

STEP 1 - START RISK ASSESSMENT & INTERVENTION TOOL

- When I come into contact with a minor (or their parents) from a country where there is a greater risk of FGM/C
- and / or when the mother or sister of the minor has undergone FGM/C
- When someone tells me they are at risk of FGM/C

For more information go to www.endfgm.ca



STEP 2

DETECT AND EVALUATE THE RISK



STEP 3

TAKE ACTION TO PROTECT



Level 1: No - Low Risk

- The family has strong views against FGM/C
- Are aware that FGM/C is illegal in Canada
- No plans to travel
- Parents have recently signed an Statement of Honour to not carry out FGM/C on their daughters.
- The girl has refugee status specific to protecting her from the risk of undergoing FGM/C. > This suggests that at least one family member wants to protect the girl from FGM/C.

- Stay mindful of your internal bias when assessing a family's level of risk. See below.
- Build a trusted relationship with the family in order to have a holistic approach and identify if dynamics change
- Raise awareness among parents: explain Canadian law and the harms of FGM/C and suggest they take the online module at End FGM Canada Network, share the End FGM Canada pamphlet
- Plan a follow-up meeting with the girl's parents in the medium and long term.

I go to level 2 (if one of the criteria listed in 1 is no longer relevant or if there is a change in the family circumstances (death of the girl's guardian, remarriage, divorce, evidence of abuse) or a change in civil status (acquisition of Canadian citizenship).

Level 2: Possible Risk

- The attitude of a spouse and/or family members: pro-FGM/C.
- Pressure from family or community or social pressure to carry out FGM/C.
- Mother and/ or especially if another daughter has already undergone FGM/C.
- The family is considering to travel with their children to a country where FGM/C is prevalent. Especially if travelling during the December and summer holidays as these are considered "cutting seasons" Or if they intend to go for an extended period of time (multiple months).

- Raise awareness among parents: explain Canadian law and the harms of FGM/C and suggest they take the online module at End FGM Canada Network, share the End FGM Canada pamphlet.
- Create a safety plan with the child and or parent that is against FGM/C.
- Document the conversation on FGM/C in the girl's medical and social file.
- If you are a frontline service provider or medical professional, build a trusting relationship with the family and then have the parents sign the Statement of Honour. If one or both refuse to sign the document, this could be a red flag.
- Plan a follow-up meeting with the girl's parents in the medium and long term.

I go to level 3 when the girl travels or FGM/C is announced.

Go back to level 1 if the parents cooperate, they ask for support to protect their daughter

Go back to level 2 if the parents cooperate, and ask for resources to protect their daughter

**Level 3:
Imminent
Risk**

1. ANNOUNCEMENT OF FGM/C
 - Announcement of the decision to carry out FGM/C. Gather the following information: who, how, when, where, etc
 - Other risk elements (family member willing to perform FGM/C)
 - Family pressure to practice FGM/C in Canada or abroad (who, how, when, where?)
2. TRAVEL IN NEAR FUTURE (abroad in less than three weeks)
 - Protection of girls once abroad > ask about what protection is provided by parents in the country to assess whether they can protect other family members from the risk of FGM/C in the country of origin.
 - Determine what protection might be available from the government of that country and/or from non-profits in that country and whether contacting them ahead of time would be feasible and helpful.
3. FAILURE TO RETURN FROM TRIP
 - The daughter does not return from a trip as planned, without adequate explanation from the parents



Go back to level 2 if the parents cooperate, and ask for resources to protect their daughter

**Level 4:
Suspected
FGM/C**

Signs to look for in 0-3 years olds
When changing the diaper look for: Missing or cut clitoris and or labia/ blood loss/ painful spot on vulva/ pain during urination/ pain during nursing/ change in the child's posture

- Signs to notice FGM/C in children aged 3 - 18 years old:
- Difficulty in urinating (long and repeated visits to toilet)
 - Painful menstruation if infibulation
 - Pain, scars, fear of movement, refusal to engage in sports
 - Change in posture, decreased concentration and declining school performance
 - Disappearance of a student after the holiday or unexplained long-term absence. In some cases after FGM/C the girl is now expected to live in this country to which she was taken

1. ANNOUNCEMENT OF FGM/C

- Create a safety plan with the child and or parent that is against FGM/C.
- Contact Child Protective Services, law enforcement; temporary apprehension of the child may be necessary.
- Contact the services closest to the child; maternity unit, school, pediatrician or doctor.
- Have the girl medically examined by an FGM/C-trained doctor.

