

PChAD Info for Parents

The Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act (PChAD) took effect in Alberta on July 1, 2006.

What now? What next?

Your child is struggling with an alcohol or drug addiction. You've tried virtually every avenue of treatment; done all you can to help. Nothing has worked. You feel frustrated, overwhelmed and powerless. And now you fear your child is in danger of harming himself or others. What do you do? Where can you turn? The PChAD program is here to support you.

What is PChAD?

The Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act (PChAD) is an Alberta law that takes effect on July 1, 2006 to help children under 18 years of age whose use of alcohol or drugs is likely to cause significant psychological or physical harm to themselves or others. The PChAD program allows you, as legal guardian, to ask the court for an apprehension and confinement order. This order will mean your child can be taken to a protective safe house for up to five days, even if he/she does not want to go.

This five-day period will provide your child with a structured and protective setting in which to begin detoxification, while offering parents an opportunity to get involved in the process. The time spent in the protective safe house also allows counsellors a chance to assess your child and offer treatment recommendations to follow once they have been discharged from the program.

How do I know if PChAD is the right program for my child?

AADAC offers a number of programs to assist children and their families with drug and alcohol-related issues. These services form a continuum from least to most intensive. If your family has tried AADAC's other options for intervention and voluntary treatment without success, PChAD may be the next step.

PChAD is a specialized, intensive service that is designed to help children who cannot help themselves and who are at risk for harming themselves or others. If you aren't sure if PChAD is the answer, call any [AADAC office](#) or the [AADAC Help Line at 1-866-332-2322](#). We'll provide the information you require to make the right decision for your child.

How do I get my child into the PChAD program?

In order to place your child in the PChAD program:

1. You must file an application with the Provincial Court of Alberta, Family Court. To learn how, call the Provincial Court Services or contact your lawyer.
2. You must notify AADAC of the application to the court by calling the phone number that appears on the Guide for Applicants Seeking Orders under the Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act.
3. You must then advise AADAC if the court order was granted. At that time, we will inform you of the location of the protective safe house where your child should be taken.

You may choose to transport your child yourself. If you cannot do this, (for example, because your child is no longer at home or you are unsure of his/her whereabouts), you may apply for a court order that authorizes the police to apprehend your child and take him/her to a protective safe house. This court order may also allow the police to search for your child and enter a place if they believe your child is there. If the police transport your child, it is their responsibility to contact AADAC to learn the location of the protective safe house where he/she should be taken.

What will happen to my child?

Under the PChAD legislation, your child can be confined to a protective safe house for a maximum of five days. During this time your child will undergo detoxification, a practice in which an individual is provided a safe and supportive environment during an acute withdrawal process from the effects of substance abuse.

Over the course of the five days, your child will also be assessed. AADAC counsellors use the assessment process as a tool to learn more about your child's alcohol and/or a drug use. It includes a review of substance abuse history and the impact of use on the child's major life areas, such as school, family, friends, and health. The information gathered in the assessment is then used to make treatment recommendations for your child once he/she is discharged from the protective safe house.

What are my child's rights under the PChAD act?

If your child is confined in a protective safe house under a PChAD court order, he/she will be advised:

- that he/she has the right to contact Legal Aid or a lawyer;
- why he/she has been confined;
- how long his/her confinement will last;
- that he/she has the right to ask the court for a review of the confinement order and will be given a Request for Review form; and
- that if a Request for Review is filed with the court, it will be reviewed within a day.

It is important to note that your child has a right to appeal the confinement and apprehension order at any time. If he/she makes a request for review and it is heard, the court may make an order confirming, varying or terminating the original order. The court cannot extend the period of confinement set by the original order.

What is my role in the process?

Parental support is critical to your child's recovery because young people look to primary relationships as a foundation on which to build a new, "non-using" life. That's why we encourage you to participate in your child's treatment program while he/she is residing in a protective safe house. The level of participation can vary and will depend upon the needs of your family. We offer services ranging from general information sessions to family counselling. Whichever route you choose, you'll find that getting involved with your child's treatment at an early stage will help lay the groundwork for a more cooperative and constructive recovery process.

What happens after the five days?

Our goal over the five-day period is to engage your family in the treatment process and encourage you to choose the counselling and/or treatment services you feel will work most effectively for your child once he has been discharged.

As your child transitions into voluntary treatment, AADAC offers several services to aid in the continuation of his recovery process. Your child can join one of many aftercare programs, such as a voluntary residential program, a weekly support group for teens or peer mentoring opportunities.

If you have questions about AADAC's programs or the PChAD program, contact any [AADAC office](#) (or listed in your local phone book under **Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission**) or call the [AADAC Help Line at 1-866-332-2322](#).