



Easy Read guide

NSW Department of  
Communities and Justice

# What happens when a caseworker visits



## How to use this guide



The NSW Government Department of Communities and Justice wrote this guide.

When you see the word 'we', it means the NSW Government Department of Communities and Justice.



We wrote this guide in an easy to read way.

We use pictures to explain some ideas.

**Bold**  
Not bold

We wrote some important words in **bold**.

This means the letters are thicker and darker.



We explain what these words mean.

There is a list of these words on page 42.



This Easy Read guide is a summary of a booklet.

This means it only includes the most important ideas.



You can find the booklet on our website.

[www.dcj.nsw.gov.au/children-and-families/nsw-child-protection-guide-for-families/when-a-caseworker-visits.html](http://www.dcj.nsw.gov.au/children-and-families/nsw-child-protection-guide-for-families/when-a-caseworker-visits.html)



You can ask for help to read this guide.

A friend, family member or support person might be able to help you.



This guide includes photos of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

It might contain photos of people who have passed away.



We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional owners of the land we live on – Australia.

They were the first people to live on and use the:

- land
- waters.



This guide is quite long.

It includes a lot of information.



You don't need to read it all at once.



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## What is this guide about?



We deliver **child protection services**.



This means we work with families and communities to make sure children are safe.

We can decide if a child is not safe in their home.

We always aim to:



- keep your child safely at home with you



- treat families and communities with respect



- work with you and your community to build skills and knowledge.

We also aim to:



- be honest



- listen to your ideas and respond when you ask for help



- connect you to supports.



This guide is about what you can expect when a **caseworker** visits your family.

Our caseworkers can support you to:



- care for your child



- live safely.



They work with:

- you
- your family and community.

## Why is a caseworker visiting your family?



People can contact us if they're worried a child isn't safe.

We call this a 'report'.



Anyone in the community can make a report.



The law says that some people need to make a report if they think a child isn't safe.

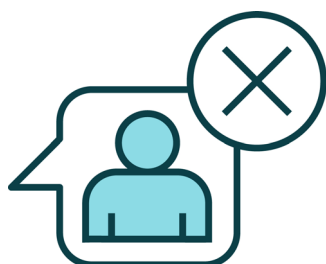
For example, teachers and health care workers.



We use the information from reports to decide if a caseworker will visit your family.

We'll also use any other information we have.

For example, if we have worked with your family before.



Caseworkers can't tell you who made a report.

It's against the law for them to do that.

## Why a caseworker would worry about a child



There are lots of things that can make caseworkers worried about a child.

For example, if:



- someone is hurting a child



- someone isn't treating a child in the right way



- people are using drugs at home



- people are getting hurt at home.

## Getting legal advice



It can be a good idea to talk to a **lawyer**.

A lawyer is someone who knows the law.



A lawyer can:

- explain your choices
- speak for you
- give advice about fixing problems.



Caseworkers can support you to connect to a lawyer.



We have a list of legal services on page 36.



## What happens when a caseworker visits?



Usually, 2 caseworkers will visit your family to check if your child is safe.

We call this a 'safety assessment'.



They will try to call you on the phone before they visit.



Before they visit, they might ask you for information about places like your child's:

- school
- health services.

This is so they can understand your child's situation better.



When they visit, they'll explain:

- why they're visiting you
- what they're worried about.





They might visit because something is happening to your child that you need to know about.



You can ask the caseworkers as many questions as you want.



You can also write down what they say.



And you can ask someone else to support you.

For example:

- a friend or family member
- someone who can speak up for you.

## The types of questions they will ask

The caseworkers will ask you questions about:



- your child's safety



- what they're worried about



- if your family is worried about anything.

The caseworkers could also ask questions to understand your family, such as:



- what's been going well or badly recently



- who spends time with your child, including who lives at your home



- what supports your family has, or what supports you need



- which members of the community can help your child be safe.

## Spending time with your child



It's the caseworkers' job to spend some time with your child to understand what life is like for them.



For example, they might:

- ask them questions
- play with them.



The caseworkers will talk with you before spending time with your child.



They'll tell you what they will talk to your child about.



They might not be able to talk to you before they spend time with your child.

If this happens, they'll tell you what they talked to your child about as soon as they can.

## If your child is hurt



If the caseworkers believe your child is hurt, they can ask you to take your child to hospital.

The law says they can ask for this to happen.



If you have trouble getting to the hospital, the caseworkers can arrange for someone to take you.



While a doctor is checking your child, your child will be under our legal care.



The doctor will write a report after they check your child.

You can ask your caseworker for a copy of this report.



The doctor's report will include information about:

- if your child is hurt or at risk of getting hurt
- why they believe your child is hurt
- what they heard about your child's injuries
- what they think should happen next.



The caseworkers will use the doctor's report to decide whether your child is safe.



The caseworkers will talk with you about:

- a plan to make your child safe
- what people need to do to make your child safe.





