



Resources for Families & Caregivers

Every parent or caregiver wants their child to succeed in life and make their family proud. This can be difficult when there are many influences in your child's life outside the home, including peers or even adults who don't have your child's best interests at heart.

During adolescence, young people start to seek independence and adventure. They are eager to try new things, more confident taking risks, and they crave a sense of belonging and respect from their peers. This can make them vulnerable to negative influences, but the same energy can also be channelled in a positive direction.

This guide will help you recognize signs that your child might be falling in with the wrong crowd, and help you take steps to protect them from getting drawn into dangerous situations or criminal activity. Filling your child's life with positive influences and activities can keep them on the path to a healthy, happy successful future.

If you're concerned about your child or another young person you know, help is available.



Website:
edmonton.ca/buildingsafercommunities

For additional resources:
Call: 211



Supporting Positive Choices for Youth

"Filling your child's life with positive influences and activities can keep them on the path to a healthy, happy successful future."



Setting Your Child Up for Success

Building Safer Communities



Know the Signs

If your child is struggling at school or with peers, they may feel ashamed that things aren't going well. They may try to hide difficulties to save face and avoid disappointing you, but this can make things worse over the long term as it keeps them from getting the guidance they need to fix the problem. They may also find the wrong kind of support in friend groups who aren't making good choices.

If you notice sudden changes in your child's behaviour, performance at school, or communication with you – like the examples in this brochure – it's important to have a direct conversation with your child about what's going on in their life.

School

- Sudden drop in grades/academic performance
- Not completing or submitting school assignments on time
- Frequent phone calls or emails from the school about your child missing classes
- Phone calls or emails from the school about your child bullying or fighting with other students

Community

- Sudden change in attitude toward community and social institutions
- Loss of interest in usual community activities (clubs, youth groups, volunteering, etc.)
- Decreased participation in community /cultural events

Peers

- Withdrawing from long-time friends
- Sudden adoption of a new friend group
- Worsening attitude toward peers and adults
- Associating with peers who are involved in antisocial behaviour (theft, vandalism, threats, violence, etc.)

Family

- Avoiding conversations with family
- Not wanting to spend time at home or with family members
- Ignoring curfews, chores, or other family expectations
- Having unexplained money, new clothing or other expensive items
- Secrecy about activities or time away from home



What You Can Do

Plan family time

Eat meals together as a family, plan regular family outings or activities, keep family traditions, and make time for your family to discuss each member's plans, feelings, and experiences. Give lots of positive feedback and let your child know how much their participation in the family means to you.

Set clear expectations and limits

Set clear expectations such as when your child needs to be home and how often they need to check in with you while they're out. Explain the consequences for breaking these rules and follow through with those consequences if they are broken, while still demonstrating unconditional love for your child.

Fill time with positive activities

Involve your child in social activities that give them a sense of belonging and achievement outside the family. Athletics, arts programs, school clubs, a part-time job, or youth groups at religious or community organizations are all good options. Assign age-appropriate responsibilities at home as well.

Educate your child about risks and responsibility

Talk openly with your child about the negative consequences of risky behaviour such as neglecting schoolwork, using drugs and alcohol, or forming friendships with peers who have a negative influence on them. Avoid scare tactics, but explain how making risky choices now can limit their future options and lead to regret. Express care and concern for their future, not anger and blame.

Stay involved and engaged

Take an interest in your child's life. Show support for their hobbies and interests, meet their teachers, get to know their friends and their friends' parents, keep an eye on their online activity, and monitor their progress at school. Celebrate their achievements and help them find appropriate support if they're struggling.

Set the example you want your child to follow

Even as they seek more independence, young people are still watching the adults around them. They will learn a lot about navigating adult life and making responsible choices by observing how you do it. When you model accountability, positive relationships, honest communication, and respect for the community in your own life, it helps your child learn how to do the same.

