

GRADE 1

TEACHER BACKGROUND INFORMATION

FAMILY LIFE

FAMILIES

Families play an important role in society by providing a loving, caring environment for their members.

In native societies, family ties are still very strong. Many people within a community are related to each other. Through the family, the traditions, values and language of the culture are transmitted from one generation to the next.

Because the family is such an important part of native life, it is extremely important for teachers to ensure the cultural relevance of these lessons for the children in their class. Each lesson should be adapted or altered as necessary to fit the local situation. In schools with native students, it is strongly recommended, that native teachers, a classroom assistant, a parent or elders either teach the lessons or discuss with the students the concepts related to families in that context.

A nuclear family can be considered "a committed group of people that lives together in a home and provides love, care, nurture and support for its members." This definition will not fit the concept of a family for some groups, where the extended family is the common family unit. Teachers should select with local elders a suitable definition of a family in their local situation.

In present day society, family structures vary greatly in size and composition:

- i) the nuclear family usually consists of mother, father and children
- ii) the one parent family results from separation, divorce, death or choice
- iii) the extended family includes most relatives, but particularly grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins
- iv) the adopted family accepts a person from another family into their family
- v) the foster family looks after a child, on a temporary basis
- vi) the blended family occurs when members of different families come together, e.g., through remarriage

ABUSE PREVENTION

The lessons in this grade do not deal specifically with sexual abuse, but they do serve as an introduction to the topic.

Students evaluate different touches by the positive or negative feelings they produce. Students may experience touches which make them feel comfortable, some which make them feel uncomfortable and some which make them confused. Confused feelings are generally created when they experience a touch which usually makes them feel comfortable, but in this particular situation or from this particular person, it produces uncomfortable feelings. For younger students, these are referred to as "yes" or "no" feelings.

Students are encouraged to develop their own family and community support systems so that, should they be at risk, they know who to approach and how to contact them.

Teachers must approach the topic of Abuse Prevention with sensitivity. They may have an abused child in the class. When teachers teach about abuse, they may be told about an abuse. To ensure they know the correct procedures to follow if they suspect child abuse, they should become familiar with the N.W.T. Department of Education 'Procedures for Reporting Suspected Child Abuse' (available in all schools).

Staff should also become familiarized with local support people in the community. Schools should advise agencies involved in the investigation and treatment of child abuse that they will be using materials on abuse prevention in the schools.

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION GUIDELINES FOR EDUCATION
PERSONNEL REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE**

Any person employed by the Department of Education, a Board of Education, or a Divisional Board of Education in the Northwest Territories who suspects child abuse shall:

1. Immediately report orally the details of the suspected abuse to the local or regional representative of the Department of Social Services.
2. Inform the principal of the school of the report.
3. Follow-up the oral report to the local or regional representative of the Department of Social Services, as soon as possible, with a written report to the Superintendent of Child Welfare in Yellowknife.
4. Upon receiving a report from an employee, the principal shall immediately inform the Regional Superintendent of Education that a report of suspected child abuse has been made.
5. Staff shall *not* contact the child's family or the suspected perpetrator or anyone else to inform or further investigate the circumstances of the suspected abuse. This is the responsibility of the Department of Social Services and the R.C.M.P.
6. Any information, oral or written, about child abuse cases is confidential. All written records or reports must be treated confidentially and should not be placed in the child's record or cumulative file. Information necessary in the conduct of the investigation or subsequent treatment of the child or the offender must be shared with the authorized agencies.
7. The above procedures will also be followed by adult educators with regard to children who are or, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, appear to be under the age of 18 years of age. However, adult educators are not required to inform the principal of the school.

Supt. of Child Welfare
Department of Social Services
Box 1320
Yellowknife, X1A 2L9
(403-873-7709)