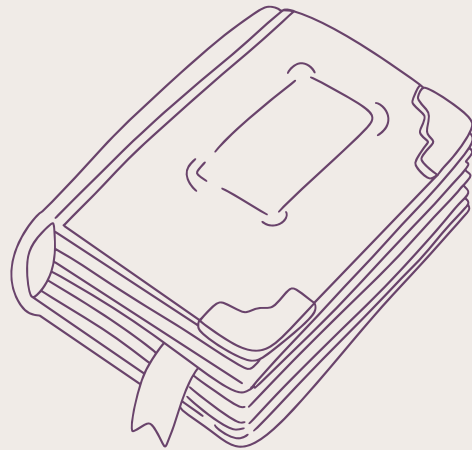
- Possible Outcomes
 - If not provided, ensure to make note of Police Officers' names, badge numbers, and telephone numbers.
 - Follow up with the Police Officers you had initial contact with.
 - Speak with local Police Station or Detachment.
 - Submit complaint to Office of the Independent Police Review Director

Scenario 10: "My Protection Order (e.g Restraining Order; Peace Bond) has been violated, what can I do?"

- Possible Outcomes
 - IMMEDIATELY contact Police Services, if in danger, call 9-1-1.
 - Contact Legal Services.



LEGAL SERVICES



***DISCLAIMER:** This section provides an overview of information when consulting with Legal Services.

*There are some limitations to legal services, however that **DOES NOT** mean you should ignore legal services. The information in this section will cover the limitations and provide many resources.

Legal Services

Reasons to access legal services

- A lawyer can help you map out the options available to you.
- Leaving an abusive situation might be complicated if your immigration status is tied to your partner (for example, if you are sponsored) or if you are financially dependent on your partner.



What are YOUR rights?

- You do NOT have to reveal any more information than is needed.
- You ARE allowed to share your concerns with your lawyer:
 - "I want to have full control/autonomy over this process."
 - "I want to have assurances of confidentiality or privacy."
 - "I am worried about retaliation from my abuser/abuser's family/my own family/my own community."
- You have the right to find another lawyer if your current one does not listen to your needs or concerns.
- The legal process can be both re-traumatizing and also revictimizing for survivors of gender-based violence. If you are nervous and scared, tell your lawyer:
 - "I am looking for client-facing advocacy."
 - "I am looking for a legal advocate who prioritizes my comfort."

Legal Services

What is a Legal Aid Certificate?

- If you are financially eligible, you will receive a legal aid certificate.
- This means that Legal Aid Ontario pays a lawyer to work for you.
 - Determine whether you are financially eligible for legal aid: <https://www.legalaid.on.ca/services/domestic-abuse/>
 - Find a lawyer who accepts legal aid work: <https://www.legalaid.on.ca/lawyers/>

What is a Restraining Order?

- If you are worried that the abuser will hurt you or your children, you can apply for a restraining order from a family court judge.
- If the abuser violates the restraining order, they can be arrested or charged. This means that your abuser will not be able to:
 - Come within a certain distance of you and your children
 - Come within a certain distance of your work and home
 - Talk to you/contact your children, only through someone else
- How to apply for a restraining order & plan for safety:
 - <https://www.legalaid.on.ca/faq/restraining-orders/#after>



Legal Services

What is the difference between a Restraining Order & Peace Bond?

- To get a restraining order, you go to a family court.
- You can apply for a restraining order against someone if:
 - You were married to the person.
 - You lived together with the person for any period of time.
 - You have a child with the person.
- To get a peace bond, you go to a criminal court.
- A peace bond can be used against anyone.
- Can last up to 1 year (and then you can apply again).
- To get a peace bond, you must prove that you have a reasonable fear that the other person will:
 - Hurt you, your family, pets or damage your property
 - Share intimate images or videos of you without permission
- For more information:

<https://stepstojustice.ca/questions/abuse-and-family-violence/what-difference-between-restraining-order-and-peace-bond/>

Pros of a Restraining Order or Peace Bond	Cons of a Restraining Order or Peace Bond
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Violation of both a restraining order and peace bond is a crime <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ This might deter your abuser • You do NOT need a lawyer to obtain a restraining order or a peace bond 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both require PROOF or EVIDENCE of a risk of reasonable harm, which might be difficult to obtain • Even though they COULD deter your abuser, they might not always <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Your abuser might still violate the orders ◦ You will have to call the police to have the orders enforce



Legal Services

Limitations of legal services

- Legal solutions might not always address the root causes of harm (e.g. family trauma, substance abuse, etc.).
- Most of the time, carceral solutions (such as putting someone in prison) might make the cycle of harm worse.
 - When someone leaves prison, they might be more traumatized and abusive than when they entered because prisons are often very terrible and hostile environments.



