



PRIVACY INFORMATION

For Families and Children

CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES AND YOUR PRIVACY

Family and Children's Services of Lanark, Leeds and Grenville (FCSLLG) protects children so they can grow up safe from abuse, including physical, emotional and sexual abuse as well as neglect. We support families when they need it and, when required, take the necessary steps to make sure children are protected. We carry out our work under the Ontario *Child and Family Services Act*, which requires us to investigate possible abuse or neglect of children and ensure the safety of children who need protection.

Child safety is our top priority. But privacy and confidentiality are important to us as well. This document explains what we do with your personal information and how we keep that information safe. This will also explain when we will ask you for consent or permission to use or share your information, and when we won't.

Your personal information

We make sure that we protect your personal information and keep it PRIVATE. What is your personal information? Personal information includes your name, date of birth, phone number, address, and things we find out about you, your home and your family. Your and your child's personal information will be kept together in a "family file". However, if a child is brought into care, a separate file will be created for the child. When we refer to "your child", we mean any child who is in your care or any children who are in your care.

What we do with your personal information

We collect, use and share personal information in order to protect children and support families. When we get information about children whose safety is at risk, it is our responsibility to take whatever steps are necessary to make sure children are protected. In this section we explain how we collect and use personal information for these purposes.

Stage 1 – Intake Call/Documentation/Consultation

If we get information that tells us that your child may be in need of protection, we will record this information in our computer system. Next, we will check if there is any information about the child or his or her family in the records of any children's aid societies in Ontario. To do this, we will enter some identifying information about the child and the family (like the child's name and address) into a database that is shared with all children's aid societies in Ontario. If another children's aid society has information about that child or family, we will get a copy of that information from that agency. **We will not ask for your consent to collect or share this information because it is necessary for us to do so in order to protect your child.**

Stage 2 – Investigation

After we have reviewed this information, we will usually try to meet with you and your child and other family members or guardian(s). But if we believe there is a serious or immediate risk that the child could be harmed, we will start an investigation without meeting with anyone.

We then use all of the information we have about you and your child and family to decide what steps are necessary for us to take.

If we believe that a child's safety is at risk, we will start an investigation. During an investigation, we will collect information about you and your child, your family and your home from you, your child, or from third parties, such as the police, medical professionals, your child's school, your neighbours and other people who have information that can help us.

Where possible, we will ask for your consent to speak to third parties to collect information about you, your child and/or your family. However, our top priority is to ensure the protection, well-being and best interests of the child. For that reason **we may collect information without your consent** in order to investigate whether a child is in a safe environment and whether there is an imminent risk to the child's safety.

Stage 3 – Determination

Once our investigation is complete, we will consider whether your child's safety is at risk and will decide what steps are necessary to ensure that your child is protected. Possible steps include:

- taking no action
- participating with you and your family in an alternative dispute resolution process
- asking you to sign a contract of expectations and working with you to ensure the protection of your child
- working with other family members to ensure that the child is protected
- going to court to obtain a protection or supervision order
- or any other action that is permitted by the *Child and Family Services Act*.

Where possible, we will work with you voluntarily (meaning that you agree to work with us, even if there is no order requiring you to do so). But if we have to, we will take other steps in order to keep the child safe.

We will use all information we collect about you and your child, your home and your family in order to complete our investigation and decide what steps are necessary. **We will not ask for your consent to do this.**

Who can see your information

In most cases, we will not share your and your child's personal information with anyone without your consent. Sometimes, however, we will share the information we collect about you and your child with experts, such as health professionals, and with lawyers, courts and the police. Where possible, we will ask for your permission before doing so. But there are times when **we will not ask for your consent to share personal information**, such as:

- if we have concerns about an immediate risk to a child's safety;

- if we must share information with others as part of an investigation;
- with a professional college investigating a complaint related to a service provided by an employee or a service provider;
- for the purpose of searching for and securing a placement that is in the best interests of a child, including a kinship arrangements; and
- if we are permitted or required by law to release your information without your consent to others, such as the police, lawyers or the court.

Within our agency, your personal information will only be viewed by workers directly involved with you and your child. If you know someone within the Agency and you don't want them involved with your file, please let us know and we will ensure that they do not have access to your personal information.

How we protect your information

We have safeguards in place to keep your personal information private and safe. We protect your personal information against loss and theft, and make sure that no one can see or use or share your personal information unless they have permission to do so. All paper records containing personal information are kept in locked storage rooms. All electronic records containing personal information are protected by passwords, firewalls and encryption technology.

All of our employees are trained on how to keep your personal information safe. They have learned how to appropriately collect, use, share, and protect personal information in accordance with our Privacy Policy. In addition, all of our employees sign confidentiality agreements in which they promise not to share any personal information they see while working at our agency or to use it for any purpose other than what their job requires them to do with the information. Even after employees leave our agency, they are still required by law to keep personal information private.

Seeing your personal information

You can ask us to see what information we have about you and your child. If your child is under the age of 16, you can ask to see his or her information without his or her consent.

Please let us know in writing what information you would like to access and who you would like us to provide that information to.

Please note that there are limits to what information you can see. We will not provide the following information to you:

- the name of the person who told us that your child was in need of protection;
- any information that is not directly about you or your child;
- any information that may cause emotional harm to someone if it is shared; and
- any information that was provided by third parties to us, unless we have obtained their consent to disclose it to you.

A child in care can also ask to see his or her information. We will allow a child to see his or her information where we believe it is developmentally and emotionally appropriate.

Correcting your personal information

If you think that the personal information we have about you is not accurate, please let us know. We can't remove information that is already in our system, but we can correct the information we have by adding to it, if you give us the correct information. We cannot correct information given to us by someone else or change a record of what one of our workers has seen or heard.

How long we keep personal information

We keep all of the personal information contained in our records permanently.

How to contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about how we collect, use or share your personal information, or about the accuracy of your personal information, please contact our Privacy Officer:

Privacy Officer
438 Laurier Blvd.
Brockville, ON K6V 6C5
1-855-667-2726
privacyofficer@fcsllg.ca

If you feel that we have not adequately addressed your privacy concerns even after contacting our Privacy Officer, you can submit a written request that the matter be reviewed by our Internal Complaint Review Panel. We will reply to you within 7 days to let you know whether the Panel will hear your concern.

If you are not satisfied with our internal review process, you may file a formal complaint regarding the accuracy of your personal information by contacting the Child and Family Services Review Board at (416) 327-4673 or 1-888-728-8823.

If you want to know more about how we protect your personal information, please ask us for a copy of our Privacy Policy.