

# When child protection workers visit

## A text-only Easy Read booklet for parents

### How to use this booklet

The Victorian Government Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) wrote this booklet. When you see the word 'we', it means DFFH.

We wrote this booklet in an easy to read way.

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

This means the letters are thicker and darker.

We explain what these important words mean.

There is a list of these words on page 17.

This Easy Read booklet is a summary of another document.

You can ask for help to read this booklet. A friend, family member or support person may be able to help you.

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## Why did we give you this booklet?

We gave you this booklet because someone told DFFH that your child might not be safe.

There is a law that says we can visit you to see if your child is safe.

This law is called the *Children, Youth and Families Act (2005)*.

This law helps us:

- work with families
- keep children safe.

A **child protection worker** will visit you and your child to see if your child is safe.

A child protection worker:

- works for the government
- talks to people to find out if a child is safe
- works to keep children safe.

## Who told us about your child?

Anyone can tell us that your child might not be safe.

The child protection worker cannot tell you:

- the name of the person who told us about your child
- anything else about the person.

The child protection worker can only tell you who the person is if they give **consent**.

When you give your consent, you say it is okay to do something.

## What happens at the first visit?

A child protection worker will visit you if someone tells us your child might not be safe.

You might not know they are coming.

A child protection worker will talk to:

- you
- your child – if they are old enough.

They will talk about:

- what they do
- why they are visiting you and your child
- why they are worried about your child's safety.

The child protection worker will also check if your child:

- has been hurt
- is not safe.

The child protection worker will keep a record of what happens at their first visit.

If you are not home when the child protection worker visits, they might leave a note with their contact details on it.

## **If you do not talk to the child protection worker**

You might not want to talk to the child protection worker.

The child protection worker still needs information about:

- you
- other members of your family
- your child.

If you talk to the child protection worker, they will better understand:

- you
- other members of your family
- your child.

You can tell the child protection worker if you want someone else with you to support you when you talk to them.

You can also tell the child protection worker if there is someone you want them to talk to.

## What will happen next?

The child protection worker might need more information about your child.

The child protection worker might visit your home again and talk to:

- you
- your child – if they are old enough.

The child protection worker will try and work out how they can keep your child safe.

They might talk to other people who can give them information about your child.

They might also:

- have a doctor look at your child
- set up a meeting about your child's safety with other people who can help.

Your child protection worker might suggest you and your child get help from other services, such as:

- family services
- **counselling support**
- alcohol and drug services.

Counselling support is when you talk to someone about:

- how you think and feel
- ways to help you feel better.

## **The Children's Court**

If a child is not safe, we may need to take them away from their:

- homes
- parents
- families.

We do this to keep them safe.

The **Children's Court** will make this decision.

The Children's Court is a place where legal decisions about a child are made.

If the child protection worker thinks your child is not safe, they might send a form to the Children's Court.

Your child protection worker might tell you:

- about the Children's Court
- where you can get legal help
- how you give information to the Children's Court.



## The information about children and families

The information that the child protection worker collects is controlled by the law.

This means it will only be used:

- if the Children's Court thinks your child is not safe
- to work out what your child needs
- to keep your child safe.

The child protection worker might need to give your information to people who can help your child.

For example:

- members of your child's family
- the Children's Court
- health, community and school services
- other government departments
- the police
- the Aboriginal Child Specialist Advice and Support service (ACSASS), if your child is Aboriginal.

## Your information

If you want to see the information we collected about your child, you can talk to the child protection worker.

You can also send in a form called a freedom of information request.

This is a way to ask the government for information they have about you.

You can ask someone to support you to do this, such as:

- the child protection worker
- a family member, friend or support person
- an **advocate** – someone who helps you speak up for yourself.

## Getting legal help

You might want legal help if a child protection worker asks for information about your child.

You can get help from a **legal representative**.

A legal representative is someone who can:

- give you legal support
- support you with legal decisions.

You can get help from a legal service, such as Victoria Legal Aid (VLA).

You can call them on **1300 792 387**.

The Law Institute of Victoria may be able to help you find a legal representative.

