

Child Welfare Services and Child Protection



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Child Welfare Services are government offices that help make sure children and youth are safe and cared for properly. This includes:

- ▶ supporting families that need help raising their children
- ▶ investigating reports of abuse or neglect
- ▶ supporting children in care, like foster care or adoption

In Nova Scotia, child protection services are to help anyone under 19 who needs protection.

Everyone has a duty to report any possible abuse or neglect of a child. You can report without giving your name (anonymously) by calling a Child Welfare Services office near where the child lives.

You can see the full list of Child Welfare Services offices here:

<https://novascotia.ca/coms/departement/contact/ChildWelfareServices.html>

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN SOMEONE REPORTS ABUSE OR NEGLECT?

When someone reports possible abuse or neglect, a social worker checks to see if a child or youth needs help. They might talk to the child and their friends, family, and teachers. They might also get medical help or counseling for the child. The social worker can also help parents or caregivers learn how to look after their children properly.

If a caregiver can't look after a child, the social worker might ask a judge to decide what is best for the child. The judge might say the child should live somewhere else. This might be with other family members, with a foster parent, or in a group home. Children will live with family members or community members whenever possible.

Youth who need more help than a family member or foster parent can provide may stay at a group home. This is a place where more than one youth - usually teens - live together with adult supervision. The group home will help youth set goals, finish school, learn life skills, and get mental health support.

A social worker will give you a schedule that shows when and where you can visit your parent or caregiver. Each visit is for a set time, such as from 3 p.m. to 4 p.m. Visits might have to be in a certain place or be supervised by the social worker.



WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

If the social worker and your parent or caregiver can't agree on where you should live or how often visits will happen, a judge will decide. If you are staying with family, a foster parent, or in a group home, the judge will look at your case after 30 days to see how you are doing. They might decide that your parent or caregiver is able to look after you again. They might also decide that it is better for you to stay where you are.

If your social worker still thinks your parent or caregiver can't look after you, the judge will look at your case again in three months. The judge will decide what help you and your parents or caregiver need and where you will live for the next year.

If you have been living somewhere else for a year and your parent or caregiver is still not able to look after you, the judge might order "permanent care and custody." This means that you will not go back to living with your parent or caregiver. Instead, you might live with a family member permanently or be adopted by another family.

If you are older than 12, you can't be adopted without your agreement.

YOUR CULTURE IS IMPORTANT

A social worker will create a "cultural connection plan" for all children and youth in permanent care. This means that steps are taken to make sure you have a connection to your racial and cultural community, religion, and language. This could include things like attending powwows, going to a French language school, or carrying out African Nova Scotian traditions.



INFORMATION FOR YOUNG PARENTS

If you are under 19 years old and you have a child, you still have the right to see your child, even if they are living somewhere else. If you can't look after your child on your own, a social worker can help you with parenting classes and financial support. You and your child might need to live with another adult who can help you. This might be your own parent or another family member, or a foster parent.

For more information about what happens when your child is taken into care, or if you have to go to court, you can read this brochure: [“What you need to know when Child Protection takes your children into care”](#).

Nova Scotia Legal Aid offers one-hour appointments to parents who need advice when they are involved with Child Protection.



Resources

Call Child Welfare Services right away if you think a child is in danger of abuse.

Weekdays, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.:

- ▶ 1-877-424-1177

Evenings (4:30 p.m. - 8:30 a.m.), weekends, holidays:

- ▶ 1-866-922-2434

For children and families living in Mi'kmaw communities, contact Mi'kmaw Family and Children's Services 24/7:

- ▶ 1-800-263-8686 (mainland)
- ▶ 1-800-263-8300 (Cape Breton)

Black Youth Helpline

Every day, 9 a.m. - 10 p.m.

- ▶ 1-833-294-8650
- ▶ info@blackyouth.ca

Child Protection Early Legal Advice

1-866-420-3450

Nova Scotia Youth Outreach Program

Support for youth who are at risk of being subjected to or perpetrating sexual violence, and who are in temporary or permanent care

- ▶ <https://novascotia.ca/coms/families/prevention-and-early-intervention/youth-outreach-program.html>