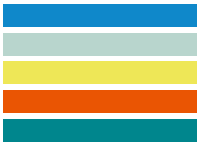


CHILD WELFARE SERVICE

In the best interests of the child





THE NORWEGIAN CHILD WELFARE SERVICE

The Child Welfare Service's task is to provide children, adolescents and families with help and support when there is a difficult situation in the home or a child is in need of help from the Child Welfare Service for other reasons (for example behavioural problems or problems connected with drugs or alcohol). It is the responsibility of the parents to provide care and protection for their child or children. If however the parents are experiencing problems or difficulties, the Child Welfare Service is obliged to provide whatever help is necessary to ensure that children and adolescents receive the care they need.

The Child Welfare Service's duty is to ensure that children and adolescents who are living in situations or conditions that represent a risk to their health and/or development receive any help necessary at the time it is needed and to contribute to that children and adolescents grow up in safe, secure and caring circumstances.

In the best interests of the child

The Child Welfare Service must base its actions on the best interests of the child. This can sometimes conflict with the view of the parents. The Child Welfare Service's first duty is to provide help and support to the parents so that they can be good carers for their children. If such measures and initiatives fail to produce the desired result, or if the problems experienced by the parents are for whatever reason insurmountable, an alternative may be to relocate the child or children outside the home for a shorter or longer period.

WE HAVE PROBLEMS. CAN THE CHILD WELFARE SERVICE HELP?

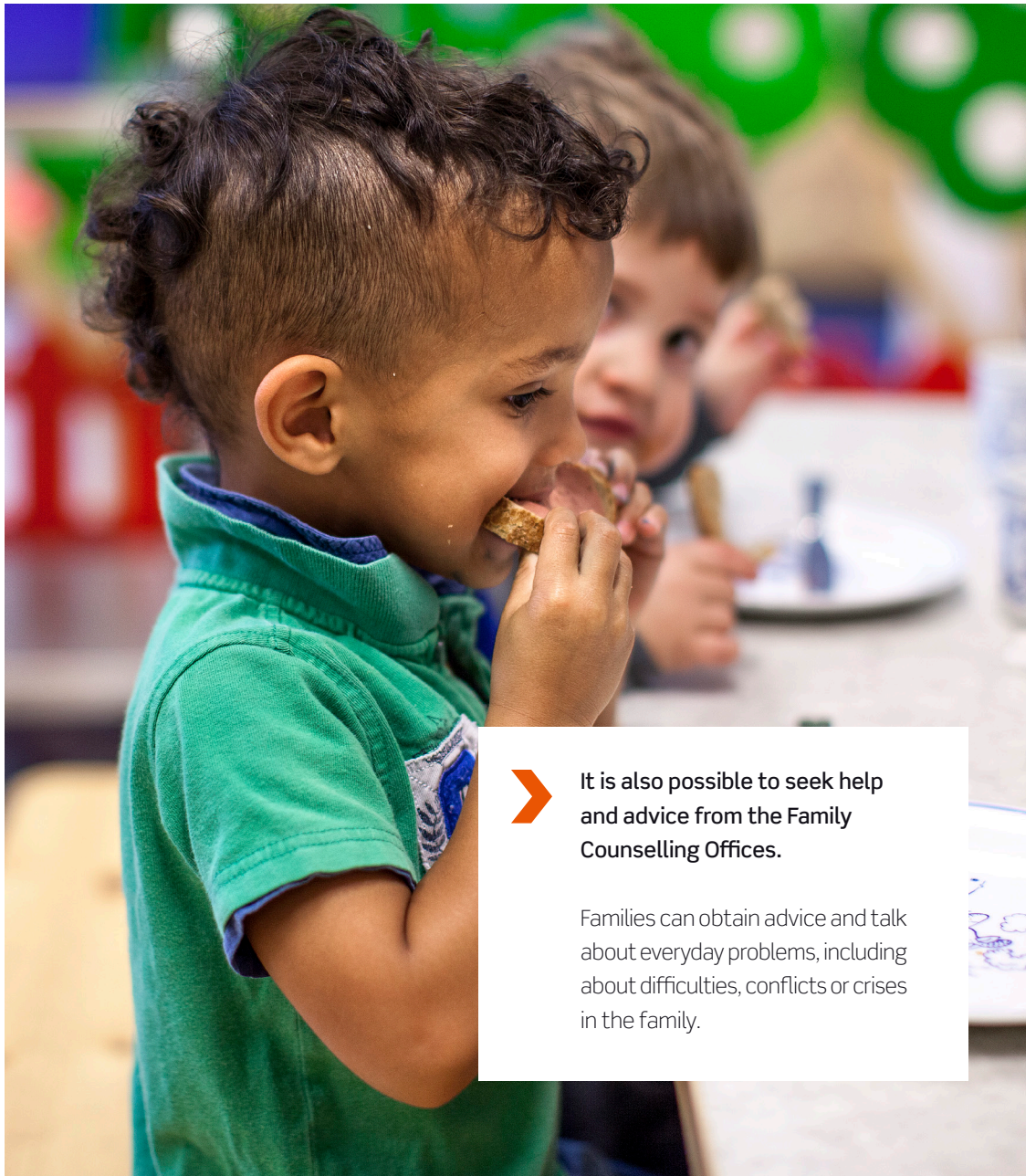
There can be times in everyone's life when difficult situations and circumstances arise and where one needs help and support in providing proper care for one's children. In such case the Child Welfare Service has a duty to provide help to the family.