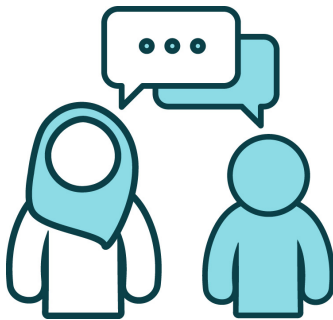
They might decide that your child:

- isn't safe
- can't stay with you.



You can find more information about what happens if it isn't safe for your child to stay at home on page 32.

## Doing a cultural consultation



Caseworkers might talk to someone from the same **culture** or background as your child.

This is so they can understand your child's experiences and needs better.

We call this a 'cultural consultation'.

Your culture is:



- your way of life
- how you think or act now because of how you grew up
- your beliefs
- what is important to you.



You can ask if the caseworkers have done a cultural consultation yet.

## Meeting with your family

The caseworkers might ask if you want to take part in a meeting with:



- your family members
- the people who care about you and your child.

We call this meeting a ‘Family Group Conference’.



At this meeting, you and your family can create a plan to keep your child safe.



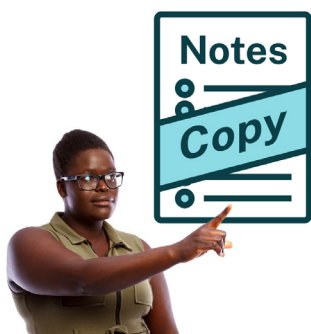
You can ask for one of these meetings even if the caseworker doesn’t suggest one.



## What happens after they visit?



After they visit your home, the caseworkers will write down what they saw and heard.



You can ask them for a copy of their notes.

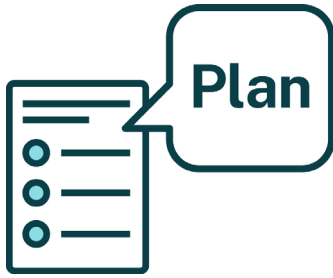


Together, the caseworkers will decide if your child:

- is safe
- needs a plan to help them be safe
- isn't safe.



They will tell you what they decide.



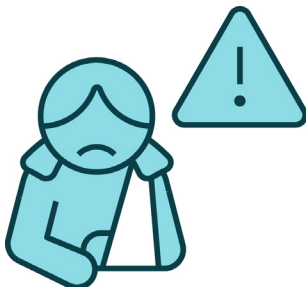
We explain what happens if they decide your child needs a plan to keep them safe on page 24.



We explain what happens if they decide your child isn't safe on page 32.



If they decide your child is safe, the caseworkers might still need to work with you some more.



This happens if your child's is at risk of getting hurt in the future.



We have information to explain why we'd still need to work with you, even when your child is safe.

You can find this information on our website.

[www.dcj.nsw.gov.au/resources/easy-read-hub.html](http://www.dcj.nsw.gov.au/resources/easy-read-hub.html)

## Visiting your home again



The caseworkers will need to check your home again if your child's safety changes.

For example, if someone moves into your home.

They will also check your home again:



- to make sure a plan about your child's safety is still working well



- if we decide to stop working with your family.



This could happen if:

- your child is safe
- there isn't a risk of them getting hurt in the future.

# What happens if your child needs a plan to be safe?

The caseworkers might decide that:



- your child isn't safe
- but
- changing things right now could keep them safe.



The caseworkers will work with you to create a plan about how to change those things.

We call this a 'safety plan'.



It's a short-term plan to help keep your child:

- in your home
- at a place you choose.



A safety plan is a list of things everyone needs to do to make sure your child is safe.



This includes:



- you and your family
- people who can support you
- the caseworkers.

## What goes into the safety plan



The safety plan includes a list of dangers.  
These are things that could hurt your child.



Next to each danger is a task that someone can do to keep your child safe from that danger.



A task includes:

- who will do it
- when they will do it.



An example of a task is that someone in your family will take care of your child while you're at work.

## Making the safety plan



You will make the safety plan with a caseworker.



You should tell them what you think needs to happen to make your child safe.

This includes what you need from other people.



You can also ask questions about what choices you have.



Your child can help to create the safety plan.

They can tell the caseworker what they need to feel safe.



It's a good idea to have someone you trust with you to support you.

For example:



- a family member



- a lawyer



- a support person.



They can write down notes.

## Support to make the safety plan



The caseworker should make sure you can:

- understand the safety plan
- do the tasks.



If you're a person with disability, you can ask for a safety plan that suits what you need.



Your caseworker can also make sure your safety plan is in a language other than English.

They can organise for someone to translate it.





It can also be a good idea to get legal advice so you understand the choices you can make.

You can find the contact details of legal services on page 36.



If you are unhappy with how the safety plan was made, you can visit our website.

<http://www.dcj.nsw.gov.au/children-and-families/nsw-child-protection-guide-for-families/when-a-caseworker-visits/safety-plans.html>

## Following the safety plan



The caseworkers will check how you're going with the safety plan.

This includes making sure you have what you need to do each task.



They will keep checking the plan until your child is safe from the dangers in the plan.



Sometimes the safety plan will change if things change for your family.

For example, if a friend or family member can't take care of your child anymore.



The caseworkers will make sure to tell you if the safety plan changes.