- The legal system can be re-traumatizing to survivors of violence.
 - Lawyers are expensive.
 - The legal process is very invasive and lots of information is required from survivors (includes evidence and testimony).
- Legal victories do NOT equal cultural or social victories.
 - Even if you win a legal case, your family or community might remain hostile.
 - There is a risk of retaliation - if not from your abuser, from the broader community.

These limitations do NOT mean you should ignore legal services. However, be prepared for the process.



Legal Services

How to access legal services and what to expect

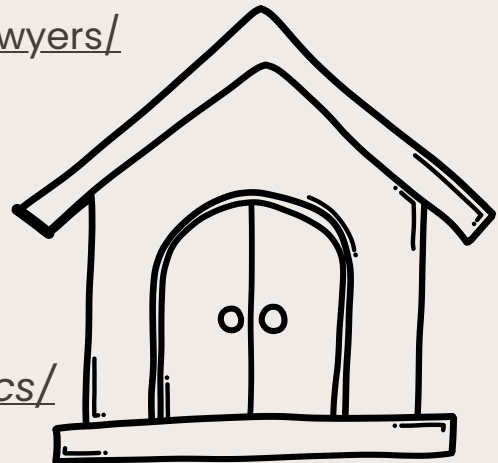
- **Two hours of free legal help for domestic violence survivors in Ontario**
 - This program is for those who need immediate advice and assistance in relation to family law and immigration and refugee law matters.
 - There is no financial eligibility requirement
 - People experiencing domestic violence are eligible for up to five 2-hour sessions/yr
 - Please call your local shelter or community legal clinic to ask about accessing this service.
 - They will give you a referral voucher so that you can get two hours of free legal advice from a lawyer
 - The voucher is only eligible for a lawyer with experience in domestic abuse issues.
 - Your shelter/legal clinic can help you find a trained lawyer, or you can use the Find-a-Lawyer tool here: <https://www.legalaid.on.ca/lawyers/>

Find a Shelter:

<https://sheltersafe.ca/ontario/>

Find a Community Legal Clinic:

<https://www.legalaid.on.ca/legal-clinics/>



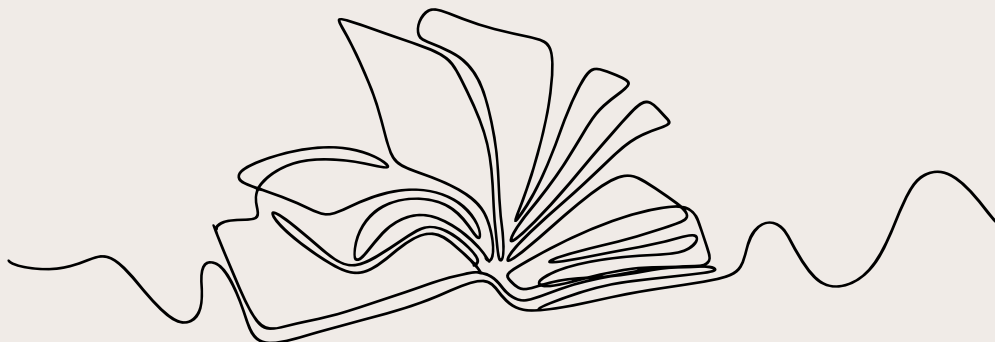
Legal Services

- **Legal help for low-income**

- Legal Aid Ontario Contact Centre - Confidential Phone Line
 - If you have experienced domestic violence and need help with an urgent family law matter, please call:
 - **Toll-free:** 1-800-668-8258
 - **GTA:** 416-979-1446
 - **Bell Relay:** 1-800-855-0511
- You may ask to speak with a Legal Aid Ontario family lawyer for free summary legal advice (20 mins) and/or apply for a legal aid certificate.
- This service can be accessed in over 300 languages.