Many people find it difficult to contact the Child Welfare Service as they are worried that the child or children will be removed from the home. The assumption of care is an extremely serious measure to take in relation to children and parents alike. It is for this reason that there must be extremely good cause before this step is taken.

If you need help from the Child Welfare Service you can telephone the municipality in which you live and arrange a meeting. On attending the meeting you will discuss the help and support your family needs with the Child Welfare Service.

The majority of those who receive help and support from the Child Welfare Service receive help in the home, so that the child/children and parents can live together. We call this help an initiative, and it can for example be:

- Guidance and advice for the family
- Parent groups
- A support contact
- Financial support for a kindergarten place or places
- Financial support in connection with the day care facilities for schoolchildren arrangement (SFO/AKS)
- Financial support in connection with leisure time activities or other arrangements
- Relief at weekends / visiting homes



It is also possible to seek help and advice from the Family Counselling Offices.

Families can obtain advice and talk about everyday problems, including about difficulties, conflicts or crises in the family.



40 percent of all children who received help from the Child Welfare Service in 2012 received advice and guidance. 20 percent were offered a visiting home and 19 percent of the children were provided with financial support initiatives. As of 31st December 2010 there were 30 316 children receiving help measures and initiatives in the home. Over 80 % of all children the Child Welfare Service works actively with receive voluntary help measures and initiatives in the home. (SSB)

I AM CONCERNED ABOUT A CHILD I KNOW. SHOULD I CONTACT THE CHILD WELFARE SERVICE?

As a mother or father it may well be that you are nervous about contacting the Child Welfare Service. As a relative, neighbour, teacher or similar you are perhaps unsure and a little scared of getting involved.

If you do not take the step of contacting the service, the result may be that the child and parents do not get the help and support they need – and that they have a mandatory right to. Don't be worried about contacting your local Child Welfare Service. Call and tell the service about the problem / your concerns. Well-qualified staff at the Child Welfare Service can give you a lot of sound advice and tips about what you can do and how the service can help you or those you are concerned about.

If you feel that contacting the Child Welfare Service is distasteful, a social skills counsellor, health visitor / public health nurse, advisor or other adults can assist and advise you.

Can I remain anonymous if I call the service?

