



# health care

and the United Nations Convention  
on the Rights of the Child



A guide for people who work for or with children and youth

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### Design explanation !

The graphic shows the letter "i" emphasized in the words "rights of the child." The idea behind this is that the "i" is important in both; each individual right is important, as is the importance of each child entitled to these rights. The "i" also serves as a silhouette of a child. The explanation mark drives home the point that this is an important issue that needs our attention. The mock world that forms the period of the exclamation mark emphasizes that this is an important global issue, one we all have to work together for, and that applies to all the world's children.



## Contents

Letter from the CCRC .....	2
Common Questions about Children's Rights .....	4
Common Questions about Health Care and Children's Rights .....	11
Index to the CRC Articles .....	16
Children's Rights Quiz .....	17



Dear Friend:

During the spring and summer of 2001, the Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children (CCRC), with funding from Human Resources Development Canada, began a project to spread awareness of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). This booklet is one outcome of that project.

The first stage of our project involved assessing existing knowledge of the principles and provisions of the CRC among those who work with or on behalf of children. We contacted 1700 such people or organizations across Canada and found a real eagerness for more information. We developed a prototype information booklet, which was evaluated by representatives of various stakeholders at two one-day workshops held in Ottawa in June of 2001. Modifications to both style and content were made based on their recommendations and a further evaluation was conducted by a specialist in the field. Over the next four months, approximately 400 draft booklets were pilot tested by people in a variety of organizations. Their experiences and recommendations were taken into account when developing this booklet. We are extremely grateful to all the people who so generously gave of their time and expertise.

This booklet is one of seven that were developed to provide an overview of the CRC for people who work with and on behalf of children in the following areas:

- child care
- education
- health care
- justice
- protection
- recreation
- resource and support programs

For copies of these booklets, contact the CCRC or download them from the CCRC website. We hope that they will be a useful reference for you.

Our aim is, with your help, to improve the lives of children and in so doing to work together toward building a culture of peace.

Sincerely,

**Board of Directors 2002,  
Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children**

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### What are children's rights?

Children's rights are described in the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC). The CRC describes three categories of rights.

- Rights of *provision*, for example, the right to adequate education and health care.
- Rights of *protection*, for example, the right to be protected from abuse and neglect.
- Rights of *participation*, for example, the right to be heard in matters affecting the child.

### What is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child?

On November 20, 1989, the United Nations General Assembly unanimously adopted the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, the most comprehensive treaty for the protection and support of children in existence today. It reaffirms the fact that children, due to their vulnerability, need special care and protection, defined in terms of rights. The CRC has been ratified by more countries than any other human rights treaty in history. Canada is one of 191 nations that have signed and ratified the CRC, demonstrating our government's commitment to recognize the fundamental human dignity of our children, and to ensure their well being and healthy development. (The USA and Somalia are the only 2 countries that have not ratified the CRC.)

### How does the CRC define a child?

The CRC defines a child as every person under the age of 18, unless under a particular law the age of majority is attained earlier.

To ratify means to approve and sanction formally. Canada ratified the CRC in 1991.

### Why do we need the CRC in Canada?

Overall, Canadian laws, policies and practices provide relatively well for children's rights. Nonetheless, many children in Canada live in poverty. Some Canadian children receive inadequate health care and experience poor nutrition, and some are abused or exploited. Also, a substantial number of Canada's refugee and immigrant population are children who are living with the long-term trauma of war or civil conflict. The CRC, then, is a valuable means of emphasizing the continuing need to protect children from conditions that compromise their healthy development, and to provide optimal conditions to ensure their well-being.

The CRC also articulates the need for meaningful participation of children in matters that affect them. Canadian children are given few opportunities for input in decisions that affect them in their families, schools and communities. The CRC encourages meaningful opportunities for youth participation and acknowledges the value of participation as a necessary part of healthy development.

### But we have a Charter over Rights in Canada; why do we need something more?

The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, as well as other international human rights treaties and provincial human rights legislation, applies to all adults and in many cases to children. However, these human rights documents and laws do not deal with the rights of children in a clear and systematic way. Nor do they recognize the unique developmental needs of children. The CRC is important as it clearly recognizes children as independent rights-bearing persons and focuses on the specific needs of children for healthy development.

