

For those who are legally responsible to report concern for a child's welfare

Information for those legally obliged to report according to chapter 19 § 1 of the Swedish Social Services Act



Why reports are needed

When legal guardians are not capable of meeting their children's needs it is the responsibility of social services to ensure that children's needs are met. In order to do so, social services have to be notified about children who are in need of protection or support. Therefore you and other employees at certain authorities and operations that come into contact with children are legally responsible to immediately report to social services any suspicion of a child being at risk.

Legal responsibility to report in summary

If you are legally obliged to report suspicion to social services, you must do so immediately, when you in your professional capacity suspect or learn of a child that is at risk. You must also provide information that may be of significance to the social services' investigation.

Your concern is what you report

To report your concern for a child is a way to take responsibility for the child and inform social services of the situation. As an informer you do not need to be certain that the child is at risk, the suspicion is enough. It is the social services' responsibility to investigate the child's situation and assess if protection or support is necessary.

Concerns before a report is made

When you are faced with making a report you may feel uncertain about whether it is the right thing to do. Try to keep in mind that you are doing it for the sake of the child. You can also discuss questions or concerns with a manager or a colleague. If you are unsure whether you should make a report, you can contact social services and describe the situation. They can also give you advice on what you should and should not say to the child and the family. If you do not want the conversation to be treated as a report, do not reveal the identity of the child. It is important to keep in mind that a conversation is not a substitute for a report, a report is often needed in order for social services to take action.

How to make a report

- The report should be made to social services in the municipality (kommun) where the child lives. If you do not know where the child lives social services where the child resides can guide you.
- The report should preferably be in writing. Some municipalities have a digital service for this type of reports. In an emergency you can make an oral report and confirm it in writing afterwards.
- In the report, you describe which child it is about, your observations and your concerns for the child. Concrete and detailed information that describes the cause of the concern makes it easier for the social services.

There may be routines for how to make a report at your work place. If you suspect that a child has been the victim of a crime it is important that you also consider filing a report to the police.

What happens next?

It is natural to want to know what happens after a report. You may wonder if social services will act, what your responsibilities are as an informer and what will happen to the child once the report has been made. Social services are governed by strict confidentiality and they must always assess whether they can give out information about a person or not.

You can usually find out if your report has been received and by whom. Normally you can also find out if social services are starting an investigation, or if an investigation is already in progress. If social services find that it's motivated from the child's best interest they may ask you to attend a meeting with the family.

If social services start an investigation

As someone who is legally responsible to report you are also required to provide information. That means that it is your responsibility to provide any information that may be important to the social services' investigation and the assessment of a child's need of protection and support.

Information for those legally responsible to report concerns according to chapter 19 of the Swedish Social Services Act regarding

- why reports are needed
- what, where and how you should report
- the possibility of receiving feedback from social services.

Information in this folder is based on provisions in chapter 19 of the Social Services Act and decisions made by the Parliamentary ombudsman.

More information

The manual Anmäla oro för barn (Reporting concern for a child) contains compiled information for managers and employees responsible for setting up routines for reports. Article 2022-5-7884, The National Board of Health and Welfare 2022.