- You can decide for yourself if you wish to remain anonymous when you contact the Child Welfare Service.
- You can choose to remain anonymous when reporting a case, so that neither the Child Welfare Service nor the parents know the identity of the person reporting the matter. Keep in mind that the family will be able to see the report, so if you write or say that you are for example the child's aunt, it will be relatively easy to identify you.
- If you choose to remain anonymous, the parents will not know that it was you that took up the matter with the Child Welfare Service.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE CHILD WELFARE SERVICE RECEIVES A NOTE OR MESSAGE OF CONCERN ABOUT A CHILD OR FAMILY?

The Child Welfare Service often receives a telephone call or a letter that describes how the caller or writer is concerned that a child or a family is in difficulties or not doing as well it should. We call this a call or note of concern. The Child Welfare Service is obliged by law to study any such call or note and to assess whether or not there is due cause to investigate the matter further.

If the Child Welfare Service finds due cause to initiate an investigation, it may happen that the Child Welfare Service contacts the originator of the call or note of concern to obtain more information about the background for the concern.

In other instances the Child Welfare Service may see no need for this, and will contact the child's or children's parents directly to further investigate the case. In such case the parents can be called on to attend a meeting at the Child Welfare Services offices or at the home. If the Child Welfare Service decides to meet the parents in their home, advance notice of this is given by letter.

When the parents meet with the child welfare service worker, they are given information about the call or note of concern, and in most cases will be able to read it themselves. After information relating to the notified concern has been provided, the child welfare service worker and the family discuss the content of the call or note of concern. The Child Welfare Service will often also contact others who know the child and the family, for example the local health centre, kindergarten, school, PP service and similar.

The Child Welfare Service is able to make an informed decision on the basis of the above as to whether or not further work in the case is necessary.

THE RIGHTS OF PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

The parents or parent the child lives with and a parent or parents who also have parental responsibility for the child, are all parties in a child welfare case. If you are a party in the case you have:

- The right to see the documents pertaining to the case
- The right to appeal against the Child Welfare Service's ruling
- The right to attend a meeting with the County Board and voice your opinion
- The right to free legal aid in County Board cases and court cases
- The right to appeal against rulings adopted by the County Board and to appeal these to the ordinary law courts
- The right to petition for the reversal of a ruling on the assumption of care



THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

The Convention stipulates that all persons under the age of 18 are children and are encompassed under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS:

- All children are born free and are of equal worth.
 - All children have the right to a name and nationality.
 - All children have the right to protection.
 - All children have the right to best possible health care and sufficient food and drink.
 - All children have the right to be heard and listened to.
 - All children have the right to education.
 - All children have the right to play, leisure and rest.
 - All children have the same rights
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HOW CAN I CONTACT THE CHILD WELFARE SERVICE?

Send a letter

You can send a letter through the postal service in which you explain that you are in need of help and would like an appointment with the Child Welfare Service.

You can send a letter through the postal service if you are concerned about a child. You will have to include a little about what the problem is, who it concerns and how the Child Welfare Service can contact the person in question.

By telephone

You can also phone the Child Welfare Service in the municipality the child / adolescent lives in. You will be able to speak to a member of the Child Welfare Service about your concerns. You will be given advice and tips about what you should do next. You can remain anonymous.

Ask for a meeting

Agree on an appointment for a meeting. Many Child Welfare Service offices have allocated time for advice and guidance meetings. If you would like to have a meeting, call the Child Welfare Service in the municipality and ask if they have time to meet with you. You will be able to talk about your concerns and receive advice and guidance on what you should do next. You may take someone with you for support.

ASK FOR AN INTERPRETER IF YOU NEED ONE

FAMILY COUNSEL

It is traditionally the Child Welfare Service that decides what is to happen in child welfare cases. Families that are experiencing difficulties can also get help to arrange a family counsel. A family counsel is a meeting where the family together with relatives and others who are important to the child. The family agrees on what they think should be done to make sure that things get better for the family and the child and discuss their conclusions with the Child Welfare Service.

If you have been exposed to or subjected to a frightening or unpleasant incident or event, or you or others you know are having difficulties in the family - contact the Child Welfare Standby Officer or **emergency telephone: 116 111**



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3103 Tønsberg

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