

PROPOSAL FOR A HOLLY'S LAW

Background

Protect Kids Advocacy is proposing legislation entitled Holly's Law to mandate primary prevention programs for all children in schools across Ontario. This proposed legislation is in memory of **Holly Jones**, a child who was brutally murdered in Toronto in 2003.

Current Status of Child Abuse Prevention Programs in Ontario

Currently, there are no comprehensive child abuse prevention programs that are delivered consistently in elementary schools across Ontario. Individual school boards and in some cases individual schools determine which, if any, programs they want to use. Many of the programs that are still being used are outdated and do not reflect current research about what works. This results in "hit and miss" prevention education for children without opportunities to build on knowledge and skills.

Solution Proposed

Effective primary prevention programs reduce vulnerability to abuse and victimization, increase resiliency, and promote safe, healthy and pro-social relationships. Holly's Law is to ensure that every elementary school offer some form of prevention program consistent with these goals.

For an example of an effective primary prevention program, we would recommend a provider such as Boost Child Abuse Prevention and Intervention. Boost's programs are based on the following six concepts; self-esteem, making good choices, respect for oneself and others, communication, healthy touch, and how and where to get help. Boost has a proven track record of success in current Ontario school boards, and is the industry expert in this field.

Support from the Jones-Stonehouse Family

The family of Holly Jones believes that initiatives in Holly's name should be focused not on the offender, but on the child. The family is promoting this very proposal through their media liaison, Karyn Klaire Koski.

Taking Action vs. Not Taking Action

The total cost of implementing primary prevention programs across Ontario has been calculated as less than \$ 1,100,000.

Research funded by the Law Commission of Canada has evaluated the costs of child abuse to Canada as \$ 15.7 billion dollars per year (Bowlus et al, 2003). The authors of the study estimate the share of Ontario's costs as between \$ 5.5 to \$ 6 billion dollars per year. While no primary prevention program will fully end child abuse, effective primary prevention programs will mitigate Ontario's current costs with this issue.

We would like to thank you in advance for taking action, understanding that it is every child's right to know how to protect themselves, and that it is our obligation to give them the tools.

"They won't know if we don't tell them."

Advocates of Holly's Law

Charles de Kerckhove, Protect Kids Advocacy

Cheri DiNovo, MPP for Parkdale-High Park

Karyn Klaire Koski, Family Liaison to Maria Jones and to George Stonehouse

APPENDIX

With information from Boost Child Abuse Prevention and Intervention

What should a child abuse prevention program look like?

- Boost's "I'm a Great Kid!" and "I'm a Great Little Kid!" programs include the most recent recommendations about core content. Rather than discussing "good touch" and "bad touch," the Great Kid programs stress positive and negative feelings about touch and that children can decide for themselves how they feel about a touch.
- Daro (1994) concluded children aged 7-12 received the strongest beneficial effects of prevention programming. This is the targeted age group for the "I'm A Great Kid!" programs.
- According to Finkelhor, Asdigan & Dziuba-Leatherman (1995) there are five vital elements for a program to be considered a comprehensive child abuse or child sexual abuse program:
 1. content about touch, telling an adult, and abuse is never the child's fault
 2. a chance to practice in class
 3. information to take home
 4. a meeting with parents
 5. repetition of material over more than a single day

The Great Kid programs include many of the essential elements for a comprehensive program.

- The Great Kid programs utilize developmental and age-appropriate materials (e.g. simple concepts and themes).
- The Great Kid programs use stories and videos as the modes of presentation.
- Moreover, there is an experiential component to the programs in which the children actively participate in activities (e.g. skits, rehearsal, drawing activities) and discussions which reinforced and supplemented the concepts.
 - MacMillan et al (1994) stressed the importance of prevention programs to combine multiple modes of instruction for children.
 - Wurtele, Marrs & Miller-Perrin (1992) note that behavioural skills training approaches are more effective than passive learning procedures.
- Both programs consist of six sessions (multiple sessions which allow for repetition and themes which build upon each other).
- Most prevention programs, such as this, encourage parental involvement. Yet, prevention programs consistently have difficulty attracting parents to information and training sessions. Research has shown, however, that higher parental knowledge and involvement is associated with children's knowledge. This supports the importance of continuing to find creative methods of encouraging and maintaining parental participation in child abuse prevention programs.

Do child abuse prevention programs work?

Research indicates after participating in a child abuse prevention program, children do learn a number of important concepts (Tutty, 1996; Wurtele & Miller-Perrin, 1992).

The Great Kid research found similar results. The participants improved in their ability to discern what a secret is and the concept of not to keep a secret about a touch. In addition, children who participated in the program improved in their ability to identify individuals to go to for help; and their understanding of “keep telling until you get the help you need.”

Notes involving costs

The cost of Boost’s teacher training across all school boards is \$ 63,000 (full day of teacher training per school board is \$600, given 105 school boards in Ontario) and the cost of supplying their facilitators’ guides at all schools is \$ 1,002,750 (\$ 250 for four copies total, two of “I’m a Great Kid!” and two of “I’m a Great Little Kid!”, given 4,011 elementary schools across Ontario). This comes to a total cost of \$ 1,065,750. For 1,389,608 elementary students in Ontario, this works out to \$ 0.77 per student.

The study which evaluated the national costs of child abuse at \$ 15.7 billion dollars per year is referenced by the Government of Canada’s Department of Justice from the following site:

http://canada.justice.gc.ca/eng/pi/fv-vf/facts-info/sex_abu.html#consequences

Funded by the Law Commission of Canada, this study by Bowlus et al (2003) includes the expenditures from Canada’s provincial and territorial budgets within the Justice System, in Social Services, and in Health specific to child abuse.

Reference: Audra Bowlus, Katharine McKenna, Tanis Day and David Right, *The Economic Costs and Consequences of Child Abuse in Canada* (Ottawa: Law Commission of Canada, 2003).