

## ***Joint Statement on Physical Punishment of Children and Youth***

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### **Background for the Education Community**

The Canadian *Joint Statement on Physical Punishment of Children and Youth* was developed by a coalition of six national organizations led by the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO). This document—like the three Canadian joint statements on other aspects of child health and harm before it—provides a comprehensive review of research on physical (corporal) punishment of children. It also examines physical punishment in Canada from legal and human rights perspectives and provides examples of resources on effective parenting. The document's conclusions and recommendations for action are based on this extensive body of research.

The aim of the *Joint Statement* is knowledge transfer. Knowledge changes behaviour. Research evidence has informed and moved Canadians to protect children from exposure to second-hand smoke, sun, pesticides, and motor vehicle and bike injuries. In the same way—**based on research evidence that physical punishment of children and youth is ineffective as discipline and poses only risks to their development—the *Joint Statement* is a vehicle for professional and public education.** Since its launch in September 2004, the document has become a seminal national and international resource. It has informed and shaped discussion about physical punishment of children in Canada. It has been endorsed to date by more than 400 organizations that span the Canadian community and by a number of distinguished Canadians.

The education sector plays a critical role in the development of Canada's children. Our Coalition and a growing number of education leaders want to ensure that the information in the *Joint Statement* is disseminated throughout the sector. It is timely. Educators, parents and students across Canada (and around the world) are deeply concerned about bullying and its negative impact on students, school safety and the learning environment. **The research evidence is quite clear—physical punishment is strongly linked to aggression/bullying in children and youth.** Research has also demonstrated that physical punishment is linked to slower cognitive development in pre-school and elementary school children and adversely affects academic achievement of school age children.

Parents look to educators for guidance to support children. Effective parenting produces healthy and respectful children who are ready to learn. Endorsement of the *Joint Statement* by the education community supports this objective.

The education sector is responding to our outreach. The *Joint Statement* is being studied, endorsed and disseminated by many education organizations, including public and Catholic and English and French school boards/divisions in eight provinces and one territory (BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Northwest Territories), the Nunavut Department of Education, private schools, and other education leaders.

The *Joint Statement* and related material may be viewed and downloaded from the CHEO website at [www.cheo.on.ca/en/physicalpunishment](http://www.cheo.on.ca/en/physicalpunishment).

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## ***Joint Statement on Physical Punishment of Children and Youth***

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### **Background for Sports and Recreation Organizations**

The Canadian *Joint Statement on Physical Punishment of Children and Youth* was developed by a coalition of six national organizations led by the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO). The document—like the three Canadian joint statements on other aspects of child health and harm before it—provides a comprehensive review of research on physical (corporal) punishment of children. It also examines physical punishment in Canada from legal and human rights perspectives and provides examples of resources on effective parenting. The document's conclusions and recommendations for action are based on this extensive body of research.

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Sport and recreation programs touch hundreds of thousands of Canadian children, youth and parents. Violence in sports is weekly news. Parents, coaches, volunteers, administrators, and youth express concerns about it. **The research evidence summarized in the *Joint Statement*—that physical punishment is strongly linked to the development of violent attitudes and behaviours, often displayed as bullying, in children that are carried into adulthood—must reach the sports and recreation communities in Canada.** Violence is modeled and nurtured by the use of physical punishment. Coaching practices that are physically punitive and intended primarily to humiliate do not build athletic skill, speed, strength, endurance, or respect. See “Physical Punishment of Children in Sport and Recreation”, and “Physical Punishment of Children in Sport and Recreation: The Times They Are A-Changin’” in *Coaches PLAN du Coach*, Coaches of Canada, Winter '08/09 and Summer 2010, also posted on the CHEO website (link below).

Recognizing the implications of this research for children involved in sport and recreation, sector leaders have begun to reference and disseminate the *Joint Statement*. It has been endorsed by the Coaching Association of Canada, Coaches of Canada, Respect in Sport, Canadian Academy of Sport and Exercise Medicine, Right To Play Canada, Rugby Canada, and Dr. Andrew Pipe. Organizations that deliver recreational programs to children and youth have endorsed the *Joint Statement*, among them, Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada, Girl Guides of Canada, Scouts Canada, YMCA Canada, and YWCA Canada.

The *Joint Statement* and related material may be viewed and downloaded from the CHEO website at [www.cheo.on.ca/en/physicalpunishment](http://www.cheo.on.ca/en/physicalpunishment).

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### **Background for Business**

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Physical punishment of children takes a wide and heavy social and economic toll. In Canada, physical punishment accounts for 75% of child physical abuse. **A study by the Law Commission of Canada estimated the judicial, social services, education, health, employment, and personal costs of child abuse in 1998 to be, at a minimum, \$15 billion.** Physical punishment also predicts poorer mental health, impaired relationships with parents, weaker internalization of moral values, antisocial behaviour, poorer adult adjustment, and tolerance of violence in adulthood. Over a lifespan, these consequences can be felt by the child, the youth, the adult, their partners, their children, and their co-workers. **The preventable consequences of physical punishment are felt by others as bullying at school, abuse of children, and aggression against partners and co-workers.** Everyone in the workplace—employer, manager and employee—is affected by the consequences of physical punishment of children. Taxpayers and governments are burdened by it.

Leaders in key sectors of the Canadian community—health, education, social services, sport, and faith—are disseminating information about the implications for their communities of physical punishment of children. **Business leaders are well positioned to add their influential voices to this national discussion.** Physical punishment's impact on the workplace and the economy needs to be better understood. Endorsement of the *Joint Statement* by the business community supports the dissemination of this information.

The *Joint Statement* and related material, including the names of endorsers to date, may be downloaded from the CHEO website at [www.cheo.on.ca/en/physicalpunishment](http://www.cheo.on.ca/en/physicalpunishment).

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