

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.



- ▶ **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



What you need to know about Child Welfare and Family Court

THREE IN A SERIES

Working with

FAMILY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES

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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 F&CS 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 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 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.

Most likely, the judge will not make the final decision about your case on the first court date. You may 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, 519-824-0170, 11A Suffolk St. East in Guelph.

You can get free legal advice by going to the Family Law Information Clinics at the Guelph Family Courthouse at 36 Wyndham St. South on Friday mornings, 9 a.m. to noon.

You can 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 will 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 Aboriginal) 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 and do it within 30 days. You will find a blank Form 33B.1: Answer and Plan of Care in the legal papers from F&CS.

Ask your lawyer to help you fill out this Answer form. It tells the judge your side of the story and what you want for your children.

For more information

www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca → Family Justice
Family Courts
Guelph Family Court
74 Woolwich Street,
519-822-7961