

Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect

Reports by professionals

Persons working closely with children have a special awareness of the signs of child abuse and neglect, and a responsibility to report their suspicions. Any professional or official who fails to report a suspicion that a child is or may be in need of protection where the information on which that suspicion is based was obtained in the course of his or her professional or official duties, is liable on conviction to a fine of up to \$1,000.

Role of the CAS in protecting children

When a referral or complaint is received, the CAS must determine whether a child is in need of protection according to the legal definition, initiate necessary interventions or services if a child requires protection and offer support and counselling to the family.

When a referral or complaint is received, the CAS documents the call and immediately determines whether the situation described meets the eligibility requirements for an investigation. Many calls to a CAS do not meet eligibility requirements--these families are provided with information and referred to other community support services. An investigation starts immediately for those situations where the child is believed to be at immediate or serious risk, where there is an injury to the child, or where evidence is likely to be available only at the time of investigation. Investigation of other situations will begin within 7 days.

The investigation includes interviews with the parents and others who are caring for the child and interviews with the identified child and his/her siblings. Siblings, relatives, neighbours, community professionals, etc. who may have information about the need for protection of the child may also be interviewed. CAS past records are checked and parents are requested to sign consents to seek information from other community services.

Safety of the child

The question of whether the child is safe is determined at the initial contact. If the safety of the child cannot be guaranteed, the CAS has the authority to take the child to a "place of safety". If CAS removes the child without the consent of the parent, the CAS must bring the matter before the court within five days to provide evidence as to why the CAS removed the child. The judge makes a determination as to the short term and long term plans for the child.

Who is involved in the investigation?

Child protection workers investigate child abuse and child neglect complaints. The CAS refers all serious allegations of child abuse to the police. The child protection worker has the prime responsibility for determining if a child requires protection and providing a plan for the protection of the child. The police officer has the prime responsibility for investigating the offence and laying any charges under the Criminal Code or other legislation.

Where child abuse resulting in an injury is presented, then the CAS requires a medical examination of the child and his/her siblings.

Generally, within 30 days of the original complaint, the CAS will determine whether the child is in need of protection and whether the child is at risk of future abuse or neglect.

Conclusion of the investigation

Parents and the child, where appropriate will be informed by the child protection worker of the outcome of the investigation and the ongoing role of the CAS if any. Referral sources will be informed of the outcome of the investigation if the family consents. Verified child abuse will be reported to the Ontario Child Abuse Register.

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Children's Aid Society
LONDON & MIDDLESEX
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