

# **Child Abuse Substantiation Procedure (CASP)**

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**What we do when  
using the CASP**

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# Tusla is the Child and Family Agency

**In this leaflet we explain how we use the CASP when someone tells us that a child has been abused. This leaflet explains what happens during the CASP process.**

In this leaflet will also tell you:

- about Tusla,

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- how to disclose child abuse,

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- what the CASP process is and what happens at each stage, and

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- where to find support.

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There may be some words you are unfamiliar with in this leaflet. We try to explain any words like this when they come up.

## Tusla – the Child and Family Agency

### Who we are

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.

### Tusla and An Garda Síochána (Irish police)

An Garda Síochána is also responsible for protecting children. They carry out any criminal investigations into child abuse. We must tell An Garda Síochána about any allegations of child abuse. An Garda Síochána must tell us about any allegations of child abuse that are made to them. An allegation is an unproven statement declaring that something has happened.

Sometimes An Garda Síochána investigates an allegation of child abuse at the same time as we are carrying out our assessment. When this happens, we will meet with An Garda Síochána and agree next steps.

Our CASP child abuse assessment is called a 'substantiation assessment'. You can read more about this assessment on page 6.

Substantiation means the process of examining and evaluating allegations of child abuse that arrives at an outcome and a conclusion about the allegations. (See pages 7 and 8 for more details.)

### Types of abuse

Allegations of child abuse can include:

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

## How to disclose child abuse

If you disclose child abuse, it means that you tell another person that you were abused as a child. Anyone can contact us to disclose child abuse or someone else can contact us on their behalf.

A child can contact us themselves to disclose child abuse. Sometimes a child might tell an adult like parents, friends or teachers that they have been abused. The adults can then tell us about it.

## How we assess disclosures of child abuse – Child Abuse Substantiation Procedure (CASP)

The CASP is the process we may use when assessing allegations of child abuse.

CASP also helps us to identify when we need to tell another person or organisation that a child is at risk.

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

- fairness
- dignity
- respect.

We make decisions in line with:

- the law
- policy
- best practice.

## People involved in the CASP

**Person Making a Disclosure – PMD:** This is the person – either a child or an adult – who discloses child abuse.

**Person Subject of Abuse Allegations – PSAA:** This is the person – either a child or an adult – who has had allegations of child abuse made against them. (See ‘Legal advice’ recommended on page 5.)

**Witness:** This person can be either an adult or a child who has information about the disclosure. They have an

important role in helping us to assess allegations of child abuse and risk of harm to children. They may:

- have seen an event, or
- know something about the disclosure.

### **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 the address of the Person Subject of Abuse Allegations (PSAA).

If we cannot find the address, we may not be able to proceed with a substantiation assessment.

### **What if the PSAA is dead?**

If a Person Subject of Abuse Allegations (PSAA) is dead, this means they are no longer a risk to children and we do not do a substantiation assessment.

### **What if a PMD is not ready yet to disclose child abuse?**

If a Person Making a Disclosure (PMD) is not ready to talk with us, we will be limited in the actions we can take.

However, if we are worried that children are at immediate serious risk, we will act immediately to make sure they are safe.

If we continue to have reasonable grounds for concern, and believe we need to do further assessment, we must move to Stage 2 of the substantiation assessment (see page 7 in this leaflet). This involves getting the PSAA's response to the allegations.

### **Legal advice recommended for PSAA**

If you receive a communication from us telling you that an allegation has been made against you, we recommend that you look for legal advice. You can bring

your legal advisor with you to any meetings with Tusla.

You can bring a support person with you to any meeting with Tusla, for example a parent or a friend.

If you are a Person Subject of Abuse Allegations (PSAA), we cannot make you take part in a substantiation assessment. Your cooperation is voluntary. If you decide not to take part in this assessment, we will reach a decision without your input.

## The substantiation assessment

During the substantiation assessment we assess the allegations of child abuse to determine if they are 'founded' **or** 'unfounded' and to arrive at a conclusion.

**1. Founded:** This means we have established, on the balance of probabilities, that child abuse did occur. The 'balance of probabilities'

means 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:** If the allegations are unfounded this means we have not established, on the balance of probabilities, that child abuse has happened.

## What to expect during the substantiation assessment

The main parts of the assessment are explained below:

### 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 continue our assessment.

If we decide we need to continue our assessment,

we start with Stage 1 of the CASP process. We tell you about this below.

