



How can I make sure that my side of the story is heard?

- Be cooperative and give the caseworker names and contact information of people that can provide additional information. Written consent may be needed in some cases.
- Allow the caseworker into your home so they better understand your situation.
- Attend all meetings set up to talk about the case or your children.
- Ask questions about the process and what you can do.
- Make sure to take your children to any appointments or specialists when requested.
- Make sure the caseworker is updated on any changes such as a new address, new person living in the home, or new contact information.
- Ask about resources. In some counties, parent advocates are available to support you during the investigation.
- Let the caseworker know of other people who have knowledge of the situation. The more information the caseworker has the better they can make a determination.



Who do I contact if I have concerns about my case?

If you have a complaint or concern, please contact your caseworker or their supervisor.

If your concerns are still not resolved, you can call your local Area Administrator.

You may call the Office of Constituent Relations at 1-800-723-4831 for help at any time

-or-

You may call the Office of the Family & Children's Ombuds* at 1-800-571-7321.

**This agency is separate from DCYF. It investigates concerns about DCYF.*

If you would like copies of this document in an alternative format or language, please contact DCYF Constituent Relations (1-800-723-4831 | 360-902-8060, ConstRelations@dcyf.wa.gov).

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Child Protective Services (CPS) Investigation

Keeping Children Safe while Strengthening Families



Washington State Department of
CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES



What is a CPS Investigation?

A CPS Investigation is a response to an allegation that a child has suffered abuse or neglect. It is a detailed and fair attempt to learn the facts around whether abuse, neglect, or child abandonment has occurred, how or if this puts children at risk of future abuse or neglect, and if the children are safe. This is completed by inquires and interviews from a variety of relevant sources.

Why am I receiving an investigation?

- The Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) received a report with concerns about your children's safety.
- The report met the legal definition of child abuse and neglect (RCW 26.44.020).
- The report showed the allegations were moderately high or high risk or that there may be immediate danger to your child.
- DCYF wants to work with you to keep your children safe.

What is the definition of Child Abuse and Neglect?

Child abuse or neglect means the injury, sexual abuse, or sexual exploitation of a child by any person under conditions which indicate that the child's health, welfare, or safety is harmed, or the negligent treatment or maltreatment of a child. See Chapter 110-30 WAC for more details available online at <https://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=110-30&full=true>.

What to expect from the Investigation?

- DCYF greatly values the family unit and works to keep children in their homes if they can remain there safely. The safety of your child is of the highest importance and the caseworker will work with you closely to find a way to keep your child safe in your home, if at all possible.
- You and your children should be treated fairly and with respect at all times.
- As a parent, legal guardian, or subject you will be interviewed as part of the investigation.
- By law, children may be interviewed and photos may be taken, as part of the investigation, without your permission. Children have a right to have a third party of their choice present during their interview.
- Information will be gathered through obtaining records and conducting interviews with a variety of important contacts.
- When there is a criminal component to the allegation, the CPS investigator may team with law enforcement to reduce the amount of repeated information collected.
- Services may be offered to address your family's needs, reduce risk and safety concerns, or your case may be transferred to Family Voluntary Services (FVS) for monitoring.

What are findings?

Allegations may be "Founded" or "Unfounded". A Founded finding means that, based on available information, it is more likely than not that child abuse or neglect did occur. Unfounded means that, based on available information, it is more likely than not that child abuse or neglect did not occur or sufficient evidence to determine whether the allegation did or did not occur is unavailable.

How will I be informed of the finding?

A letter will be sent informing you of the finding. If the finding is founded, the letter will tell you how to appeal the finding. This appeal must reach the DCYF office within 30 days of receipt of the findings letter or the findings will be final. Make sure that if you move the caseworker is aware of your new address.

How can a founded finding affect me?

Founded findings are stored confidentially in the DCYF computer system. They can be used for the following purposes:

- Evidence in court actions concerning your children.
- Deciding if you can be employed, licensed, or volunteer to care for vulnerable children and adults.
- Background information, in the event of future allegations.
- Deciding if you are eligible for placement of a relative or kin child that comes into care.

