

Placement Concerns Response Unit – (PCRU) and the Allegation Assessment/Investigation → *Process currently in review:*



PCR screens each new allegation of care concern to determine if it is a concern of Non-Compliance or concern of Abuse / Neglect according to The Act.

If it is not a concern at all, PCR will close the file and notify the foster care agency of the screening. The agency will debrief the matters 'closed at screening' with the foster family.

Concerns of non-compliance are assessed and followed-up by the FCSW, the licensing officer and the contract specialist, in collaboration with the child's caseworker as appropriate.

Concerns of abuse and neglect are assessed and investigated by PCRU (Placement Concerns Response Unit). Here is the process and some tips on handling an investigation in a professional manner.

DURING AN INVESTIGATION:

- After notification from PCRU, your agency will place your home "On Hold" (no new placements).
- Children/youth *might be* removed from your home (CW must provide information to you in writing if it is a permanent removal).
- If a child safety concern is alleged, there could be a community investigation involving your bio-children or grandchildren (consent to speak to your children is not required as per CYFE Act).
- In some cases, Police can be notified and a criminal investigation can occur.
- The information collected by PCRU will be recorded on your CICIO record and may be included on future Intervention Record Checks.

Typical PCR INVESTIGATOR Steps:

1. **Intake** - Contact all caseworkers with children in your home to notify them of the concern. The service teams will create a safety plan.
2. Contact the agency to notify of the concern and gather information. At this time, they may create a plan to notify your family.
3. **Consult/Screening** – PCRU gathers sufficient preliminary information to determine if it is a PCR matter.
4. **Pre-Meeting** – *This is booked* with all involved professionals to share information and determine if there is enough information to conclude the matter, or if it should proceed with investigation.
5. **Assessment** - If the investigation proceeds, PCRU may review agency files for your home, including current and previous placements. Then, they will:
 - Interview the foster child/ren (your consent is not required under the CYFE Act).
 - Inform you, if you have not yet been notified that an investigation is occurring.
 - Sometimes request to interview bio-children or family members. You may choose whether or not to permit this (except in cases of abuse allegations).
 - Interview you - both caregivers will be interviewed (without children present).
6. **Team Outcome Meeting** - You, as the foster parents, will not be present at this meeting, but all other involved professionals will attend to coordinate information and decide on next steps.
7. **Provider Debrief Meeting** – you will receive a letter of PCRU findings, and you can request to meet with the PCR Assessor to receive the *findings of the investigation*.

* **PLEASE NOTE** that each investigation may proceed a bit differently, depending on its unique circumstances.



TIPS:

- Your FCSW cannot warn you that an investigation is going to happen.
- You may have little or no notice that you will be interviewed.
- **Do not agree to be interviewed until BOTH your Foster Care Support Worker and a C.A.S.T. worker are present.**
- Do not talk to your children about the interviews or about the investigation. This can be viewed as 'coaching' the child and can bias the investigation against you.
- Do not refuse to answer questions. Take a deep breath before answering and THINK. If you don't know, say so; if the answer is 'yes' or 'no' say so.
- Do not over-answer or explain. Stick to the questions.
- **Tell the truth. Even if the truth is embarrassing - do not lie!**
- Treat the visit as a 'business' meeting. If the interview is in your home, do not offer snacks. Coffee, tea, or water is sufficient.
- Sit around a table. Sitting in the living room can make things too informal.
- Dress appropriately. No pajamas or sweat pants. Good, clean, casual clothing is best.
- Arrange for childcare for your children. If they are at home, have someone babysit them in a different room or outside where they cannot hear what is being said.
- **Don't make jokes.** Nervousness can cause some people to make slightly inappropriate jokes that may bias the investigation against you.
- **Document EVERYTHING!**



FINANCIAL INFORMATION:

If your foster child is temporarily removed from your home during the investigation, the temporary foster placement will receive a full stipend, and you will receive an adjusted stipend according to the following provincial formula:

- First 7 days - full stipend minus \$2.60
- Next 33 days - half stipend minus \$2.60



If the investigation continues longer, and the child continues in a temporary placement, your agency must get CW manager approval to extend your half stipend.

POSSIBLE OUTCOMES:

NOTE:

Although PCRU assessments begin with specific reported concerns, the Assessor may notice other concerns or issues during their investigation of the foster home that the service team will also have to address.

SUBSTANTIATED:

Sufficient information was gathered to support or corroborate the allegations of abuse or neglect.

UNSUBSTANTIATED:

The information gathered **does not** support the initial allegations. But remember: there may be other worries/concerns to address.

