

What to Expect When Interacting with ACS

- An ACS (Administration of Child Services) investigation begins because someone made a report of suspected neglect or abuse.
- ACS investigators may not look official. They may call themselves “caseworkers,” “child protective specialists,” or just “ACS”.
- ACS may say they are there to help and ask questions about how they can support you and your family.
- Everything you say or do when interacting with ACS will be documented and can be used against you later. Be cautious about how you behave and what information you share with ACS.
- ACS may try to look into every part of your family’s life, including your home, children’s schools, other family members, doctors, neighbors, and social media. You are not required to cooperate with their requests for information unless a court orders you to.
- During an investigation, you can consult with a lawyer. You should contact your local family defense office right away for free legal services.
- If your case moves to family court you have the right to additional free legal services from the Government if you cannot afford to pay.

CONTACT YOUR LOCAL FAMILY DEFENSE OFFICE FOR FREE LEGAL SERVICES

Brooklyn

Brooklyn Defender Services
Phone: 646-974-9343
Toll-Free Phone: 888-898-0700
Email: earlydefense@bds.org
Website: bds.org

Harlem & Uptown

Neighborhood Defender Service
Phone: 212-876-5500

Bronx

Bronx Defenders
Phone: 347-778-1266
Address: 360 161st St., Bronx
Website: bronxdefenders.org

Manhattan

Center for Family Representation, Inc.
40 Worth Street, Suite 605
New York, NY 10013



The Do's and Don'ts when Interacting with ACS

Do's

- ✔ Do try to stay calm, even though the conversation may be upsetting.
"I need to sit down and have a glass of water. Can we take a break?"
- ✔ Do call your local family defense office to get assigned a lawyer and free legal services.
"Before we go any further, I need to call my family defense office and get a lawyer."
- ✔ Do ask to see the caseworker's ID. Ask for their supervisor's name and phone number.
"Can I see your identification? What is your supervisor's name and phone number? I need to write it down."
- ✔ Do ask questions if something doesn't make sense.
"Can you explain more?" "Why are you asking that?"
- ✔ Do ask ACS to come back later if it's a bad time.
"Can you come back later? I'm busy right now."

Don'ts

- ✘ Don't panic or show that you're angry. This can be used against you later, including in court.
"I need to take a minute. Can I use the bathroom?"
- ✘ Don't share more information than is necessary. If they bring up your past (like smoking marijuana as a teen) you do not need to talk about it.
"I don't need to talk with you about that."
- ✘ Don't answer right away if you feel they're rushing you. Ask for time to speak with a lawyer.
"I can't answer that right now, I need to call my lawyer."
- ✘ Don't answer questions that make you uncomfortable.
"I need to talk to my lawyer before I talk with you more."

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