

Child Abuse Substantiation Procedure (CASP)

**Explaining the
CASP to children**

Tusla is the Child and Family Agency

In this leaflet we explain:

- what to think about when deciding if you should explain or have decided to explain the Child Abuse Substantiation Procedure (CASP) to a child,
- how to tell a child about Tusla,
- how to talk to a child about An Garda Síochána
- how to tell a child what happens if there is a worry about their safety,
- how to explain the CASP to a child, and
- other things to remember when speaking to children.

First make sure you have the information you need

You should read our General Information Leaflet on the CASP first to make sure you have a full understanding of the CASP. If someone says a child has been abused, we call this an 'an allegation of child abuse'. An allegation is an unproven statement declaring that something has happened.

When we receive an allegation, we may decide that we need to do an assessment using the Child Abuse Substantiation Procedure (CASP). In broad terms, the CASP is the process of examining and evaluating allegations of child abuse that arrives at an outcome and then a conclusion.

Should we explain the CASP to children?

If we decide to carry out an assessment using the CASP, you may need to explain the procedure to the child in an age-appropriate way. You will need to think carefully about how to approach this.

To help you decide if you should explain CASP to a child, think about:

- the child's age and stage of development,
- any past trauma the child may have experienced,
- any diagnosis or issues the child has, like learning disabilities or language issues,
- any other issues the child might have that could affect their ability to fully understand the CASP.

Who is the best person to explain the CASP?

You should think carefully about who the best person is to explain the CASP to a child.

This could be the:

- child's parents,
- foster carer,
- social worker,
- social care leader.

It could also be another trusted person.

If you think it is appropriate to explain the CASP to the child, a social worker can advise and support you. They can also help you decide who is best placed to talk to the child, given their individual circumstances.

How to explain the CASP to children

Tell the child about Tusla

– Explain to the child that Tusla is the Child and Family Agency in Ireland. Our job is to work with children, young people and their families to make sure children are safe from harm.

Our social workers work with children and young people and their families when there is a worry that a child has been or may be unsafe. A social worker from Tusla will talk to the child and the people that know the child so that they can find out what happened.

Talk to the child about An Garda Síochána – If you think it is appropriate, talk to the child about An Garda Síochána and their role in keeping children safe.

Explain to the child that An Garda Síochána is also responsible for protecting children. Tell them that the Gardaí try to find out if someone has hurt or abused a child.

Tell the child that when Tusla hears about any risk of child abuse, they must tell An Garda Síochána. Tell the child that, An Garda Síochána must tell us about any allegations of child abuse that are made to them. Explain that sometimes An Garda Síochána and Tusla work together to find out about child abuse.

Explain what happens if there is a worry about their safety –

Explain to the child that they can contact Tusla themselves if they are worried that they or another child is not safe.

Tell the child that otherwise they may tell an adult like a parent, foster carer or teacher that they have been abused.

In this case, explain that the adults can contact Tusla with this information.

How to explain the CASP –

We have listed some things to think about on page 6 of this leaflet. They will help you to decide if explaining the process to the child is the right thing to do.

If you decide it is appropriate, you can tell them:

- what it means to ‘make a disclosure’ of child abuse,
- that the CASP is the name for how Tusla assesses an allegation of child abuse,
- that the CASP helps to keep children safe,
- that the CASP helps us find out if we need to tell other people to keep other children safe.

Animation that explains the CASP – There is an animation that explains the CASP if you would like to watch it. You can find this at:



Explaining what happens during an assessment

If there is a worry about a child’s safety, we may need to carry out an assessment.

1. Meeting the child

The social worker may need to meet the child and other people in the child’s life. These people could be:

- their brothers or sisters,
- their parents,
- other family members,
- other people that the child knows.

If the child decides to meet Tusla’s CASP social worker, they will always be able to bring an adult they trust with them if they wish.

2. After meeting the child

After the child meets the CASP social worker, the social worker will meet other people to discuss what the child said. This helps the social worker make sure that the child and other children are kept safe.

3. We will tell the PSAA what has been said about them

The Person Subject of Abuse Allegations (PSAA) is the person who has had allegations of child abuse made against them. The CASP social worker will tell this person what the person making the disclosure has said.

Things to remember when explaining the CASP to children

Stay calm: If a child wants to talk to you about a CASP assessment, try to stay calm throughout the discussion. It might be difficult but try not to get angry or upset.

Be caring: Make sure the child knows you care for them and that they have done nothing wrong. You should repeat this to them throughout the talk.

The child needs to see that adults are doing all they can to protect them. Make sure the child knows they were right to talk about it and that you are glad to be able to talk to them about it.

Face the problem: When you know about the disclosure of abuse:

- face the problem honestly,
- always protect the child,
- talk openly and effectively with the child about their safety and the assessment process.

Make sure the child feels safe: Do what is needed to protect the child from further harm and support the child to feel safe. Make sure the child has an age-appropriate understanding of any safety plan that is in place.

Our leaflets about the CASP

The following leaflets are also available:

- The General Information Leaflet on the CASP
- The CASP Information Leaflet for Young People
- The CASP Information Leaflet for Children

Online information:

Our website **www.tusla.ie/casp** also includes:

- all of the CASP information leaflets,
- a video explaining the CASP for adults,
- an animation explaining the CASP,
- other information about the CASP.

See our website **www.tusla.ie** for further information on all of the different things that Tusla does and can help with.

Glossary of terms:

Some of the following terms in this glossary are taken directly from page 10 - 13 of the full CASP, which can be found at **www.tusla.ie/casp**. The NALA Plain English mark does not apply to this Glossary

Allegation: unproven statements declaring that something has happened.

Balance of probabilities: saying something is proven on 'the balance of probabilities' means it has been determined that it is more likely than not to have happened.

Child abuse categories: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse.

CASP social worker: a social worker who is responsible for undertaking a substantiation assessment on behalf of Tusla.

Child(ren): a person under the age of 18 years.

Disclosure of child abuse: when a person tells another person (for example, their therapist, or a teacher) that they were abused.

Final conclusion: is made following receipt of the PSAA's response to the provisional conclusion or in the absence of the response.

Founded: If the Final or Provisional Conclusion of the substantiation assessment includes a 'founded' outcome, it means it is established on the balance of probabilities that child abuse has occurred.

Outcome: the decision reached as part of the provisional and final conclusion as to whether an allegation of abuse is founded or unfounded. This decision is reached on the balance of probabilities.

Substantiation assessment: the process of examining and evaluating allegations of child abuse that arrives at a conclusion which includes an outcome as to whether the allegation is founded or unfounded on the balance of probabilities.

Unfounded: If the Final or Provisional Conclusion of the substantiation assessment includes an 'unfounded' outcome, it means it is not established on the balance of probabilities that child abuse has occurred.

We would like to acknowledge the feedback on the CASP leaflets from five groups of young people in the Cavan and Monaghan Area:

- Monaghan Youth Activists
- Foróige Children in Care Group
- CAMRY Cavan
- CAMRY Monaghan
- ISPCC Children in the Community

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An Ghníomhaireacht um
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach
Child and Family Agency

www.tusla.ie