

NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Children and Family Development

PROGRAM LAUNCHED TO HELP PREVENT SHAKEN BABY SYNDROME

VICTORIA – Government is investing \$1.4 million in an education and prevention program that will give every new parent in B.C. resources and information to better understand inconsolable crying in infants and help lower the incidence of Shaken Baby Syndrome, Children and Family Development Minister Tom Christensen announced today.

Christensen also proclaimed April 11, 2008 as Child Abuse Prevention Day.

“The health and safety of children and youth in B.C. is the first priority of the Ministry of Children and Family Development,” said Christensen. “By providing Prevent Shaken Baby Syndrome BC with \$1.4 million over four years, our goal is to significantly reduce the number of deaths and serious injuries caused by Shaken Baby Syndrome – a violent form of child abuse.”

Over the coming year, new parents will receive educational materials called The Period of PURPLE Crying. The package consists of a 10-minute DVD and an 11-page booklet, available in English and six other languages. The materials will help new parents and caregivers understand normal crying patterns in young infants and provide strategies to help cope with periods of inconsolable crying.

Research has shown that shaking babies is both common and a leading cause of infant mortality. Each year in British Columbia, five to 15 children will suffer traumatic brain injury from shaking and require hospitalization. One in four will die, and of those who survive, approximately 80 per cent will suffer from some form of life-long brain injury, such as cognitive impairment, developmental delays, blindness or cerebral palsy.

“Staff at BC Children’s Hospital know all too well how devastating the consequences of shaking a baby can be,” said Dr. Ronald Barr, professor of pediatrics at the UBC Faculty of Medicine. “Prevention through the promotion of practical, evidence-based tools to help all parents and caregivers better understand normal infant crying – which includes inconsolable crying that can worry, frustrate and anger parents and caregivers – and how to manage that crying safely, is absolutely vital.”

In addition to the \$1.4-million commitment from the Ministry of Children and Family Development and \$60,000 from BC Children’s Hospital Foundation, Prevent Shaken Baby Syndrome BC – a program of BC Children’s Hospital, an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority – has received support and funding to implement The Period of PURPLE Crying from a range of partners, including:

- Child Health BC;
- BC Perinatal Health Program;
- The Civil Forfeiture Office with the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General; and
- Fraser Health Acquired Brain Injury Program.

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The Ministry of Health and B.C. health authorities will distribute the program materials to parents through maternity and community health nurses and health-care providers.

The Period of PURPLE Crying program includes three action steps to guide caregivers, which include responding to the baby with “comfort, carry, walk and talk” behaviours, putting the baby in a safe place and then walking away, and never shaking or hurting the baby to stop its crying. The effectiveness of this program has been validated by research conducted at the Child & Family Research Institute under Dr. Barr’s leadership in the Centre for Community Child Health Research.

“In a recent two-week period, I attended to three babies who were inconsolable criers that came through our ER,” said Sharron Lyons, emergency nurse at BC Children’s Hospital. “The parents were so relieved when I explained what The Period of PURPLE Crying was and to know that their child’s crying was normal. This program is definitely going to save lives.”

Training of maternity and community health nurses and other health-care providers is currently being conducted by Prevent Shaken Baby Syndrome BC for the Fraser Health, Vancouver Coastal, and Vancouver Island health authorities. Training for the Interior and Northern health authorities will be complete by the end of the year.

The announcement also marked Child Abuse Prevention Day, a day that reinforces the shared responsibility of all British Columbians in keeping children and youth safe.

To learn more about child abuse prevention, please visit the Ministry of Children and Family Development website: http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/child_protection/

To learn more about Prevent Shaken Baby Syndrome BC please visit:
<http://www.dontshake.ca/>

To learn more about BC Children’s Hospital programs and services please visit:
www.bcchildrens.ca

1 backgrounder(s) attached.

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BACKGROUND

2008CFD0014-000514
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Ministry of Children and Family Development

SHAKEN BABY SYNDROME AND CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION

Shaken Baby Syndrome

- Shaken Baby Syndrome is a violent form of child abuse and can result in a range of extremely damaging injuries or death.
- Shaken Baby Syndrome is the leading cause of non-accidental death in infants and is the most common cause for inflicted brain injury in the first year of a child's life.
- It is estimated that there are eight to 15 cases of Shaken Baby Syndrome diagnosed each year in B.C. and potentially others that go undiagnosed.
- Of the babies shaken each year, nearly one-third die. Of those that survive, approximately 80 per cent are left with permanent brain damage.

The Period of PURPLE Crying

- The Period of PURPLE Crying is a prevention program designed to educate parents and caregivers about normal patterns of crying in infants and provide useful steps to reduce parents' and caregivers' frustration.
- The program includes a 10-minute video and an 11-page booklet that parents can share with other caregivers of their baby, such as family members and babysitters. The program educates parents and caregivers about the hazards of shaking and gives them alternatives to use when they feel they are overwhelmed. The materials are currently available in English, Cantonese, Punjabi, Spanish, Korean and Vietnamese. By the end of 2008, the materials will be available in Japanese, Portuguese and French.
- The letters in the word "PURPLE" each stand for one of the normal characteristics of early infant crying, and the word "Period" is used to remind parents that increased crying is temporary and, eventually, does come to an end.
- Implementation of the program follows a three-year study conducted in the Vancouver area, in which 1,800 mothers of infants participated. The study was funded by the Ministry of Children and Family Development.
- Approximately 42,000 new parents every year in B.C. will receive The Period of PURPLE Crying package from a trained maternity nurse before leaving hospital. Subsequently, trained community health nurses will provide support and advice during their first home visit.
- In addition, Prevent Shaken Baby Syndrome BC continues to train community groups, medical advisors, help line staff, First Nations groups, and pregnancy outreach groups to provide support for parents.

Child Abuse Prevention Day

- April 11 is Child Abuse Prevention Day in British Columbia.
- Children have the right to be protected from all abuse, violence, exploitation and neglect.
- The health and safety of children and youth in B.C. is vital to ensuring they have the strongest start possible to thrive and succeed.

- The health and safety of children and youth in B.C. is the first priority of the Ministry of Children and Family Development.
- While parents hold the primary responsibility for a child's health and well-being and provide a foundation of love and support for their children, parents are not alone in keeping their children safe. Educators, concerned citizens, community organizations, and public officials all have vital roles in protecting our children and supporting families.
- The government of British Columbia is committed to the promotion and development of the capacity of families and communities to care for and protect vulnerable children and youth, and to maximize the potential of every child in B.C. by supporting healthy child development.
- By working together and sharing information on how to prevent, recognize, and report signs of child abuse, we can help protect our children and youth from abuse and give them the opportunity to achieve their dreams.
- Preventing child abuse is everyone's responsibility.
- A comprehensive handbook, Responding to Child Welfare Concerns, Your Role in Knowing When and What to Report is available online at www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/child_protection/pdf/child_welfare_your_role.pdf. It features information about:
 - Identifying and reporting suspected child abuse and neglect;
 - Relevant law and government services; and
 - How to help prevent child abuse and neglect.
- If you suspect a child is being abused or neglected, dial 310-1234.
- B.C. law requires that anyone who has concerns about a child needing protection has a duty to report those concerns.

To learn more about child abuse prevention, please visit the Ministry of Children and Family Development website: www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/child_protection/

To learn more about Prevent Shaken Baby Syndrome BC please visit: www.dontshake.ca/

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