2. IMMINENT TRAVEL (ABROAD WITHIN LESS THAN THREE WEEKS)

- In addition to the actions described in the previous point:
- Seek advice from a specialized service, Child Protection Services or lawyer, in advance. Submit the case to the reference magistrate of the public prosecutor's office: they may, for example, order the confiscation of the girl's passport and/or ban her from leaving the country and/or change the parental authority.
- Law Enforcement should contact Canada Border Service Agency to alert them that the family plans to travel
- Sign up the child with Registration of Canadians Abroad, a free service for Canadians travelling or living abroad. <https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/registration>

3. FAILURE TO RETURN FROM A TRIP

- Contact the Canadian embassy or consulate in the country to which she was taken (or the embassy responsible for that country), and initiate a legal procedure to repatriate the girl at risk of undergoing FGM/C under certain conditions. Global Affairs Canada can be contacted to support repatriation efforts; issuing an emergency passport and supporting the purchase of a ticket home.

- If you are a Child Protection worker, assess that harm was done to the girl and proceed with the suspected child abuse case protocol. Order a medical examination by a FGM/C trained doctor to determine whether or not the girl has undergone FGM/C.
- If you are a teacher send the student to the school nurse if you have one. Then proceed with the duty to report protocol as needed.
- Contact Child Protective Services and law enforcement. Law enforcement will proceed with interviewing the family as this is now a criminal investigation.
- Depending on the medical outcome, see bar below.



I go to level 1 if the FGM/C is not medically certified I will go to level 5 if the FGM/C is medically certified



Level 5: Confirmed FGM/C

Vacation Cutting

- If a girl was living in Canada at the time of her FGM/C and was taken abroad for this, the case should be reported to the police. The age may determine if Child Protection services are contacted. In some provinces, the age is different than 18. Please see this link:
<https://cwrp.ca/frequently-asked-questions-faqs>

FGM/C in Canada

- If FGM/C took place in Canada this must be reported to the police. Check your province for the age at which Child Protection Services needs to be contacted.

FGM/C before moving to Canada

- If the girl was born in a country where FGM/C is prevalent there is a risk that the girl has undergone FGM/C in her country before coming to Canada.

If the FGM/C is medically certified:

- If Child Protection Services is not yet involved, contact them. Check your province for the age at which Child Protection Services needs to be contacted.
- If you are a Child Protection worker, assess the ongoing risk to the girl and proceed with the child abuse case protocol. Contact law enforcement as this is now a criminal investigation.
- Acquire adequate care (physical and psychological) for the child.
- In the presence of an intercultural mediator, the family needs to be reminded of the criminal law prohibiting FGM/C, explained the harmful health consequences, informed of the next steps being taken and what to expect
- Law enforcement will determine if it was vacation cutting, FGM/C in Canada or FGM/C before moving to Canada

Vacation Cutting

If a police investigation confirms a case of vacation cutting, the parent(s) or guardian (s) could be charged with Removal of a child from Canada, Under section 273.3 of the criminal code.

FGM/C in Canada

- If a police investigation confirms a case of FGM/C, the parent(s) or guardian (s) could be charged with Aggravated Assault, under section 268 (1) of the criminal code. If someone other than the parents or guardians performed the FGM/C, determine who that is and whether or not they are still in Canada.

FGM/C before moving to Canada

- Although no criminal charges can be laid, Canada Border Service Agency can be informed of the case and prevent the individual(s) who performed FGM/C from entering Canada.



I will go to level 1 if there are any OTHER GIRLS born or due to be born in the family that could be at risk.



**Level 1: Low-No Risk
& 2: Possible Risk:**

At this stage, you want to ask the following questions to establish the likelihood of the family carrying out FGM/C:

A. How does your family feel about FGM/C?

If FGM/C is already being practised within the family or is viewed as being a part of the culture, then the risk to a girl(s) is high.

B. Do you feel pressured by your family or community to have your daughter(s) undergo FGM/C?

Community norms put tremendous pressure on families to conform. Families will opt to have their daughters undergo FGM/C to avoid being shamed and ostracized.

C. How old is the daughter?

Many communities believe girls need to undergo FGM/C to become women, so between the ages of 13-15 years of age when puberty starts is a common time for this to be done.

