



DFCS LEADERSHIP:

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CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES (CPS)

EVERY CHILD NEEDS TO BE TREASURED, PROTECTED AND NURTURED. UNFORTUNATELY, SOME PARENTS ARE UNABLE TO CARE FOR THEIR CHILDREN. WHEN NEGLECT OR ABUSE OCCURS, SOMEONE MUST STEP IN TO ENSURE THEIR SAFETY. THE COMMUNITY, THE POLICE, THE COURTS, AND STATE AND LOCAL AGENCIES SHARE THIS RESPONSIBILITY. IN GEORGIA, THE DIVISION OF FAMILY & CHILDREN SERVICES (DFCS) HAS A SPECIAL ROLE AS THE STATE AGENCY DESIGNATED TO REDUCE THE RISK TO CHILDREN AND STRENGTHEN FAMILIES.

IF YOU THINK A CHILD IS BEING HURT OR NEGLECTED...WHOM DO YOU CALL?

REPORTS CAN BE MADE BY CALLING 1-855-GACHILD (1-855-422-4453) 24 HOURS A DAY, 7 DAYS A WEEK, 365 DAYS PER YEAR. YOUR REPORT IS CONFIDENTIAL; HOWEVER, IT CAN BE MORE HELPFUL FOR THE CHILD IF YOU ARE WILLING TO TELL WHO YOU ARE, AND WILLING TO TESTIFY IN COURT IF NECESSARY. IF YOU BELIEVE A CHILD IS IN IMMEDIATE DANGER, PLEASE CALL THE POLICE (911).

WHAT IS CONSIDERED CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT?

- PHYSICAL ABUSE IS INJURY TO A CHILD UNDER AGE 18 BY AN ADULT WHICH RESULTS IN BRUISES, WELTS, FRACTURES, BURNS, CUTS OR INTERNAL INJURIES.
- NEGLECT IS THE FAILURE OF THE PARENT OR CARETAKER TO SEE THAT A CHILD IS ADEQUATELY SUPERVISED, FED, CLOTHED OR HOUSED.
- SEXUAL ABUSE OCCURS WHEN A PARENT OR OTHER ADULT USES A CHILD UNDER AGE 18 FOR SEXUAL GRATIFICATION.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU CALL DFCS TO REPORT SUSPECTED ABUSE OR NEGLECT?

AN INTAKE WORKER WILL FIRST DETERMINE WHETHER THE CALL IS ABOUT THE MALTREATMENT OF A CHILD UNDER 18 BY A PARENT OR CARETAKER. REPORTS THAT FALL WITHIN THE GUIDELINES STATED ABOVE ARE ASSESSED BY DFCS, FREQUENTLY ALONG WITH THE POLICE. THE LAW REQUIRES DFCS TO NOTIFY THE POLICE OF ALL REPORTS OF ABUSE. IN-PERSON RESPONSE TIMES RANGE FROM WITHIN 24 HOURS TO FIVE DAYS DEPENDING ON THE NATURE AND SEVERITY OF THE ALLEGATION, THE AGE OF THE CHILD, AND HISTORY OF THE FAMILY WITH THE AGENCY, IF ANY. THE MAIN CONCERN THROUGHOUT THE ASSESSMENT IS THE SAFETY OF THE CHILD.

UNDER WHAT CONDITIONS MAY DFCS REMOVE CHILDREN WHO ARE IN IMMEDIATE DANGER?

IF THE CPS STAFF DETERMINE IT IS NOT SAFE FOR A CHILD TO REMAIN AT HOME, DFCS WILL FILE A PETITION WITH THE LOCAL JUVENILE COURT TO REQUEST TEMPORARY CUSTODY. A HEARING WILL BE HELD WITH JUVENILE COURT TO DISCUSS WHO SHOULD RETAIN CUSTODY ONGOING.

WHAT HAPPENS TO CHILDREN WHO ARE LEFT WITH THEIR FAMILIES AFTER DFCS HAS SUBSTANTIATED ABUSE OR NEGLECT?

DFCS WORKS WITH FAMILIES TO PROVIDE SERVICES AND REFERRALS TO DECREASE SAFETY ISSUES IN THE HOME AND INCREASE THE PARENTAL CAPACITIES WHENEVER POSSIBLE. THE MOST INTENSIVE SERVICES ARE PROVIDED TO HIGH RISK FAMILIES. DFCS WILL CONTINUE TO EVALUATE THE SAFETY OF CHILDREN IN THE HOME. AN ALTERNATIVE PLAN WILL BE DEVELOPED FOR ANY CHILD DETERMINED TO BE UNSAFE

WHAT KINDS OF SERVICES ARE OFFERED TO THESE FAMILIES?

SERVICES AVAILABLE TO FAMILIES INCLUDE REFERRAL FOR ALCOHOL AND DRUG TREATMENT, REFERRALS FOR EMPLOYMENT AND CHILD SUPPORT, PARENTING EDUCATION, COUNSELING, IN-HOME PARENT AIDES, AND CHILD CARE.

WHAT HAPPENS IF A CHILD IS STILL BEING NEGLECTED OR IS ABUSED AGAIN?

AT ANY TIME IT IS DETERMINED THE CHILD CAN'T BE MAINTAINED SAFELY IN THE HOME, DFCS MUST GO TO COURT TO SEEK TEMPORARY CUSTODY OF THE CHILD.

DOES GEORGIA EMPHASIZE KEEPING THE FAMILY UNIT TOGETHER AT ALL COSTS?

No. THE MOST IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION IS THE SAFETY AND PROTECTION OF THE CHILD.

WHERE DO CHILDREN GO WHO MUST BE REMOVED FROM THEIR HOMES?

DFCS WILL PLACE A CHILD IN THE LEAST RESTRICTIVE , MOST APPROPRIATE SETTING POSSIBLE. THE PLACEMENT MUST BE ABLE TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE CHILD. GENERALLY, DFCS STAFF FIRST LOOK FOR A RELATIVE TO CONTINUE A FAMILY BOND WITH THE CHILD. RELATIVES MUST DEMONSTRATE THEY ARE WILLING AND ABLE TO PROVIDE A SAFE AND LOVING HOME FOR A CHILD.

DFCS EVALUATES ALL POTENTIAL HOMES INCLUDING RELATIVE AND NON-RELATIVE PLACEMENTS. FOSTER PARENTS ARE SCREENED AND TRAINED PRIOR TO HAVING A CHILD PLACED IN THEIR HOME. (REFER TO FOSTER CARE SECTION OF WEBSITE [HTTP://DFCS.DHS.GEORGIA.GOV/FOSTER-CARE](http://dfcs.dhs.georgia.gov/fooster-care))

POSSIBLE PLACEMENT OPTIONS INCLUDE:

- WITH A RELATIVE
- IN A FOSTER HOME – EITHER PUBLICLY OR PRIVATELY MANAGED
- IN A CHILD CARING INSTITUTION (CCI)