

Protocol for Making a Report of Suspected Child Maltreatment

Version 3

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SCHOOL OF EARLY
CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Protocol for Making a Report of Suspected Child Maltreatment

Protocol for Students

1. If you are observing a situation where a child or youth is in *immediate* danger, phone 911 and then call a child protection agency.
2. Suspicions that a child has been abused, or is at risk for abuse, must be reported to a CAS or Indigenous Child and Family Well-Being Agency. Students should report concerns as soon as physically possible the same day they meet the threshold for having reasonable grounds (ie. within 24-hours). Students can locate their local CAS or Indigenous Child and Family Well-Being Agency by visiting <https://www.oacas.org/childrens-aid-child-protection/locate-a-childrens-aid-society/>.

Below are steps involved in the reporting process:

PREPARE FOR THE TELEPHONE CALL

- Students should document in writing the basis of their suspicions that a child has experienced, or is at risk of experiencing, child maltreatment. The documentation should be factual and only include what has been seen or heard (i.e., do not include personal opinions).
- The student has the option of notifying their faculty, field mentor or liaison of their *intention* to call a child protection agency, although doing so is not required. Students can reach out for support with the process whenever needed.
- If the student is unsure of whether the suspicions are reportable, they should *consult* via phone with a child protection worker to discuss the circumstances further. No one else has the authority and contextual knowledge needed to decide whether or not a report should be made. Consultation with a telephone intake worker may start as anonymous if the student prefers, however depending on the circumstances the worker may then advise the student that a formal report is required.
- If the child's religious or cultural affiliation is known, the report can be made directly to the society of appropriate religious/cultural affiliation. However, if this information is not known students should contact any local CAS.
- Students will need to find a private, distraction-free space to make the call without interruptions.

MAKE THE TELEPHONE CALL

- The student will report directly by making a phone call to their local CAS or Indigenous Child and Family Well-Being Agency and asking for the **intake department**.
- The student must speak with a *child protection worker* via phone directly to make a report and answer any questions asked to the best of their knowledge. Leaving a message does not qualify as making a report. If calling after hours and needing to leave a message, be sure to leave your full name and a telephone number where you can be reached. If your message is not returned the same day call back the following morning.
- At the end of the call students should ask the child protection worker who specifically they can notify about the report i.e., involved parents, family members, childcare staff, centre supervisor, field liaison or if they are not permitted to speak to anyone while the investigation continues.
- If the reported concerns relate to a Registered Early Childhood Educator, students should consult with the child protection worker regarding when a complaint to the CECE may be made. A complaint can be made via phone by completing **this complaint form**.

***If following the above reporting process is emotionally difficult for the student, they may request that a child care supervisor, field liaison or faculty be*

present as a support when they contact CAS as long as doing so does not jeopardize the students ability to report promptly.**

AFTER THE TELEPHONE CALL

- Upon completion of the call, students must follow the instructions of the child protection worker. For example, students should not inform any caregivers i.e., involved parents, family members, childcare staff, field liaison if they are not permitted to speak to anyone while the investigation continues.
- Students should add to their notes by documenting the outcome of their call with a child protection worker, including the workers name. The document should be dated and placed in a sealed envelope. The student should keep this envelope in a confidential and safe place.
- If additional suspicions of child maltreatment are known, or there is new information regarding the initial report circumstances, the student must make another report as per the above reporting process.
- If making the call has impacted a student's emotional and mental health, they can connect with Seneca College's free, confidential [Personal Counselling Services](#) for registered Seneca students.

If you need urgent mental health support, the following resources are available:

[988: Suicide Crisis Helpline](#)

[Good2Talk](#) for students: call 1.866.925.5454 or text GOOD2TALKON to 686868

[WeConnect](#) for domestic students (code: senecaco) and international students (code: senecaint)

Mental Health Helpline from [ConnexOntario](#): call 1.866.531.2600

Protocol for Employees (Field Liaisons and Faculty)

BE SUPPORTIVE

- When a student report's having suspicions of child maltreatment, recognise they might display a range of emotional responses to the circumstances and may feel anxious about reporting. Faculty will remain mindful that some students may have personal experiences with the system that may influence their comfort in contacting a child welfare agency. Students can be encouraged to contact Seneca's Personal Counselling Services if additional support is needed.
- Offer a private room for the student to use while making the call if needed. The liaison or faculty may be present during the call for support if the student requests.

EXPLAIN THE PROCESS

- Explain to the student their responsibility to report under the CYFSA, and the process of reporting as per the above protocol. Liaisons and faculty are *not* to consult with the student on *whether* a report should be made. Rather, students should be encouraged to consult directly by calling the intake department of their local CAS or Indigenous Child and Family Well-Being Agency and speaking to a child protection worker via phone if they are uncertain.
- Remind the student of the importance of writing a factual account of the incident or circumstances, noting the date, time and location, and names of those involved. Encourage the student to write what was seen and heard, rather than what might have been happening. Students should also document the outcome of their call with a child protection worker, including the workers name.
- If the circumstances involve a member of the College of Early Childhood Educators a complaint may be made of the College of ECE. Please note, if a complaint is to be made to the College of ECE, the child protection worker should be informed to give guidance on *when* the complaint submission should be made to avoid inadvertently impacting an investigation by CAS. A complaint can be made via phone by completing [this complaint form](#).
- If making the call has impacted a student's emotional and mental health, they can connect with Seneca College's free, confidential [Personal Counselling Services](#) for registered Seneca students.

INFORM FIELD PLACEMENT COORDINATORS OR ACADEMIC PROGRAM MANAGER

- Notify the Chair, Academic Program Manager and a Field Placement Coordinator that a report was made, however withhold specific details of the circumstances and individuals involved to protect confidentiality.

Frequently Asked Questions about Reporting Concerns of Child Maltreatment in Field Placement Settings