### FYI

For more information about the status of children's rights in Canada see:

Canada's NGO Report to the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children, [www.rightsofchildren.ca](http://www.rightsofchildren.ca)

How Does Canada Measure Up? [www.rightsofchildren.ca](http://www.rightsofchildren.ca)

Covell, K. & R. Brian Howe (2001). *The Challenge of Children's Rights for Canada*. Wilfrid Laurier University Press. ISBN: 0 88920 380 6

Convention on the Rights of the Child: Second Report of Canada. Canadian Heritage, 15 Eddy Street, Hull, Quebec, K1A 0M5; Phone (819) 997-0055

Online version of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, [www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/k2crrc.htm](http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/k2crrc.htm)

For a youth-friendly version, Say It Right! The Unconventional Canadian Youth Edition of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Available through CCRC, c/o Canadian Institute of Child Health, Suite 300, 384 Bank Street, Ottawa, Ontario, K2P 1Y4.

## Does the CRC address responsibilities?

With rights come responsibilities. The CRC outlines the following responsibilities:

- *For governments:* to support families and communities, and to respect and provide for the rights of children through laws, policies and special programs.
- *For parents:* to provide for the rights and best interests of their children.
- *For society:* to respect the rights of children and to support programs that provide for children's rights.
- *For children:* to respect the rights of others. (Studies show that the more children know about their own rights, the more likely they are to respect the rights of others.)

## How is the CRC interpreted?

Four principles serve to guide interpretation of the CRC:

1. *The best interests principle.* The CRC requires that the best interests of the child be a primary consideration in all decisions that affect children (*Article 3*).
2. *Non-discrimination.* All children, regardless of their ethnocultural, socioeconomic, or health status must have their rights respected and be protected from any form of discrimination (*Article 2*).
3. *Life, survival and development.* Every child has the inherent right to life, survival and optimum development (*Article 6*).
4. *Participation.* Children must be given the opportunity to express their views and have those views considered in all matters that affect them, in accordance with their evolving capacities (*Articles 12, 13, 14 and 15*).

## What does the CRC mean for parents?

The CRC recognizes the fundamental importance of the family to healthy child development (*Preamble*, and *Articles 3, 5, 9, 14 and 18*).

## The CRC addresses children's participation. Does this mean we're supposed to let children make all of their own decisions?

No. *Article 12* requires that children be given meaningful and age-appropriate opportunities for participation in matters that affect them. However, this does not mean that children should be given absolute decision-making power. Under the CRC, parents and other adults have the responsibility to engage children as active and valued participants in all decisions that affect them, while providing them with advice and appropriate guidance. Adults can provide age-appropriate opportunities for decision-making by encouraging younger children to participate in everyday decisions (such as whether they would prefer milk or juice with their breakfast). As children mature, their capacity for autonomous decision-making increases and greater independence should be encouraged.

Age-appropriate opportunities for participation are essential to healthy child development. When adults are interested in children's thoughts and respect children's opinions, their self-esteem is affected in a positive manner. Also, when children are guided in making positive decisions, they learn skills necessary to become active and responsible members of society.

## Does the CRC require protection of children from abuse?

The CRC requires Canada to take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect children from all forms of abuse and neglect (*Articles 19, 32, 33, 34, 36 and 37*). The experience of abuse or neglect has a negative effect on children's physical, mental and emotional well-being which may persist over their lifespan. Recognizing the serious and persistent effects of such experiences, the CRC requires that any child who is a victim of abuse,



For more information about the effects of teaching children about their rights, see the following articles:

Covell, K. & Howe, R.B. (1999). The impact of children's rights education: A Canadian study. *International Journal of Children's Rights*, vol. 7, pp. 171-183.

Covell, K. & Howe, R.B. (2001). Moral education through the 3 Rs: Rights, respect, and responsibility. *Journal of Moral Education*, vol. 30 (1), pp. 31-42.

neglect, exploitation or torture be provided with treatment that will promote both physical and psychological recovery, and social reintegration (*Article 39*).

### **Are there any special protections for ethnic, religious and linguistic minority groups and for Aboriginal children?**

A fundamental principle of the CRC is non-discrimination (*Article 2*). The rights of each child are to be respected. However, there are also special provisions in the CRC for children who are members of indigenous or ethnocultural minority groups. Under *Article 30*, children belonging to any minority or indigenous group have the right to enjoy their own culture, practice their own religion, and use their own language. *Article 31* recognizes the right of children to participate freely in cultural life, and requires governments to encourage the provision of opportunities for participation in cultural activities.