### **Stage 1 – the Person Making a Disclosure (PMD)**

We will seek the Person Making a Disclosure (PMD).

We also meet any witnesses.

We decide if there are reasonable grounds for concern and if we need to do further assessment. If we decide that we do, we move to Stage 2. If this happens, all of the information we gather will be given to the Person Subject of Abuse Allegations (PSAA). This includes what the PMD and any witnesses have said.

We then move on to Stage 2.

### **Stage 2 – the Person Subject of Abuse Allegations (PSAA)**

We give the PSAA all relevant information in writing. This includes the PMD's allegations.

We carefully consider any response from the PSAA.

We try to meet any witnesses that the PSAA identifies.

### **Questions from the Person Subject of Abuse Allegations (PSAA)**

The PSAA may ask us to ask questions to the person making a disclosure (PMD), and we will consider this request. If we are going to ask these questions, we will talk to the PMD first to find the best way of asking them.

The PMD decides if they want to answer these questions from the PSAA, or not. If the PMD want to talk more about this, the CASP social worker will meet them to discuss it in more detail.

### **Outcome**

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

1. **Founded**
2. **Unfounded**

(We explained these earlier on page 6 of this leaflet)

### **Provisional and final conclusion**

When we have decided the outcome, we will give a provisional conclusion to the PSAA. This is a conclusion before the final conclusion.

We will ask the PSAA to respond.

If the PSAA responds, we will assess this response.

We will then come to a final conclusion on the child abuse allegations.

**Important:** After this, the PSAA may ask for a review. We tell you about this next.

## **Review**

### **Only a Person Subject of Abuse Allegations (PSAA) can ask for a review.**

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

The PMD will not be given the outcome until:

- the 14 days have passed where the PSAA has not asked for a review, or
- when the review is complete where the PSAA has requested a review.

### **What happens during the review?**

Two review panel members do this review. They are independent from Tusla. This means they are not within Tusla. They are not Tusla staff. They examine our work and the 'founded outcome' that we reached again to make sure we took all the steps we should have taken. They do not fully reassess



the allegations. If there is a review, we share the PMD's information with the review panel members.

We tell the PMD the outcome of the review as soon as we know.

### **How Tusla use your data (personal information)**

We give you and everyone involved a Data Protection Notice. This tells you how we use your information.

## **Assessing risk and informing relevant people**

Throughout the assessment and when the assessment is complete, we will assess any risk posed by the Person Subject of Abuse Allegations (PSAA) to children. After this, to keep children safe, we may need to inform relevant third parties.

We give a relevant third party the least information needed to protect any children at risk.

Third parties may include:

- employers, and
- community organisations.

## Supports available

There are many people and services available to help.

### HSE National Counselling Service

T: 1800 700 700,  
or you can visit,  
[www.hse.ie/eng/services/  
list/4/mental-health-  
services/national-  
counselling-service/contact-  
us/](http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/mental-health-services/national-counselling-service/contact-us/)

### 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](mailto:hello@cari.ie)  
[www.cari.ie](http://www.cari.ie)

### Rape Crisis Centre National 24 Hour Helpline

T: 1800 778 888

### One in Four

One in Four aims to provide a safe place for men and women to explore the impact childhood sexual abuse has had on their lives.

T: 01 662 4070

### Samaritans

T: 116 123  
E: [jo@samaritans.ie](mailto:jo@samaritans.ie)  
[www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

### Barnardos

T: 01 453 0355  
E: [info@barnardos.ie](mailto:info@barnardos.ie)  
[www.barnardos.ie](http://www.barnardos.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](http://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. A YouTube video explaining the CASP is also available at [www.tusla.ie/CASP](http://www.tusla.ie/CASP).

There is an animation that explains CASP if you would like to watch it. The animation is available at:



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](http://www.tusla.ie).

Tusla will give those involved a Data Protection Notice which will tell those involved how we will use their information.

### Tusla feedback and complaints procedure

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

E: [tellus@tusla.ie](mailto:tellus@tusla.ie)

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

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

We would like to acknowledge the feedback on the 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

# TÚSLA

An Ghníomhaireacht um  
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach  
Child and Family Agency

[www.tusla.ie](http://www.tusla.ie)