

- ▶ If F&CS removes your child, the worker will ask if you have relatives or friends who could care for your child.
- ▶ In some situations you and F&CS may go to court. In this case, you need to see a lawyer as soon as possible.

What if an F&CS worker comes to investigate?

- ▶ You have the right to have someone you trust, or an advocate or lawyer with you when you talk to an F&CS worker. If a worker comes unexpectedly to your door, you might not want to talk to them or let them in. But, the law requires that the F&CS worker investigate. It is best if you cooperate.
- ▶ If you are alone with your child, you can ask the worker to wait until you arrange to have someone else with you.

Your rights with F&CS

- ▶ You have the right to be treated with respect.
- ▶ You have the right to know how the decisions that affect you and your family are made.
- ▶ Whenever possible, you have a right to be involved in the decision-making.
- ▶ You have the right to services that respect your culture, language, race, ethnicity, faith, ability, sexual orientation and gender identity.
- ▶ If your child cannot live with your family, you can ask F&CS to make sure the culture, language, race, ethnicity, faith, ability, sexual orientation and gender identity of your child are respected.



- ▶ **The mission of F&CS** is to ensure the safety and well-being of children and to support and strengthen families. Together with the community, we work to develop respectful and caring environments in which all children can grow to their full potential.
- ▶ **We envision** a community where all children are safe and healthy, nurtured in a permanent loving family and provided with opportunities to grow to their full potential.
- ▶ **As an organization we value:** the safety and well-being of all children; the family as a foundation for children; caring communities; care of children in need; human dignity; service excellence; and organizational health.
- ▶ **We are here** to help 24 hours a day, seven days a week with any child welfare concerns you may have. Call us during business hours to learn more about our service programs, adoption and foster care or volunteering.

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.
www.fcsgw.org/positivespace



**KEEPING KIDS
SAFE: Roles and
responsibilities**

ONE IN A SERIES

Working with

FAMILY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES



Your responsibilities as a parent

The law says that you, as a parent or guardian, are responsible for the care and safety of your children.

As a caregiver, you must make sure your child has enough food and clothing, a safe place to live, and health and dental care. You must give your children the emotional care and support they need to grow up safely.

F&CS responsibility: to protect children

In Ontario it is the job of Family and Children's Services (F&CS or the Children's Aid Society) to provide support services to children and families. F&CS must make sure children are protected from abuse and neglect.

Children have the right to be safe from abuse and neglect

It is against the law for you to abuse or neglect your children. You must also protect your child from physical and emotional abuse, from sexual abuse and exploitation, and from neglect.

This is emotional abuse:

- ▶ A caregiver does not give their child normal affection or attention.
- ▶ A caregiver constantly criticizes or threatens a child, making the child feel worthless and afraid.
- ▶ A child sees violence or fighting at home.

This is physical abuse:

- ▶ A child is shaken, kicked, punched, beaten, or thrown.



- ▶ A child is burned or hit with an object on purpose or is choked or held under water.
- ▶ A caregiver uses a cruel method of punishment, like locking their child in a room without food or water for a long time.
- ▶ A child has marks or bruises from being hit by their caregiver.

This is sexual abuse:

- ▶ A caregiver touches a child in a sexual way, has sex with a child, or threatens to do so.
- ▶ A caregiver tries to get sexual pleasure by letting a child look at sex magazines and videos or watch people having sex.

This is sexual exploitation:

- ▶ A caregiver uses a child as a prostitute or to make pornography (sexual pictures or movies) or makes a child do other sexual activities.

This is neglect:

- ▶ A child is left with caregivers who are using drugs or alcohol or who are too young to look after children.

- ▶ Children who cannot care for themselves are left alone in the house, in a locked car, or on the street.
- ▶ A child does not get health and dental care.
- ▶ A child does not have enough to eat.
- ▶ A child does not wear clothes that protect them from bad weather.

F&CS will help

If your family is struggling with any of these issues, please call us.

Is it physical discipline or abuse?

Sometimes the line between physical discipline and abuse is hard to see. It is abuse to spank a child with an object like a stick or belt. It is abuse to hit a child hard enough to leave a mark or to hit a child on the face or head. You cannot spank teenagers or a child younger than two. At F&CS, we do not support the use of physical discipline in any situation.

What happens if someone tells F&CS your child is abused or neglected?

- ▶ The law says F&CS must look into every report of possible abuse or neglect. An F&CS family service worker may talk to you, to the child and to other people who know the child to decide how best to help.
- ▶ F&CS may find that your child is safe. Or, F&CS may decide the child needs protection. They may ask you to make changes so your child is safe and well cared for. F&CS may ask you to sign a written agreement. This is a legal contract and you should agree only to what you think you can do.
- ▶ If F&CS thinks the problem cannot be fixed quickly, they can remove the child from your home for a while.