If the plan changes without you knowing about it, talk to the caseworkers as soon as possible.

## If you can't follow the safety plan



You should let the caseworkers know if it's too hard to follow the safety plan.



You might need to work together to change the tasks.



It's good to be honest about how you feel so you can get the support you need.



Make sure to get lots of help from the people who care about you and your child.



Tell the caseworkers if you don't have someone who can support you.

They can connect you to services and people who can help.

## What happens if your child isn't safe?

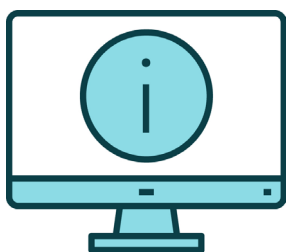


If the caseworkers decide your child isn't safe, they won't be able to stay with you.



We might need to place your child somewhere else.

We call this 'out of home care'.



We wrote some information about out of home care.

You can find it on our website.

[www.dcj.nsw.gov.au/resources/easy-read-hub.html](http://www.dcj.nsw.gov.au/resources/easy-read-hub.html)



Or you might be able to create an agreement for someone else to care for your child.

## Temporary Care Agreement



You might be able to create an agreement with us that means:

- your child will stay with someone else
- but
- you can still make decisions for your child.



We call this a 'Temporary Care Agreement'.



A lawyer can help you make a Temporary Care Agreement.

It will mean you can make decisions about:



- who your child will live with
- how and when you can see your child.



The Temporary Care Agreement includes a plan for your child to come back home.



This is a longer-term plan than the safety plan.



This plan has tasks that everyone must do so your child can come back home.



You will create this plan with the caseworker after you make the Temporary Care Agreement.



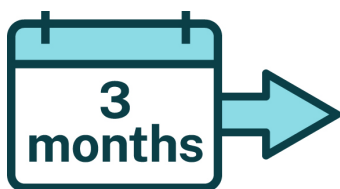
Your Temporary Care Agreement will also include a plan for any supports you'll need.

## Ending the Temporary Care Agreement



You and the caseworker will agree on how long the Temporary Care Agreement will last for.

It can last up to 3 months.



If you only need a little more time to finish the tasks, we can extend it longer than 3 months.



We can choose to end the Temporary Care Agreement at any time.



You can also choose to end the Temporary Care Agreement at any time.

If you do, the caseworker will check if it's safe for your child to come home.



# Legal services

## Aboriginal Legal Service



You can contact the Aboriginal Legal Service for legal advice.



You can call them.

**1800 733 233**



You can visit their website.

[www.alsnswact.org.au](http://www.alsnswact.org.au)

## Legal Aid NSW



You can contact Legal Aid NSW for legal advice.



You can call them.

**1300 888 529**



You can visit their website.

[www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au](http://www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au)



## Women's Legal Service



You can contact the Women's Legal Service for legal advice.



You can call them.

**1800 801 501**



You can visit their website.

[www.wlsnsw.org.au](http://www.wlsnsw.org.au)

## Disability Advocacy NSW



You can contact Disability Advocacy NSW for support to speak up for yourself.



You can call them.

**1300 365 085**



You can visit their website.

[www.da.org.au](http://www.da.org.au)

## Intellectual Disability Rights Service



You can contact the Intellectual Disability Rights Service for support:

- to speak up for yourself
- if you have an **intellectual disability**.



An intellectual disability affects how you:

- learn new things
- solve problems
- communicate
- do things on your own.



You can call them.

**02 9265 6300**



You can visit their website.

[www.idrs.org.au](http://www.idrs.org.au)

## Contact us

Asking for help can show that you:



- are a strong parent



- want your child to be safe.



If you want support, you can visit our website.

[www.dcj.nsw.gov.au](http://www.dcj.nsw.gov.au)

## Your caseworker



You can also contact your caseworker for information about how to get support.

You can write their contact details below.



Your caseworker's name:

---



Your caseworker's phone number:

---



Your caseworker's email address:

---

## Your local Community Services Centre



You can contact your local Community Services Centre for information about how to get support.

You can write their phone number below.

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## Make a complaint about our services



When you make a **complaint**, you tell someone that something:

- has gone wrong
- isn't working well.



If you want to make a complaint about our services, you can contact the Enquiry, Feedback and Complaints Unit.



You can call them.

**1800 000 164**



You can also send them an email.

**[complaints@facns.nsw.gov.au](mailto:complaints@facns.nsw.gov.au)**

# Word list

This list explains what the **bold** words in this guide mean.



## **Caseworkers**

Our caseworkers can support you to:

- care for your child
- live safely.



## **Child protection services**

Child protection services work with families and communities to make sure children are safe.

They can decide if a child is not safe in their home.



## **Complaint**

When you make a complaint, you tell someone that something:

- has gone wrong
- isn't working well.

## Culture

Your culture is:



- your way of life
- how you think or act now because of how you grew up
- your beliefs
- what is important to you.

## Intellectual disability

An intellectual disability affects how you:



- learn new things
- solve problems
- communicate
- do things on your own.



## Lawyer

A lawyer is someone who knows the law.



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