

How Child Protective Services Investigations Typically Work

This diagram explains what typically happens during a CPS investigation and what you can expect.



START

A Concern is Reported



Someone contacts Child Protective Services (CPS) because they are worried about a child's safety or well-being.

CPS Reviews the Report (Screening / Intake)



CPS reviews the information to decide:

- Does the concern meet the legal definition of child abuse or neglect?
- Is the child in immediate danger?
- If the answers are **no**, CPS does not get involved, and the report is closed.
- If the answers are **yes**, CPS will be involved and the concern will be looked into further.

Information Gathering

CPS may gather information by:

- Talking with parents or caregivers.
- Talking with children (in an age-appropriate way.)
- Speaking with the person who made the report and anyone else who may be involved with the family.
- Visiting the home.
- The CPS worker will assess child safety, family strengths, stressors, and challenges, and what support may help the family.



CPS Contacts the Family

If CPS moves forward, a CPS worker may:

- Call or visit the family.
- Explain why CPS is involved.
- Ask questions about the child and family.



Safety Decision

After reviewing all information, CPS decides whether:

- The child is safe. If so, the case may close.
- Support is needed. If so, services may be offered.
- Immediate safety concerns exist. If so, a safety plan is created.
- Removal of a child is rare and only happens when there is serious danger and no safe alternative.



Safety Plan or Services (If Needed)

If CPS stays involved, they may:

- Create a safety plan with the family.
- Offer voluntary services or prevention services.
- Connect the family to community supports.
- Examples: Parenting support, Counseling or mental health services, Help with housing, food, or childcare, Cultural or community-based resources.



Follow-Up and Case Closure

CPS continues to check in with the family until:

- The child is safe, and the family has the support they need.
- CPS involvement ends and the case is closed.



FINISH