D. Are you planning any trips abroad? If yes, then where, when and for how long will the trip be?

Destinations would be to countries where FGM/C is either not illegal or punishment is not enforced. Vacation-cutting trips are usually planned around the winter and summer holiday school breaks to allow the girls time to “heal” from the FGM/C before returning. Trips for this purpose would be longer in duration than a typical two-week vacation. In many cases, the physical impacts of FGM/C can take from several months to up to a year to heal.

E. Who do they plan to visit? A village elder or a doctor?

FGM/C is often performed by traditional circumcisers or cutters who do not have any medical training. But in some countries, it may be done by a medical professional. Village elders often have the role of cutter in their community.

F. Are you planning a celebration while you are there?

In many communities, FGM/C is accompanied by a large ceremony and celebration. FGM/C is sometimes viewed as a rite of passage.

G. Was the family aware this act was illegal in Canada?

In 1997, FGM/C was added to the Canadian Criminal Code as a form of aggravated assault, with a possible sentence of up to 14 years in prison (Government of Canada, 2022). Further, it is an indictable offence to remove a child from Canada with the intent to perform FGM/C outside Canada. The amendment holds parents responsible for the violence inflicted on their child, whether it was performed firsthand or consent was given to a third party (Government of Canada, 2022; Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2009)

**Level 3:
Imminent Risk:**

At this stage, you want as much detail as possible about the pending and/or suspected FGM/C:

A. Where and when is the FGM/C being planned for?

See Level 2: Question D. If the family is planning on having FGM/C done in Canada, they will likely have someone fly into Canada from an FGM/C-affected community. Ask the following questions:

From what country is the person coming to perform FGM/C?

When do they arrive?

What is their name and nationality?

Child Protection Services and law enforcement will need this information if they start an investigation.

B. Who is planning to perform the procedure?

See Level 2: Question E.

**Examine your own assumptions, beliefs, and biases about FGM/C. While FGM/C is child abuse, a human rights violation, and illegal in many countries, including Canada, FGM/C is a deeply rooted social norm in certain communities and many within those communities do not see FGM/C as negative.

**Level 4:
Suspected Risk:**

This is now a criminal offence investigation. Law enforcement officers will be asking the questions:

A. Did your daughter undergo FGM/C?

If the family says yes and this is confirmed with a medical exam, move to Level 5. If they say no, wait for the results of a medical exam before deciding on the right course of action.

**Level 5: Confirmed
FGM/C:**

This is now a criminal offence investigation. Law enforcement officers will be asking the questions:

A. Where was the FGM/C performed?

Likely, destinations would be to countries where FGM/C is either not illegal or punishment is not enforced. While less likely, it is not impossible that it might be performed in other countries

B. When and for how long was the trip?

See Level 2: Question D.

C. How old was the girl when this took place?

If the child is under the age of majority, Child Protection Services must be called.

If she was above the age of majority Child Protection services do not need to be called. Law enforcement can still decide to press charges regardless of the age of the girl. For those above the age of majority, the act of FGM/C must have been non-consensual in order for police to be involved. However, any medical professional who performs FGM/C may be removed from practice.

D. Were there other girls who underwent FGM/C at the same time?

Many communities perform FGM/C on many girls at one time. There could be a possibility of multiple girls undergoing FGM/C at the same time.

E. If a criminal investigation is undertaken, the location of the FGM/C will determine what charges can be laid under the criminal code:

If the act of FGM/C took place in Canada then the parents/ guardians could be charged with Aggravated Assault, under section 268 of the criminal code.

If the crime took place outside of Canada, then the parents/guardians could be charged with Removal of a Child from Canada, under section 273.3 of the criminal code

F. Did it happen before she lived in Canada?

If so, there is no need to contact law enforcement.

G. Who performed the FGM/C?

If this was performed in Canada, there is a chance a FGM/C traditional practitioner/cutter flew in from another country to perform FGM/C. Ask the following questions:

Where did the traditional practitioner/cutter fly in from?

Is the traditional practitioner/cutter still here?

When does the traditional practitioner/cutter plan to leave?

Gather flight and passport information

H. Was the family aware this act was illegal in Canada?

See Level 2: Question G.

** Once FGM/C plans are confirmed or FGM/C is confirmed to have happened and the police are involved in Levels three and above, asking further questions knowing that the responses would be used as evidence against the potential perpetrators, maybe a charter rights violation. Only the police should ask questions from that point onward.