What to Expect with Child Protective Services Investigations

Child protective services and investigations are meant to keep all children safe, including refugee and newcomer children. This diagram explains what typically happens during a CPS investigation and what refugee and newcomer families 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 such as the Resettlement Agency.
- Visiting the home.
- Through these interactions, the CPS worker assesses child safety, family strengths, stressors and challenges, and what support may help the family.

CPS Contacts the Family

If CPS accepts the case for investigation, 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 refugee family has the support they need.
- CPS involvement ends and the case is closed.

FINISH

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