The CRC also provides special protections for Aboriginal and minority children who must be removed from the family. When placing children in alternative care, all efforts should be made to place the child in a culturally similar home (*Article 20*). However, if a culturally appropriate placement is not available, alternative caregivers should guide and encourage children to continue to practice their own culture.

### **Does the CRC apply to Canadian law?**

Canada ratified the UN *Convention on the Rights of the Child* on December 13, 1991. However, upon ratification the articles contained within the CRC did not automatically become part of Canadian law. Ratification of the CRC requires Canada to review domestic laws and practices regarding children and to revise public policy and practice such that the minimum standards set by the CRC are reached over time.

As an international treaty, the CRC is a part of binding international human rights law. As such, Canadian courts have begun to consider the CRC when making decisions affecting children. In addition, Canadian organizations that work with or on behalf of children should use the CRC as a reference point when setting standards. The CRC can serve as an effective tool for child advocates in their work to improve the situation for children.

### **How has the CRC been used in Canada to defend the rights of children?**

The CRC has been used in a number of ways to defend and promote the rights of children in Canada.

- The CRC has been used as an educational tool. For example workshops have been held to inform teachers, child protection workers and police officers about the CRC and the importance of its implementation. Such workshops encourage respect for children's rights, and remind adults of the unique developmental needs of children.
- The CRC has been used effectively as an advocacy tool. For example, child advocates were successful in getting the CRC included in the preamble to the new Youth Criminal Justice Act. This means that the CRC can and should be used by the courts and justice officials when interpreting the Act.
- Recently, the CRC has been used as an interpretive guide in court cases in both the Supreme Court and lower courts of Canada involving children and families. For example, several family court cases have used *Article 3* of the CRC to reinforce the "best interests of the child" standard already present in Canadian law. The CRC has been used in other cases to justify the definition of a youthful offender. Immigration cases have also cited the CRC to prevent the separation of children from their families.



See the following cases for more information on the use of the CRC in Canadian courts:

Young v. Young, [1993] 4 S.C. R. 3. R. v. L. (D.O.), [1993] 4 S.C.R. 419

Francis (Litigation guardian of v. Canada (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration),

- The CRC can be used by each of us to remind governments of their obligations and to encourage them to work towards compliance with the CRC, and to encourage the public to support their efforts.

### How is the CRC enforced?

Upon signing the CRC, the Canadian government was required to report its progress to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child. The first report was due two years after ratification, and additional reports are due every five years (*Article 44*). Upon reviewing Canada's reports, the UN Committee makes recommendations for changes in policy and practice, which Canada is expected to consider and to report back on progress in the next report. However, no formal measures exist to enforce the CRC or the Committee's suggestions. The basic method of enforcement is through domestic and international pressure. Groups such as the CCRC support this work through monitoring and reporting on Canada's progress towards meeting these obligations under the CRC (*Article 45*).

### What does the CRC say about health care for children?

*Article 24* recognizes the right of children to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health and to have access to treatment facilities. *Article 27* addresses the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's development including nutrition.

Although the CRC states that parents have the primary responsibility to secure these conditions for their children, it also recognizes the responsibilities of governments to assist parents in providing for these rights. Governments have an important role to play in ensuring that adequate funding is allocated to provide health care for children, even in difficult economic times.

Health care is a provincial jurisdiction, but the federal government has established principles under the *Canada Health Act* for the provinces to follow. And since Canada's provinces have approved the CRC, they are responsible for providing the best possible health care to children.

*Article 24.2* specifies a number of health-care goals that are seen as particularly important. Canada must take appropriate measures to diminish infant and child mortality, to ensure provision of necessary health care to each child, and to combat disease and malnutrition. Recognizing the importance of the prenatal and infancy periods, the CRC calls for the development of preventative health care services, guidance for parents, and family planning education and services.



For more information about the health of Canada's children check out the resources available through:

- the Canadian Institute of Child Health at [www.cich.ca/resource.htm](http://www.cich.ca/resource.htm)
- the Canadian Health Network at [www.canadian-health-network.ca](http://www.canadian-health-network.ca)

## Did You Know...

During the 1990s there was an increase in the incidence of low birth-weight and pre-term births. This may in part have resulted from poor prenatal care and fetal exposure to toxins. Data indicate that during this period approximately 18% of pregnant women consumed alcohol, 24% smoked, and 7% used illegal drugs.

