

Information for those who are legally responsible to report children at risk according to chapter 14 § 1 of the 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 14 of the Social Services Act and the decision made by the Parliamentary ombudsman.

www.socialstyrelsen.se/orosanmalan

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

Information for those who have a legal obligation to report suspicion of child maltreatment or neglect according to chapter 14 § 1 of the Social Services Act.



Why reports are needed

When legal guardians are not capable of meeting their children's needs for development and health 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 or their parents 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 responsible 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 at the request of the social services provide information that may be of significance to their 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 really 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.

Your own concerns before a report

When you are faced with making a report you may have a lot of thoughts going through your head. It is easy to feel uncertain about whether it is the right thing to do or not. Try to keep in mind that you are making the report for the sake of the child. You can also discuss questions or concerns with a manager or a colleague.

If you are unsure whether the situation is such that a report needs to be made, you can contact social services and describe the situation. If you do not want the conversation to be treated as a report, you should not reveal the identity of the child involved. However, since a report is often needed in order for social services to take action, it is important to keep in mind that a conversation is not a substitute for a report. Social services can also offer you advice on what you should and should not say to the child and the family about your report.

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.

How to make a report

The report should be made immediately to social services in the municipality or district where the child lives. If you do not know where the child lives social services where the child resides can guide you. There are no requirements for the form of a report but it should preferably be in writing. In emergency cases you can make an oral report and confirm it in writing afterwards. There may be routines for how to make a report at your place of work.

What happens next?

It is natural that you might want to know what happens after a report. You may wonder if social services will take action, 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 have or have not started 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 child's parents to explain to them why you are concerned for their child.

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.

Special regulations for family counseling

If you work with family counseling you must immediately report to social services if you in your profession find out that a child is being sexually abused or exposed to physical or psychological abuse in the home. However, you are not required to provide information for the social service's investigation.

More information

The manual Anmäla oro för barn (Reporting concern for a child) contains compiled information about reports, support for informers and more about the work that is conducted by social services (in Swedish).

www.socialstyrelsen.se/publikationer2014/2014-6-5

Guidance for staff in healthcare and dental care can be found in Barn som far illa eller riskerar att fara illa (Children at risk or in danger of being at risk, in Swedish) www.socialstyrelsen.se/publikationer2013/2013-11-1