

## Will my child be taken away?

If during the Initial Assessment, your child(ren) is deemed unsafe, the social worker will attempt to work with you to develop a plan so that the home can be safe. If an in-home plan can't be made, the social worker will talk with your family to:

- Find a temporary safe place for your child to stay, with relatives or in foster care.
- Arrange for you to see your child.
- Arrange services for your child and family.

In an emergency, your child may be placed outside your home without your permission. A court hearing must be held within 48 hours (excluding weekends and holidays) of the time when the decision was made to remove your child from your home. At this Temporary Physical Custody (TPC) hearing, the court decides whether your child should remain living outside your home. You should attend the hearing to tell the court how you see the situation. You may seek legal counsel, but the court will appoint a *Guardian ad Litem* to represent your child.

## *Building hope and health for a lifetime*

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### **GUIDE TO A CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES ASSESSMENT**

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# GUIDE TO A CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES ASSESSMENT

*Crawford County Health & Human Services*

# Introduction

This brochure has been prepared to help parents understand what to expect if they are involved in a child protective service case.

## What is Child Protective Services (CPS)?

An agency required by Wisconsin state law to investigate reports of suspected child abuse and neglect. *The purpose is to support parents/caregivers in making necessary changes so children are safe and protected in their homes.* The agency's job is to keep children safe in their own homes or whenever possible. The focus of the CPS Initial Assessment is child safety and is not to establish legal responsibility or make criminal determinations.

## Why has CPS contacted me?

A social worker has contacted you because the child welfare agency received information that your child may have been abused or neglected or may be at risk of being abused or neglected. Wisconsin law requires the agency to review each referral and decide if the report warrants an investigation to find if a child is unsafe and/or in need of protection or services.

## What happens once a CPS report is made?

The county receives reports of child abuse and neglect and decides if the information in the report is potential child abuse or neglect according to Wisconsin law. The Wisconsin Children's Code defines the areas and indicators of child abuse and neglect. If the report meets these definitions for potential abuse, the CPS worker starts an "Initial Assessment." Reports that suggest a child is in immediate danger receive a same-day response. The Initial Assessment social workers interview and gather information based on the Wisconsin Access and Initial Assessment Standards. The CPS worker has 60 days to complete this "Initial Assessment," but if a child is found unsafe, then immediate intervention must occur.

Within the 60-day Initial Assessment period, a decision is made whether to continue to work with the family or not. If additional services or ongoing protection is needed, the family may engage in "Ongoing Services."

## Reporting

Anyone can report suspected child abuse or neglect to the local Child Protective Services or to the police. Some people are mandated reporters who by law must report any suspected or threatened abuse or neglect of a child. By law, CPS does not share reporter information.



## What is Child Abuse or Neglect?

Physical Abuse: Causing serious physical harm and injury by other than accidental means.

Sexual Abuse: Sexual intercourse or sexual touching of a child; forced viewing of sexual activity, child prostitution, sexual exploitation.

Emotional Damage: Serious harm to a child's psychological or intellectual functioning when parents/caregivers don't provide necessary treatment.

Neglect: Seriously endangering the physical health of the child by not providing needed food, clothing, shelter, protection, medical or dental care or supervision.