Exposure to tobacco smoke represents a major avoidable threat to the health of Canada's children. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s there was a 400% increase in childhood asthma. Environmental tobacco smoke likely played a role in these increases considering that in the 1990s, 33% of children were regularly exposed to tobacco smoke in the home, and 85% of children who lived with a smoker were given no protection against the smoke.

Throughout the 1990s the number of children relying on food banks has been steadily increasing. Between 1989 and 2000, the number of children relying on donated food increased more than 85%. And, inadequate nutrition is not always a result of poverty. Although the national poverty rate was 20% in 2000, 31% of elementary students and 62% of secondary students did not eat breakfast daily.

In particular, governments should work toward ensuring that mothers receive pre-natal and post-natal health care, and that there is widespread education about basic child health and nutrition, the advantages of breast-feeding, hygiene and environmental sanitation, and the prevention of accidents (injuries).

### Does the CRC address environmental health?

Under *Article 24*, in combating disease and malnutrition, Canada should take measures to provide nutritious foods and clean drinking water taking into consideration the dangers and risks of environmental pollution. In addition, the CRC states that Canada is required to ensure the survival and development of children to the maximum extent possible (*Article 6*), and recognizes the rights of children to the highest attainable standard of health (*Article 24*). All children should be provided with clean and healthy environments, and should be protected from the negative effects of exposure to environmental hazards.

### What does the CRC say about the treatment children are to receive?

The CRC does not provide specific guidelines for treatment as long as, according to *Article 3*, the best interest of the child is a primary concern in any action taken. However, the CRC does require, under *Article 25*, that children placed by authorities for the treatment of physical or mental health be provided with a periodic review of their treatment. A health care professional must periodically reassess the state of the child's health and determine if the treatment being used is still appropriate and effective. If not, the treatment should be changed so as to promote the best possible outcome for the child.

### Should children have a say in decisions about their treatment?

Yes. Under *Article 12* of the CRC, children who are capable of forming their own views have the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting them. So, if a child is capable of forming an opinion, he or she should be allowed to have input into treatment decisions. However, this does not mean that children should necessarily make the final decision about their treatment. Parents have the responsibility to provide children with direction in the exercise of their rights, but the child's views should be sought, and given weight in accordance with the child's age and maturity (*Articles 5 and 12*).

For young children, the various treatment options should be explained in language they can understand, and they should be able to have input into the decisions made by their doctors and parents. Older children may be more capable of determining what is appropriate for them. Children should not be forced to make such decisions; *Article 12* gives children the right to express their views, but there may be situations in which children prefer not to be involved in decision-making.

Allowing children to participate in decision-making may also be important for the child's health. For example, the child's input can be sought on which kind of medication is preferred – pill or liquid form and, when possible, if treatment is received at home or in the hospital setting. Recent research has shown that children who have input into decisions that affect their health feel empowered and more in control, leading them to adopt more positive attitudes toward their illness and treatment. They may also be more likely to comply with treatment regimens. Compliance with treatment and positive attitudes will likely lead to better outcomes.

## STOP and Think

The CRC makes it clear that all children should receive high quality health care, regardless of their family's financial situation. Here in Canada, many people assume that this is the case due to our universal health care system. However, in a recent consultation with NGOs from across Canada, a number of situations were discussed in which our health care system seems to fall short:

- There is significant inter-provincial and intra-provincial variability in availability of services, particularly for children living in rural, northern, and Aboriginal communities.
- Although most basic services are free, charges are often applied for things like eye examinations and glasses, dental services, medications and assisted devices such as wheelchairs and artificial limbs.
- There is a lack of mental health services for all children and youth, and an even greater lack for Aboriginal and marginalized youth, despite higher rates of substance abuse and suicide among these youth.
- Children with disabilities and chronic diseases are most at risk during times of fiscal restraint.

Think about children's rights to health care under the CRC.

What policies and practices need to be changed to ensure that all children have this right provided for?

Can you think of any situations in your experience where a child has not received the quality of care he or she needed?

What actions might be taken to ensure children's health care rights are implemented?



