



Family Guide to Child Protection

This guide is to help the reader understand what county social services staff does when a report of child abuse or neglect is accepted.

This guide is for:

- Parents
- Others who may give information about a child abuse or neglect concern.

When social services staff gets a report, they decide if the report fits what the law defines as child abuse or neglect. Some reports are about concerns that do not involve neglect or abuse. When this happens the family may be offered voluntary child welfare services.

When a report meets what the law says is child abuse or neglect, social services staff must do a Family Assessment or an investigation. The staff needs to make sure the child is safe. Social services staff decides what to do depending on how serious the report is. The staff also wants to learn if the family is willing to work together to keep the family safe. The steps social services staff takes in these two different responses – Family Assessment or investigation – is explained in this guide.

Family Assessments

A Family Assessment is done when social services staff accepts a report about a child's safety, but the report is not about threats of immediate and serious harm. Staff meets with the family to assess their needs and strengths. Social services staff works with families to make sure their child is safe, not to prove or disprove if child abuse or neglect happened.

Three steps are taken by social services staff as a part of a Family Assessment:

1. Decide if a child is safe and if the family needs help to keep the child safe in the future

Social services staff meets with the parents and child to decide if the child is safe. Staff also wants to see if the family needs help. Social services staff must see and interview the child. Most of the time the parents are asked first if it is okay to interview the child. This may not happen if it would make the child unsafe. If the parents do not agree to have the child interviewed, social services staff may need to do an investigation.

Social services staff must:

- Tell the parents what the report is about
- Not tell who the reporter is, unless a judge orders them to
- Meet with the child, the parents and other family members.

Social services staff may interview other people who may know more about the child's safety.

Social services staff will tell you:

- Why the information is needed
- How the information will be used
- What your rights are to refuse to answer questions
- What your rights are about the information gathered
- What rights other people have to the same information.

Social services staff will gather information on:

- Parents' comments about their child's safety
- Past child abuse or neglect reports
- Family violence, alcohol and drug abuse
- Other situations that may make the child unsafe
- Strengths and needs of the family.

Social services staff may ask for more information about the child, such as school and medical records.

A Family Assessment must be done within 45 days of accepting a child abuse and neglect report.

2. Tell the results to the people involved

Social services staff sends a letter to the parents or guardian of a child when the Family Assessment is done. The letter tells them:

- Whether or not the family needs services
- That the report is private information
- How long social services staff will keep the record.

Social services staff sends a letter to people who are required by law to report child abuse and neglect. The letter tells them:

- That a Family Assessment was done to respond to their report
- That a family will or will not get services.

3. Provide services

In a Family Assessment, social services staff decides if services are needed to keep a child safe. If needed, social services staff provides these services. If social services staff and the family agree, other services may be provided to help meet the needs of the family.

Investigations

An investigation must be done when the child is in immediate or severe danger. It also must be done when the family refuses to work with social services staff to make sure the child is safe. Two decisions are made by social services staff in an investigation:

- Did child abuse or neglect happen?
- Are protective services needed to make the child safe in the future?

Three steps are taken by social services staff as a part of an investigation:

1. Gather information to learn if the child was abused or neglected and if they need services

Social services staff works with law enforcement to learn:

- If the child was abused or neglected
- If the harm was caused by something the parents or guardian did or failed to do
- If child protective services are needed.

Social services staff and law enforcement may interview the child without first asking the parents. The interview may happen at school or another private place.

If the child is in immediate danger, they may be taken into safekeeping. The child would go to a foster home until it is decided that s/he can safely go home. If the child goes to a foster home, social services staff will ask the parents to give names of relatives or kin who may be able to take care of the child.

Social services staff must:

- Not tell who the reporter is, unless ordered by a judge
- See or talk with the child in person
- Interview the reported offender of abuse or neglect to tell them what the report is about
- Interview parents and other people who take care of the child.

Social services staff must tape-record all interviews, when possible. If the report is about sexual abuse, the interview with the reported victim and other child witnesses must be videotaped, when possible.

Social services staff may interview:

- Other children who live with or who have lived with the reported offender
- Medical professionals
- Others who may know about the reported abuse or neglect.



Social services staff will tell the parents:

- Why the information is needed
- How the information will be used
- What the parents' rights are to refuse to answer the questions
- What will happen if the parents do not answer the questions
- What rights the parents have to information gathered
- What rights the parents have to disagree with the records
- What rights other people have to the information.

