

# Know Your Rights

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Guidance for dealing with the Children's  
Aid Society





# Triggers for a CAS investigation

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- ❑ CAS typically gets involved with a family when a concerned party—or a child—reports that the children may be at risk of harm due to neglect by the parents, physical, emotional or sexual abuse or a caregiver's addiction issues.
- ❑ A negative life event frequently triggers CAS's involvement with a family. Often, it's something beyond the parents' control, such as the loss of employment or housing, mental health issues or financial distress.
- ❑ Regardless of why a CAS investigation is triggered, going through one can be intimidating and extremely stressful for the entire family. If a child in your care has come to the attention of the CAS, having a Band Representative on your side can help you navigate the complex process and protect your rights.



# What to expect if CAS contacts you

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- ❑ When CAS receives a report about a child who may be at risk, the agency assigns a child protection worker to investigate the allegations. In addition to interviewing the caregivers, the worker may also speak to the children, teachers, members of the extended family and anyone else who can provide significant input into the investigation.
- ❑ For instance, if the CAS receives a referral from your son's teacher because of his inconsistent record of attending school, a worker will reach out to you for an explanation. There may be legitimate reasons for the absenteeism, but parents or guardians will need to satisfy the agency's concerns once the wheels are in motion. If they can't, CAS continues its investigation to determine the underlying cause. Depending on the severity of the allegations, CAS may petition the court to remove the children from their home.



# Your legal rights-what you know can hurt you

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- ❑ When a child protection worker shows up at your house, they wear two distinct — conflicting — hats. One is of a supportive resource who can help your family through a period of crisis. The other is that of an investigator who has the power to remove your children from the home.
- ❑ Sometimes, a family works voluntarily with the CAS, but even if there is an agreement to accept the services or programs they recommend, it's critical to remember that any information you give to a CAS worker can be used to build a case against you.
- ❑ When parents are in the midst of a stressful situation, it can be tempting to open up to a child protection worker who appears to have your best interests at heart. But this isn't necessarily in your or your children's best interests.



# Common missteps in CAS interactions

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Parents and caregivers should be careful to avoid these common missteps in their interactions with CAS workers:

1: Child protection workers are not your friends. Regardless of how warm and supportive they are, a child protection worker's priority is to ensure the safety of your children. Anything you say during an interview can be used against you later in court.

2: Disrespecting the CAS worker. Don't argue, use foul language or otherwise appear uncooperative. Your best chance for a successful resolution is to appear cooperative and keep an open mind to the worker's suggestions, all subject to legal direction.

3: Going it alone. Parents who don't get legal advice before following a worker's suggestions often set themselves up for failure.

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There is nothing more important than your children. Any threat to your relationship with them is tremendously stressful and anxiety-provoking. The Matachewan First Nation Band Representatives can help navigate your involvement with the CAS to achieve the best possible outcome for you and your children.