

HOW TO REPORT ABUSE AND WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU DO.

What to do if you suspect a child is being abused

You don't need to be sure! If you suspect that a child is being abused, call your [local Children's Aid Society](#) or Office of Family and Child Services. It is their job to figure out if what is happening is abuse.

How to report abuse

If you know that a child is being abused or you suspect that a child is at risk of being harmed, it's time to call your [local Children's Aid Society](#) or office of family and children's services. We are available 24-hours a day to talk about your concerns, and the information you give us, including your identity, will remain confidential where possible. Remember, you don't need to be sure. It is the CAS's job to figure out if what is happening is child abuse.

What happens when I call?

When you call, you will speak to an intake worker who is specially trained to listen to your concerns and ask questions before deciding how urgent the situation is and what type of intervention is needed. If a child is in imminent danger, a social worker will respond immediately.

If the protection worker determines that the child is not in immediate danger or risk of harm, he/she will be able to assist the family by taking a customized approach designed to connect them with community resources.

CAS workers are professionals who evaluate your information using comprehensive guidelines to determine the risk in each situation. Child protection workers, using clear standards and guidelines, determine the kind of support and service needed to keep children safe and families healthy in situations involving child maltreatment. A typical response to a child protection concern will include checking a computer database to see if the family or child has been involved with a CAS in the past. Many factors are considered when determining how to investigate your concerns, including the age of the child, presence of physical injuries and other red flags that might indicate abuse.

Every report received by the CAS is reviewed by a child protection worker who then consults with a supervisor to determine the appropriate response. Most calls that require further investigation fall into two categories -- those that must be responded to within 12 hours, and those that must be followed up within 7 days. Individual circumstances and level of risk for the children involved determine the response times.

What happens during an investigation?

The worker may interview the child and family members during an investigation, to determine if abuse has occurred. If the answer is no, the investigation is then complete and the worker may refer the child and family to community agencies. If there is abuse, the worker plans a strategy to ensure the child or children are safe and the family gets the help it needs. While in most cases the family remains together while working with the CAS and community services, it is sometimes necessary to take the children out of the home to keep them safe. When that step is taken, the children may be placed with a foster or adoptive family or with family through kinship care or service.

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