Many people think that young children should not know very much about their illness and treatment, and that giving children such information would only frighten them. Something to consider is what children imagine to be occurring if the situation is not explained to them in an age-appropriate manner. During recent consultations with health care professionals, a story was told about a young boy whose best friend died from leukemia when they were six. Over the next few years, the boy began to experience increasing behavior problems in school, and was eventually sent to see a mental health professional. During therapy it was revealed that the boy, due to the secrecy and whispering surrounding his friend's death, had thought he had caught the leukemia. His behaviour problems were due to his fear that he too would soon die. Think about situations in your career in which information may have been withheld from children to keep them from being frightened.

Is there a way such situations can be explained so that the child can understand?

What might children think was occurring in such situations?

## What information should children be given about their health and/or illness?

Under *Article 13*, children have the right to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas of all kinds. In addition, if children are to have meaningful input into treatment decisions, they need accurate information about their illness and treatment options. Of course, this information should be presented and explained to children in an age-appropriate manner.

*Article 17* specifically recognizes the child's right to access information aimed at promoting their social, spiritual and moral well-being and physical and mental health. Therefore, children should have access to any information that focuses on keeping children healthy and safe, for example, information on safety procedures (e.g., bike safety, preventing abduction), STDs and sex education, and how to obtain health care services when necessary (e.g., youth health centers). A further consideration is that a child has a right to privacy in receiving such information under *Article 16*, balanced by *Article 17(e)*, which protects children from information and material injurious to their well-being.

When respecting children's rights to access information, it is important to remember that, under *Article 5*, parents are responsible for providing children with direction and guidance in the exercise of their rights, and that under *Article 17*, children have the right to be protected from information and material that would be harmful to their well-being. So, access to certain types of information, for example graphic information that very young children might not understand, can be restricted to protect the child's best interests.

## What if a practice that is harmful to a child's health is part of his or her culture?

Under *Article 30* of the CRC, children have the right to

enjoy their own culture. However, as described in *Article 24*, there are limitations. We have to do whatever we can to abolish traditional practices that are harmful to a child's health. An example of such a practice is female genital mutilation. We can also consider *Article 37*, which states that no child should be subject to torture or other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, and *Article 3*, which emphasizes that the child's best interests be a primary consideration. In addition to the CRC, there are laws to protect all Canadian children from such practices, whether they are performed in Canada or elsewhere.

## What does the CRC say about caring for children with special needs?

Although all articles of the CRC are meant to apply to all children, *Article 23* specifically describes rights for children with disabilities. Children with disabilities, physical or mental, have the right to enjoy a full and decent life. They should be able to live in conditions that promote self-reliance, individual development, including cultural and spiritual development, and the fullest possible social integration, including active participation in the community. Towards these ends, children with disabilities have the right to special care as needed. Services to be provided include special educational opportunities, training, health care, rehabilitation, preparation for employment, and recreation opportunities. Where possible, services should be provided at no or minimal cost to allow for equal access.

Under *Article 23*, Canada also has an important role to play internationally in providing or exchanging information concerning preventative health care and medical and psychological treatment of children with disabilities. This is intended to improve the capabilities and skills of health care professionals to help provide better care for all children with disabilities.



For more information about children's competency in making medical decisions, see Brenda S. Miles' article, "Are Adolescents Competent Decision Makers?" in Covell (ed.) *Readings in Child Development*, Nelson Canada: Scarborough, ON, 1995.



A traditional Canadian practice is male circumcision. Some people feel that male circumcision is a harmless procedure, and have their sons circumcised because it is part of their culture, thought to be a health practice, or seen as a normal and common practice. However, other people feel that baby boys should not be circumcised – they argue that it is not usually medically necessary to have a male circumcised at birth and that it is cruel to do so because the procedure does cause pain and may have lifelong implications.

What do you think?

What articles of the CRC apply to each side of the argument?

Which side has a stronger case?  
Don't forget to consider the guiding principles of the CRC in making your decision.

