



Children's Administration Mission

The mission of the Children's Administration is first to protect abused and neglected children, to support the efforts of families to care for and parent their own children safely, and to provide quality care and permanent families for children in partnership with parents and kin, Tribes, foster parents and communities.

About Children's – Summary

How We Serve Our Clients

Children's Administration staff in 46 field offices work with children and families to identify their needs and develop a plan for services which support families and assure safety and well-being for children. These services are designed to reduce the risk of abuse, find safe alternatives to out-of-home placement, and assure safety and permanency for children in care.

Services to support families who are in crisis and at risk of disruption and services to care for children in placement are provided primarily by community agencies and foster parents. Over 60 percent of the Children's Administration budget is used to fund services provided by non-employees, with over 50 percent of the total budget used for contracted client and professional services and 14 percent of the total budget for cost reimbursement to foster parents. In addition, private child placing agencies provide adoption services and foster care to some youth in the custody of the Children's Administration.

Local community partnership

We collaboratively plan our services with Tribes and work together with a variety of interested local organizations and governmental entities to determine unmet client needs and plan for efficient service delivery. We work with regional service networks, community-based service providers, and community networks to provide quality services to meet the unique needs of families. Community Child Protection Teams and Child Fatality Review Teams review high-risk cases and provide a foundation for a community response to meet client needs and improve local systems supporting families and protecting children.

Services

Within the Children's Administration, the Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) is the provider of client services. There are 44 offices located throughout Washington State, with each office tailoring their services to the community in which they serve.

Please contact your local office to get information on the specific service offerings in your area.



How to Report Child Abuse or Neglect

Offices within local communities are responsible for receiving and investigating reports of suspected child abuse and neglect. Reports are received by Child Protective Services (CPS) located in each community office and assessed to determine whether the report meets the legal definition of abuse or neglect and how dangerous the situation is.

Children's Administration offers several ways to report abuse:

Daytime - Find your local office number to report abuse or neglect in your area.

Nights & Weekends - call **1-800-562-5624** to report abuse during the evening or on weekends.

Hotline - call **1-866-ENDHARM** (1-866-363-4276), Washington State's toll-free, 24 hour, 7 day-a-week hotline that will connect you directly to the appropriate local office to report suspected child abuse or neglect.

TTY Callers - call **1-800-624-6186** to place a direct TTY call.

Questions that will be asked when you call

1. The name, address and age of the child.
2. The name and address of the child's parent, guardian or other persons having custody of the child.
3. The nature and extent of the abuse or neglect.
4. Any evidence of previous incidences.
5. Any other information which may be helpful in establishing the cause of the child's abuse or neglect and the identity of the perpetrator.

You do not need to have all of the above information when you call to make a report, but the more accurate information you can provide, the better equipped the offices will be to assess the child's risk.

What is Child Abuse and Neglect?

RCW 26-44-020 (12) defines abuse and neglect as injury, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, negligent treatment or maltreatment of a child by any person under circumstances which indicate that the child's health, welfare, and safety is harmed. Abuse and neglect does NOT include the physical discipline of a child as defined in RCW 9A.16.100.

Recognizing Child Abuse and Neglect: Signs and Symptoms

The first step in helping abused or neglected children is learning to recognize the signs of child abuse and neglect. The presence of a single sign does not prove child abuse is occurring in a family; however, when these signs appear repeatedly or in combination you should take a closer look at the situation and consider the possibility of child abuse.

The following signs may signal the presence of child abuse or neglect.

The Child:

- Shows sudden changes in behavior or school performance.
- Has not received help for physical or medical problems brought to the parents' attention.
- Has learning problems (or difficulty concentrating) that cannot be attributed to specific physical or psychological causes.
- Is always watchful, as though preparing for something bad to happen.
- Lacks adult supervision.
- Is overly compliant, passive, or withdrawn.
- Comes to school or other activities early, stays late, and does not want to go home.

The Parent:

- Shows little concern for the child.
- Denies the existence of—or blames the child for—the child's problems in school or at home.
- Asks teachers or other caretakers to use harsh physical discipline if the child misbehaves.
- Sees the child as entirely bad, worthless, or burdensome.
- Demands a level of physical or academic performance the child cannot achieve.
- Looks primarily to the child for care, attention, and satisfaction of emotional needs.

The Parent and Child:

- Rarely touch or look at each other.
- Consider their relationship entirely negative.
- State that they do not like each other.

Common Indicators:

- Physical Abuse
- Neglect
- Sexual Abuse
- Emotional Abuse

Author: National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information (DHHS)

What Happens Once Abuse & Neglect is Reported?

Child Protective Services

Staff within DSHS provides Child Protective Services (CPS). When someone reports that a child may be abused or neglected, CPS is required by law to investigate. A report of suspected child abuse or neglect could be made to CPS or the police. Even though CPS staff and the police work together, they make separate investigations. CPS conducts family assessments, and the police conduct criminal investigations.

Protective Custody

When it appears that a child is in danger of being harmed, or has already been seriously abused or neglected, a police officer can place the child in protective custody. Custody of the child is then transferred to CPS which places the child with a relative or in foster care. By law, a child can be kept in protective custody for no more than 72 hours, excluding weekends and legal holidays. If the child is not returned to the parents or some other voluntary arrangement made within 72 hours, the matter must be reviewed by a court.

Parental Rights

In very serious cases of abuse and neglect, a child can be removed permanently from the parents. This is called termination of parental rights. When this happens, the child becomes legally free through a court procedure. The parent no longer has any rights or responsibilities toward the child. If a parent voluntarily gives up a child for adoption, the process is called relinquishing parental rights.

Child Welfare Services

Child Welfare Services (CWS) provides services to children and families with long-standing abuse and neglect problems. Typically these children have been removed from the family home and are in the foster care system. The focus of CWS is to achieve a permanent plan and placement for these children as soon as possible.

Who is Required to Report Child Abuse and Neglect?

The Mandatory Reporter's Video provides guidance for those who are required by state law to report child abuse or neglect.

Any person who has cause to believe that a child has suffered abuse or neglect should report such incidents.

Those people legally required to report child abuse or neglect are:

- Medical practitioners
- Nurses
- Dentists
- Social service counselors/therapists
- Psychologists
- Medical examiners
- Pharmacists
- School personnel
- Child care providers
- Law enforcement officers
- Juvenile probation officers
- Corrections employees
- DSHS employees
- Placement and liaison specialists
- Responsible living skills program staff
- HOPE center staff
- State family and children's ombudsman
- Any volunteer in the ombudsman's office
- Adults residing with child suspected to have been severely abused