

# CHILD MALTREATMENT (PART 1):

## *Reporting Rates During COVID-19 in Canada and Across the Prairies*

### The Bottom Line

While precise numbers are not known, since March 2020 Canadian child maltreatment reports have decreased. These are expected to increase in the coming months, as children resume access to more potential reporters. Preparing for this and paying attention to the implications of isolation - particularly in the Prairies - is crucial to address this problem.

Self-isolation and stay-at-home orders have led to increased anxiety, economic hardship, and overall stress. These factors have historically been known to lead to increased violence within homes. Alongside these factors, children have not been in direct and daily contact with professionals and trusted adults like teachers, doctors, counsellors, neighbours, extended family, or their peers.

The isolation of rural and remote areas in the Prairie provinces, alongside the additional isolation associated with COVID-19 make up a 'perfect storm' for child physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, neglect, and exposure to intimate partner violence (IPV). During this period, many more cases are likely to occur and go unnoticed. Child maltreatment and IPV reports are expected to increase during reopening plans and when children and youth return to school.

### Maltreatment and IPV Reporting Rates: What is Known

#### **Canada**

Children First Canada reported maltreatment reports spiked across Canada within the first few days of provincial lockdowns.

Teachers account for around 33% of all child maltreatment reporting.

#### **Saskatchewan**

Highest rate of domestic violence among all Canadian provinces in 2018.

IPV incidents totalled 1,066 per 100,000 people in 2018.

Domestic violence against children and youth totalled 453 incidents per 100,000 people in 2018.

#### **Manitoba**

Domestic violence reports to police in Winnipeg averaged 44 per day before COVID-19. This is expected to increase due to COVID-19.

Teachers made up around 90% of all maltreatment reports in Winnipeg before COVID-19.

#### **Alberta**

Edmonton's Zebra Child Protection Centre reported a 31% decline in child maltreatment reports from mid-March to mid-April, 2020.

## Maltreatment and IPV Reporting Rates: What is Known (Cont.)

### Canada

Maltreatment reporting dropped 30-40% since mid-March.

### Saskatchewan

Child maltreatment reports have decreased since the onset of COVID.

### Manitoba

Child abuse reports have decreased since the onset of COVID.

### Alberta

The Internet Child Exploitation unit of the Alberta Law Enforcement team reported a nearly 121% increase in April 2020 for child exploitation reports compared to their monthly average for the last two years.

## Possible Responses

- Recognize the higher risk for family violence associated with isolation in rural and remote areas, and increased stress and economic pressures.
- Increase communication with families and frequently reassess risk level.
- Correct any COVID-related threats or trauma-bonding that may prevent a child from disclosing abuse or seeking help.
- Be prepared for an increase in needed services as the Prairie provinces continue to advance in their reopening plans and children are exposed to other community members.
- Educate and prepare for the disclosure and reporting of child maltreatment.
- Continue to work toward improved virtual service provision, and access for all, with particular attentiveness to the rural and remote regions.

For original sources and documents, please visit: [www.childtraumaresearch.ca](http://www.childtraumaresearch.ca)

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