## Index to the CRC Articles

Issue	Key Articles
Aboriginal	8, 30, 31
Access to Information	17
Adoption	21
Alternative Care	20
Armed Conflict	38
Best Interests	3
Child Care	3, 18
Children's Rights Education	42
Children with Disabilities	23
Definition of a Child	1
Drugs	33
Economic Exploitation	32
Education	28, 29
Family Upbringing (State Help, Childcare)	18
Family Reunification	10
Freedom of Association and Assembly	15
Freedom of Expression	13
Freedom of Thought, Conscience & Religion	14
Government Responsibility	4
Life, Survival & Development	6
Health	24
Justice	36, 37, 40
Language	30
Minorities (ethnic, religious or linguistic)	30
Name, Nationality & Identity	7, 8
Non-Discrimination	2
Parental Guidance	5, 14
Participation	12
Play & Leisure	31
Privacy	16
Protection from Abuse & Exploitation	19, 32, 34, 36, 37
Recovery & Reintegration	39
Refugee Children	22
Review of Treatment	25
Sale & Traffic of Children	35
Separation from Parents	9, 20, 25
Sexual Exploitation	34
Social Security/Social Insurance	26
Standard of Living	27
Supremacy of Higher Standards	41
Transfer Abroad	11

## Children's Rights Quiz

Test your knowledge of the CRC! Read each of the following statements and decide if you think they are true or false. Then turn to page 28 to see how you did!

1. Almost all countries in the world ratified the CRC in the 1990s.
2. The CRC gives children the right to express and have their opinions heard regarding decisions that affect them.
3. When children are in foster care, the CRC requires that all aspects of their placement be reviewed regularly.
4. The CRC indicates that young people should not have to take jobs that leave little time for social activities.
5. The CRC defines children as all persons up to age 16.
6. The CRC requires the provinces to take measures to encourage school attendance and reduce drop-out rates.
7. The CRC is silent on the issue of protecting children from the illicit use of narcotics.
8. Under the CRC, Canada should provide special protection and assistance to children who are seeking refugee status, regardless of their parents' situation.
9. Under the CRC, children who are sick have the right to participate in decisions about their treatment.
10. The CRC says that school discipline should be consistent with the child's dignity.
11. The CRC upholds the family as the fundamental group of society.
12. The CRC is silent on the issue of privacy for children.
13. The CRC does not address the issue of whether a child has rights prior to birth.
14. The CRC allows for traditional practices that may compromise the health of the child, if the practices are an integral part of the family's cultural heritage.

15. Upon ratification, the CRC became part of Canadian law.
16. The CRC says that governments should take measures to ensure there is child care available to those who need it, as long as they are eligible for it.
17. The CRC requires that the Canadian government provide some international assistance.
18. The CRC recognizes the right of the child to have a voice in community decision-making affecting youth.
19. Implementation of the CRC in Canada is the sole responsibility of the federal government.
20. Under the CRC, it is parents, not governments, who are charged with providing an adequate standard of living for their children.
21. The CRC says that in custody disputes, children have the right to have their views heard and taken into account.
22. Under the CRC, Canadian governments should take measures to ensure that children have access to information that promotes their health and well-being.
23. The CRC does not address the issue of religious freedoms for children.
24. The CRC fails to provide for the due process of young offenders.
25. The CRC says that its principles must be made known to those working with children, although not necessarily to children themselves.
26. Under the CRC, custody of juvenile offenders is to be used only as a last resort.
27. The CRC addresses child prostitution, but is silent on the use of children in pornography.
28. Under the CRC, children have the right to be protected from all forms of physical and mental violence.
29. The CRC requires that children who have experienced any form of abuse, neglect, or exploitation be provided with rehabilitative care.

30. The CRC requires that First Nations or minority children be provided with opportunities to practice their own culture but not necessarily their own language.
31. Under the CRC, children have the right to access information via the internet, subject to parental guidance.
32. The CRC does not address the issue of discrimination against children.
33. Under the CRC, children have the right to have their voices heard in the determination of school rules such as dress codes.
34. The CRC recognizes the right of the child to play and leisure.
35. The CRC has been used by the court as an interpretive guide in legal cases.
36. Under the CRC, children with disabilities have the right to education that helps them achieve self-reliance.
37. The CRC obligates Canadian governments to not only provide health care for pregnant women, but also to teach them the advantages of breastfeeding.
38. The CRC recognizes the right of children who are removed from their biological parents to have input into decisions about their placements.
39. The CRC pits children's rights against parental rights.
40. One problem with the CRC is that it does not take into account the evolving capacities of children.