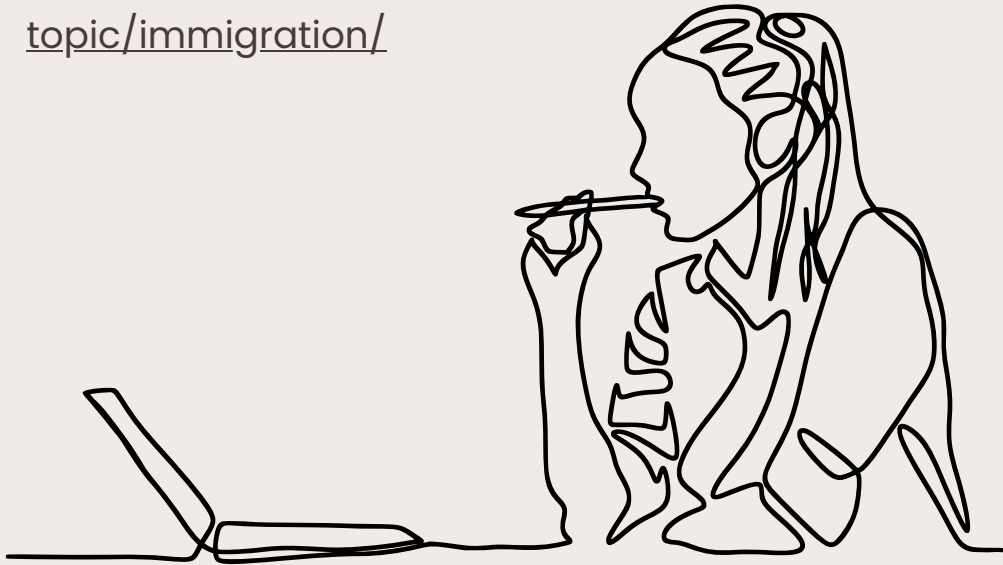
- **Ontario legal clinics you can access (these are funded by Legal Aid Ontario)**

- South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario (culturally responsive, aimed at supporting racialized communities such as the South Asian community)
- Find a legal clinic near you:
<https://www.legalaid.on.ca/legal-clinics-list/>



Legal Services

- **Steps to Justice Legal Guide** – FAQ & legal advice if you live in Ontario
 - **Abuse and Family Violence:**
<https://stepstojustice.ca/legal-topic/abuse-and-family-violence/>
 - **Family Law:** <https://stepstojustice.ca/legal-topic/family-law/>
 - **Immigration Law:** <https://stepstojustice.ca/legal-topic/immigration/>



If you do not qualify for legal aid, get advice from the following services:

- **Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic** – schliferclinic.com
- **Law Society Referral Service** – find.legalhelp.ca
- **Ontario Legal Information Centre** – centreinfojuridique.ca
- **Assaulted Women's Helpline** – awhl.org
- **Fem'aide** – femaide.ca

MEDICAL SERVICES



Medical Services

How to access medical services

- Emergency department
 - *Trillium health partners - Women's health services (available 24 hours through Mississauga's ED)*
- *Family physicians*
- *Women's clinics*
 - *Reproductive health clinics (e.g. Brampton Women's Clinic)*
- *Combined services*
 - *Chantel's place: initial & follow up medical services, counseling, & police services*

Reasons to access medical services

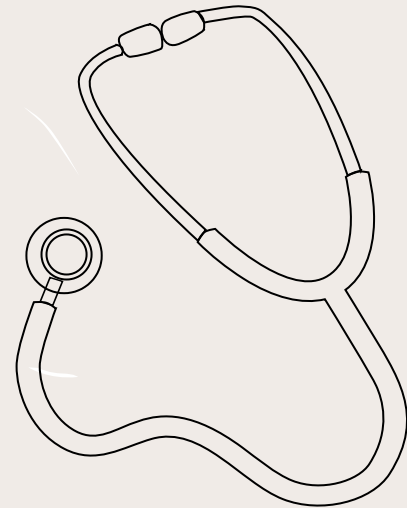
- Disclosing domestic violence and get access to resources.
- Getting medical care for physical and mental health problems caused by gender-based violence.
- Physicians can help guide evaluation and treatment of different health concerns:
 - **Physical:** *Broken bones and soft tissue injuries*
 - **Sexual:** *Unwanted pregnancies, STI, UTI*
 - **Psychological:** *PTSD, substance use, sleep disorders, suicidal ideation*



Medical Services

What are YOUR RIGHTS?

