

# Joint Statement on Physical Punishment of Children and Youth



## Background for Mental Health

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 other four Canadian joint statements on aspects of child health and harm—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 translation. Knowledge changes behaviour. Research evidence has informed and moved Canadians to protect children from exposure to second-hand smoke, sun, pesticides, and sport 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 discussion about physical punishment of children in Canada. It has been endorsed to date by more than 500 organizations that span the Canadian community and by a number of distinguished Canadians.

A substantial body of research has demonstrated that physical punishment of children is associated with broad and enduring negative developmental outcomes. There is strong evidence that physical punishment places children at risk for physical injury, impaired relationships with parents, weaker internalization of moral values, antisocial behaviour (aggression, bullying), and poorer adult adjustment. Research has demonstrated that physical punishment is linked to slower cognitive development in young children and adversely affects their academic achievement. **Research that earlier found a relationship between physical punishment and poorer mental health has more recently demonstrated that physical punishment during childhood is linked to a range of adult psychopathology (mood and anxiety disorders, alcohol and drug abuse/dependence, and several personality disorders), and that these outcomes are independent of sociodemographic variables and family history of dysfunction.** The impact of punishment has consequences not only for children who experience it, but for the people (child/adolescent peers, partners, colleagues, own children) they will encounter, work with, and care for over their lifetime.

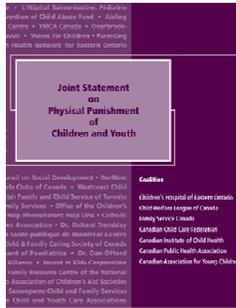
Recognizing the implications of this research for child, youth and adult adjustment, a number of mental health organizations have begun to reference and disseminate the *Joint Statement*. It has been endorsed by the Mental Health Commission of Canada; Canadian Mental Health Association; Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health; Children's Mental Health Ontario; Infant Mental Health Promotion; Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario Division; Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Ontario; CASA Child, Adolescent and Family Mental Health and CASA Foundation (Edmonton, Alberta); and Cumberland Mental Health Services (Amherst, Nova Scotia).

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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March 1, 2014

# Joint Statement on Physical Punishment of Children and Youth



## Background for Education

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 other four Canadian joint statements on aspects of child health and harm—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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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.

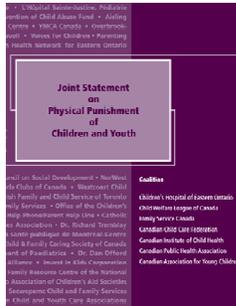
The education sector is responding to our outreach. The *Joint Statement* is being studied, endorsed and disseminated by education organizations and leaders across Canada, including public and Catholic and English and French school boards in every province, Northwest Territories, Nunavut Department of Education, and private schools.

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May 14, 2014

# Joint Statement on Physical Punishment of Children and Youth



## Background for Sport and Recreation

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 other four Canadian joint statements on aspects of child health and harm—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 translation. Knowledge changes behaviour. Research evidence has informed and moved Canadians to protect children from exposure to second-hand smoke, sun, pesticides, and sport 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 discussion about physical punishment of children in Canada. It has been endorsed to date by more than 500 organizations that span the Canadian community and by a number of distinguished Canadians.

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 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport ([www.cces.ca/en/page-355-position-statements](http://www.cces.ca/en/page-355-position-statements)), Coaching Association of Canada, Coaches of Canada, Respect Group Inc. (Respect in Sport), Canadian Academy of Sport and Exercise Medicine, Right To Play Canada, Rugby Canada, Gymnastics Canada, Dr. Andrew Pipe, and Sheldon Kennedy. 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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