

Step 1

Receive referral and complete initial assessment



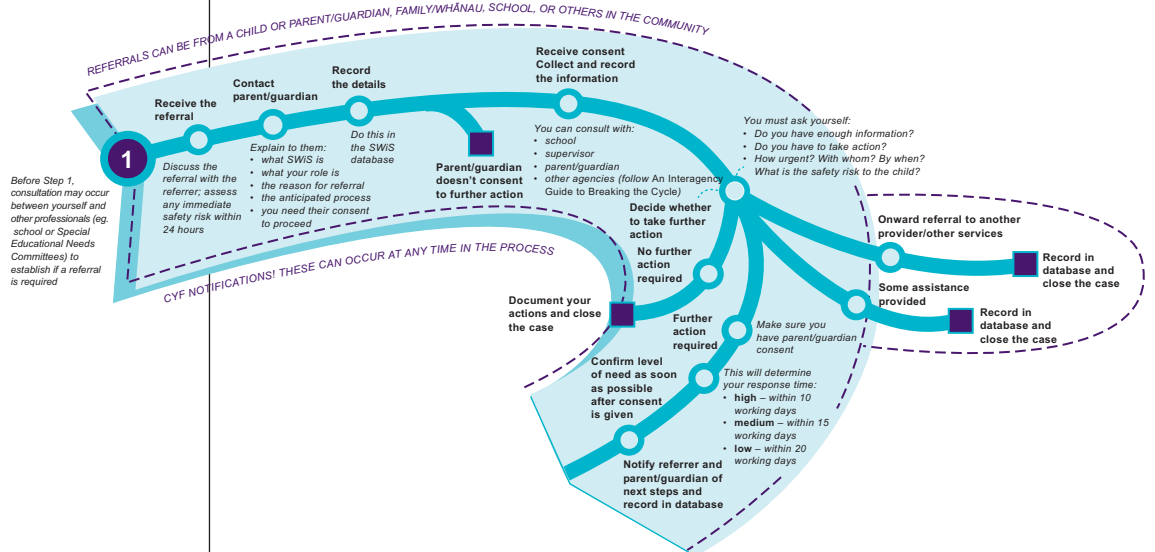
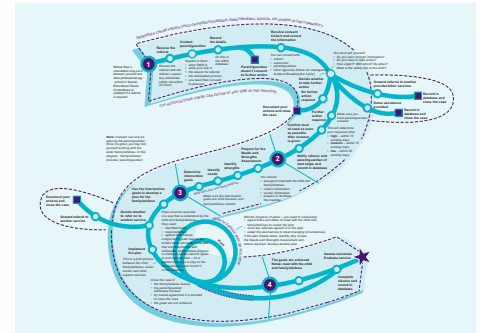
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Introduction

Step 1 explains what to do when you receive a referral and how to make an initial assessment.

The referral and initial assessment is designed to make sure that children who have been identified as being at risk get early access to appropriate services.

Step 1 of the process



Key points

- Participation is voluntary.
- Parent/guardian consent should be obtained before you act on the referral. Consent can be withdrawn at any time.
- The only exception to needing consent is where you take action under the Child Protection Policy (see page 67).
- All referrals must be recorded in the database.
- You must complete an immediate safety check using the information provided by the referrer within 24 hours of receiving the referral.

Key players and responsibilities

This table shows the key players and their responsibilities for this step of the process.

Key players	Responsibilities
Social worker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receive referrals and record in the SWiS database. Complete immediate safety check within 24 hours. Contact referrer at the earliest opportunity after receiving a referral. Contact parent/guardian to advise of referral and gain consent within 72 hours of receiving the referral. Meet the child. Gather information about the referral from other sources. Complete initial assessment. Decide what response is necessary. Assess level of need to determine response time. Advise referrer if referral accepted or declined.
Provider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respond to referrals in social worker's absence. Discuss case load and referrals with the social worker.
School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wherever possible, inform parent/guardian that a referral is being made. Pass referrals to the social worker within 24 hours or, in their absence, the provider. The principal or board of trustees may give consent for social worker action where it is decided that the need for intervention outweighs the principle of consent.
Parent/guardian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give or withhold consent to participate in the service.
Referrer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide accurate information about the reason for the referral. Provide appropriate referrals to the SWiS service.
Professional supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide the social worker with professional social work supervision. Discuss case load and referrals with the social worker.



This table shows the key documents you'll see for this stage of the process.

Documentation

Document	What is it for?	Who can view the document?
Referral	To alert the social worker to a potential problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child Social worker Provider Parent/guardian Professional supervisor CYF (Approvals)
Initial assessment	To provide an initial assessment of the issues that may be addressed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child Social worker Parent/guardian Professional supervisor Provider
Database entry screens	To register the referral on the SWiS system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child Social worker Parent/guardian Provider Professional supervisor CYF (Approvals)
Personal file	To record the details of the case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child Social worker Parent/guardian Provider Professional supervisor CYF (Approvals)
Onward referral	To activate other services that may be necessary for the child's well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child Social worker Parent/guardian Professional supervisor Provider

Note: the process will be different if you take action under the Child Protection Policy and/or make a notification to CYF or the Police (see page 6).

