

## HOME

### Your rights at home and parental rights

Teenage years are transitional, meaning they bridge the complex gap between childhood and adulthood. What are your rights as a person in their 'youth'? How can one deal with complicated situations at home and/or with their parents? What are some resources that you can use?

#### **Can my parents spank or beat me?**

Yes, they can, but there are limits to what they can do. Firstly, parents can't use violence to discipline you if you are under the age of 2 or a teenager nor can they use excessive force that would endanger your life, your limbs, your health or risk disfiguring you. They are not allowed to use any objects to beat you. They can't make any blows or slaps to your face. If your parents fail to respect these rules or if you fear for your safety at any time contact the police.

#### **Can I get in trouble for not listening to my parents?**

Put simply, you are supposed to obey your parents for any reasonable requirements that they may have. Your parents are your guardians until you reach the age of majority at 18 and therefore make all of the major decisions for you. Before 18, there are decisions that you are allowed to make on your own on a case-by-case basis. You are allowed to make certain medical decisions on your own by the age of 14, for example.

When in doubt ask someone. A lot of times there is no clear answer as to whether you have to obey your parents, often it depends. Your parents can ask you to spend a couple of hours on chores at the end of the day, but if they ask you to do chores until you go to bed at night, every single day, for example, that may be considered a bit extreme and an abuse of their authority.

For medical questions contact your local CLSC. For other questions you can contact Batshaw Youth and Family Services. If you feel that your parents are forcing you to do something that is wrong or makes you very uneasy, don't hesitate to ask someone or call anonymous help-lines for someone who can help.

#### **If I'm married, a parent, or live alone, do my parents still have a right to tell me what to do and make decisions for me?**

No, once you are married you become legally emancipated from your parents, so they no longer have any parental authority over you nor over any children you may have.

#### **When can I get married?**

18, but you can marry as young as 16 with your parents' consent.

#### **Can my parents open mail addressed to me?**

It is illegal to open, hold on to or delay the receipt of someone else's mail. Even if someone else's mail gets put into your mail box accidentally, it is your responsibility to see that it gets to the right person, by giving it to them yourself or giving it to a Canada Post mailman or its agent.

### **Do my parents have a right to the money I earn?**

No, after the age of 14 you can determine how to manage your own money.

### **Do I need my parents' permission to get a tattoo?**

**Yes**, if you are under 18 then you need your parent's permission to get a tattoo and even with permission you need to be at least 17 to get a tattoo. For piercings, you need to be 16 or older unless you are piercing your ear lobes (other parts of the ear require parental consent) in which case there is no age requirement.

### **At what age can I move out?**

There is no age requirement for moving out per se but in order for you to legally sign a contract like a lease for an apartment you need to be 18. You can move out before then but because of the legal risk, the landlord will typically ask your parent to sign the lease for you.

### **When do I need my parent's permission for medical attention?**

Under the age of 14, your parents make all medical decisions for you. Between 14 and 18, you can make minor medical decisions without their medical approval, as long as these medical decisions won't put your health in serious danger. You can get birth-control, see a doctor about your flu symptoms, or you can make a quick trip to a hospital for an asthma attack but if your health is in danger, the doctors will contact your parents. If you have to be hospitalized or need to stay at the hospital for more than 12 hours, your parents will immediately be advised.

### **Can I get an abortion or surgery without my parent's permission?**

Over the age of 14, you are allowed to get an abortion or emergency birth-control (the day after pill) without your parent's permission or even knowledge.

For any major medical decision, such as surgery, you would need your parent's permission. If you disagree with your parent's decision and think that their decision might pose a risk to your health, notify your doctor and they can consider bringing the hospital's ethics committee into the decision-making process.

### **Who can look at my medical records?**

Under the age of 14, only your parents can. Over the age of 14, usually only you can view your doctor's office medical records and your parents would need your permission to see them. At a hospital, your parents can view your records unless the hospital administration thinks that this would put your health at risk.

### **What is child neglect?**

According to Justice Canada, child neglect is often chronic, and it usually involves repeated incidents. Neglect involves failing to provide what a child needs for its physical, psychological or emotional development and well-being—such as repeatedly not giving food, clothing, shelter, cleanliness, medical care or protection from harm. Emotional neglect includes failing to provide a child with love, safety, and a sense of worth.

### **Do teenage parents have to pay child support?**

Yes, your age doesn't exempt you from your parental obligations. The child-support amounts will be determined by a judge and both parents are financially responsible for the child until he/she is able to take care of himself/herself. The payments for child-support do not automatically stop when the child turns 18.

### **Is physical abuse the only kind of violence I can report to the police?**

No, you can also report sexual abuse or emotional abuse. All forms of abuse carry consequences and the authorities are there to protect you from them. If an adult, or older child, touches you anywhere on your body with a sexual purpose, they are committing sexual interference which is a form of sexual abuse and they need to be reported.

If an adult, or older child, makes verbal threats, makes you feel intimidated, socially isolated, or exploited then they could be committing what is considered emotional abuse. Your parents or guardians are responsible for making you feel safe. If they fail to protect you from family violence, whether it be from another parent, an uncle, an aunt, a grandparent, a family friend or even a sibling, older or younger, then they are failing in their duty to properly care for you. If you are unsure whether or not your circumstances constitute abuse you can call one of the help-lines to determine your next steps.

### **Can someone divorce their parents?**

It sounds weird to put it that way, but there is something similar to divorce that can be done with one's parents: it's called 'minor emancipation'. This is where you break the legal relationship you have with your parents, essentially taking away any parental authority they have over you. There are, however, some less extreme cases where your parents have some say over what you do until you are 18.

Once you become an emancipated teen you can make a lot of the same decisions as adults. In order to become emancipated, you would either have to be married, with parental permission, or go through the court system to ask for permission to become legally emancipated