



Overview of the Hungarian Child Protection SIGNALING SYSTEM for temporary protection status holders

*This document aims to provide a broad overview about the obligations of **organizations who are working with children in the context of the Ukraine conflict**. The information is compiled by the Child Protection sub-Working Group in Hungary in January 2023 and approved by the Ministry of Interior (Child Protection and Child Welfare).*

What is the “signaling system”?

- The Hungarian Child Protection Act¹ requires certain institutions and professionals to **report a suspected or confirmed endangerment** of a child to the local Child Welfare offices, or in case of serious endangerment to the Guardianship authorities or to the police.
- In other contexts, the signaling system might be referred to as a “mandatory reporting” mechanism of children at risk

What kind of cases need to be signaled?

- The Child Protection Act specifies that any “**endangerment**” or suspicion of endangerment of a child needs to be signaled.
- “Endangerment” is defined: A behavior of a child or another person or an omission or condition that hinders the physical, mental, emotional, or moral development of a child.
- This can be cases with the **suspicion** of emotional, physical, sexual abuse, neglect or any other serious risk. It does not matter who is the perpetrator of the endangerment and where the incident is taking place. It can include adults as well as other children who are causing the endangerment, it can take place in person, but virtual / online acts are included as well. In certain cases, the behavior of a child can endanger him or herself too.
- Not only cases of imminent danger need to be signaled, but any cases that is at risk of endangerment. Also in these cases, **the child welfare system is able to provide the necessary support services**.

Who is obliged to signal child protection cases?

- In general, there is a **mandatory reporting obligation for anyone who belongs to an organization** that is part of the signaling system (e.g. educational institutions, health care providers, police, public prosecutor’s offices, courts, local government offices acting as child protection authority etc).

¹ Section 17 of Act XXXI of 1997 on the protection of children and the administration of guardianship affairs (Child Protection Act).



- It also includes registered² **foundations, associations, faith based and charity organizations working with children**. These organizations might receive information or notice signs of endangerment throughout their social and educational activities, hence **temporary shelters and collective sites are also obliged to signal**.
- Besides these organizations and institutions, **any citizen and social organization** representing the interest of children **can make a signal to the local child welfare and family support service**. It means that also **non-registered organizations, volunteer initiatives or any individual have the right to report cases**.

How do I signal a case?

- **In working hours, the cases are handled by the local child welfare and family service** (család és gyermekjóléti szolgálat). **Please search online** for the contact of the relevant child welfare and family service according to the location or reach out to your **local municipality** for advice on how to contact the child welfare and family service. The contacts of the local child welfare and family services are also available on the [Social Sector Portal](#) ('Szociális Ágazati Portál')
- You can also reach out to the relevant child welfare and family center (család és gyermekjóléti központ) that operates on a territorial ('járási') level. Please see a contact list of the child welfare and family centers [HERE](#).
- **Out of working hours the police shall be contacted in urgent cases. You can reach the police via 112**. In addition, **the Child Protection Helpline number (+3680212021)** can be contacted anytime.

In what languages do I need to make the signal?

- In general, **signals to the Child Welfare Offices need to be made in Hungarian**. It is advised to call with the support of a translator.
- However, if you signal to the police via 112, you have the possibility to make the signal in Hungarian, English or German.
- After reporting a case over the phone, members of the signaling system are obliged to report the case in writing as well. That must be done in Hungarian. For private individuals written reporting is not compulsory.

Do I need to inform the parents about the signaling?

- In general, **you have the obligation or the possibility to signal a case whether or not the parents gave their consent**.
- The Child Welfare and Guardianship authorities are protecting the data of the organization or the individual signaling the case even without a specific request. Therefore, the authorities are keeping the identity of the person who made the signal confidential.
- However, unless it is a serious risk and the parent might be the one endangering the child, it is recommended to inform the parent about your obligation to signal the case.

² Act CLXXV of 2011 on the Freedom of Association, Non-profit Status and the Operation and Support of Civil Organizations (Civil Act).



What if I am not sure whether or not to signal a case?

- **Family and child welfare service or the family and child welfare center can be contacted for advice** if there are further steps that the person or organization who is signaling could still do or if the case has to be officially signaled and handed over to the child welfare authorities.
- Please check above the `How do I signal a case` section for finding the contact of the relevant family and child welfare service or center.
- In addition, the **Child Protection Helpline (+3680212021) can be contacted**, if someone does not know where to turn to for advice regarding a case.

What happens after a signal arrives to the Child Welfare?

- The aim of the Child Protection Act and Child welfare in general is to support and enable families to raise their children within the family and to prevent or discontinue abuse and endangerment.
- In case of a signal, the child welfare **contacts** the family concerned and **informs** them about the locally available support services they could access on a voluntary basis.
- Considering the level and the nature of endangerment and the needs of the family, the child welfare can decide to introduce further measures and **obliges the family to cooperate**.
- If there is no change or improvement after a series of interventions or if the level of endangerment requires immediate intervention, then other types of measures can be introduced (e.g. protection measure, temporary or permanent alternative care placement)
- Please note that services of the Child Welfare system are usually provided in Hungarian.

Will I know what happened after the signal?

- The child welfare authorities are generally obliged to send written feedback to the one reporting the case within 15 days starting from the first meeting with the family. Exception is made only if a written feedback would endanger the anonymity of the reporter.