



Child Protective Services

What are child protective services?

Child protective services are services designed to help children who have been or are at risk of becoming victims of abuse or neglect. The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services supervises the state's child protective services programs, which are administered locally by 88 county public children services agencies (PCSAs). Of those, 64 are located within county departments of job and family services, and the other 24 operate independently. County agencies investigate all allegations of abuse, neglect and dependency and offer services for abused and/or neglected children and their birth, foster and/or adoptive families.

After a county agency receives a report of possible child abuse or neglect, a caseworker completes an assessment. If the caseworker determines that the child cannot safely remain in the home, he or she then works with the family to find an alternative safe placement, preferably with relatives or another familiar setting, such as with a neighbor, family friend or another family within the same area and school district. If this is not possible, the caseworker will work with the local court system to put the child in the protective custody of the county's PCSA. The PCSA may then place the child with a foster family.

What is Differential Response?

Ohio's Differential Response child protection system gives children services agencies two options for responding to accepted reports of child abuse and neglect: a Traditional Response pathway and an Alternative Response pathway. Both pathways allow children services staff to address the unique safety concerns, risks and situations of each family, in a way that is collaborative and respectful. In both cases, the primary goal is child safety.

The Traditional Response pathway is always required for reports of sexual abuse, abuse resulting in serious injury, and whenever children are determined to be in serious and immediate risk of harm. This pathway may involve court intervention and will result in a determination or finding about the allegation.

The Alternative Response pathway is used when reports of abuse or neglect do not allege serious or imminent harm. It involved safety-focused partnerships with families and does not result in a determination or finding about the allegation.

Both pathways require caseworkers to complete assessments to gather information about the family's strengths and needs. A case may be assigned to an Alternative Response pathway but later changed to a Traditional Response pathway if needed to ensure child safety. For more information, visit jfs.ohio.gov/ocf/DifferentialResponse.stm.

What is the best way to report suspected abuse or neglect?

If you suspect a child is being abused or neglected, call 1-855-OH-CHILD (1-855-642-4453), and you'll be connected to a local child welfare or law enforcement agency. You also can report abuse or neglect by directly contacting the law enforcement agency or PCSA in the county where the incident occurred or where the child and his or her parent, guardian or custodian live. To find the phone number and location of the appropriate county PCSA, go to jfs.ohio.gov/County/County_Directory.pdf.

Will the information be kept confidential?

All reports of suspected child abuse and neglect made through the 855-OH-CHILD hotline, law enforcement agencies or PCSAs are confidential. The report can be made anonymously if the reporter desires. Ohio's Central Registry on Child Abuse and Neglect is a confidential database that contains reports of alleged child abuse and neglect and information on the parties involved. Those involved in a child abuse or neglect report include the alleged perpetrator, the alleged child victim, the child's caretaker, and other children and adults named in the report. Under the Ohio Privacy Act, any individual whose name is contained in a database of confidential, personal information maintained by a government agency may request and receive information about the status of his or her name in that database.