- Confidentiality is a key principle in medicine.
- Exceptions to confidentiality.
 - *Patient discloses an intention to take their own life.*
 - *Patient discloses an intention to take someone else's life.*
 - *Abuse or potential abuse of children (CPS takes over case).*
 - *Gunshot wounds reported to police.*

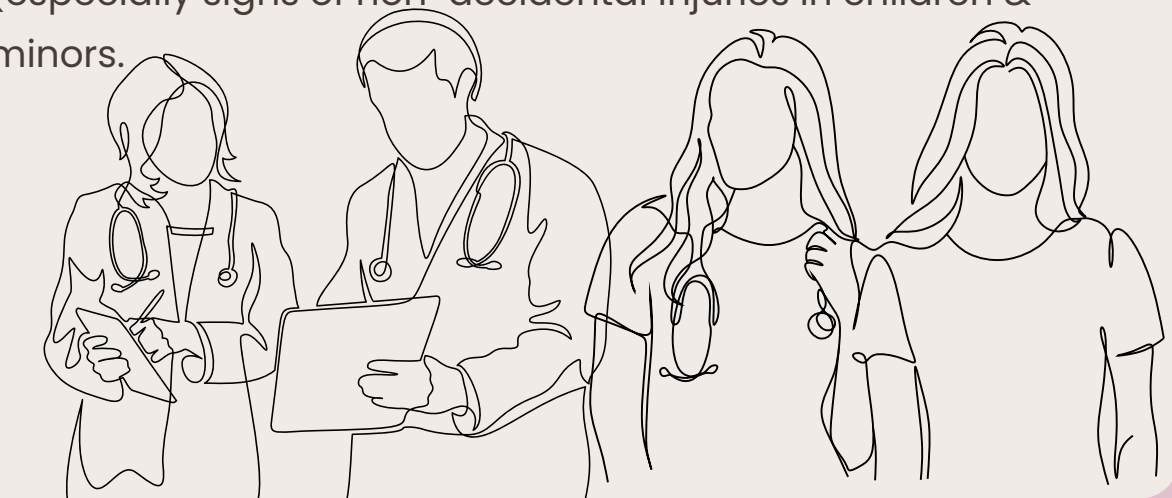


- Other than above, all information will be kept confidential (only shared with people in your circle of care), including disclosures of domestic violence.
- You have the right to refuse any part of the history, physical exam, or diagnostic tests suggested by a physician.

Medical Services

What to expect when accessing medical services?

- Primary goal for physicians is to provide compassionate and judgment-free care.
- Your physical and mental health is valued.
- **History:** asking details about symptoms and other relevant questions.
- **Physical exam:** focused on your reason for visiting the ED (e.g. pelvic exam, examination of the muscles, bones, and joints).
- **Diagnostic tests:** focused on physical exam findings.
 - *Bloodwork (pregnancy, anemia, infection)*
 - *Urine (UTI, STI)*
 - *Vaginal swabs (STI, trauma)*
 - *X-Rays (fractures, trauma)*
 - *CT scans (head trauma)*
- Based on patterns of results, physicians can often identify non-accidental injuries.
- Physicians are trained to focus on identifying victims (especially signs of non-accidental injuries in children & minors).



Medical Services

Additional community services

- **Trillium Health Partners Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Services**
 - *Accessed through Mississauga's hospital emergency department, available 24/7*
 - *905-848-7580 ext. 2548*
- **Chantel's Place**
- **Brampton Women's Clinic**
- **Mississauga Women's Clinic**
- **Hope 24/7 Sexual Assault Centre of Peel**



SOCIAL SERVICES



***DISCLAIMER:** This section provides an overview of information when consulting with Social Services.

*The majority of this information applies to the
Peel Children's Aid Society (CAS).

Social Services

Key things to understand about Peel Children's Aid Society (CAS)

- CAS tries to look for least disruptive solution.
- **Mission:** to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and to strengthen families through partnerships.
- The institution (any institution) can be inherently biased, which may not be known by all people.
- Each CAS agency differs per community.

