



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2009CFD0010-000516
October 23, 2009

Ministry of Children and Family Development

'PURPLE' SHAKEN BABY TRAINING EXPANDS TO FOSTER PARENTS

VANCOUVER – Foster parents around the province will be more ready than ever to deal with babies who are going through a heightened period of crying, said Minister of Children and Family Development Mary Polak.

“It’s critical that we let all parents know that their babies may go through this period of extended and exhausting crying, but that it will end and it’s important that they never shake their child, no matter what,” said Polak. “Foster parents care for newborns and infants like any other new parent, so it’s important that they too receive the right training to prevent instances of shaken baby syndrome.”

They are the latest group of parents to receive the Period of PURPLE Crying prevention training, a program developed by the National Centre on Shaken Baby Syndrome and delivered in communities throughout the province by Prevent Shaken Baby Syndrome BC, a program of BC Children’s Hospital, an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority. Supported by funding from MCFD, the program – which offers all new parents materials including a DVD and booklet – has been successfully rolled out to all birthing hospitals and public health clinics around the province.

The focus of the program is to educate new parents and caregivers about how to deal with this intensive period of crying in a safe manner and to prevent occurrences of shaken baby syndrome, which can have life-threatening or life-altering outcomes.

“The Period of PURPLE Crying program is unique, in that it uses positive messages and education over negative warnings to bring about change in how we deal with a crying child,” said Marilyn Barr, director, Prevent Shaken Baby Syndrome BC. “All parents and caregivers, including foster parents, need to know that it’s okay to walk away from a child – as long as they’re safe – if their crying becomes too frustrating.

“It doesn’t make you a bad parent, it just gives you time to regain control and patience so you don’t turn to shaking.”

The ministry is sending the training materials to all foster homes that care for children from newborn to three years of age – approximately 1,000 homes throughout B.C. Ministry social workers and contracted family support workers are also receiving the training through in-services, web conferencing or online training methods.

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The PURPLE material will also be implemented into the mandatory 53-hour foster parent training curriculum.

“We strongly recommend that all caregivers caring for infants or toddlers take this excellent training, in order to ensure the best possible care can be provided,” said Melanie Filiatraut, president, B.C. Federation of Foster Parent Associations.

Shaken Baby Syndrome is the leading preventable cause of physical and mental disability among infants and young children. In B.C., it is estimated that there are at least three to 15 children each year who suffer traumatic brain injury as a result of shaking. Nearly one-third of these babies die. Of those who survive, approximately 80 per cent are left with permanent brain damage.

Long-term consequences of shaking include learning disabilities, physical disabilities, visual impairments/blindness, hearing impairment, speech disabilities, cerebral palsy, seizures, behaviour disorders, cognitive impairment or death.

“I can’t express enough how important prevention training is for all parents and caregivers – and the general public – so we can reduce the number of cases we see each year,” added Polak. “One case of shaken baby syndrome is one too many.”

Parents and caregivers can get more information on the Period of PURPLE Crying program at www.PURPLEcrying.info, a website designed just for them.

Health-care professionals can learn more about the program in B.C. on the Prevent Shaken Baby Syndrome BC website at www.dontshake.ca.

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