The process

Receive the referral

Referrals can be made by phone, fax, letter, or email, in person, or on a referral form.

With voice contacts (by phone or in person) you need to be sure that the person wants to make a referral. If they do, you must record the information on a referral form. The referral form does not need to be signed by the referrer.

A referral should ideally contain all of the following information:

- name and age of child
- date of birth
- gender
- address, including who the child lives with
- school, including year group and class
- date of the referral
- the reasons for making the referral in as much detail as possible (how is the child being affected?)
- length of time concerns have been held
- whether an urgent response is necessary (are there concerns for the immediate safety or well-being of the child?)
- details of any previous action, including Individual Education Plan. If there is limited information, you may need to go back to the referrer or the school. You must assess the referral information you receive for risk within 24 hours of receipt. This is to ensure the safety of the child is protected.

Get a copy of a referral to keep as a sample in this toolkit.

**Contact with parent/guardian**

Making contact with the parent/guardian is a crucial step. This is when you will ask for their consent to be involved with the service.

In most cases, the school will have been in touch with the parent/guardian to discuss the issues that led to the referral and to explain what the SWiS service can offer.

Even if the school has made contact with parent/guardian, you need to be sure they understand:

- what the SWiS service offers and how it works
- what your role as a social worker is
- the reason for the referral
- that you must have their consent to be involved with the service
- the anticipated process.

Any information provided by the parent/guardian should be recorded.

Before asking for consent, explain that it is understood to be for the entire process and will allow you, the social worker, to gather information from any agencies, including schools, that are involved with the child now or have been in the past. Advise the parent/guardian that they may withdraw consent at any time. Give the parent/guardian the option of limiting consent, by specifying people or agencies they don't want you to contact.

Continued over page...



The process continued

If the parent/guardian refuses to provide information or denies consent, this should also be recorded in the SWiS database. If consent is denied at this meeting, you should explain that it is possible for them to reconsider at any time.

Have a look at the information pamphlet and consent form examples in the toolkit.

Preparation

You need to plan for this meeting. Some of the things you may need to think about are:

- cultural and language issues
 - which family member should you talk to?
 - will you need an interpreter?
 - where and when should the meeting take place?
- documentation
 - information about the service
 - consent form
 - your business card
- your own safety
 - should you take a cellphone?
 - is there any risk of aggressive behaviour?
 - are there any dogs on the property?

Parent/guardian consent

Participation in the SWiS service is voluntary. This means, in most cases, that parent/guardian consent should be obtained before making contact with a child.

In cases where you, the social worker, believe it is necessary to contact a child without gaining consent, you should first consider:

- the nature and urgency of the situation
- the safety of the child
- the parent/guardian's right to know
- the guiding principle that social work services will work in partnership with parent/guardian and family/whānau.

If a decision is made to proceed without consent, you must have the consent of the school principal or board of trustees.

If the safety of the child is at risk, a notification should be made to Child, Youth and Family (CYF) or the Police under *An Interagency Guide to Breaking the Cycle* 2001. If such a notification is made, it should be recorded in the database.

Record the details

Whenever a referral is made you must record the information on the SWiS database. Every referral is recorded, whether or not consent is given.

Collect and record the information for initial assessment

You are now collecting information that will enable you to make your initial assessment of this situation. This should be completed within 72 hours of receiving the referral. The initial assessment should answer three questions:

1 How is the child being affected?

Some of the ways the child is being affected might be:

- inability to concentrate or learn at school
- poor social skills
- suffering from or being at risk of health problems
- subject to or at risk of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse or neglect.

2 Are there concerns for the immediate safety or well-being of the child?

If the assessment indicates abuse or neglect, a notification must be made to CYF or the Police.

Other immediate needs may include:

- housing – if the family is homeless or living in conditions that cause or exacerbate health problems
- health – where the child or a family member has a health problem that will worsen without intervention
- family finances/resources – inadequate food and clothing for the child.

3 Is further action required, by whom and how urgently? You may talk to the referrer, parent/guardian, teachers, or health workers. All the information you collect should be recorded as part of the initial assessment section of the referral screen in the database.

Some of the information you can gather to help you to make a decision includes:

- frequency of incident
- the child's behaviour
- who is affected
- educational issues (eg. learning difficulties, stand-down, or suspension)
- health issues
- home life/situation.

With the exception of a Child, Youth and Family or Police notification, no action can be taken if the parent/guardian does not consent to taking part in the programme. Consent can be withdrawn at any time during the process.

Decide whether to take further action

Think about the answers to the three questions you asked yourself in the previous step. Reflect on all the information you have collected and consider what needs to happen next.

No further action

You may decide to take no further action. It may be that there is no cause for concern, action has already been taken, or the parent/guardian chose not to accept the offer of services. Close the case and record in the database.