



CHILDREN'S  
AID SOCIETY  
*of* TORONTO

LA SOCIÉTÉ  
DE L'AIDE à  
L'ENFANCE  
DE TORONTO



# Children's Aid Society of Toronto's Responsibilities and Client Rights

## What are the Children's Aid Society (CAS) of Toronto's responsibilities?

Child protection is our ultimate responsibility. We are legally mandated under the Child and Family Services Act (Ontario) to intervene in any situation where a child under the age of 16 in Toronto has been, or is threatened with, physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse, or neglect.

## What services does the CAS of Toronto provide?

Child management services with family support, foster care, groups for victims of sexual abuse, adoption and help for pregnant women. We also connect people with other services in the community.

## What happens when a report is made?

A parent or a child may call us directly. A relative, friend, teacher, public health nurse, doctor or other professional in the community may make referrals.

If someone reports your child is abused or neglected, a CAS of Toronto worker will visit your family to determine if abuse is occurring. If the worker thinks your child is at risk, he or she must decide how to protect the child and help your family. The worker may offer you support services, or decide to temporarily remove your child from home.

If the child appears to be in immediate danger and the only way to ensure his or her safety is by removal from the home, this can be done with or without your consent. The child is then

taken to a safe environment, such as a family friend, relative or foster home.

## How do families and the CAS of Toronto work together?

Children come into the care of the CAS of Toronto for various reasons. Their parents may not be able to care for them safely, other supports such as counselling or education haven't worked or aren't available, and friends and relatives can't help out.

For every child taken into care, six more are served in their own homes. Some children are placed with us voluntarily by their parents, while others are placed by court order. Occasionally, it may be best to bring a child into care on a voluntary basis. This is done for a limited period of time, with your consent and the consent of your child, if he or she is 12 years of age or older.

If your child is removed from home against your wishes, a judge will decide what should happen next. The CAS of Toronto must present the situation to a Family Court judge within five days. The judge makes the decision about whether the child should remain in CAS of Toronto care or return home. You can get a lawyer to help you in court. If you can't afford one, you should ask for assistance from the legal aid office.

## What are the child's rights?

- The right to participate in important decisions that are made about his or her life in a way that's appropriate to his or her age and ability

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- The right to privacy
- The right to visit with you, unless a judge decides or a court order provides for the CAS worker to decide, that it's not in your child's best interests
- The right to receive appropriate care, including nutritious meals, education that suits his or her abilities, regular medical and dental care, age appropriate clothing, and participation in after-school recreational activities
- The right to freedom from physical abuse or punishment, and from emotional, sexual, and verbal abuse
- The right to practice his or her religion, and to receive religious instruction
- The right to participate in activities that are important to his or her culture and heritage
- The right to have his or her individuality respected, including ability, sexual orientation, and gender identification

## What are the parent's rights?

The CAS of Toronto must make a reasonable effort to notify you of all matters involving court. If the Family Court judge decides that your child must remain in our care, the CAS of Toronto must notify and allow you to take part in important decisions affecting your child. There must also be reasonable access to certain information in CAS of Toronto files.

A plan will be created to outline what everyone must do to ensure the best outcome for your child, whether that is remaining in our care for a period of time, or returning home.

You may visit with your child in private, unless a judge or your CAS of Toronto worker and/or your child's CAS of Toronto worker through a court order, consider it's not in your child's best interests.

These visits may occur at your home, in the community, or at the place where your child is living.

You and your CAS of Toronto worker (and your child if he or she is old enough) will discuss when, where, and how often you can visit.

## Are CAS records confidential?

Yes. The CAS of Toronto must keep accurate records of all contacts with children and their families to document our activity, and collect important information to help your family. All records are confidential and disclosure of their contents is strictly regulated.

You have the right to:

- review and understand your record
- have the record explained to you
- seek corrections

## What if there are concerns about the CAS of Toronto's service?

If there's a problem, we'll do our best to resolve it. Please feel free to talk to your CAS worker if you have any concerns or questions.

If you and your CAS worker can't sort it out, ask to speak to the CAS supervisor. It has been our experience that most matters are usually resolved at this point. However, if you, your social worker, and the supervisor can't resolve the problem, the CAS has a formal complaints procedure that will be explained to you. You can ask for a written copy of the complaint procedure at any time.