



Child Protective Services

What are child protective services?

Child protective services are designed to help children who have been or are at risk of becoming victims of abuse or neglect. Ohio has a state-supervised, county-administered children services system. The state's child protective services programs are administered locally by 88 county public children services agencies (PCSAs). PCSAs assess and investigate reports of child abuse, neglect, or dependency, as required by state law. If necessary, PCSAs work with families to develop a family case plan identifying services to reduce risk to the children and prevent the abuse or neglect from occurring again. When it is determined that it would not be safe for children to return home, the PCSA will work with the family to identify a voluntary safety plan for the children. If the PCSA and the family cannot work out a voluntary plan, the PCSA will involve the local court system to ensure the children's safety. The court could place the children with a licensed provider if a kinship placement is not possible.

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

Anyone who knows or suspects that a child under age 18, or a young person under age 21 who is developmentally disabled or physically impaired, has been or is at risk of being abused or neglected may make a report. 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 PCSA 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 the child's parent, guardian, or custodian live. To find the phone number and location of the appropriate county PCSA, go to jfs.ohio.gov/county.

What can I expect if I report suspected abuse or neglect?

When you contact a PCSA, a children services professional will ask you some questions – for example:

- The name and address of the child.
- The age of the child.
- The name and address of the parents or caretakers.
- The name of the person you suspect is abusing or neglecting the child and the address if available.
- The reason you suspect the child is being abused and neglected
- Any other information that may be helpful to the investigation.

You are not required to have all this information, and you may report anonymously, if you choose. Giving your name can help the investigator clarify information. The agency will not give your name to the person suspected of abusing the child.

Will the information be kept confidential?

All reports of suspected child abuse and neglect made through the 855-OH-CHILD hotline, law enforcement agencies, and PCSAs are confidential. 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 their name in that database.

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How does ODJFS support local children services agencies?

ODJFS oversees program implementation by developing policies and procedures to guide PCSAs in program and service delivery. It provides support and oversight to the PCSAs in several ways.

- **Technical Assistance:** ODJFS provides guidance regarding state and federal laws, rules, and procedures and monitors PCSAs' compliance. It conducts case reviews, targeted reviews, data interpretation/reviews, fatality/near fatality reviews, and administrative reviews to foster improvement in casework practice.
- **Training:** ODJFS develops and supports robust training and guidance to meet the needs of local children services staff. The Ohio Child Welfare Training Program (OCWTP) promotes children services best practice through comprehensive skill development, strategic partnerships, and effective advocacy. OCWTP partners with eight regional training centers, operated by PCSAs, which identify and address staff training needs and assist in developing, piloting, and evaluating training activities. ODJFS also supports the University Partnership Program, a unique collaboration to bolster Ohio's professional child protection workforce.
- **Practice:** Best practice implementation is at the heart of the support to the PCSAs to promote quality, timely services to children and families. ODJFS helps PCSAs implement federal legislation such as the Family First Prevention Services Act and the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act. It also provides guidance for consistent use of tools from the Comprehensive Assessment Planning Model, which is a structured process to support and document critical decisions involving children and their families. ODJFS also helps PCSAs access various reports, which provide data to inform their practice.

Where can I find additional information?

For more information about Ohio's children services initiatives, including community partnerships to support infants affected by family substance misuse, visit jfs.ohio.gov/ocf/DifferentialResponse.stm.

For more information about children services training initiatives, visit jfs.ohio.gov/ocf/training.stm.