

Kristen French Child Advocacy Centre Niagara

8 Forster St.
St. Catharines, ON L2N 1Z9
Tel: 905-937-5435
Fax: 905-934-6917
kristenfrenchcacn.org

Caregivers Guide



**Kristen French
Child Advocacy
Centre Niagara**

What else can I do to Support My Child?

- Return to a normal routine as soon as possible
- See that your child receives counselling as soon as possible
- Find community resources for yourself. Your Family Advocate can assist you with this
- Teach your child the rules of personal safety. Tell them what to do if someone tries to touch them in an uncomfortable way
- Be careful not to question your child about the abuse. If your child wants to talk about it, listen supportively, but do not probe
- Keep your child away from the person suspected of the abuse
- Avoid discussing the case with other victims or other families
- Never coach or advise your child on how to act or what to say to professionals or investigators
- Your child may need an extra sense of physical security. Stay close and tell your child you will keep them safe



Kristen French Child Advocacy Centre

The Kristen French Child Advocacy Centre Niagara (Kristen French CACN) provides a safe place to help, heal and end child abuse for Niagara's children and youth who have been physically abused, sexually abused, become the targets of internet luring, or were the unwilling witness to violence. A caring team of professionals work together helping to reduce the trauma of disclosure. The Centre's partners are Niagara Regional Police Service, Family and Children's Services Niagara and Family Counselling Centre Niagara.

By combining the skills and resources of all of our partners, the Kristen French CACN is ready to support and focus on the well-being of children and their caregivers who come through our doors.

Kristen French CACN:

- Provides a safe and child-friendly environment for you and your child as you proceed through the investigative process
- Reduces the trauma associated with reporting abuse
- Guides you and your child through the investigation and healing process
- Helps you and your child access continued support through resources in your community



Recovery & Understanding

This is a very difficult time in your life and in the life of your child. While you are in charge, it is important to ensure you involve your child in the process and encourage them to be empowered.

Communication is key. It is essential that your child knows that you love them, believe them and are proud of them. The most important message you can give them throughout this process is that this is **NOT THEIR FAULT**.



What if my child wants to tell me everything?

It is unlikely that this will be the case. Children often do not want to discuss sensitive matters such as this in order to protect their caregivers. If your child does want to talk to you, then be a good listener and do not probe them for additional information.

Should my child show signs of sadness or shame?

It is not uncommon for children to feel relieved that they have been able to finally talk about what has happened, and in these cases children may show signs of relief. They may seem like their normal selves and return to their regular activities. However, some children may show signs of sadness or fear about what has happened, especially if their perpetrator is a family member or someone they trusted.

Should my child see a counsellor?

Yes. Professional counselling can help you and your child through this stressful time. Your Family Advocate or Child Protection Worker will provide you with a referral to Family Counselling Centre Niagara where a trained Counsellor will be able to work with you and your child.

What should I say to my child after the interview?

- **Listen to your child:** If your child wants to talk about the interview, it is important that you listen. Let your child lead the discussion and try to avoid asking them detailed questions. If your child does not want to talk about their interview, do not be concerned. It is not uncommon for children to want to move on and not discuss it further.
- **Thank your child:** It is important that your child knows that you are not upset with them. Thank them for talking and be sure to acknowledge their courage. Reassure your child that you love them and continue to be supportive.
- **Avoid false understandings:** Try to avoid leading your child to think that the process will end now that they have given a disclosure interview. Every case is different and some cases will continue into the legal system which will prolong the process. Reassure your child that no matter what happens you will go through it together and be honest with them. It is ok to tell them that you do not know what is going to happen next.



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How we can help

At the Kristen French CACN, our partners continually ensure that they carry out each investigation in the most reassuring and supportive manner.

At the Kristen French CACN we adapt our services to meet the individual needs of you and your child. We are here to guide you through the investigation and healing process.

- We will ensure your child does not have to recount the details of their abuse several different times
- We will provide the continued support of a Family Advocate
- We will provide you and your child with a child-friendly and supportive environment
- We will ensure you have access to free follow-up counselling
- We will ensure you are provided with any necessary community referrals
- We will accompany and support you and your child through the criminal justice process



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Questions you may have

During the post investigation process you will undoubtedly have questions. Your Family Advocate will be with you throughout the entire process and will be able to provide you with answers to these questions or direct you to who can best answer your questions. Below is a list of typical questions; however it is natural to have questions that are not on this list. Do not hesitate to ask any question. Your Family Advocate will be sure to find the answer.

- What should I say to my child?
- How can I stay strong for my child?
- Will we get over this?
- What can we do to get on with our lives?
- Can I talk to my child about what happened?
- Should I expect changes in my child behaviour?
- How do I deal with my feelings over what happened?
- Does my child/family need to see a counsellor?
- What should I say to my other children?
- What should I tell the other members of my family?
- Should I tell my child's school?
- How long will the investigation take?
- How long does the court process take?
- Will my child need to testify in court?
- Will my child have to see the accused again?

After the interview

The Family Advocate is always available to answer any questions or concerns you may have and to provide you with referrals to community resources.

Our Family Advocacy Program provides individualized support to your child/family post-investigation in a confidential, non-judgmental way and is available until support is no longer needed. In the coming pages you will find answers to commonly asked questions that caregivers have after their children have gone through the interview process.