You can call them on **(03) 9607 9311**.

You can also get help from a legal service in your local community.

If you are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, you might want to use an Aboriginal legal service.

You can contact one of these legal services yourself or Victorian Legal Aid can help you get a legal representative from one of these services.

You can call the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service.

**1800 064 865**

You can also call Djirra.

**1800 105 303**

Djirra used to be called the Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service Victoria.

## What if you don't agree with a decision?

If you do not agree with a decision the child protection worker makes about your child, you can ask for a **review**.

A review is when someone checks if something:

- works well
- could be better.

You can ask for a statement of reasons.

This means the child protection worker must write a document that explains why they made a decision.

You must ask for a statement of reasons within 28 days after a decision is made.

You can get more information about reviews from:

- the child protection worker
- their manager.

## Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT)

If you don't agree with a decision about your child, you can ask the **Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT)** to review it.

VCAT helps solve legal problems for people in Victoria.

You can ask VCAT to review a:

- decision
- statement of reasons.

You must ask VCAT for a review within 28 days after:

- a decision is made
- you receive the statement of reasons.

You can call VCAT.

**1300 01 8228**

You can email VCAT.

**[humanrights@vcat.vic.gov.au](mailto:humanrights@vcat.vic.gov.au)**

You can go to VCAT's office.

55 King Street, Melbourne

## Making a complaint

If you are not happy with what is happening, you can make a **complaint**.

When you make a complaint, you tell someone that:

- something has gone wrong
- something is not working well
- you are not happy.

You can make a complaint to the:

- child protection worker
- child protection worker's manager.

You can get legal help to make a complaint.

If you are not happy with the result of the complaint, you can:

- fill out an online form at [www.dffh.vic.gov.au/making-complaint](http://www.dffh.vic.gov.au/making-complaint)
- call **1300 884 706**.

If you are still not happy, you can contact the Victorian Ombudsman.

The Victorian Ombudsman helps with complaints about government services.

You can call the Victorian Ombudsman.

**1800 806 314**

If you are deaf, or have a hearing or speech impairment, you can call the National Relay Service.

**133 677**

You can also visit the Victorian Ombudsman website.

[www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au](http://www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au)

## What we must do to keep children safe

### Human rights

When we keep children safe, we must protect the **human rights** of:

- children
- families.

Human rights are rules about how everyone should be treated:

- fairly
- equally.

You can find out more about human rights from the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission.

You can visit their website.

[www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au](http://www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au)

You can call them.

**1300 292 153 or (03) 9032 3583**

## **Child Safe Standards**

When we keep children safe, we must follow a set of rules called the Victorian Child Safe Standards.

If you think we did not follow these rules, you can tell the Commission for Children and Young People.

You can call them.

**1300 78 29 78**

You can send them an email.

**[childsafestandards@ccyp.vic.gov.au](mailto:childsafestandards@ccyp.vic.gov.au)**

You can visit their website.

**[www.ccyp.vic.gov.au](http://www.ccyp.vic.gov.au)**



## Word list

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

### **Advocate**

An advocate is someone who helps you speak up for yourself.

### **Child protection worker**

A child protection worker:

- works for the government
- talks to people to find out if a child is safe
- works to keep children safe.

### **Children's Court**

The Children's Court is a place where legal decisions about a child are made.

### **Complaint**

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

- has gone wrong
- is not working well
- is making you unhappy.

### **Consent**

When you give your consent, you say it is okay to do something.

## **Counselling support**

Counselling support is when you talk to someone about:

- how you think and feel
- ways to help you feel better.

## **Human rights**

Human rights are rules about how everyone should be treated:

- fairly
- equally.

## **Legal representative**

A legal representative is someone who can:

- give you legal support
- support you with legal decisions.

## **Review**

A review is a way to check if something:

- works well
- could be better.

## Contact information

The child protection worker's name is:

Their phone number is:

Their email address is:

The child protection worker's manager is:

Their phone number is:

The Information Access Group created this Easy Read text only document. For any enquiries, please visit [www.informationaccessgroup.com](http://www.informationaccessgroup.com). Quote job number 4763-A.