

SAFELY TOGETHER

The guideline of the Guides and Scouts of Finland
for acting in situations that require child welfare

The essence of this guideline is child abuse prevention, advice for dealing with difficult situations, and, thus, the increased feeling of safety experienced by children and youth in Guiding and Scouting.

In Guiding and Scouting, situations that may
require child welfare intervention may include

- ▶ A child is not picked up after a meeting or a camp
- ▶ A parent picks up their child after a meeting or a camp clearly under the influence of alcohol
- ▶ A child or youth has signs of physical abuse on their body
- ▶ A child or youth tells you about neglect and/or abuse they have experienced
- ▶ A child or youth talks about their drug or alcohol use or a leader becomes concerned about it
- ▶ The behaviour of a child or youth causes concern
- ▶ A child says they do not want to go home or are afraid to go home
- ▶ A parent's drug or alcohol problem or the state of their mental health causes concern that it is threatening the wellbeing of a child

GUIDELINES

Prepare

- Every local group has to name a Safe Adult who can support local group members in child welfare matters
- The Safe Adult takes care that all leaders of the local group have completed the Safely Together online course
- A local group has to agree on a code of conduct for dealing with child welfare concerns
- Every leader must have the number for emergency social services on their phone in case of sudden child welfare issues

Ask for help!

- Nobody has to be able to deal with child welfare matters by themselves. Professionals and District offices are here to help all Guides and Scouts.

Ask questions and listen

- If someone is concerned for the wellbeing of a child or youth in Guiding and Scouting, the matter must be intervened with immediately.
- Unfortunate situations can occur suddenly or the concern may grow bit by bit.
- The issue must be discussed with the child.
- It is best if the conversation includes another leader, preferably the other leader of the group. This way, the situation is easier to keep in hand, the emotional burden can be shared, and the issues can be reflected on afterwards with the other leader.
- There is no need to shy away from dealing with the situation and asking questions from the child. Things like violence should be talked about directly.
- It is best to avoid leading questions such as "Did mom or dad hit you?" A good question is, for example, "What happened to you?"
- A child or youth must not be promised anything without justification, such as "Thank you for telling me. This will never happen again."
- It is a good practice to write notes during the conversation, so the issue is easier to return to and a leader doesn't have to rely on memory.

Contact the guardians

- The issue must be discussed with the guardians of the child immediately, if there is no reason to suspect this will put the child in further danger.

Make a child welfare notification when necessary

- A child welfare notification is an expression of concern based on which social service official will begin an investigation into whether child welfare services are required.
- If the matter is urgent, call your municipality's emergency social services or 112 immediately. If the matter can wait till the next day, the notification can be made by a Safe Adult, the leader of your local group, or a District employee.
- Calling by phone is the best way to make a notification.
- A child welfare notification can be made anonymously by a Guide or a Scout.
- A child welfare notification must include the child's full name and, if possible, their birthdate and home address.
- The person taking your call will ask you for all the information required.