Social services staff will gather information on:

- Past reports of abuse and neglect
- Child's age, gender and ability level
- People who reported and their:
 - Relationship to the person accused
 - Knowledge of the report.
- Reported offender and his or her:
 - Age
 - Past reports of abuse and neglect
 - Criminal charges and convictions.
- Other facts to help decide if the child was abused or neglected.

Social services staff may need:

- The child's medical records
- A medical exam of the child
- Information given by the reported offender of abuse or neglect
- Other facts that help decide if the child was abused or neglected.

The investigation must be done within 45 days of accepting the report.

2. Tell the results to the people involved

Within 10 days after the investigation, social services staff sends a letter to the parents or guardians of the child, that says:

- Whether the child was or was not abused or neglected
- Whether or not the family needs protective services
- What the reasons were for the decisions
- That social services staff followed the law when it gathered information
- What people's rights are to certain information about themselves

- What people's rights are to ask social services staff to reconsider the decisions.

Social services staff sends a letter to the person who was accused of abuse or neglect that says:

- Whether social services staff decided that the child was or was not abused or neglected
- What the reasons were for the decision
- That social services staff followed the law when information was gathered
- What people's rights are to certain information about themselves
- What people's rights are to appeal the decision.

3. Provide services

In an investigation, social services staff decides if protective services are needed.

If it is decided that services are needed, social services staff will:

- Provide the services
- Work with the family to keep the child safe in the future.

If protective services are not needed, social services staff will:

- Close the case record
- Offer the family information about other services that could help.

Social services staff must tell the results of the investigation to the person who reported the abuse or neglect, if that person was required by law to make the report. They would not share the results if it were not in the child's best interest.



Attention. If you want free help translating this information, ask your worker or call the number below for your language.

ملاحظة: إذا أردت مساعدة مجانية في ترجمة هذه المعلومات، فاسأل مساعدك في مكتب الخدمة الاجتماعية أو اتصل على الرقم 1-800-358-0377

កំណត់សំគាល់ បើអ្នកចង់បានជំនួយបកប្រែព័ត៌មាននេះដោយមិនគិតថ្លៃ សូមសួរអ្នកកាន់សំណុំរឿងរបស់អ្នក ឬ ទូរស័ព្ទទៅលេខ 1-888-468-3787 ។

Pažnja. Ako vam je potrebna besplatna pomoć za prevod ove informacije, pitajte vašeg radnika ili nazovite 1-888-234-3785.

Ceeb toom. Yog koj xav tau kev pab txhais cov xov no rau koj dawb, nug koj tus neeg lis dej num (worker) lossis hu 1-888-486-8377.

ໂປຼດຊາບ. ຖ້າທ່ານທ່ານຕ້ອງການການຊ່ວຍເຫຼືອໃນການແປຂໍ້ຄວາມດັ່ງກ່າວນີ້ຟຣີ, ຈົ່ງຖາມນຳພນັກງານຊ່ວຍວຽກຂອງທ່ານຫຼືໂທໂທຕາມເລກໂທ 1-888-487-8251.

Hubaddhu. Yoo akka odeeffannoon kun sii hiikamu gargaarsa tolaa feeta ta'e, hojjataa kee gaafaddhu ykn lakkoofsa kana bilbili 1-888-234-3798.

Внимание: если вам нужна бесплатная помощь в переводе этой информации, обратитесь к своему социальному работнику или позвоните по следующему телефону: 1-888-562-5877.

Ogow. Haddii aad dooneyso in laga kaalmeeyo tarjamadda macluumaadkani oo lacag la'aan ah, weydii hawl-wadeenkaaga ama wac lambarkan 1-888-547-8829.

Atención. Si desea recibir asistencia gratuita para traducir esta información, consulte a su trabajador o llame al 1-888-428-3438.

Chú Ý. Nếu quý vị cần dịch thông tin này miễn phí, xin gọi nhân-viên xã-hội của quý vị hoặc gọi số 1-888-554-8759.

LB2-0001 (10-09)

ADA4 (3-12)

This information is available in alternative formats to individuals with disabilities by calling 651-431-4671. TTY users can call through Minnesota Relay at 800-627-3529. For Speech-to-Speech, call 877-627-3848. For additional assistance with legal rights and protections for equal access to human services programs, contact your agency's ADA coordinator.



Minnesota Department of **Human Services**

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