

FACT SHEET

Child Protective Services

What are child protective services?

Child protective services are services that prevent child abuse and neglect; that provide investigation into allegations of adult abuse, neglect and exploitation; and that offer services for abused and/or neglected children and their families (birth, foster and adoptive). The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) administers and oversees the state's child protective services programs. Child protective services in Ohio are provided by a network of 88 public children services agencies (PCSAs). Fifty-five of these are located within county departments of job and family services, and 33 operate independently.

Ohio's PCSAs are required to assess and investigate all reports of child abuse and neglect. After receiving a report, the PCSA will complete an assessment and, if necessary, work with the family to develop a case plan identifying services necessary to reduce risk to the child and prevent the abuse or neglect from occurring again. In instances where it is found that children cannot safely remain in their own homes, the PCSA will work with the local court system to remove them and find an alternative safe placement, preferably with relatives.

What is "Differential Response"?

Differential Response offers caseworkers a second option for responding to accepted reports of suspected child abuse and neglect. Instead of conducting a traditional family assessment, they respond with an "alternative family assessment response," in which they assess the needs of the child or family—in a non-threatening, non-adversarial manner—and then offer services to meet those needs. Because a formal disposition that maltreatment has occurred is not required, the caseworker is able to place less emphasis on the circumstances of the incident and more focus on the family's overall needs. As of July 2011, 33 Ohio counties were offering this option.

Differential Response is neither better than nor a replacement for the traditional response. It merely acknowledges that families with different circumstances of varying severity require different responses. In many cases, the traditional response is the only way to protect children from harm. In other cases, however, issues can be resolved much more quickly and easily—and, for children, less traumatically—by taking an alternative approach.

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

To make a report of abuse or neglect, contact the law enforcement agency or PCSA in the county where the child and his or her parent, guardian or custodian reside or where the incident occurred. To find the phone number and location of the PCSA, go to <http://jfs.ohio.gov/County/cntydir.stm>.

Will the information be kept confidential?

Ohio's Central Registry on Child Abuse and Neglect is a confidential database that contains allegations of reports of child abuse and neglect and information on the parties involved. Parties involved in a child abuse or neglect report may include the alleged perpetrator, alleged child victim, caretaker, and other children and adults involved in the report. The Privacy Act permits an individual whose name is contained in a personal database maintained by the state to request and receive information about the status of his/her name on that database.