



## Family Services à la famille Ottawa

### POSITION ON PHYSICAL PUNISHMENT OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Family Services à la famille Ottawa will act, through our counseling, education, and advocacy, to end physical punishment of children and youth, and encourage other, more constructive and child-friendly, approaches to discipline.

Operationally, Family Services à la famille Ottawa will continue to initiate and/or offer the following actions and services:

- Through our family life education programming, deliver public awareness messages to inform parents that physical punishment is harmful to children's development and is ineffective as discipline
- In parent education, teach and support other, more effective, methods of discipline.
- Distribute pamphlets aimed at reducing and preventing spanking.
- Lend our name to the Repeal 43 Committee website.
- Value diversity in terms of culture, religion, and parenting styles.

The data is overwhelming: physical punishment is not a benefit to children. According to the Joint Statement on Physical Punishment of Children and Youth<sup>1</sup>:

- There is strong evidence that physical punishment places children at risk for physical injury, poorer mental health, impaired relationships with parents, weaker internalization of

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<sup>1</sup>Joint Statement on Physical Punishment of Children and Youth, 2004 was created by the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario, Child Welfare League of Canada, Family Service Canada, Canadian Child Care Federation, Canadian Institute of Child Health, Canadian Public Health Association, and Canadian Association for Young Children.

moral values, antisocial behaviour, poorer adult adjustment and tolerance of violence in adulthood.

- Most parents believe that physical punishment is ineffective, unnecessary and harmful. A majority of parents think the most common outcome is parental guilt or regret.
- Parents are more likely to use physical punishment if they experienced it themselves as children, feel anger in response to their children's behaviour, are subject to depression, or are burdened by particular forms of stress.

In addition, Canada's Criminal Code says it is an offence to use force against anyone without their consent. The right to personal security is a fundamental human right.<sup>2</sup> But, Section 43 of the Criminal Code justifies hitting children for correction.

- We believe that this contravenes the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- It violates a child's dignity and shows a lack of respect.
- It can lead to serious physical and emotional harm.

Family Services à la famille Ottawa believes that physical punishment of children is not good for children, families or communities, because it negatively impacts on family relationships and affects the ability of children to attain their potential. Assisting parents to develop other, positive strategies for discipline is important to support families to attain greater health and well-being.

We believe that every child and parent has the right to live in a healthy and safe environment. And, we believe that no culture or religion supports the abuse or harming of children.

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<sup>2</sup>Organizations who support the Repeal 43 campaign include Family and Children's Services of Brockville, Leeds and Grenville, Ontario; Family and Children's Services, Guelph and Wellington County, Ontario; Family Education Centre, Brampton, Ontario; Family Education Centre Region of Peel, ON; Family Service Canada; Family Service London, ON; Family Service Ontario, Toronto; Family Service Saskatoon, and over 100 others.