The Mission of Child & Family Services Agency is to provide important services to promote the safety and well-being of children and families. The agency coordinates public and private partnerships to protect children from abuse and neglect, preserve families through provision of services, and provide foster care and adoption services.

Child abuse/neglect is ………………
Physical or mental injury, sexual abuse, negligent maltreatment, or maltreatment of any child under age 18 by a person responsible for the child’s welfare under circumstances that threaten or harm the child’s health or safety.

When making a hotline report be prepared to provide as much of the following:
• Name, gender, age, and address of (1) the child who is the subject of the report, (2) the child’s siblings (if any), and (3) the child’s parent(s) or caretaker.
• The nature/extent of the abuse and any previous abuse, if known.
• Anything that may shed light on the cause and circumstances of the abuse and the identity of the perpetrator.

When you call CFSA’s hotline to report, our goals are to:
• Determine whether the allegation meets the legal definition of abuse or neglect.
• Ensure the safety of children involved.
• Provide helpful/needed services to families.

When a report does not meet the legal definitions of abuse or neglect but the family needs help, CFSA-hotline professionals refer the family to community services.

Under District law, you must report actual or suspected child abuse and neglect. To report, call the District hotline 24 hours a day at 202-671-SAFE.
Accepting an investigation:
When a report does meet the legal definition of abuse or neglect, CFSA must initiate an investigation within 24 hours. A CFSA professional will investigate alone or in conjunction with the Metropolitan Police Department to determine next steps.

Depending on the outcome of the investigation, the Child Protective Services Social Worker will either find the allegation of abuse/neglect as substantiated, unfounded, or inconclusive.

Substantiated Allegations
When allegations are Substantiated, the child may remain at home with agency and community services to ensure his/her safety. However, if the risk to the child is high, CFSA may remove the child to a safe setting.

Unfounded/Inconclusive Allegations
If the allegation is Unfounded or Inconclusive, CFSA may refer the family to community services, depending on their needs.

Mandated Reporter Feedback
CFSA will send you a letter stating whether or not we are investigating your report. The letter will include the investigator’s name and telephone number so you can call with additional Information. However, confidentiality laws preclude CFSA from providing you with information about the case.

HELP TO PROTECT OUR CHILDREN
- KNOW THE SIGNS OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT.
- WHEN CHILDREN HAVE THE COURAGE TO DISCLOSE ABUSE OR NEGLECT TO YOU, TAKE THEM SERIOUSLY.
- WHEN YOU SUSPECT OR KNOW OF INCIDENTS OF CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT, CALL CFSAAT (202) 671-SAFE.

YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR CALLING CFSA YOURSELF
You are an essential part of the safety net that protects children and can provide life-saving help to child victims in our community. Please take this important legal responsibility seriously (D.C. Code §§2-1352 through 2-1363).
In-Home Services
In CFSA’s effort to ensure the safety, permanency and well-being for children we work to empower and equip parents (or caretakers) to function independently as their child’s primary caregiver. In-Home Services are provided to support families in a manner that will help them overcome long-standing difficulties that endanger their children. This level of assistance is used to help avert an emergency (such as eviction) and prevent entry into the child welfare system. A licensed social worker is assigned to work with each of the families on their identified issues.

Out-of-Home Services
When a family’s living environment presents too much danger, CFSA has the authority to remove children to safe settings (prompt agreement must be received from D.C. Family Court also). In instances where removal is imminent family relatives are sought out as placement resources. When family is not available or suitable, the youth is placed in a foster or group home setting. CFSA recruits, trains, and licenses foster parents. CFSA also licenses, monitors, and maintains contracts with group homes. A licensed social worker is assigned to work with each family to ameliorate the issues that lead to agency involvement.

Adoption Services
For many youth returning to their biological parents (and/or) family is not an option for various reasons. In these instances, adoption becomes the permanency goal for these youth. Consequently, to many youth are growing up in the nation’s child welfare system while waiting for a “permanent family.” CFSA recruits and trains people willing to provide permanent, nurturing homes for District children and teens through adoption. Legal guardianship is an alternative to adoption for relatives, and others, who want to provide a permanent home for children. A licensed social worker is assigned to work with youth and families that are going through the adoption process.
Social Workers, Kinship Caregivers/Foster Parents, Group Home Providers
When working with youth in foster care you may interface with any one of the persons listed above. It's important to understand each person's function and how you should interface with each of them.

**Social Workers**
When a child is in the custody of CFSA, the agency serves as its parent. The Social Worker is the agency designee ensuring the child’s needs are met and that they are progressing in a safe environment free from harm. The Social Worker works collaboratively with the placement provider to ensure they attend school, get medical attention, and receive any needed support.

**Kinship Caregivers/Foster Parents**
Kinship Caregivers and Foster Parents are licensed by CFSA (or a private agency) to serve as the day-to-day caregiver for a child in foster care. Kinship Caregivers are relatives of the youth and the foster parent is not. Each of these providers is supported by the agency to care for youth in foster care in the same manner they would their own biological children in the home. They attend school meetings, medical appointments, etc.

**Group Home Providers**
Group Homes are providers that service a larger number of youth for placement. CFSA only places youth ages 13 and above in group home care. However, the preferred option of placement care is a family-setting. Trained Group Home staff ensure that youth attend to their activities of daily living, provide shelter, and remain safe.

For more information about CFSA, call 202-442-6180
D.C. Child and Family Services Agency 400 6th St. SW Washington DC 20024
http://www.cfsa.dc.gov
Frequently Asked Questions

Q: If a child is placed in foster care, will they change schools?
A: Attempts will be made to allow that child to remain in their school of origin to ensure some continuity during that time of transition. If a change is necessary, efforts will be made to have that occur during a scheduled school break –i.e. end of the semester, fall break, etc.

Q: For children in foster care, am I legally permitted to share educational and behavioral information with the child’s social worker and foster parent?
A: Yes, you are able to share educational information with both parties. The Social Worker will contact you periodically to monitor the child’s progress. However, the report card, daily assignments, test grades, etc. will be received by the foster parent/group home provider on a regular basis. As well foster parents are expected to attend parent/teacher conferences, etc. The Social Worker may also participate in these meetings as well.

Q: Who should I contact if I have a concern about the child?
A: Routine matters should be discussed with the foster parent, as with any Parent. Larger issues depending on their nature should be addressed to the Social Worker and Foster Parent.

Q: How should I refer to the foster parent when speaking to the child?
A: Take your cue from the child. The child may refer to the foster parent as their mother/father, aunt/uncle, or another designated name. You should not refer to them as foster parents, as this violates the child’s confidentiality. The child’s status in foster care should not be shared with other classmates or parents.

Q: If I am contacted by the birth parent of a child in care, may I share information about the child with him or her?
A: Contact the Social Worker immediately to see if any conditions have been implied by the courts around parental contact. The level of contact with birth parents varies in every case, so informing the Social Worker is the best option before divulging any information.

Q: How long does a child remain in foster care?
A: There is no specified amount of time. The goal is to stabilize and reunify the child’s family as quickly as possible. If that is not possible adoption or guardianship may be pursued.

As a professional working with children please be mindful of how their home life/ environment might effect their ability to learn, concentrate, and maximize their potential. As child serving professionals we are all responsible for ensuring our children are safe, educated, and functioning at their highest level.

Let’s work together to create the bright minds of tomorrow.