

AFCCA: Youth Insights

What Youth Experiencing AFCCA Want to Help Other Youth Understand

"[AFCCA] can be like, really lonely and... [feel] like there's like not a lot of options... find your anchors that are going to help you cope through it."

What is AFCCA?

Aggression toward Family/Caregivers in Childhood and Adolescence (AFCCA) is a pattern of behaviour that causes significant physical and/or psychological harm to the child/teen showing the aggression, to the person(s) who the aggression is directed at, and to other family members who may witness it.

A recent study sought to identify the social, emotional, and mental health needs of young people impacted by AFCCA. Youth who had exhibited AFCCA and siblings impacted by AFCCA from across Canada participated in the study via surveys and interviews. You can learn more about this study [here](#).¹

AFCCA can look like

- swearing a lot, saying mean things or yelling at family members;
- threatening to hurt family members or pets;
- self-harming or hurting yourself;
- damaging objects or stealing money;
- physically hurting family members or pets;
- threatening to cause sexual harm to family members.

"When I don't feel my voice is heard, it makes me angry... but I... didn't have the coping mechanisms to realize why I was feeling how I was feeling and acting how I was acting."

"I needed help, but they weren't hearing that I needed help."

"...I guess [I was] trying to communicate that I was... in a lot of distress. That I was in a lot of emotional pain and... very confused."

"I didn't care what was happening because I felt like no one [cared] about me."

"I was like really overwhelmed and... didn't know how to... cope and deal with the stuff I was feeling."

What's really happening:

Learn About Our Human Rights

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is an important agreement by countries who have promised to protect children's rights.

We have the right to be heard and to have our views taken seriously:

- We know it's hard to express our feelings, but we have the right to tell people how we feel.
- The adults in our lives want to help us, but it may be hard for them to understand how we're communicating.
- It's okay to ask our family and other adults or friends for help!
- We have the right to support and treatment that can help us, and for our families to make sure that our feelings are better understood.

Please learn more about our rights based on the [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#).

When a youth is experiencing AFCCA, here's what they want other youth to know:

- It can feel lonely and isolating, sometimes. But we are not alone, and we have the right to receive help!
- Sometimes it can feel like the adults in our life don't understand our feelings. Finding other young people to connect with may help us feel seen and understood.
- It often gets better! For some young people, AFCCA stopped as we got older and we were able to learn and grow from their experiences. In many cases, our family relationships got better too.

¹DeCarlo-Slobodnik, D., & Gervais, C. (2022). *Young persons' reflections on their rights as children in the context of aggression toward family and caregivers in childhood and adolescence*. University of Ottawa. <https://www.adopt4life.com/resource-library/young-persons-reflections-on-their-rights-as-children-in-the-context-of-afcca>