**Now turn the page to find out how you did!**



## Answers

1. True – According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 191 countries had ratified the CRC by 1997. This means that the CRC has been ratified by all but two countries — the United States of America and Somalia.
2. True – Article 12 states that children who are capable of forming their own views have the right to express those views freely in all matters that affect them. The views of the child are to be given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.
3. True – Article 25 recognizes the right of any child who has been placed by authorities for purposes of care or protection to a periodic review of their treatment or placement.
4. True – Under the CRC, children are permitted to work. However, Article 32 recognizes the right of the child to be protected from any work that will be harmful to the child’s physical, mental, spiritual, moral, and social development, and work that does not leave time for social activities will hamper many aspects of the child’s development. In addition, such work is a violation of the child’s right to rest, leisure, play, and recreational activities, which is articulated in Article 31.
5. False – Article 1 defines children as every human being below the age of eighteen years, unless domestic law says otherwise.
6. True – Article 28.1(e) says that countries shall take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rates. Because education in Canada is under provincial jurisdiction and the provinces have ratified the Convention, this responsibility becomes a provincial one.
7. False – In fact, the CRC has an article that specifically addresses this issue. Article 33 states that countries must take all appropriate measures to protect children from the illicit use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, and to prevent the use of children in the illicit production and trafficking of such substances.
8. True – Under Article 22.1, any child who is a refugee or is seeking refugee status must receive appropriate protection and humanitarian assistance, whether unaccompanied or accompanied by his or her parents or by any other person. In addition, Article 2 obligates countries to ensure the rights of children without discrimination, including discrimination based on the status of the child’s parents.

9. True – As with question 2, Article 12 states that children who are capable of forming their own views have the right to express those views freely in all matters that affect them, which would include treatment decisions.

10. True – Under Article 22.2 school discipline must be administered in a manner consistent with the child’s human dignity and in conformity with the CRC.

11. True – The CRC clearly recognizes the importance of the family. The fifth and sixth paragraphs of the preamble state that the family is the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of children, and that the child should grow up in a family environment. Articles 3.2, 5, and 14.2 recognize the rights and duties of parents or legal guardians to protect children and guide children in the exercise of their rights. Article 9 protects children from separation from their parents, unless such separation is in the child’s best interests, and outlines necessary procedures to allow the child to maintain contact with his or her parents in the event of such separation. Finally, Article 18 articulates the importance of both parents having common responsibilities for the child’s upbringing, and that parents or legal guardians have the primary responsibility for the development of the child.

12. False – Article 16 specifically recognizes a child’s right to privacy, stating that no child shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his or her privacy.

13. True – There is some mention in the CRC of the prenatal environment. The ninth paragraph of the preamble states that the child needs special safeguards and care before as well as after birth, and Article 24.2(d) obligates countries to ensure appropriate prenatal health care for mothers.

14. False – Although the CRC does stress the importance of culture, Article 24.3 requires States Parties to take effective and appropriate measures toward abolishing traditional practices that are detrimental to the health of children.

15. False – The CRC is a document of international law, but it does not automatically become part of Canadian law upon ratification. However, Article 4 obligates States Parties to undertake all appropriate legislative, administrative and other measures for the implementation of the CRC.

16. True – Article 18.3 says that countries shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that children of working parents have the right to benefit from child care services and facilities for which they are eligible.

17. True – The CRC promotes international assistance and co-operation in numerous areas. Under Article 4, with regard to economic, social, and cultural rights, States Parties are to undertake implementation measures within the framework of international cooperation. In addition, international cooperation is encouraged in areas such as provision of health care (Article 24.4); elimination of illiteracy (Article 28.3); protection of children from abduction and trafficking (Article 35); exchange of information, particularly concerning preventative health care and the care of disabled children (Article 23.4); protection of children from sexual abuse and exploitation (Article 34); and protection and care of children affected by armed conflict (Article 38.4).

18. True – Article 12 states that children who are capable of forming their own views have the right to express those views freely in all matters that affect them, which would include many community decisions.

19. False – It is clear that Canada's federal government plays a major role in implementing the CRC. For example through providing funding to the provinces/territories, through research on child development and children's rights, and through promoting the CRC. Nonetheless, many of the areas addressed by the CRC fall under provincial or territorial jurisdiction. Implementation, then, is a joint responsibility of both levels of government.

20. False – In Articles 3.2, 18.1, and 27.2 the responsibility of parents to provide an adequate standard of living for their children is recognized. However, the CRC also recognizes that parents may need assistance to provide for their children's needs. Article 18.2 obligates countries to provide assistance to parents and legal guardians in the performance of the child-rearing responsibilities, and Article 27.3 specifies that this assistance should come in the form of material assistance and support programs, particularly with regard to nutrition, clothing and housing.

