

Office of the Children's Lawyer

Voice of the Child Report

Information Sheet for Parties

What is a Voice of the Child Report?

A Voice of the Child Report (VOC) is a short report written by an Office of the Children's Lawyer Clinician for the Court that summarizes a child's statement about a particular issue in their decision-making responsibility, parenting time and contact arrangement. The Report is done for children over the age of seven (7).

This information sheet will provide information about the process.

Step 1 - Request from the Court

A Judge may make an Order requesting that the Office of the Children's Lawyer (OCL) intervene and provide a Voice of the Child Report. The Court will define the issues for the report by way of the Voice of the Child Endorsement Form which will be sent to the OCL by Court staff.

Step 2 - Completing the Voice of the Child Intake Forms

The parties involved **must** complete the short Intake form and send it to the OCL **within 1 business day** of the date of the order. Where a party completes the Intake form immediately after the Court Order is made and before leaving the court house, court staff will send both the Court Order and completed Intake forms to the OCL at the same time.

If a party does not complete the Intake form at the court house, the party will be responsible for sending the completed Intake form to the OCL within 1 business day of the date of the order.

The address and fax for service is:

email: OCL.LegalDocuments@ontario.ca, Fax: (416) 314 8050.

Step 3 - Making a Decision About Accepting the Case

The OCL will decide whether to accept or refuse the case by reviewing the information that is included on the Intake forms and the Endorsement. If the case is accepted, an OCL Clinician and not a lawyer, will be assigned to the case. All the parties, as well as the referring Justice, will be informed of the acceptance or refusal of the case in writing.

Step 4 - Start

Once the case is accepted, a Clinician will be assigned. The Clinician will contact all of the parties to introduce themselves, describe the process, gather limited information about the reasons for the referral, question whether CAS is actively investigating, and set up the date/time/location of the child(ren) interviews.

The Clinician will have thirty (30) days to complete the involvement and send a report to the Court and to the parties.

Step 5 - Child Interviews

The child(ren) will each attend two (2) interviews with the Clinician and these the two scheduled interviews will occur on separate days. Each party is responsible for making arrangements with the Clinician for one of these scheduled interviews. When this is not possible, the parties will be asked by the Clinician whether they consent for one of the parties to make arrangements with the Clinician for all of these scheduled interviews.

At the end of each interview, the Clinician will review the child(ren)'s statement(s) with the child(ren) to ensure accuracy.

The Clinician will also explain to the child(ren) that none of the information gathered during the interviews will be kept confidential.

Step 6 - End

The Clinician will inform all parties when the interviews with the child(ren) have been completed.

The VOC report will be filed with the Court and copies will be sent to the parties within 30 days.

This will complete the OCL's involvement in the file.

IMPORTANT

In a VOC Report, there are NO:

- *Formal Interviews of the parties*
- *Observations visits*
- *Gathering of collateral information*
- *Disclosure meetings*
- *Recommendations*

*Should a child make a statement of abuse, neglect, or maltreatment, the Clinician has a duty to report this information to the local Children's Aid Society.

