



# **NIAGARA REGIONAL POLICE SERVICE**

## **Police Services Board Report**

### **PUBLIC AGENDA**

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**Subject:** Annual Report – Child Abuse and Neglect  
January 1 to December 31, 2023

**Report To:** Chair and Members, Niagara Police Services Board

**Report Date:** 2024-02-22

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### **Recommendation(s)**

**That the Niagara Police Services Board (Board) receive this report for information.**

### **Key Facts**

- The purpose of this report is to advise the Board that the Niagara Regional Police Service (Service) is in compliance with By-Law 219-2000 – Child Abuse and Neglect.
- By-Law 219-2000 contains provisions requiring the Chief of Police to report specific information in order to ensure compliance with the legislative guidelines.
- This report is submitted to provide the Board with the necessary and required information pursuant to the operation of the Child Abuse Unit (CAU).

### **Financial Considerations**

There are no financial implications relating to the recommendations contained within this report.

### **Analysis**

In accordance with By-Law 219-2000, the Chief shall make a written report to the Board on or before August 30 of each year in respect of investigations into child abuse and neglect. The report shall include:

- a) A summary of the written procedures concerning investigations into child abuse and neglect;
- b) Confirmation that the procedures and protocol are being complied with; and
- c) A summary of the training given to members regarding investigations into child abuse and neglect.

This Board Report will outline each of the above and confirm compliance with the By-Law.

The CAU is staffed by one detective sergeant and six detective constables who are responsible for investigating the following:

- Incidents of child abuse by a caregiver that have occurred in the Niagara Region;
- Incidents of child sexual abuse that have occurred in the Niagara Region;
- Cases of neglect where serious injuries have resulted, a life has been endangered or where there has been a failure to provide the necessities of life; and
- Attempted murder of a child by a person having charge, care, or authority over a child.

a) *"...a summary of the written procedures concerning investigations into child abuse and neglect..."*

GO 084.08 - Child Abuse and Neglect was last revised in 2021 and is the primary Order related to this By-Law. The Order was authorized and has been fully implemented.

The Child Abuse Protocol is a procedural document that has been adopted by Family and Children Services (FACS), Ministry of the Attorney General for Niagara North and Niagara South, Victim/Witness Assistance Program, and the Office of the Regional Coroner for Niagara. This Protocol serves as a strategy for the coordination of a multidisciplinary response to issues of child abuse and neglect and is included as an attachment to the Child Abuse and Neglect GO.

The Protocol has been updated to reflect changes to the Child, Youth and Family Services Act (CYFSA). At year end, the Protocol had not been finalized; minor changes require further review by community stakeholders and the Service before it is presented to the Board for approval. During 2023, child abuse and neglect investigations were still guided by the 2017 Child Abuse Protocol, and further by procedural amendments to the CYFSA, enacted in 2019 and 2020.

The Child Abuse Protocol contains guidelines that promote inter-agency cooperation and effective response.

b) *"...confirmation that the procedures and protocol are being complied with..."*

Investigations are conducted in accordance with GO 084.08 and the Child Abuse Protocol and are compliant with procedures established in these documents.

A positive working relationship exists between members of CAU and their counterparts at FACS. Issues with respect to the interpretation of the Child Abuse Protocol are resolved informally, usually to the mutual satisfaction of both agencies.

The Kristen French Child Advocacy Centre of Niagara (KFCACN) continues to support a multi-disciplinary team approach to investigations, and a child-friendly environment to conduct forensic interviews with child victims and witnesses. CAU investigators attend the Centre on an as-needed basis during joint investigations with the on-site team of FACS Niagara child protection workers. The Service provides partial funding on an annual basis toward the operating costs of the KFCACN.

The Child Abuse Review Team (CART), led by FACS, and currently chaired by Detective Sergeant Allender, facilitates a coordinated multi-disciplinary review of child abuse and neglect issues, with representation from the Service, local school boards, medical staff, and mental health officials.

In 2023, 245 incidents of child abuse or neglect were investigated by CAU. Investigators conducted 219 child interviews and laid 88 criminal charges in 26 incidents. Additionally, members of the unit reviewed and monitored referrals to and from FACS Niagara involving child welfare concerns in accordance with the Child Abuse Protocol. The CAU had grounds to lay criminal charges in 14 additional investigations in which extra judicial measures, community resources or diversionary programs were utilized in lieu of criminal charges. The diversionary measures or extra judicial measures were primarily utilized in cases where the suspect was a young offender.

Year	Incidents Investigated	Child Interviews	Criminal Charges	Cleared by Charge
2021	272	234	227	37
2022	291	270	151	57
2023	245	219	88	26

In summary, the Service is in compliance with the written procedures outlined in the GO.

c) *"...a summary of the training given to members regarding investigations into child abuse and neglect..."*

All members of the CAU are required by the Provincial Adequacy Standard Regulation (LE-027) to obtain the following training:

- Criminal Investigator Training;
- Ontario Major Case Management;
- Sexual Assault Investigation;
- Investigation of Offences against Children; and
- Investigative Interviewing Techniques.

New investigators assigned to the CAU are required to attend the above-noted training as soon as practicable; however, some courses are only offered once or twice a year

and have prerequisite training. Accordingly, it can take in excess of a year for new investigators to become fully trained.

### **Alternatives Reviewed**

Not applicable.

### **Relationship to Police Service/Board Strategic Priorities**

To comply with the provisions of Police Services Board By-Laws and to maintain compliance with the Provincial Adequacy Standards Regulations.

### **Relevant Policy Considerations**

Police Services Board By-Law 219-2000 – Child Abuse and Neglect  
General Order 084.08 – Child Abuse and Neglect  
Provincial Adequacy Standards Regulation, LE-027 – Child Abuse and Neglect

### **Other Pertinent Reports**

8.6.2023.03.23 - Annual Report – Child Abuse and Neglect - January 1 to December 31, 2022

*This report was prepared by Nick Allender, Detective Sergeant, Child Abuse Unit, in consultation with Mike Casella, Staff Sergeant, Special Victims Unit. Reviewed by David Masotti, Inspector, Investigative Support Services, and recommended by Todd Waselovich, Deputy Chief, Operational Services.*



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#### **Submitted by:**

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Chief of Police

### **Appendices**

Not applicable.