21. True – Article 12 states that children who are capable of forming their own views have the right to express those views freely in all matters that affect them, which would include custody decisions. Article 12.2 also makes specific mention of the child having the opportunity to be heard particularly in judicial and administrative procedures.

22. True – Article 13 articulates the child's basic right to freedom of expression, which includes the freedom to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas of all kinds. In addition, Article 17 and Article 24.2(e) also make specific mention of the child's right to access information aimed at the promotion of social, spiritual and moral well-being and physical and mental health, particularly concerning topics such as child health and nutrition, hygiene, and the prevention of accidents (injuries).

23. False – Under Article 14.1, the child has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. However, as stated by Article 14.2, parents and legal guardians should provide direction to the child in the exercise of this right, and this should be done in a manner consistent with the child's evolving capacities.

24. False – Articles 37 and 40 address issues that would apply to children in contact with the law. In general, these articles state that all children have the right to be treated with humanity and respect, and to be protected from all forms of torture, capital punishment, life imprisonment, and arbitrary or unlawful deprivation of liberty. Also, all children accused of crimes have the right to be informed promptly of the charges, to receive legal assistance, and to be presumed innocent until proven guilty in a prompt and fair trial.

25. False – Article 42 states that the principles and provisions of the CRC are to be made widely known, by appropriate and active means, to adults and children alike.

26. True – Article 37(b) states that the arrest, detention or imprisonment of a child should be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time.

27. False – Article 34 obligates States Parties to take all appropriate measures to prevent the use of children in pornographic performances and materials, and to protect children from other forms of sexual abuse.

28. True – Under Article 19.1, States Parties must take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect children from all forms of physical or mental violence.

29. True – Article 39 obligates States Parties to take appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of child victims in an environment that fosters the health, self-respect, and dignity of the child.

30. False – Article 30 states that children of ethnic, religious or linguistic minority and indigenous children have the right to use their own language, in addition to the right to enjoy their own culture, and to profess and practice their own religion.

31. True – Article 13 articulates the child’s general right to seek, receive, and impart information through any media of the child’s choice, and Article 17 obligates States Parties to ensure that the child has access to information and material from a diversity of sources. However, Article 17(e) encourages the development of appropriate guidelines to protect the child from information and material that will harm his or her well-being, and Article 5 articulates the parents’ responsibilities to provide the child with direction and guidance in exercising his or her rights, in accordance with the child’s evolving capacities.

32. False – Article 2 states that the rights in the CRC are to be provided for all children without discrimination and requires States Parties to take appropriate measures to protect the child against all forms of discrimination.

33. True – Article 12 states that children who are capable of forming their own views have the right to express those views freely in all matters that affect them, which would include school rules.

34. True – Article 31 recognizes children’s right to rest, leisure, play, recreational activities, cultural life, and the arts. Article 31.2 also asks States Parties to encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for such activities.

35. True – There has been increasing use of the CRC in both the Supreme Court and lower courts to interpret or supplement Canadian law.

36. True – Under Article 23.3, children with disabilities should have access to education, training, health care, rehabilitation, preparation for employment and recreation opportunities in a manner which allows the child to achieve social integration and individual development to the fullest extent possible. In addition, Article 23.1 recognizes the right of children with disabilities to enjoy a full life in conditions that promote self-reliance and facilitate the child’s active participation in the community.

37. True – Article 24.2(e) obligates States Parties to take all appropriate measures to ensure that all segments of society, in particular parents, are informed of and have access to education about the advantages of breastfeeding, and are supported in the use of breastfeeding.

38. True – Article 12 states that children who are capable of forming their own views have the right to express those views freely in all matters that affect them, which would include placement decisions. Article 12.2 also makes specific mention of the child having the opportunity to be heard in judicial and administrative procedures. In addition, Article 9.2 states that, when children are separated from their parents, all interested parties (which would include the child) should have the opportunity to participate in the proceedings and to have their views known.

39. False – Although the CRC focuses on the rights of children, it also recognizes the fundamental importance of the family to healthy child development and addresses the responsibilities of parents to provide for the rights and best interests of their children.

40. False – Article 5 articulates parents’ responsibilities to provide the child with direction and guidance in exercising his or her rights, in accordance with the child’s evolving capacities. Article 12.1 and Article 14.2 also reiterate this principle.

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