

Information about Protocol Investigations & Quality of Care Reviews

As foster parents, you share the Ministry's responsibility to protect the safety and well being of children in care. Carrying out this responsibility in day to day life is not always easy. Foster families face a lot of challenges and sometimes these lead to differences between foster parents and ministry staff.

Most issues can be worked out by talking things over with a social worker. But other situations require a formal process called a protocol that clearly spells out what will happen and when.

The first situation is when the ministry receives a report that a child in your home is abused or neglected. In a case like this, the Protocol for Investigating Reports of Abuse or Neglect are followed

The second is when someone has a concern about the quality of care a child in your foster home is receiving. In this case , the Protocol for Reviewing Quality of Care Concerns is followed

The third is when you and ministry staff can not agree on an issue. In this case, the Protocol for Resolving Issues between Foster Parents and Ministry Staff is followed.

This is only a summary of the three protocols. You can get more detailed information from the booklet Protocols for Foster Homes or click here for more information (link to Resources, Other Documents, Protocol Information).

A protocol investigation should be undertaken in the following circumstances:

- if the child has, or is likely to be, physically harmed by the child's caregiver
- if the child has been, or is likely to be, physically harmed, sexually abused or sexually abused by the child's caregiver.
- if the child has been, or is likely to be, physically harmed, sexually abused or sexually exploited by another person and the child's caregiver is unwilling or unable to protect the child.
- if the child has been , or is likely to be, physically harmed because of neglect by the child's caregiver.
- if the child is emotionally harmed by the caregivers conduct.
- if the child's development is likely to be seriously impaired by a treatable condition and the caregiver refuses to provide treatment.
- if the child is deprived of necessary health care
- if the child in care's caregiver is unable or unwilling to care for the child and has not made adequate provision for the child's care

Major Roles and Responsibilities

A delegated child protection team leader maybe designated by the Community Services Manager to make a decision on whether to initiate a protocol investigation. In some communities the Community Services Manager may choose to be the person responsible for initiating and coordinating a Protocol Investigation in his/her community

Where the Team Leader is in charge of the protocol investigation s/he is to :

-receive the report and access it jointly with the Resource Team Leader, The final decision to initiate a protocol investigation is the designated Team Leader's responsibility;

-co-ordinate the protocol investigation

-determine any action needed to ensure the safety and well being of any children

-determine if the child can remain in or be returned to the foster home, in consultation with the child's social worker

-ensures the foster parents are notified, in writing, of the commencement of a protocol the letter is to be provided to the Resource Team Leader

-notify the Community Service Manager responsible for the foster home of the allegation, including the specifics of the report and the Team Leader's assessment of the information

-as directed, update the Community Service Manager on the progress of the protocol and make recommendations regarding the home and/or placement of the children

-informs the Community Service Manager responsible for the foster home of the results of the investigation

-informs the foster parents and Resource Team Leader, in writing, of the results of the investigation and any decisions affecting the foster parents

Team Leader responsible for the Resource

Decides in consultation with the designated Team Leader and where appropriate the Community Service Manager, on the future of the foster home

Investigating Social Worker

The investigating Social Worker is responsible for all aspects of the protocol investigation, from commencement to conclusion. The Social Worker is to

-inform the foster parent that a protocol investigation has commenced and advise them of their rights, and recommend that they access available supports

-consult and share information with the designated Team Leader, the Resource Social Worker and the child's Social Worker

-plan and carry out the protocol investigation according to the Child and Family Services Standards

-complete an immediate safety assessment for each child in the foster home, in consultation with the child's social worker

-notify all relevant delegated staff of the protocol investigation

-whenever possible meet jointly with the Resource Social Worker and the foster parents at the commencement, during, and at the conclusion of the protocol investigation

Resource Social Worker

The Resource Social Worker remains the foster parent's worker throughout the investigation and assists the foster parents by providing information and offering support. The main responsibilities of the Resource Worker are:

if requested by the foster parent, contact and inform the support person (s) identified by the foster parent that a protocol investigation has begun, and arrange for the support person to sign an oath of confidentiality prepared by the Director prior to the support person's involvement in the protocol

-provide the Investigating Social Worker with relevant information about the foster home

-provide ongoing support throughout the protocol investigation

-at the conclusion of the protocol investigation, whenever possible, meet jointly with the Investigating Social Worker and the foster parents to discuss the outcome of the protocol investigation. Support persons may be included as requested by the foster parent.

