



What to do?

If you have reasons to believe that a child is being subjected to ill treatment, sexual abuse or some other form of violence, you should notify the Child Protection Services where the child lives. Give the child the benefit of a doubt and allow professionals to evaluate the need for measures.

The Child Protection Act no. 80/2002, states that each and every person having reason to suppose that a child lives under unacceptable conditions of upbringing, is subjected to ill treatment or violence or is at serious risk of suffering damage to health and development has a duty to notify the Local Child Protection Services. The Act especially emphasizes that people who, because of their work, are involved in matters involving children, have such a duty to notify. The duty of notification takes precedence over provisions in law or codes of ethics on confidentiality within the relevant profession.

When a child tells

It is never easy for a child to tell about sexual abuse or other violence. A child often needs to build up courage for a long time and sometimes tells about such things without intending to. If a child takes this step of telling about such experience, it is important to respond properly.

- ✓ **Believe** the child.
- ✓ **Listen to the child** carefully, do not interrogate.
- ✓ **Let the child know** that it is OK to tell.
- ✓ **Assure the child** that she or he is not to blame for the violence.
- ✓ **Notify** the matter to a Child Protection Committee.
- ✓ **Remember** that your response is important for the child's prospects and the success of coping with the consequences of violence.



THE CHILDREN'S HOUSE



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About The Children's House

The Children's House started its operation in November 1998 and is operated under the auspices of the Government Agency for Child Protection, which directs child protection affairs on behalf of the Ministry of Social Affairs. To ensure that the child victim gets appropriate assessment and treatment.

To ensure a child-friendly environment, meeting the needs of children for investigative interviews, medical examination and treatment. To establish professional work procedures in dealing with cases involving sexual abuse. To strengthen expertise on sexual abuse of children and disseminate that expertise to both professionals and the general public. The Children's House provides specialised services to children suspected of being subjected to sexual abuse or violence. The Local Child Protection Services are responsible for handling such cases and can request the services of The Children's House. Children and their families can, by referral from the Child Protection Services, obtain a comprehensive services under one roof and free of charge.

Criminal investigation of sexual abuse cases require that the child gives her/his testimony for a Court Judge. This can be carried out in the Children's House if the Court Judge decides so. Child Protection Services can look to The Children's House if other kinds of violence against children are suspected.

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Main goals

- ✓ **To create** a forum for the cooperation and integration of agencies responsible for the investigation and handling of cases involving sexual abuse of children: The Court Judges, the Prosecution, the Police and the Child Protection Services.
- ✓ **To prevent** subjecting children to repeated interviews by many agencies in different locations.
- ✓ **To ensure** professional competence, experience and knowledge for conducting investigative interviews of children.
- ✓ **To establish** professional work procedures in dealing with cases involving sexual abuse.
- ✓ **To strengthen** expertise on sexual abuse of children and disseminate that expertise to both professionals and the general public.
- ✓ **To ensure** that the child victim gets appropriate assessment and treatment.
- ✓ **To ensure** a child-friendly environment, meeting the needs of children for investigative interviews, medical examination and treatment.

Services of The Children's House

- ✓ **Testimonies for Court Judges** – are done at the request of Court Judges in cases of criminal investigations. If such a request is made, an investigative interviewer from The Children's House takes the child's statement under the direction of the Judge. Representatives from the Police, the Child Protection Services, the Prosecution as well as the defence attorney and the child's advocate are present in a different setting. The child is always alone with a specialized interviewer in an interview room, but those present, follow the interview on a monitor and can direct questions to the interviewer.
- ✓ **Exploratory interviews** – done at the request of Child Protection Services, if needed, when police investigation is not requested. A social worker from Child Protection Services is present, but in other respects, the interview is carried out the same way as a testimony for the Courts.
- ✓ **Assessment of the child** – Child Protection Services, at the conclusion of the interview with the child, can request an assessment to evaluate the possible consequences of the sexual abuse to the child and its family.
- ✓ **Treatment** – if an assessment has revealed the need of further support, Child Protection Services can request treatment for the child along with counselling for the parents. The Children's House provides assessment and treatment in the child's home area, if requested.
- ✓ **Medical examination** – The Children's House has very good facilities for medical examinations. A gynaecologist, paediatrician and registered nurse administer the examination.
- ✓ **Counselling and education** – advice to those requiring information because of suspected sexual abuse. Lectures and education