

**What is child abuse and neglect?**

<http://www.dcf.wisconsin.gov/children/CPS/progserv/maltreat.HTM>

**What are some signs of child abuse and neglect?**

<http://www.dcf.wisconsin.gov/children/CPS/progserv/signs.HTM>

**How do I report Child abuse and neglect?**

<http://www.dcf.wisconsin.gov/children/CPS/cpswimap.HTM>

**What if I'm not sure I should report?**

Please make the report! The social worker who takes your call is trained to determine if the report meets the statutory definition of abuse or neglect. Remember, children cannot be protected unless we know your concerns.

**Can I remain anonymous if I report?**

You do not need to provide your name if you report, however, we prefer to get the reporter's name whenever possible. Either way, Wisconsin law protects your identity and your name is never given out to the family that you made the report on.

**What happens when I make the report?**

Your report will be taken by a social worker who will ask the names and ages of the children in the home and their address. The social worker will also ask the names of the parents or anyone else who resides in the home. It is important to provide as much information as you have regarding the maltreatment as this aids the social worker in determining the correct response to the report. After the worker completes the report, it is reviewed by a supervisor who determines if it meets the State's legal guidelines for investigation.

If it is determined that an investigation is warranted, the supervisor decides how quickly a social worker must respond using a "priority response tool". Response time may be "same day", "24-48 hours", or "within 5 business days" depending upon the degree of the maltreatment.

When a report does not meet the State's legal guidelines for maltreatment, but the information provided indicates the family could benefit from an offer of voluntary services, a case may be opened under a child welfare report.

**What happens after I make the report?**

Social workers typically interview the children apart from other family members. Family members are also interviewed regarding the reported maltreatment concerns. Social workers use information gathered in the interviews to assess child safety, child maltreatment risk, as well as the family's strengths and needs. If maltreatment, as defined in state statutes, has occurred, social workers will decide if Social Services can provide services to ensure the safety of the child(ren) in the home or if the child(ren) need to be removed until the identified safety risks in the home can be eliminated.

### **Will my call result in the removal of the child(ren) from their home?**

The top priority of Social Services is to keep families together. Most of the reports we receive result in services being offered or provided to the family. Child removal happens only in a small number of cases and court action is required in all of those instances. Social Services' actions related to child removal are guided by Wisconsin State Statutes (see DCF Link). These statutes explain the responsibilities of Social Services to protect children from abuse, the circumstances under which they may petition the Court to intervene in children's lives, dispositions which the Court might enter on the children's behalf, criteria which must be met before children can be taken into custody, places where children taken into custody may be held and more. These Statutes clearly spell out the actions that social workers are allowed and not allowed to take. The rights of children and families are carefully protected by these statutes.

<http://www.dcf.wisconsin.gov/children/CPS/statsadmin/statsINDX.htm>

### **Will I be able to find out what happened?**

If you are not a mandated reporter (someone in a profession or position who is required by the Statutes to report), the social worker will NOT provide you with follow up information because, under state law, that would be a breach of family confidentiality.

If you are a mandated reporter, in order to meet state law requirements to protect family confidentiality, the social worker will send you a letter that provides only basic information as to whether or not an intervention was required.

### **Who are mandatory reporters?**

<http://www.dcf.wisconsin.gov/children/CPS/progserv/manrpts.HTM>

<http://wcpds.wisc.edu/related-training/mandated-reporter/>

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