

## Does Your Child or Family Need A Helping Hand? Warning Signs and Tips

We all know youth who struggle to get along with others, are "in trouble" more than they are out of it, or "hang around with a bad crowd." We all know families overwhelmed by trying to parent difficult kids. You've likely seen articles and commercials advising parents to watch for sudden changes in mood, grades, sleep habits, or social circle. Indeed, these are common warnings.

Allow me to point out a difficult youth's greatest risk and greatest reason for hope: the family. Most treatments to curb behavioural problems in youth involve parent training and family support. Even if the youth is considered "the" problem, leading a happier, more harmonious family life is difficult to achieve without engaging the key players: parents & step-parents.

Remember, this is not a "blame game." Finding help that works is more important than pinning responsibility

on one or two family members. In most cases, arguing about whose fault it is only delays a solution and incites more conflict.

Sometimes, the youth will seem like "the main problem;" in some situations, other family members also struggle. Either way,



parent training programs are very powerful antidotes to misbehaviour and daily struggles. They are thoroughly researched and no other single approach even comes close in restoring caregiver confidence, youth competence, or family harmony.

Parenting skills groups offer support for the overwhelmed and teach valuable child management skills. Families come from all walks of life, sharing common frustrations

and the hope that family life can improve. Groups typically run for short periods. It may be hard to believe now, but small changes, used consistently, are proven to make a huge difference.

Helpful Resources - books available at the Strathcona County Library ([www.sclibrary.ab.ca](http://www.sclibrary.ab.ca))

- Barbara Coloroso is a world-renowned expert with helpful books like "Kids are Worth It," "Winning at Parenting" and "The Bully, the Bullied, and the Bystander."
- Dr. Michele Borba "The 7 Biggest Discipline Mistakes" and "7 Steps for Cooling Hot Tempers (in Kids and Parents)."
- Strathcona County Parent Link-parenting resources <http://www.strathcona.ab.ca/Strathcona/Departments/Family+and+Community+Services/Parent+Link/default.htm>
- Strathcona County Family and Community Services – parenting programs -

<http://www.strathcona.ab.ca/Strathcona/Departments/Family+and+Community+Services/Families/default.htm>

This article is one of a series by the Strathcona County Community Drug and Alcohol Strategy Committee addressing information about drug and alcohol issues. In the next article: **National Addictions Awareness Week.**

For a complete listing of resources available, pick up the Drug/Alcohol Resource Directory at the Strathcona County Health Centre located at 2 Brower Drive or at Strathcona County Family and Community Services located at 2755 Broadmoor Boulevard (2nd Floor) in Sherwood Park. Residents with questions about the strategy can call Strathcona County Family and Community Services at 780-464-4044.