

**When a child has disclosed a sexual assault, how does the police investigation work?**



**The objective of the police interview is to provide the most accurate possible report of the events the child has disclosed, and to determine whether a sexual assault has indeed taken place.**

## **How does a police interview work?**

In a police interview, a plainclothes investigator questions the child about the sexual assault without ever suggesting answers or influencing their memory. They start with general questions to put your child at ease. The investigator will never force your child to speak.

The interview lasts on average 45 minutes. It takes place in a small room where your child's testimony can be recorded. Another police officer watches the interview live from another room. This officer may be accompanied by a worker from the Director of Youth Protection (DYP). You will always be informed about their presence and who they are.

While the police interview is taking place, you must also make a written or oral statement to the investigator about the disclosure.

**The total length of the appointment for the police interview can be about 3 hours.**

**Please bring a snack for your child.**

## **Whom does the police interview?**

The interview is conducted by an experienced investigator trained to conduct non-suggestive interviews with children and adolescents. Before the interview, the investigator creates a climate of respect and trust so that your child can tell their story without the experience being a traumatizing one.



## Why is the interview video recorded?

Your child's testimony is recorded as proof and can be used if legal proceedings are undertaken.

You may not attend the interview or watch the video, to ensure the neutrality and objectivity of what your child reports, and also so that the testimony is valid in court.

The DYP, police departments and the Crown prosecutor may watch the video to better assess the situation and ensure your child's safety. The alleged aggressor may also watch it, but only through their lawyer or the investigator, and may not keep a copy of the video.

## What happens after the police interview?

Following the interview, if the sexual assault allegation is well-founded, the investigator sends the file to a Crown prosecutor who determines whether a legal case will be opened. If the answer is yes, the investigator will arrest the alleged aggressor and take them to court.

The duration of legal proceedings varies by case. They can draw out over a long period of time. You may contact the lead investigator at any time to find out the progress of your case.

# What should you do if your child talks to you about their experience of sexual violence?

It's important to listen to your child, but not to question them about the details of the events as long as legal proceedings are underway.

Thank them for sharing their story with you. Encourage them in their process. As soon as you can, write down what your child said and tell the investigator about it.

Don't interrogate your child. Let them speak freely. Leading questions can influence the child, causing them to change their statements and hinder the judicial process.

You can explore your child's emotional experience and invite them to express their feelings about the sexual assault they experienced. A worker from Marie-Vincent's Psychosocial intervention services for parents can guide you in your approach to your child.



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