

Young People

TÚSLA

An Ghníomhaireacht um
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach
Child and Family Agency

Child Abuse Substantiation Procedure (CASP)

A leaflet for a young
person who is a witness in
a child abuse assessment

In this leaflet we explain what happens when someone tells someone else – for example, their teacher, therapist, us (Tusla), or perhaps tells you – that they have been abused. This is called ‘making a disclosure of child abuse’. We also explain your role as witness if you decide to be one.

This leaflet will also tell you:

- About us – Tusla – The Child and Family Agency
- How Tusla assess disclosures (CASP)
- Where you can get support

We understand that being a named witness in a disclosure of child abuse can be a very difficult and upsetting thing for you. We have written this leaflet to help you understand what we do and what you can expect if you decide to meet with us as a witness in a child abuse disclosure case.

About us – Tusla – Child and Family Agency

Tusla is the State agency responsible for protecting the welfare of children. We are also responsible for protecting children from risk of harm. Children’s safety is our main concern. This includes keeping you safe.

Tusla and An Garda Síochána (Irish police)

An Garda Síochána is also responsible for protecting children. They conduct any criminal investigations into child abuse. We must tell An Garda Síochána about any allegations of child abuse.

If An Garda Síochána is investigating an allegation of child abuse at the same time as we are carrying out our assessment of child abuse, we will work with An Garda Síochána and decide how to proceed. Our child abuse assessment is called a 'substantiation assessment'.

What happens when a child makes a disclosure of child abuse?

A child can contact us themselves to disclose child abuse. Child abuse can also be referred to us by adults – a child might tell an adult like a parent, a friend or a teacher that they have been abused. The adult can then refer this to Tusla.

When we receive referrals of child abuse, we may use the Child Abuse Substantiation Procedure (CASP) to assess the allegations.

How we assess disclosures – Child Abuse Substantiation Procedure (CASP)

The CASP is what we may use to assess allegations of child abuse. The CASP helps us to identify any potential risk of harm to children. It also helps us to find out if we need to tell other people about these risks so we can keep these children safe.

We aim to treat everyone affected by allegations of abuse with:

- fairness
- dignity
- respect.

We also need to make sure that we make decisions in line with:

- the law
- policy
- best practice.

Types of abuse

Allegations of child abuse can include:

- sexual abuse
- physical abuse
- emotional abuse
- neglect.

People involved in the CASP

We talk and meet with several people when we assess a disclosure of child abuse. We talk to the following people.

Person Making a Disclosure

– PMD: A Person Making a Disclosure is a person – either a child or an adult – who has made a disclosure of child abuse.

Person Subject of Abuse

Allegations – PSAA: A Person Subject of Abuse Allegations is a person – either a child or an adult – who has had allegations of child abuse made against them.

A witness: A witness can be either an adult or a child who has information relevant to the disclosure. They may:

- have seen an event

or

- know something about the disclosure

How you might be able to help

If we sent you this leaflet, it means that either a Person Making a Disclosure (PMD), or a Person Subject of Abuse Allegations (PSAA), has suggested you may have information relevant to our assessment.

You may give us information as a witness. We will pass on relevant information to the Person Subject of Abuse Allegations in writing.

If there are any safety concerns for you as a witness, we will speak with An Garda Síochána and make sure that you are kept safe.

If the PSAA wishes to ask you questions, the CASP social worker will think about this request and will then discuss with you the ways this can be done. It is up to you if you wish to have the PSAA – or someone else on behalf of the PSAA – to – ask you questions. For example, the Person Subject of Abuse Allegations (PSAA) may ask us to ask you questions.

If you would like to talk more about this, the CASP social worker will meet with you.

As a witness, you have an important role in helping us to assess allegations of child abuse and risk of harm to children. It is your choice to take part in the assessment or not. We are here to answer any questions you may have to help you decide.

Outcome and final conclusion

At the end of the substantiation assessment, we will reach one of the following outcomes. Outcomes are decisions.

1. Founded outcome: This means we have established, on the balance of probabilities, that child abuse did occur. (Balance of probabilities is complicated as it looks at many things and it is based on how likely or unlikely it is that child abuse happened.) If the allegation is founded the social worker decides if the PSAA poses a risk to children.

2. Unfounded outcome: This means we have not established, on the balance of probabilities, that child abuse has occurred.

When an outcome has been reached, we will give the final conclusion on the child abuse allegations to the Person Subject of Abuse Allegations (PSAA).

Review of final conclusion

If the final conclusion is founded, the Person Subject of Abuse Allegations (PSAA) may ask for a review within 14 days of that conclusion.

Two review panel members do this review. They are independent and from outside Tusla. That means they examine our work and the 'founded outcome' that we reached again to make sure we took all the steps we should have. They do not fully reassess the allegations. If there is a review, we will share your information with the review panel members.

Supports to help you

We know that it can be difficult if you are a witness or if you are trying to decide to meet with us as a witness in a child abuse substantiation assessment.

Witnessing child abuse can be very upsetting.

Remember, children's safety is our main concern. This includes keeping you safe. There are lots of support services available for children. We can help you to make sure that you get the support that you need.

Rape Crisis Centre National 24 Hour Helpline

T: 1800 778 888

CARI

CARI is an organisation providing special support to people affected by abuse.

T: 0818 924567 (01 830 8529)

E: hello@cari.ie

www.cari.ie

Further information

If you would like to view more information about the Tusla Child Abuse Substantiation Procedure, it is available at:

www.tusla.ie/CASP

The procedure is written for our trained staff, so it is very detailed and long. If you need help, one of our social workers will answer any questions you may have.

If you need any general information or wish to report child abuse, please contact your local Tusla Office. Contact numbers are also available at: www.tusla.ie.

Tusla will give you with a Data Protection Notice which will tell you how we will use your information.

Tusla feedback and complaints procedure

If you wish to give feedback or make a complaint you can contact:

E: tellus@tusla.ie

P: 01 771 8500 (Call 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday)

<https://portal.tusla.ie/feedback>

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