

The Swedish Health and Medical Services Act states that:

Healthcare staff must pay due attention to children who are relatives and their need for information, advice and support when the child's parents, or any other adult person they permanently reside with dies or has:

- a severe physical illness or injury
- a mental illness or functional impairment
- substance abuse or addiction
- subjected the child or any relative of the child to violence

In Region Skåne the child must be paid attention to in the same way as if a sibling has any of the health problems mentioned above.

Please ask healthcare staff for help

If you have questions about how to speak with the child, what words you can use or what information you wish to provide, healthcare staff can provide support.



Children as relatives
Region Skåne

Websites with more information in Swedish about and for children who are relatives:

Vårdguiden 1177.se

- The section about When family life is difficult (När familjelivet är svårt)
- The section about Feeling bad as a parent (Att må dåligt som förälder)
- When an adult in your family is unwell (När en vuxen i din familj inte mår bra)

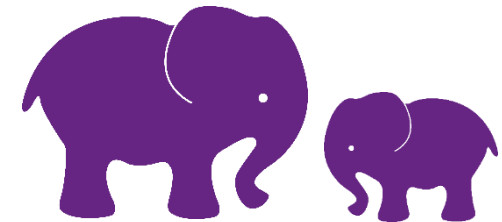
National Competence Center for Relatives (Nationellt kompetenscentrum för anhöriga (NKA))
Children as relatives | National Competence Center for Relatives (anhoriga.se)

Space to write down contact details:

When there are minor children and young people in the family

Children are affected when parents, siblings or other family members are sick or have a functional impairment. Even a small child can sense that things aren't as normal.

Children need to become involved and know what is happening in the family. It is important to talk with the child about the family's situation so the child does not have to worry and wonder what is happening on their own.



Children want to know.

Children become participants by receiving information in different ways, based upon their age

and maturity. Also, by having the opportunity to talk about how the family is functioning.

Encourage the child to follow along to medical visits if the child wants to. Prepare them by telling them about the care environment. Sometimes children want to send something along to the healthcare clinic or the hospital, such as a cuddly toy or a drawing.

Talking with the child

A good way is to first find out what the child knows about the family member's situation and what is happening. Let the child talk about it by explaining how they feel and by asking questions. Try to give them honest answers to their questions. If you do not know the answer, then it is OK for you to say so.

Some children do not ask any questions but this does not mean that they do not have any questions. Children may need time and questions may sometimes arise later on. Ask the child about *what specific* questions they have, instead of asking *if* the child has any questions. Children can be encouraged to *write down* their questions.

What questions do you have?

Some children feel guilty about what is happening. It is important to clarify for the child that the illness or the family member's situation is not the child's fault!

If there are several children in the family, then it is a good idea to talk to the children in a way that even the smallest child can understand. Sometimes

individual conversations are needed based upon the children's ages and needs.

Be sensitive to how much the child can handle. Provide the opportunity to have additional conversations and information.

What can make daily life easier?

Try to maintain the child's daily routines and interests as much as possible. Attending nursery school or school, continuing with activities, meeting up with friends and doing fun things together is typically good for the child.

There is also the possibility to receive support from the healthcare services, student health or from the municipality when the burden on the family becomes too much to bear. It may be a good idea to inform someone at the child's nursery school or school that the child trusts about the current family situation.

Some children take on a great deal of responsibility for the adult, other family members and the household. It can be too much responsibility for the child to bear and it is important to relieve them of this responsibility. Otherwise, it may have a negative impact on the child's health and development.

The child's reactions

Everyone is different, children too. This is why children can react in different ways when they have been given information about a family member's illness or functional impairment. Some children become sad, while other children do not seem to react at all. The reactions often reflect the child's development level. The same child can also display different reactions on different occasions. Some children react by becoming shut-in and passive, while others act out and become angry. Different types of reactions are nothing to worry about provided that the child seems to be

appear well. Do not hesitate to seek professional help if you are worried about your child.

If the child feels bad

Children who feel mentally unwell can exhibit behavioural changes and different symptoms that are often recurring, such as:

- stomach-ache
- headache
- muscular pain
- difficulties concentrating
- sleep disorders
- problems at nursery school or in school

Examples of organisations to contact at different ages:

Children ages 0–5:

- BVC – Children's Health Centre
- The Psychology Department at the midwife clinic and BVC
- Health Centre
- Social Services (apply for support)

Children and young people ages 6–17:

- Student Health – School Healthcare
- Health Centre
- Youth Clinic (ages 12–23)
- En väg in, a telephone advice line for children and young people in Skåne where mental ill-health is concerned. For parents, but the child is also welcome to call. Phone number: 020-51 20 20
- Social Services (apply for support)