



Children's aid: Information for parents (Fact sheet)

A children's aid society or CAS has a legal duty to make sure that children under the age of 16 are protected from harm. They may stay involved until the child they are protecting reaches age 18. The government has given them this job.

When does a CAS check on a family?

Parents have a legal duty to keep their children safe. A CAS may check on a family if they believe that:

- parents are violent to each other,
- parents do things that could harm their children, or
- a parent does not stop their husband, wife, or other people, including other family members, from doing things that could harm their children.

Here are a few examples of acts that could lead a CAS to check on a family:

- insulting or yelling at children,
- hitting or tying up children,
- punishing children by refusing to give them food,
- touching children in a sexual way, or
- leaving children by themselves without someone who is old enough and able to take care of them.

How does a CAS hear that a child might not be safe?

If anyone has good reason to believe that a child has been harmed or might be harmed, they must tell a CAS. Even relatives, friends, and neighbours have a legal duty to report these situations.

People who work with children must report these situations to a CAS or the police can charge them with a crime. Some examples are teachers, doctors, nurses, daycare workers, family counsellors, social workers, and religious leaders.

Your lawyer does not have to report about you to a CAS.

What if a CAS worker contacts me?

Try to stay as calm as you can when you talk to a CAS worker. You should try to speak to a lawyer before you say very much. If you cannot afford a lawyer, Legal Aid Ontario may pay for one.

In most cases, a CAS must get your permission to enter your home. It is usually best to let them in or the situation can become worse. If they have to, a CAS can enter by force to protect a child. They can bring the police to help them.

If you have **any** difficulty understanding or speaking English, tell the CAS worker. Ask for an interpreter who speaks your language and English well. If the CAS does not find one, you should try to find an interpreter.

The CAS worker usually talks to the parents and children separately. They must keep notes about anything you or your children tell them. This information can be used against you in court later on.

Some acts that harm children are crimes. At any time, if you think the CAS or the police suspect you of a crime, tell them that you would like to get legal advice before you answer any more questions. Contact a lawyer right away.