

Understanding Child Protection Investigations

If someone reports a concern about a child or youth, you may have questions about what happens next. The information below explains the process with the Department of Social Supports and Well-Being (SSWB) and what you can expect along the way.

Throughout the process, we work alongside families to recognize strengths, address concerns, and support the safety and well-being of children and youth. We are committed to listening, treating families with respect, and working together to achieve positive outcomes.



Someone reported a concern about my family. What happens now?

- A social worker and supervisor will review the information.
- The report is either:
 - **Screened In** - the report will be investigated to see if there is child maltreatment such as physical, emotional, sexual abuse or neglect.
 - **Screened Out** - the report will not be investigated if it does not appear to meet one of the definitions of child maltreatment in policy and law.

Who can report concerns?

- Anyone can report concerns about a child or youth. Everyone has a duty to report.
- The name of the person who submits the report is kept private (confidential) unless ordered to be released by court.

How is a report investigated?

- A social worker will interview the child(ren), parents and anyone else who lives in the home.
- Interviews may happen in schools, daycares, homes or other locations.
- If a child is too young to talk or cannot talk, the social worker will still see the child and visit/view the family home.

Safety Decisions

- After meeting with the family, it is decided if the child is:
 - **Safe**
 - **Safe with a plan**
 - **Unsafe**
- If a safety plan is needed, the social worker will work with the family to create a plan to help keep the child safe. This may include help from family members, friends or others.

Who can the social worker talk to?

- Social workers may talk to other people who know your family such as teachers, doctors, family members, friends or neighbours.
- Social workers usually ask for your permission first, but by law they can still talk to other people without permission if needed.
- The people the social workers speak to may share information about your parenting, home, and family life.

What happens next?

- There may be more home visits and interviews.
- The social worker will use assessment tools and professional judgement to assess safety and risk.

What happens when the investigation is done?

- The file may close.
- The file may stay open for ongoing protective intervention.
- **If the file stays open:**
 - The social worker works with you to create a plan to support your family, with clear steps to improve safety and lower risk.
 - When the plan is complete and the risk is lower, the file will close. The social worker will discuss this with you and give you written notice.

Questions?

Your social worker can explain the process and answer questions.

Social Worker's Name

Phone

Email

Clerical

Phone

Email

Who can I speak to if I have concerns about my investigation or file?

SSWB Inquiries: cysinquiries@gov.nl.ca

Note: This handout gives general information and does not discuss all policies or law in detail. Learn more at: gov.nl.ca/sswb

Who can I talk to if I want to report concerns for a child or youth?

SSWB Provincial Intake

Phone: 1.833.552.2368 (24/7)