



WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE CHILD ABUSE HOTLINE IS CALLED?

Call comes to NJ Child Abuse Hotline 1-877 NJ Abuse.

A concerned caller can reach DCF at any time to report child abuse/neglect or to request child welfare services. The caller does not need proof and can make the call anonymously.

In NJ, the law requires any person having reasonable cause to believe that a child was abused/neglected to immediately report the concern to DCF. Failure to report is a disorderly persons offense, punishable by fine or incarceration.

Information and Referral

If the caller's concerns do not meet the criteria for assessment or investigation, DCF provides the caller with information about services and referral options through community service providers.

Assessment or Investigation

Related Information

If the caller provides updated or additional information on an open assessment/investigation or an open case, the information is recorded and shared with the assigned worker.

Child Welfare Services (CWS) Assessment

A CWS assessment results when there is a request for services or an expressed concern about a family who may need assistance in ensuring the basic health and welfare of a child. A worker assesses child welfare issues and what supportive services might be needed. If the worker learns information during the CWS assessment that potentially meets the statutory definition of abuse/neglect, the CWS assessment can be converted to a CPS investigation.

If a person or family participation in an assessment is entirely voluntary.

Child Protective Services (CPS) Investigation

During a CPS investigation, CP&P seeks to understand the facts surrounding the allegations and ensure the child(ren)'s safety. The worker interviews the source of the report, each child and caregiver, and others involved in the family's life, i.e., doctors, teachers, etc. CP&P may request and review clinical and social service reports and may request forensic examinations of children. Ultimately, a worker makes an investigative determination, concluding one of four findings, and assesses whether the family would benefit from ongoing supportive services.

If a person or family refuses to cooperate with an investigation, CP&P can seek court intervention.

At the conclusion of an assessment or investigation, the investigator determines whether to open the case for services or terminate involvement. Even when an allegation is determined to be "not established" or "unfounded", CP&P may find that there are service needs and/or other concerns that warrant opening a case. A family's decision to accept ongoing services with CP&P is voluntary **UNLESS** CP&P has sought the Court's approval to:

- remove child(ren) and place in state custody; or
- provide ongoing care and supervision

CP&P may seek the Court's permission to remove children and place them into State custody at any point, and regardless of whether or not there is a substantiated or established CPS report.

SUBSTANTIATED

ESTABLISHED

NOT ESTABLISHED

UNFOUNDED

*Substantiated findings are disclosed for a Child Abuse Information (CARI) check

