Department of Children's Services

Child Protection Services

Overview

Assistant Commissioner David Imhof

How to Report Child Abuse or Neglect

- **Tennessee Child Abuse Hotline**

The Tennessee Child Abuse Hotline accepts all reports of suspected child abuse and neglect for the state of Tennessee.

The Tennessee Child Abuse Hotline is open 365 days a year, 24 hours a day and 7 days a week.

- **Phone:** 1-877-237-0004

- **Web:** https://apps.tn.gov/carat/

Who Must Report Child Abuse

- Everyone in Tennessee is a mandated reporter under state law. Any person with reasonable cause to believe a child is being abused or neglected must, under the law, immediately report to the Tennessee Department of Children's Services or to local law enforcement. The reporter can remain anonymous.

Failure To Report

- Failure to report abuse is a violation of the law and a Class A misdemeanor, carrying a sentence of up to three months imprisonment, a fine or both. Those who report and “act in good faith” are immune from any civil or criminal charges which may result. The reporter has the right to remain confidential and anonymous.

Types of Referrals

- Investigation Cases
- Assessment Cases
- Other Referrals

Investigation Cases

- Investigation Cases - To determine if child abuse or neglect occurred and if the child is unsafe, especially in cases with higher severity or risk.
  - ❑ Severe Physical Abuse
  - ❑ Sex Abuse
- The case must be classified within thirty (30) days.
- Case must be completed and closed within sixty (60) days
- If case is considered severe abuse it must go to the Child Protection Investigative Team (CPIT) prior to being closed.

Child Protection Investigative Team

- TN Code Annotated: Section 37-1-607

- The department shall convene the appropriate child protective team when a report of child sexual abuse or severe child abuse has been received.

- Conduct child protective investigations of reported child sexual abuse and severe physical abuse.

- DCS, Law Enforcement, District Attorney General, Juvenile Court, Child Advocacy Center, Mental Health Representative, Medical Representative

Assessment Cases

- Assessment Cases – Evaluation of the child and family's needs and risks when abuse or neglect allegations are less severe, with a focus on providing support.
  - ❑ Educational Neglect
  - ❑ Environmental Neglect
- The case must be classified within thirty (30) days.
- Case must be completed and closed within ninety (90) days
- These are not considered severe cases and would not be required to go to CPIT.

Types of Referrals – Other Referrals

- Other Types of Referrals
  - Resource Linkage
  - Special Investigation Unit Cases
  - Duplicates
  - Investigative Orders
  - Out of State Courtesy Requests

Number of Referrals DCS Received FY 2025

- Total of 151,343 Referrals
- Investigation Cases – 16,127 Referrals
- Assessment Cases – 42,727 Referrals
- Other Referrals – 92, 489 Referrals

Questions?