

## What is child abuse?

There are different kinds of child abuse:

### 1. *Physical abuse*

The intentional use of force on any part of a child's body that results in injury.

### 2. *Emotional abuse*

Anything that causes serious mental or emotional harm to a child, which the parent does not attempt to prevent or address.

### 3. *Sexual abuse*

The improper exposure of a child to sexual contact, activity or behaviour.

### 4. *Neglect*

Any lack of care that may cause significant harm to a child's development or endangers the child in any way.

Reports of alleged child abuse should be made directly to the child welfare agency in the area where the child lives. There are 20 child welfare agencies throughout the province:

**Annapolis County**  
Family and Children's Services of  
Annapolis County  
(902) 532-2337

**Antigonish County**  
Antigonish District Office of  
Community Services  
(902) 863-3213

**Cape Breton-Victoria County**  
Children's Aid Society of Cape Breton-Victoria  
Glace Bay Office (902) 842-4010  
North Sydney (902) 794-5100  
Sydney Office (902) 563-3400

**Colchester County**  
Children's Aid Society and Family Services of  
Colchester County  
(902) 893-5950

**Cumberland County**  
Family and Children's Services of  
Cumberland County  
(902) 667-3336

**Digby County**  
Digby District Office of Community Services  
(902) 245-5811

**Guysborough County**  
Guysborough District Office of Community  
Services  
(902) 533-4007

**Halifax Regional Municipality**  
Children's Aid Society of Halifax  
(902) 425-5420

Cole Harbour District Office of  
Community Services  
(902) 435-7472

Dartmouth District Office of  
Community Services  
(902) 424-3298

Sackville District Office of  
Community Services  
(902) 869-3600

**Hants County**  
Family and Children's Services  
of Hants County  
(902) 798-2289

**Inverness-Richmond County**  
Children's Aid Society Inverness-Richmond  
(902) 625-0660

**Kings County**  
Family and Children's Services  
of Kings County  
(902) 678-6176

**Lunenburg County**  
Family and Children's Services of  
Lunenburg County  
(902) 543-4554

**Native Families Living on Reserves**  
Mi'kmaw Family and Children's Services  
of Nova Scotia - Indian Brook Office  
(902) 758-3553 or 1-800-263-8686

Mi'kmaw Family and Children's Services  
of Nova Scotia - Eskasoni Office  
(902) 379-2433 or 1-800-263-8300

**Pictou County**  
Children's Aid Society of Pictou County  
(902) 755-5950

**Queens County**  
Family and Children's Services of  
Queens County  
(902) 354-3525

**Shelburne County**  
Children's Aid Society of Shelburne County  
(902) 637-2337

**Yarmouth County**  
Family and Children's Services of  
Yarmouth County  
(902) 742-0700



# Child Welfare Services

Protecting Children by Supporting Families

  
**NOVA SCOTIA**  
Community Services

NOVA SCOTIA ASSOCIATION OF  
**Social Workers**

*Building strong, healthy communities together*



## What is child welfare?

Child welfare services are about protecting children from harm from abuse or neglect, while making every effort to keep families together. Child welfare services include child protection and supports for children in care, including foster care and adoption.

## What kinds of services are provided?

In 2004, there were approximately 11,500 child welfare cases in Nova Scotia. About 840 of those involved court proceedings, and less than one per cent of all cases involved apprehending a child from the home.

Social workers make every effort to keep children at home, while working with parents to provide skills and supports.

Families often enter into voluntary arrangements to receive support. Through these voluntary agreements, families may participate in mediation, parenting skills, anger management, addictions treatment, or other kinds of counselling programs as needed.

The vast majority of court cases involve asking the court to order mandatory supervision and support while the child remains at home.

## Who provides child welfare services?

In Nova Scotia, child welfare services are provided through both provincial government offices and community agencies. All child welfare services are provided under the legislation and regulations of the provincial *Children and Family Services Act*.

People providing child welfare services are registered social workers with specialized training and a bachelor or masters degree in social work. These may include child protection workers, adoption workers and others in the community. They are accountable to their professional association and must follow standards of practice and the social work code of ethics.

## Why are some children removed from the home?

Taking a child from the home, either temporarily or permanently, is unusual and only done when a child is in imminent danger of abuse or neglect.

In all cases, the decision to remove a child from the home on an extended or permanent basis is made by a family court judge. A hearing must be held within five days if the child is removed by a social worker in an emergency situation.

## What rights do families have?

Child protection services are very open to families. Parents have access to case files and notes, under the standards of freedom of information and protection of privacy legislation. Families that can not afford a lawyer are provided with one through legal aid services.

## Why are child welfare matters confidential?

The *Children and Family Services Act* makes it illegal to publish any information that would identify a child involved in a child welfare matter. Information about specific child welfare investigations is only available to the family, social work officials and the court.

Confidentiality attempts to protect the child and family from stigma that might be harmful to their ability to improve their situation and overcome the problems that led to their involvement in child welfare.

## To report suspected child abuse or neglect:

Everyone has the duty to immediately report even a suspicion that a child may be in need of protective services. Under the *Children and Family Services Act*, designated social workers in child welfare agencies are required to assess reports of alleged child abuse and neglect.