NEXT STEPS ~

PROVIDER REVIEW OF OUTCOMES

Foster parents will meet with the service team to develop a plan addressing any identified concerns, **regardless of the outcome**. This could include, but is not limited to:

- Additional training
- Referral to community resources
- Increased monitoring /home visits
- Reducing the number of placements
- Varying, suspending, or cancelling foster license

UNDERSTAND YOUR FEELINGS:

When you and your family are under investigation, you will go through grief stages, just as with a loss. You may feel that you are losing your identity as a foster parent or even lose faith in your ability as a parent.



Expect the following:

1. **Shock** - At this point, you might not believe that this is happening to you. Numbness, confusion, hurt, may overwhelm you. You may not be able to sleep or eat. PLEASE DO NOT make any decisions about whether or not to keep the child or about your future in fostering at this time.
2. **Protest/Anger** - Preoccupation about the investigation is common and so is anger at the system, workers and sometimes the child.
3. **Despair** - Depression & feeling hopeless are common. There may be lots of crying and you may need a high level of support to make it through this stage.
4. **Acceptance/Adjustment** - This will probably not occur until the outcome of the investigation has passed. Some families move on quickly, while others take longer.

Remember - you will probably go back & forth between Anger and Despair while you are in the investigation process.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF:

- Ensure you know your rights.
- Talk to your FCSW.
- Talk to your C.A.S.T. Worker.
- Use any supports offered to you.
- Be strong and stay as positive as possible.



ASK FOR HELP! Call your FCSW and call your C.A.S.T. worker. We can listen and provide support.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS:

- Call your agency.
- You have the right to retain legal counsel.
- You have the right to not participate. NOTE: exercising this right will result in conclusions being drawn without your input/perspective and could also result in immediate closure of your home.
- In some situations, you would have the **Right to file an Administrative Review**.
- In some situations, you would have the **Right to file an Appeal**.
- Read your 'Entitlements of Foster Parents'.

FOSTERING "After PCR":

TRAUMA

Depending on the circumstances of your investigation, you may find yourself or other family members experiencing flashbacks, depression, anger, sadness, forgetfulness, emotional numbness, distrust, fear. An investigation can be a very traumatic experience, and these feelings are 'normal' for a traumatized person. Talk with your FCSW about accessing therapeutic supports such as respite, trauma debriefing/counseling, peer support.

RE-CONNECTING

Investigations can be very isolating –

- You might feel that your agency team didn't protect you;
- You might feel distrustful of your own judgment;
- You might feel anger/betrayal if the allegation came from your foster child;
- Your foster child may feel afraid and confused if they were removed from your home during the investigation;
- Your own children may feel a lot of anger or fear because of the invasive investigative process.

Make a conscious effort to set aside time for your family to be together in a relaxed atmosphere; acknowledge everyone's feelings – don't expect everything to go back to normal right away. Access mediation or counseling support if you are struggling to re-connect.

ALLEGATION CRITERIA:

CONCERNS OF NON-COMPLIANCE (according to):

- Child Youth & Family Enhancement Act / Policies
- Residential Facilities Licensing Regulations
- the Agreement to Foster (your contract)

CONCERNS OF ABUSE AND/OR NEGLECT:

1. Licensing Regulations [RFLR s.9 (a) to (c)]

- a) *inflicting or allowing physical punishment, verbal/physical degradation, emotional deprivation;*
- b) *denying basic necessities;*
- c) *use of any forbidden disciplinary methods.*

2. Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act

- **Neglect** [CYFEA s.1(2.1)(a) to (c)] --
 - a. Guardian is unable or unwilling to provide the child with necessities of life.
 - b. Guardian is unable or unwilling to ensure child receives essential medical, surgical or other remedial treatment necessary for child's health or well-being.
 - c. Guardian is unable or unwilling to provide adequate care or supervision.
- **Emotional injury** [CYFEA s.1(3)(a)] – *impairment of emotional or mental functioning/development, caused by: rejection; neglect (emotional, social, cognitive, physiological); withholding affection or cognitive stimulus; exposure to domestic violence or extreme 'disharmony'; inappropriate criticism, threats, humiliation, expectations; unstable mental/cognitive condition of others in the home; chronic substance abuse by others in the home.*
- **Physical injury** [CYFEA s.1(3)(b)] – *substantial and observable injury to any part of a child's body as a result of non-accidental application of force or an 'agent' to the child's body.*
- **Sexual abuse** [CYFEA s.1(3)(c)] – *child is inappropriately exposed or subjected to sexual contact, activity or behaviour.*

UNDER THE MAGNIFYING GLASS:

The Placement Resource Assessment



Call a C.A.S.T. Worker
(Caregiver Allegation Support Team)
Telephone: (780) 429-9923 ~ 1-800-667-2372

Edited March 2021

