

Young People

TÚSLA

An Ghníomhaireacht um
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach
Child and Family Agency

Child Abuse Substantiation Procedure (CASP)

**A leaflet for young people
who tell us about
being abused**

In this leaflet we explain to you what happens when you tell someone – for example, your teacher, therapist or us (Tusla) – that someone has abused you. This is called ‘making a disclosure of child abuse’.

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 making a disclosure of child abuse is a very difficult and upsetting thing for you to do. We have written this leaflet to help you understand what we do and what you can expect when you make a disclosure – or when someone makes a disclosure for you.

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’.

How can you make a disclosure of child abuse?

You can contact us to disclose child abuse or an adult can contact us to disclose child abuse.

For example, you may have told an adult like a parent, guardian or teacher that you have been abused. The adults can then us (Tusla) about your disclosure.

What happens when you make a disclosure of child abuse?

When you make a disclosure and it is referred to us, we may use the Child Abuse Substantiation Procedure (CASP) to assess the allegations. If Tusla thinks that a child is at immediate serious risk then we will take action immediately to make sure that children are safe.

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 parents, friends, or teachers that they have been abused. The adult can then refer this information to Tusla.

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

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.

The Person Subject to Abuse Allegations (PSAA) may ask us to ask you questions. If the PSAA wishes to have questions put to you this request will be considered and we will discuss with you the best way of having questions put. If this happens, it is a matter for you to decide if you wish to have further questions put to you by or on behalf of the PSAA.

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

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.

What happens during a substantiation assessment

During the substantiation assessment we examine and evaluate if allegations of child abuse are:

1. **Founded:**

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:**

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

This substantiation assessment process includes the following:

Screening

We review the referral of child abuse and decide if we will use our CASP process.

Preliminary enquiry

We find out the main facts and decide if we need to do more assessment.

Stage 1 - we meet you - the Person Making a Disclosure (PMD)

We meet you - you are the Person Making a Disclosure (PMD).

We also meet any witnesses.

We decide if there are reasonable grounds for concern and if further assessment is required. If so we will move to stage 2.

Stage 2 - we put your allegations to the Person Subject of Abuse Allegations (PSAA)

If we move to stage 2:

- We give the PSAA all relevant information in writing, including your allegations.
- We will carefully consider any response from the PSAA.
- We will try to meet any witnesses the PSAA identifies.

Outcome

At the end of the substantiation assessment, we will reach one of two outcomes.

1. **Founded**

2. **Unfounded**

(We explained these earlier)

Provisional and final conclusion

When we have reached an outcome, we will give the PSAA a provisional conclusion.

- We will ask the PSAA to respond.
- If the PSAA responds, we will assess their response.
- We will then come to a final outcome on the child abuse allegations.

A CASP substantiation assessment can take quite a bit of time because we want to be sure that we understand the allegations and hear all views and then reach a final conclusion. **Important:** After this, the PSAA may still ask for a review.

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.

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

We will tell you the outcome of the review as soon as we know the outcome.

Keeping you and other children safe and telling other people

We will assess if there is a potential risk to children, if necessary, take immediate action to keep you and any other children safe.

We may need to tell other people about the risk to keep children safe. These other people are known as 'relevant third parties'. We will give other people only the information needed to keep children safe. Other people may include:

- parents

- family members

- employers

- community organisations.

What happens if I don't know where the PSAA lives now?

We may ask An Garda Síochána, or another State agency, to help us find out the person subject to abuse allegation's (PSAA's) address. If we cannot find the address, we may not be able to do the assessment.

What if the PSAA is dead?

If a PSAA is dead, there is no current risk to children and we will not do any assessment.

What if I am not ready yet to disclose any abuse?

If you are not ready to speak to us, we will be limited in the actions we can take. However, if we are worried that children are at immediate serious risk, then we will take immediate action to keep all children safe, including you.

If you are not ready to talk to us yet, but we have information that concerns us and further assessment is needed, we will move to Stage 2 of the assessment. This means we will meet with the PSAA to get their response to the allegations.

Supports to help you

Making disclosures of child abuse can be very upsetting. Remember, children's safety is our main concern in Tusla. This includes keeping you safe. There are lots of support services available for children and we can help you to make sure that you get the support that you need.

CARI

CARI is an organisation providing special support to children and families affected by abuse.

T: 0818 924567 (01 830 8529)

E: hello@cari.ie

www.cari.ie

Rape Crisis Centre National 24 Hour Helpline

T: 1800 778 888

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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