The child's Social Worker

The child's Social Worker maintains contact with the child throughout the protocol investigation. The main responsibilities of the child's social worker are

-support the child throughout the investigation and prepare and assist the child in the case of a placement change

-inform the child's parent and where the child is aboriginal, the aboriginal community, and for children over the age of twelve, the child, about any changes in plans for or placement of the child

-provide the Investigating Social Worker with the child's history

-involve the child and make sure the child's views are taken into consideration in any placement changes and ensure the child's views are taken into consideration

-meet with the child at the conclusion of the investigation to explain any decisions or changes, including any of the child's concerns

Timelines

Time is of the essence in this protocol. Foster Parents shall be informed of the status of the investigation by the designated Team Leader at a minimum of every two weeks by telephone. The period of time under which the investigation shall occur will be 30 days unless extenuating circumstances require the time to be extended. Foster parents will be informed in writing of the reasons by the Resource Social Worker

Review Process

Foster Parents

If a foster parent is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation they may within seven days of receiving the written investigation summary, forward a written request for a review to the Regional Assistant Director of Child Protection.

Office of Regional Assistant Director of Child Protection

May refer the matter to the Protocol for Resolving Issues between Foster Parents and Ministry Staff

If the matter is not referred to the Protocol for Resolving Issues between Foster Parent and Ministry Staff, within 30 days of receiving a request for review, the Regional Assistant Director may choose to conduct a review of the investigation, reach a decision, and notify the foster parents of the decision by registered letter. This decision is final unless a third party review process approved by the Regional Assistant Director is available

Protocol for reviewing Quality of Care Concerns in Foster Homes

The purpose of this protocol is to ensure that concerns about the quality of care that a child is receiving in a foster home are resolved quickly, informally and collaboratively. Foster Parents and staff routinely discuss the provision of quality foster care for each child or youth in care.

Concerns that may lead to a Quality of Care Review will be determined by the Foster Home Standards and section 70 of the CFCSA

Upon receipt of a quality of care concern, the Social Worker receiving the information informs the relevant Social Workers, Team Leaders and Community Service Manager

The Resource Team Leader decides whether the concern is eligible to be dealt with under this protocol, including the specific Foster Home

Standard (s) in question and assigns a Resource Social Worker to conduct a review

The manager responsible for resources is consulted as necessary

The Resource Team Leader decides if there is sufficient information to warrant a Quality of Care Review of the identified concern (s) with the foster parents based on the information received

If there is insufficient information to assess the reported concern, the involved Social Workers develop a plan to gather the necessary information, in consultation with the Resource Team Leader. The matter is then discussed with the foster parents

The Resource Social Worker will recommend to the foster parents that they access available supports and if requested by the foster parents, will contact and inform the support person (s) identified by the foster parent that a Quality of Care Review has begun, and arrange for the support person to sign an oath of confidentiality prepared by the Director prior to the support person (s) involvement in the process

In cases where there is more than one child's Social Worker associated with the foster parents, the Resource Social Worker informs them of the concern. The timing depends on the nature of the concern and how it relates to the other child or children in the home

If the child's Social Worker is not involved in the discussions with the foster parents, they are notified of the results.

The concerns, results and remedies are recorded by the Resource Social Worker using the Quality of Care Report formats. A copy is printed, signed by the Resource Social Worker and placed on the resource file.

The foster parents are advised in writing of the results of the Quality of Care Review, and decisions affecting the foster parents. They will receive and sign a copy of the Quality of Care Report that has been severed of confidential information. A copy signed by the foster parents is placed on the resource file

Some Questions and Answers about Investigations

Will I be investigated any time some one contacts the Ministry about a child in my home?

The ministry looks carefully at any concern about a child in care. But it doesn't always investigate. Many concerns can be worked out without an investigation. However if the ministry believes that a child is not safe, it will always investigate.

What kinds of reports get investigated?

If the ministry believes a child has been harmed or might be harmed, in any way it will always investigate. This includes any kind of physical, sexual or emotional harm. It also includes any case where a child needs health care or is left alone or isn't getting enough supervision to be safe.

Who can make a report?

Anyone can contact the ministry about a child in care. A report might come from a neighbor, relative or a friend of yours and the child.

What if the report isn't true?

The ministry will first of all try to find out if the report is true before starting an investigation. During an investigation you will have your chance to tell your side of the story and to add any information about the report that you think the ministry should know. If the ministry makes a decision that you think is unfair you can ask the Office of the Director of Child Protection to review the investigation.

Who represents foster parents?

You can ask for a support person. They can attend interviews with you, answer questions and give you information about the investigation. You can also hire a lawyer to represent you. Your resource worker will also give you support and information and will keep you informed throughout the investigation. To contact a support worker yourself, please call **1-877-926-1185**.

What happens to our maintenance payments if a child is moved?

If the ministry decides to remove a child from your home while the investigation is going on, you will keep receiving payments for up to 45 days. Your payments will end sooner if the decision not to return to your care is made before 45 days are up.

How long does the whole process take?

The investigation is completed within 30 days from the time it starts until you are notified by letter of the ministry's decision. You then have 7 days to ask for a review of the investigation. This review is also completed within 30 days.

