



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?

Differential Response gives caseworkers the freedom to use an alternative approach when investigating some reports of child abuse and neglect. Instead of automatically beginning a traditional investigation, county agencies can choose to assess the needs of the child or family—in a non-threatening, non-adversarial manner—and offer services to meet those needs. With this method, the caseworker focuses less on the circumstances of the incident and more on the family's overall needs. By mid-2014, all Ohio counties will offer this option.

An alternative response is neither better than nor a replacement for a traditional response. It merely acknowledges that families have different circumstances that vary in severity and require different responses. In many cases, a traditional response is the only way to protect children from harm. In other cases, an alternative approach can resolve issues faster, more easily and with less disruption to children's lives. For more information, visit <http://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 http://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.