

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Who will know I made the child abuse/neglect report?

A: The investigator assigned to the case has access to your information in order to contact you about the report. However, CFSA is not permitted to disclose the reporter's information to anyone else who is not a professional involved with the investigation (i.e., other than detectives, prosecuting attorneys, etc.). Be aware that if the case proceeds to a trial, you may be called to testify as a witness and your identity would be revealed in court.

Q: Can I get a copy of the investigation during and/or after it is done?

A: Mandated reporters are usually not allowed copies of the investigation during or after completion.

Q: Where do the children go if they have to be removed from home?

A: It depends on the circumstances. CFSA places children in licensed foster homes. A Family Team Meeting is usually scheduled within 48 hours of removal to allow for further planning concerning the child(ren)'s temporary living status.

The child's placement in a foster home is temporary until a judge hears the case. When a child is taken into temporary protective custody, CFSA must bring the case to the attention of a judge within 72 hours. The judge will decide whether the child will remain in the temporary custody of CFSA or return to the custody of his/her caretaker(s). The child may also be placed in a relative's home, as long as that home is licensed. It is possible that the home will receive a temporary license allowing the child to be placed immediately in the relative's home.



Q: What kinds of services does CFSA offer to parents who are indicated for abuse or neglect?

A: The family goes through a comprehensive assessment to identify their needs. CFSA receives funding to provide many services to protect children. Parents may receive counseling or assistance in developing parenting or homemaking skills. Some families may be referred to agencies that provide furniture and clothing. Adults or children with substance abuse problems may receive drug or alcohol treatment. Some families may be referred to specialized agencies that assess and treat mental illness. CFSA then works to find the right services to help them. If children have been removed from their home, one **very important service** CFSA provides is **visitation** between the children and the parents.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: How long can CFSA work with a family?

A: That also varies. Some families work with CFSA for less than a year, while others may stay involved longer. Some families only need a few supports and a little time to resolve the issues that led to the abuse or neglect. Other families may have more complicated situations.

In cases where children are placed outside their parent's home, CFSA tries to reunite families within 12 months. CFSA's mission is to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of the children of the District of Columbia. CFSA is also charged with supporting troubled families in their efforts to create a stable and safe home for their children. If the caretaker(s) are unable to achieve this goal, their parental rights may be terminated to allow their children to have the opportunity for permanency with an alternative family.

Q: If I call the Hotline, are you sure the family will not be told my name?

A: Confidentiality and anonymity of reporters is the LAW. CFSA is not permitted to disclose the identity of the reporter. However, if the case goes to court and the mandated reporter is required to testify, then the family members may discover the mandated reporter's identity.

Q: What if the family can tell I made the report? Who is going to protect me from the parents? **A:** It's just human nature for parents to want to know who reported them for child abuse, so some families may accuse friends, neighbors, or professionals who work with their children of calling the Hotline. The parent may be hoping YOU will confirm that you made the call. If you feel comfortable with the parent, you can explain that you were mandated to report your suspicions. You can also assure the parent that you want to help and support the family in any way you can. If you don't feel comfortable, you have no obligation to confirm or deny the parent's suspicions. If you feel threatened by a family member, call the police.



Q: What happens if my report turns out NOT to be child abuse and/or neglect? Will I be protected from a lawsuit?

A: Yes. If you made the report in good faith - meaning that you had reasonable cause to believe that child abuse occurred - you are protected by law. The law presumes that you acted in good faith.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Have I fulfilled my obligation as a Mandated Reporter if I tell my supervisor (i.e., principal, manager, or administrator) about my suspicions of child abuse or neglect?

A: No. It is your individual responsibility as a Mandated Reporter to ENSURE that a child abuse report is made to the Hotline. Telling your supervisor or anyone else does not fulfill your legal obligation. **You must ensure that the child maltreatment report is made.** You may want to suggest that you and your supervisor make the Hotline call together, especially if you both have first hand information regarding the child.



Q: Does my supervisor (i.e., principal, manager, or administrator) have authority to decide whether I call the Hotline?

A: Although every organization has its own internal policies on reporting child abuse/neglect, the law states that under no circumstances shall any person in charge of an institution control, restrain, or modify a child abuse/neglect report.

Q: What happens if I have reason to believe that a child is abused or neglected, but I don't call the Hotline?

A: Mandated Reporters who intentionally fail to report suspected child abuse or neglect can be charged with the DC penalties of up to a \$300 fine and/or up to 90 days in jail. In addition, Mandated Reporters who have a license may lose that license to practice their professions.

Q: If an investigator comes to my work and wants to talk to the child, shouldn't I be allowed to be in the room during the interview?

A: Typically the answer is NO. The investigator will ask to interview the child alone and away from any type of influence.

Q: Does CFSA always remove children from the home?

A: A child is only removed from the home when it is absolutely necessary. The investigator goes to the home, speaks with the caretaker(s) and the child, and then assesses whether the child is safe there.

Investigators can only remove children from the home when there is an urgent and immediate threat to their safety. CFSA tries to keep families together whenever possible by implementing safety plans and providing services to keep the children safe.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What's the best place where I can find information about being a Mandated Reporter in DC?

A: The District of Columbia has created an online training for Mandated Reporters. The training website contains lessons, these FAQs, and numerous other resources to help Mandated Reporters fulfill their important role in keeping DC children and youths safe.

Resources may be accessed at any time (before, during, or after completing the online training) from the URL:

<http://DC.MandatedReporter.org>



Q: What's the most important thing I need to know about CFSA and being a Mandated Reporter?

A: The most important thing to remember is the Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline number:

202-671-SAFE (7233)

Any time you suspect abuse or neglect, make the call. Not sure you have enough details? Make the call anyway. Not sure if it really fits the criteria for abuse or neglect? Don't sweat over the decision - go ahead and call. That's why the Hotline is there.