

# CASP

## Child Abuse Substantiation Procedure and Practice

### A Guide for Witnesses who are Children

This Tusla leaflet will tell you what we do when someone says they have been abused by another person. It goes through the steps Tusla takes when it investigates allegations of child abuse and your role as a witness.

If this leaflet has been sent to you by Tusla it means that a person making a complaint - known as a Complainant, or a person against whom an allegation was made - known as a Person Subject to Allegations of Abuse (a PSAA), has suggested you are a witness in an investigation.

A **witness** is a person who saw or heard an event take place or who may have important information about the event or the people involved in the event.

#### **Tusla –Child and Family Agency:**

Tusla-Child and Family Agency is the Government organisation, along with the Gardaí, that has to make sure children are protected and receive good care. Keeping children safe from harm is Tusla's number one goal.

When someone accuses another person of abuse, they can tell Tusla and the men and women working for Tusla look into all the facts, examine both sides of the story, and treat everyone fairly and with respect while making sure that we follow the law and our own rules.

Tusla tries to treat everybody who is affected by allegations of abuse with fairness, understanding, dignity and respect whilst making sure that we follow the law and our own rules.

#### **Why CASP?**

Tusla uses a process called the Child Abuse Substantiation Procedure (CASP) to investigate complaints of child abuse.

As part of this process, we may need to tell parents, family members, or other groups about any abuse that may have happened in order to keep all children safe.

#### **What form can allegations of Child Abuse take?**

Child abuse can be sexual, physical, emotional, or involve the neglect of someone else.

Allegations or complaints of child abuse can be different and can take place in different places and at different places, including the following:

**Intra-familial abuse:** Child abuse that a child makes against a member of their own family.

**Extra-familial abuse:** Abuse that a child makes against a person who is not a member of their own family.

**Retrospective abuse:** Abuse that an adult reveals now, but it occurred in their childhood when they were under 18-years-old.

Allegations of child abuse can take several forms:

Child abuse can be sexual, physical, emotional, or involve the neglect of someone else.

#### **What happens when Tusla receives a report of child abuse?**

Firstly, Tusla decides if the complaints could reasonably be true. This is known as screening. If Tusla considers that the allegation could reasonably be true, we investigate the allegations by interviewing the complainant and any witnesses.

If we think that there are good reasons for us to worry, we will ask the Person Subject to Allegations of Abuse or the accused person about the reports and listen carefully to their response to the allegations. We will also contact any witnesses that the PSAA names in their response.

We cannot make a witness talk to Tusla and you can decide yourself what kind of help you want to give us.

If you want to talk to a social worker from Tusla, the social worker will meet with you, and if you wish your parents, or another person with whom you feel safe. We will take a full note of what you witnessed from you. The information that you tell us will be shared with the PSAA. As a witness your name and any information you tell us which is relevant to the investigation or a review will be shared with the PSAA.

The Tusla social workers will write down whatever information you give them, and you can then read this over to see if it is all accurate.

If we think that there are any concerns at all for your own safety as a witness, then we will discuss these with you and your parents.

If we think that it is important to speak to the Gardaí about your safety, then we will do so but only with your agreement.

A PSAA may wish to put questions to you in some form during the investigation or as part of a review. It is up to you and your parents if you wish to allow this happen or not. If you agree to be asked questions in some form, Tusla can arrange this in the best way possible. Tusla does not have the power to make you agree to any questioning by the PSAA.

### **The final decision**

At the end of the investigation Tusla staff will say what they have found out and give a result about the case. They will say the child abuse allegation was either a:

1. Founded outcome: In other words, it is decided, given all the information provided by everyone involved in the case, that more likely than not that child abuse happened.
2. Unfounded outcome: It is decided, given all the information provided by both sides, that more than likely child abuse didn't happen.

### **What is a review?**

Once the results of the investigation have been decided the PSAA may ask for another group of people to look at the case again to make sure it was carried out fairly. This is known as a review.

### **Further information:**

- To view the Tusla Child Abuse Substantiation Procedure, it is available at:(embed link when available) \*\*\*\*
- General information about Tusla is available at [www.tusla.ie](http://www.tusla.ie)
- If you require any advice, or wish to make a report of child abuse, please contact your local Tusla Office. Contact numbers are also available at [www.tusla.ie](http://www.tusla.ie) (Provide links to exact numbers or email address)

- If you wish to speak with Gardaí phone numbers for local stations are available here: