

## IMPORTANT: YOU HAVE ONLY 30 DAYS TO "ANSWER"

You have only 30 days after you receive the F&CS papers to fill out your "Answer" (Form 33B.1).

Before the deadline, you must give copies of this form to everyone involved in the case, including F&CS.

Then, you must take the original to the Family Court desk to file it. Court staff there will help you.

If you do not "answer" within 30 days, the judge might make decisions about your children without your input.



### We value:

- The right of children and youth to be safe and secure
- The diversity of families
- Positive space that is inclusive
- Professional practice that begins with a strength-based approach
- An open and transparent organization
- Innovation and creativity
- Social justice and the importance of advocacy
- Working together to create positive change in our community

**Head Office** 275 Eramosa Road, PO Box 1088  
Guelph, ON N1H 6N3

**Shelldale Centre** 20 Shelldale Crescent  
Guelph, Ontario N1H 1C8

**County Office** 6484 Wellington Road 7  
Elora, Ontario N0B 1S0

**info@fcsgw.org • www.fcsgw.org**  
**519-824-2410 or 1-800-265-8300**



#### FAMILY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Welcome to our positive and anti-oppressive space, where every individual, regardless of age, is valued and respected whatever their culture, faith, ethnicity, race, ancestry, class, ability, sexual orientation and gender identity.

Accessible formats of this document are available free upon request.

Revised 03-2017

# What you need to know about Child Welfare and Family Court



WORKING WITH  
**FAMILY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES**  
**BROCHURE 3 IN A SERIES**

## Protecting children

Child welfare is a community responsibility. Anyone who believes or suspects a child is being abused or neglected must, by law, report those concerns to Family and Children's Services (F&CS or the Children's Aid Society). As part of its legal duty, F&CS must look into every report. An FC&S family service worker may talk to the parents, child and other people who know the child to decide how best to help.

The law says an F&CS worker may remove your child from your care if we think the child is in immediate danger. Your child will live in someone else's home (a foster home or the home of someone you know) until a judge decides what is best for the child.

If your child is removed, you have a right to ask the F&CS to make sure the culture, language, race, ethnicity, faith, ability, sexual orientation and gender identity of your child are respected.

The F&CS worker will ask you if you have relatives or friends who could care for your child.

If we believe a child is not safe or is neglected we may ask the court to make a ruling to protect the child. Going to court does not have to mean that F&CS will remove your child. Sometimes, we ask a judge to make a court order to make sure you do certain things to protect your child.

If your child is removed from your care, F&CS has up to five days in which to go to court and explain the matter to a judge.

Even though we may be involved in a court case, F&CS is committed to working with families to protect children. We can always work together to try to find a solution to keep your children safe, without having to go to court. But, even if a case is in court, it still might be possible to reach an agreement.



## F&CS will give you papers

F&CS will give you legal papers that explain why we think a court order is needed to keep your children safe. The papers tell you when and where you or your lawyer have to be at court. Read the papers carefully and take them with you every time you go to court.

It is important for you or your lawyer to attend every court appearance. Tell your worker if you need an interpreter.

The judge might not make the final decision about your case on the first court date. You will likely have to go to court many times. Each case is different. Make sure your lawyer explains each step of your case.

## Find a lawyer

If you have to go to court, see a lawyer as soon as possible. A lawyer can give you legal advice, help you prepare legal papers and attend court with you. Make sure your lawyer knows about child protection cases and understands your situation.

To find a lawyer, you can call the Lawyer Referral Service at 1-800-268-8326. Be sure to say it is a child protection case.

If you cannot pay for a lawyer, phone Legal Aid Ontario, at 1-800-668-8258 or visit online at [www.legalaid.on.ca](http://www.legalaid.on.ca).

You may get free legal advice by going to the Family Law Information Clinics at the Guelph Family Courthouse at 74 Woolwich Street on Friday mornings, 9 a.m. to noon.

You may also get free legal advice at Family Court starting at 8:30 a.m. on the day of your court appearance. Ask where to find duty counsel and you may meet with a lawyer who will advise you and go into the courtroom with you.

Ask your local neighbourhood group (or Native friendship centre if you are of Indigenous heritage) if they have an advocate who can provide information and support.

## Write down your story

You have the right to tell the judge your side of the story by creating your own legal document. However, you must follow certain steps to do this. It is important to immediately get legal advice and work on your court papers.

## For more information

[www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca](http://www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca) → Family Justice

## Family Courts

Guelph Family Court  
74 Woolwich Street, Guelph, ON, N1H 3T9  
519-822-7961