

A Guide for Community Leaders: Re-establishing Safety within a Community

There is an array of impacts felt by communities when it comes to cases of child victimization. A response plan is needed that considers the diverse support needs of individuals within the community.

What do community leaders need to do?

It is important for community leaders to be role models for community members. They can do this by:

- Displaying evidence of self care, such as sharing with staff and community members what they are doing to help move on from the experience. For example, they could share that they are talking to a professional to help them process the situation, and encourage others to do the same so they can take care of themselves. Another example they could share is that they are getting regular exercise and sleep.
- Reaching out to services that will help organize and lead support groups within the community for staff and parents.

What do the children and families need?

There are two types of children to consider:

1. Direct victims — these children will need counseling. They will need to be worked with individually.
2. Children who don't really understand what is going on — these children have likely heard rumours about a child in the community who has been abducted. This can be scary and cause stress for some kids. Based on what they have heard, children may be afraid that someone will try to hurt them or someone close to them. Some children who have trauma histories may need to work through their processing with a trained counsellor.

What can community leaders do?

- Discuss how people feel when someone is harmed within the community.
- Provide a handout to parents (see Restoring Community Connections handout).
- Invite parents to a community evening (support group) to help them process their own feelings so they can model healthy behaviour and help their child move forward.
- Use developmentally-appropriate material to teach children about personal safety (see kidsintheknow.ca).

