

CHILD ABUSE

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER YOU MAKE A REPORT

Every Social Welfare Officer (SWO), on being gazetted as a Protector, is required to adhere strictly to the child protection procedures and the Child Act 2001 (Act 611). Upon receiving a report, the Protector will take the following action:

- visit the place or location of abuse immediately,
- meet the parent or guardian of the child and inform them the purpose of the visit,
- check the child's body to verify if there are any marks or signs of abuse,
- interview the father/ mother or the guardian, as well as the child individually,
- decide on one of the following three alternative courses of action to take if there is any reasonable suspicion of abuse:
 - take the child into temporary protective custody (with a temporary court order), which means placing the child in a place of safety or with a fit and proper person; or
 - send the child to hospital for medical examination; or
 - request the parent or guardian to take the child for medical examination at a government hospital.
- If the Medical Officer confirms that the child has been abused, the Protector must report to the police.
- The Protector will then carry out an investigation and prepares a social report. The social report will be based on the interviews with the child, the parent/guardian, family members, teachers, nurses, doctors or anyone else close to the child and it will be tendered to the Court for Children for an order.

- The permanent Court Order issued can be to:
 - send the child home and the parent(s)/guardian are required to execute a bond to guarantee that there will not be any further abuse, or to attend counselling sessions.
 - place the child under the care of a fit and proper person,
 - send the child to a place of safety (Children's Home) or,
 - place the child with a foster family.
- The Protector will continue to support the child and the child's family, including making home visits, providing counselling and other forms of necessary assistance such as financial assistance whenever there is a need.

**Information provided by Department of Social Welfare
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