Reasons to access Social Services

- People can access social services in situations where people, specifically women or children, may be unsafe.
- CAS may become involved when there is concern children are (or are at risk for) being abused or neglected.
- **It is not ALWAYS an extreme case of safety; can also provide support services.**
- The Child, Youth, and Family Services Act describes children in need of protection as:
 - *"is left alone, uncared for or neglected"*
 - *"has been abused or is likely to be abused"*
 - *"sees abuse or violence between adults in the home"*



Social Services

Important things to know

- It is possible to request that the child be placed with family and friends, if they have to be removed from a household.
 - *If not, then CAS may look for foster or group homes*
- **Seek legal advice as soon as possible.** *It is important to be equipped with the knowledge to navigate the social services system in Canada.*
- *Social services may also intersect with police services and legal services in Canada.*
- *CAS involvement does not try to mess with someone's immigration status (unless there is a criminal offence).*

What are YOUR RIGHTS?

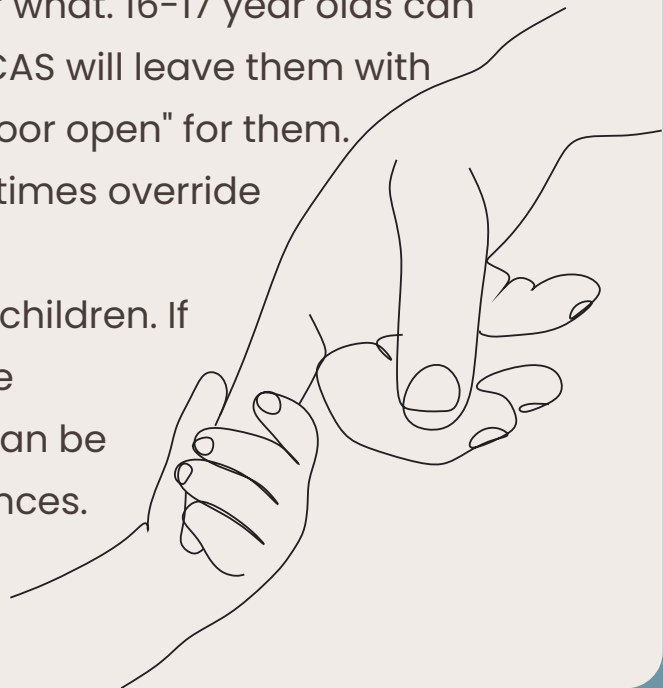
- You have the right to consult a lawyer at any point.
- You have the right to refuse CAS services.
- CAS services are voluntary, but can become involuntary if there are existing protection concerns.
- You have a right to say no.
- You have a right to request the records of your case.
- You have a right to request an interpreter or support person when working with CAS.
- Everything is confidential.
- You have a right to ask questions.



Social Services

How to access social services?

- Social services, such as Children's Aid Society (CAS), work to protect people in difficult situations and offer the relevant support and resources needed.
- Social services look for the least disruptive solutions.
- CAS can be accessed through receiving a referral or a report of children being in a situation that may be in need of protection.
- "Duty to report": if anyone believes a child is in need, they have the duty to tell CAS.
- CAS can be contacted by parents, professionals who work with children and are concerned.
- NOTE: it is mandatory to report for children under 16, but if children are 16/17, an individual can decide to report. However, this can be case by case.
- CAS will reach out no matter what. 16-17 year olds can decide to get involved but CAS will leave them with references and "leave the door open" for them.
- Safety of children can sometimes override privacy.
- Up until 18, CAS can support children. If they are in care, they can be supported until 21-24, and can be provided with further references.



Social Services

Contacting CAS

- Locate a CAS in Ontario
 - <http://www.oacas.org/childrens-aid-child-protection/locate-a-childrens-aid-society/>
- Toronto CAS: 416-924-4646
- Peel CAS: 905-363-6131

When CAS is called

- They may visit the house. CAS may potentially interview family members or individuals involved to understand the children's situation in the household. They may also speak with the partner.

