

Counsel for Children - Fact Sheet

October 22, 2014

What is the purpose of the Counsel for Children Program?

The program can provide a lawyer for children and youth involved in child protection proceedings in appropriate situations. The program will help ensure the views of children and youth are heard by the court or other decision makers, especially in difficult cases. The program will provide lawyers free of charge to the young person or child.

Why would a young person need a lawyer?

Having a lawyer will ensure the child or young person's best interests are considered fully in negotiations, mediations or court proceedings. It will also ensure the child or youth is receiving sufficient information about their case and the possible outcomes. In certain situations, there may be an even greater need for a child or youth to have a lawyer, such as:

- where proceedings are complex, perhaps because there are several siblings who may have different interests, or where there is a proposal to separate siblings, or where different parties (Social Services, parents, etc.) have different proposals for the care of the child or youth;
- where the proposed arrangements for the child or youth will have potentially long-lasting consequences, such as permanent wardship, which may sever contact with biological family members; and
- where the youth or child has expressed a wish to have their views considered.

How is a lawyer appointed?

A lawyer can be appointed for a child or youth by court order at the start of or during child protection proceedings. That order is then sent to the Counsel for Children program, which arranges for a specific lawyer for the child or youth.

As well, anyone, including a child or youth, may contact the Counsel for Children program toll-free at **1-877-787-5424** or on the internet at <http://www.justice.gov.sk.ca/cfc>.

The caller may be asked to provide some information about the child or youth, their circumstances, and why the caller thinks a lawyer could help.

Does a child or young person have a choice about whether a lawyer will be appointed for them?

A lawyer assigned to a case will contact the child or youth and ask them whether they want a lawyer before doing anything further.

Will the program be available everywhere in Saskatchewan, or just certain areas?

The Counsel for Children program will be available across the province.