

Q: How will information be used that is provided to DSS?

A: It may be used to determine if a child was abused or neglected and who is responsible for the abuse or neglect. In an indicated case, DSS may share the information you provide with people who need it in order to serve you or your family. Your case manager will tell you who gets any information you provide.

Q: Can the case manager give the information to law enforcement?

A: Yes. Under state statute, DSS records are available to law enforcement officials investigating certain crimes.



Children in Foster Care

If it is determined your child cannot remain safely in the home or be placed with an appropriate kinship caregiver, a decision may be made by law enforcement officers or the family court to place your child in foster care. DSS will find appropriate placement for your child, preferably, with a relative or family friend. Foster care is intended to be a temporary arrangement or intervention while the family and agency work together to address any identified needs. It is possible for DSS to approve relatives and friends as licensed foster parents.

In most cases, the agency will work with you and your family to develop a visitation plan for you and your child. For more information regarding the court process, please reference DSS Booklet 30230. If your child is placed into foster care, you will be given more detailed information on the foster care system procedures.

Resource Guide

SC Parents provides a various support services to parents, including parenting classes, childcare, and other resources. **Contact: (803) 733-5430**

The number individuals can call to locate local and national resources is **211**.

SC Child Care’s mission is to increase the availability of quality, affordable childcare within the State of South Carolina. Their website presents childcare options across the state. **Contact: (803) 898-2570**

S.C. Department of Children’s Advocacy provides a resource library with information ranging from the locations of local food pantries to Father-to-Father programs in the state. **Contact: (803) 734-3176**

The Children’s Law Center is a training and resource hub for professionals and the public alike. **Contact: (803) 777-1646**

Your case manager is _____

Your case manager can be reached at _____

Their team leader is _____

The team leader can be reached at _____

The county DSS office is _____

The allegation(s) being investigated is (are):

- Sexual Abuse
- Physical Abuse
- Contributing to the Delinquency of a minor
- Educational Neglect
- Abandonment
- Physical Neglect
- Medical Neglect

Other: (specify) _____

In accordance with Title IV, Section 601, of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Title V, Section 504, of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the South Carolina Department of Social Services will administer its programs in such a manner that no person shall solely by reason of race, color, national origin or qualified handicap, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefit of or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity administered by DSS.

Child Welfare Services: A Guide for Parents



Scan the QR for more content!

South Carolina's law seeks to protect children and keep them safe. The Department of Social Services (DSS) must follow certain steps when it receives a report of child abuse or neglect. This brochure provides specific information about that process.

Investigating Reported Abuse or Neglect

If a report is made that a child has been harmed, DSS must begin to investigate within a 2 hour to 2 business day time frame.

The person assigned to investigate the report is called a case manager. Their name and phone number are on the back of this brochure. The case manager will need to talk to other people who may know about the parent(s) and the family. The investigation may include an examination of the child by a doctor, and the taking of photographs.

DSS has 45 days to complete this assessment process. If there is specific information that can't be gathered within that time, 15 additional days may be approved.

As soon as possible after the investigation begins, DSS will give this brochure to the parents or guardian, or any other person named as harming the child.

DSS and the family will collaborate to create a plan to support any identified needs of the family unit. If a child is unable to remain safely in their home based on the assessment, DSS may request for your child to be placed with a relative or other caregiver. When this is not possible, foster care may be necessary.

If you are reported for child abuse or neglect, you have the following rights:

- To be represented in family court by a lawyer. If you cannot pay for one, you can ask the court to appoint a lawyer to represent you
- To be notified you are the subject of a report and your name has been recorded by DSS as a "suspected perpetrator" of abuse or neglect
- To be notified if your name is entered into the Central Registry of Child Abuse or Neglect.
- To examine the report and evidence used to decide an indicated case, except for the identity of the reporter.



- To a timely management of your case.
- To visit any children removed from your home, if appropriate.
- To help plan and participate in your family case plan.
- To be notified of and take part in family court hearings that involve your case.
- To ask for a review of your case decision by the County Director.
- To appeal an indication against you through a DSS hearing if the case is not brought before family court.

Some Important Questions

Q: What are the possible outcomes of the investigation?

A: The case may be "indicated" or "unfounded."

- "Indicated" means that it is more likely than not that the child was abused or neglected.
- "Unfounded" means the report is untrue or not supported by the information gathered.

Unfounded cases fall into three categories:

- Category I: Abuse or neglect was ruled out following assessment.
- Category II: There is not enough evidence to decide if the child was abused or neglected.
- Category III: The assessment could not be completed because DSS could not locate the child or family or for some other reason (this case can be reopened).

Q: If my family is involved in a report of abuse or neglect,

how will the records be kept?

A: Information about an investigation or a case is kept in a paper file and on the agency database. Information contained in agency records, whether on paper or in the electronic database, is kept confidential.

Q: Is someone going to talk to my child?

A: Yes. During the investigation, DSS case managers will talk to your child or any other applicable child. A parent's consent is not required for DSS case managers to talk to any child. Law enforcement officers and other professionals including, but not limited to, school professionals, doctors, nurses, forensic interviewers, etc. may talk with your child, if needed.

Q: What is the process of resolving complaints about a case?

A: First, talk to your case manager, then the team leader, and finally, if questions or problems are not resolved, contact the County Director or the Constituent Services Division at **(803) 898-7601**.

Q: Will my name be recorded in DSS records as a suspected perpetrator?

A: Yes. Your name will be recorded in DSS records as a suspected perpetrator until a case decision is made following the investigation.

Q: Is my name going to be entered into a central registry of child abuse or neglect?

A: A court order is required to enter your name on this Registry unless you are a foster parent or an employee or volunteer of a group home, institution or childcare facility. The order may come from family court or criminal court. The Central Registry is a perpetrator registry separate from the DSS agency data system.

Q: Do I have the right to inspect DSS records about my child's case?

A: Yes. You do have a right to inspect these records if the case is indicated. You also have the right to a copy of the report but not to the name of the person making the report.

Q: What if I don't cooperate with the case manager?

A: DSS still must complete the investigation. DSS may ask for the assistance of the family court or law enforcement to help do that job. You have the right to consult with a lawyer at any time you wish. However, the right to a court-appointed lawyer, if you cannot pay for one, does not exist unless your case is going to court.