Screening

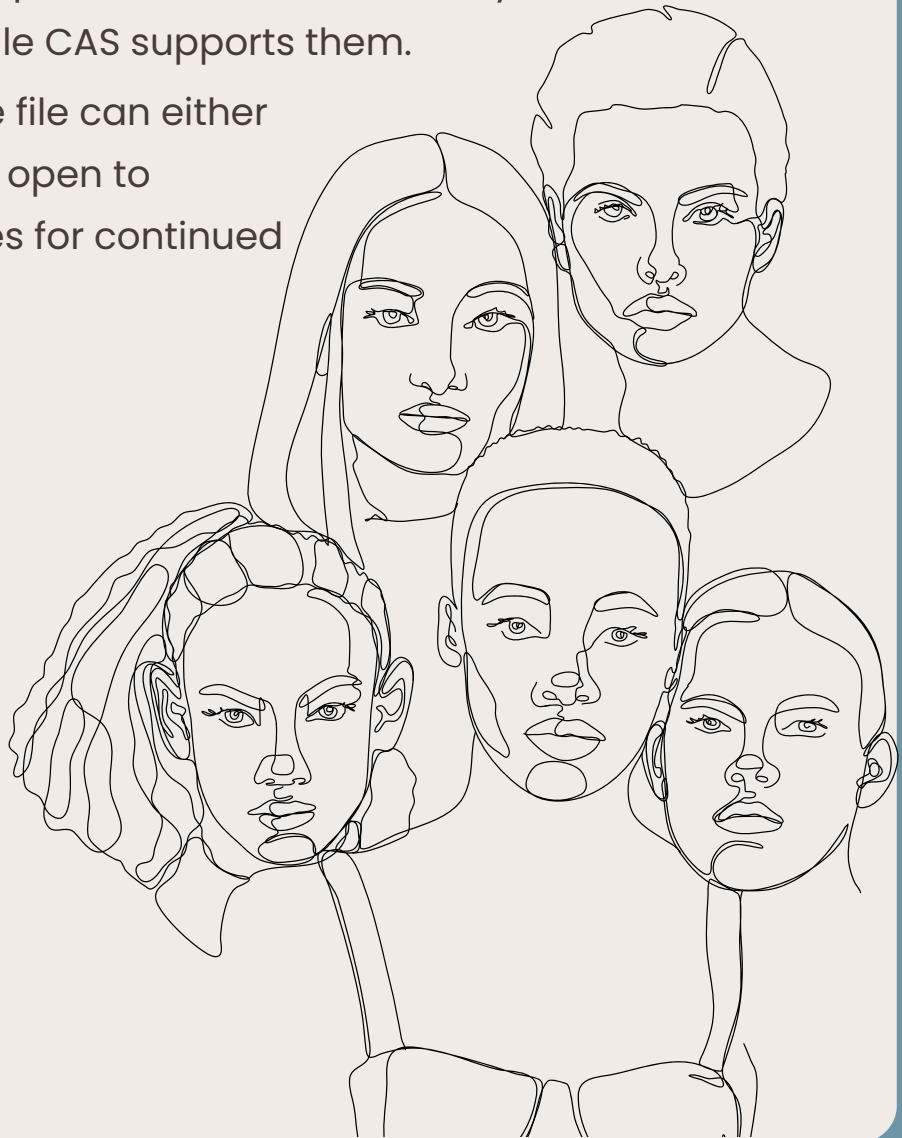
- A CAS worker will look into the initial report/call and collaboratively decide whether they will become involved in the situation.
- They may take further action, decide the situation is fine, or refer you to other services.
- They determine what type of response they will take, how swiftly they will respond (12 hours, 3 days, 7 days, or do a community link where CAS refers outwards to the surrounding community and resources), and how they will respond.



Social Services

Investigation

- Peel CAS may decide to investigate, speaking to the parents or children involved in the situation. This is a serious matter.
- However, CAS strives to work in a collaborative manner with families and their support network (formal or informal).
- The service is voluntary. The hope is that parents are able to and continue to provide a safe and healthy environment for the children while CAS supports them.
- At this point, the file can either close or remain open to ongoing services for continued support.



Social Services

Ongoing Services

- If there is a collaborative decision for ongoing services, CAS will try to work with the family on a voluntary basis to ensure children are safe and remain in the home.
- They will work with families outside of the court system as much as possible.
- This can include things like home visits, parenting courses, counselling, and drug tests (where relevant) for people in the family.
- There can be times where CAS may involve court proceedings, and CAS involvement becomes court mandated rather than voluntary.
- When child protection concerns are addressed (even with court involvement), the file would be closed.
- In certain situations, CAS may step in to remove the child from the home if it is deemed the only option to keep them safe.
- CAS will continue to work with families towards reunification if the child is removed.
- Even when the child is removed, CAS first tries to place them with kin (family or friends).
- Alternative options may include foster homes or group homes.

CAS strives to work so that the removal of a child from the home is the last option.



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Gender-Based Violence: A Toolkit

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