



Fact Sheet: 2006 York Region Survey CAS and Public Response to Reporting Child Abuse

Background

According to the Ontario Incidence Study of Abuse and Neglect, public reporting of child abuse did not increase significantly in the five years between 1993 and 1998. As a result, York Region CAS undertook a public survey to better understand the public's knowledge of the duty to report child abuse as well as the barriers to exercising that duty.

The 2006 Study

A random sample of 365 York Region residents were surveyed about their reporting duties and reasons and barriers to reporting child abuse. The research was executed and compiled by GTN Communications in London, Ontario in August 2006.

Significant Findings

- Public knows about CASs:
62% of respondents were very or somewhat familiar with CASs
- Public supports CAS work:
89% of respondents strongly to somewhat support what CASs stand for
- Public knows about their duty to report suspicions of child abuse:
87% of respondents knew they have a duty to report abuse against children
- Public reports when...
2/3 of respondents would make a report only if they were certain child abuse was occurring
1/3 would not report if they only suspected child abuse was occurring
Respondents reported they were more likely to report physical and sexual abuse and less likely to report emotional abuse and neglect.
- Barriers to reporting:

<i>Afraid person will know it was them who reported</i>	<i>Don't know where to call</i>
<i>Afraid it will make situation worse</i>	<i>Afraid I might be wrong</i>

Conclusions

These findings suggest that the public is still less likely to report suspected abuse versus what they believe to be actual abuse. It also appears that the public is clearer about reporting physical or sexual abuse and less sure about reporting emotional abuse (e.g., constant criticizing, teasing, belittling) or forms of neglect (e.g., inadequately dressed for weather, no food, inadequate supervision, unsafe living conditions).

A public education campaign about child abuse must provide information about what should be reported, how to make a report, as well as help the public move past the fears associated with making a report.

