

Can Legal Aid Ontario help me deal with a child protection agency outside of court?

A child protection worker has contacted me about my child. What do I do?



1 Get legal advice as soon as possible.



2 Do not sign any agreement with a child protection agency, such as the Children's Aid Society, until you get legal advice.



3 Call us at **1-800-668-8258** for emergency help and ask to speak to an LAO lawyer. Your information will be kept confidential.

What legal aid help can I get if I qualify?

- **By phone:** You can speak with a child protection lawyer at the LAO call centre for up to 20 minutes of free legal advice.
- **In person:** You can visit a Family Law Information Centre location in a courthouse near you to speak with a child protection lawyer.
- Free legal aid mediation services and legal advice to participate in a mediation process to resolve your child protection issue.



You may be able to get a lawyer: You may be given a **non-litigation certificate** to hire a child protection lawyer to help you resolve your child protection issue. A certificate tells a lawyer that LAO will pay for their legal fees.

To find out if you qualify, call Legal Aid Ontario (LAO) toll free at **1-800-668-8258 Monday to Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (EST)** for help in over 300 languages.

What is a non-litigation certificate?

- A non-litigation certificate is an electronic document you can give to a lawyer to receive free legal services. It confirms to a lawyer that LAO will pay for your legal advice and help you resolve your matter outside of court.
- Only lawyers who take legal aid cases will accept a non-litigation certificate. Use our **Find a Lawyer** tool on our website to find a lawyer near you (legalaid.on.ca/lawyers).
- The lawyer can:
 - ✓ Represent you during mediation, family group conferences and other meetings for your child protection issue.
 - ✓ Help you respond to the child protection agency as soon as you are aware that a protection agency wants to discuss the safety of your child(ren) or if the agency is recommending services for you.
 - ✓ Help you negotiate an out-of-court care agreement with a child protection agency, such as a voluntary service agreement, customary care agreement, or temporary care agreement.
 - ✓ Help you participate in an Indigenous dispute resolution process (e.g. Talking Together or Talking Circles).

Do I qualify for free legal aid services?

You may qualify if:



you have not yet hired a lawyer about your child protection issue;



your income and assets fall under the limits; and



you're a parent, a guardian, or other person in the place of a parent.

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