



### What is an investigation and an assessment?

The first step in an investigation is to see the children and interview them. The law gives Social Services the right during a neglect/abuse investigation to see and speak with children without a parent's permission or even prior knowledge. The social worker will notify the parents as soon as possible about the report and about interviewing the child.

It is required that the social worker visit the child's home at least one time and that the worker interview everyone who lives there. The agency is further required to talk to other people who might have information about the family's situation, but the social worker does everything possible to respect and protect each family's rights of privacy. Like the reporter's name, the information obtained during the investigation is confidential.

Most investigations are completed within 45 days, but some may take longer. The decision about the case is based on all the information gathered during that time. Decisions are never made by one person only, but are the result of deliberation by the social worker and his/her supervisor.

**For more information, call  
828-324-9111 any time.**

### Then what happens?

If abuse or neglect, as defined by North Carolina law, is not found, the case is declared unsubstantiated and closed. Child Protective Services would not be further involved unless another report was received. If abuse or neglect is found, the case is substantiated and probably transferred to another social worker to work with the family to resolve the issues that led to the abuse and/or neglect. In some cases, although the report is substantiated, because the family corrected the situation right away, no further involvement by the agency is needed.

The Catawba County Department of Social Services wants children to stay at home with their families if possible. Our efforts are to assist parents in providing a safe and nurturing home for their children. Only if a child's safety and well-being cannot be guaranteed does the department request that the child be removed from the home.

For information about Minimum Standards of Care in Catawba County, go to [www.catawbacountync.gov/dss/f&c/svs/CPSMinimumStandards.pdf](http://www.catawbacountync.gov/dss/f&c/svs/CPSMinimumStandards.pdf).

**CATAWBA COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES**  
3030 11th Ave DR SE • Hickory, NC 28602  
(828) 695-5600 • [www.catawbacountync.gov/dss](http://www.catawbacountync.gov/dss)



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## CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES



# Child Protective Services



To strengthen, with dignity and respect, the quality of life for all citizens through supportive services and advocacy



# Child Protective Services

## What is Child Abuse and Neglect?

Child abuse is a non-accidental injury or pattern of injuries to a child including:

- **Physical abuse (such as beatings with a belt or cord that cause physical harm).**
- **Sexual abuse (ANY sexual behavior with a child).**
- **Emotional abuse (constant downgrading of a child and verbal assault).**

Child neglect is ignoring a child's needs for discipline, care or supervision by:

- **Not providing for the child's basic needs.**
- **Not watching out for his or her safety.**
- **Not being sure that the child receives needed medical care or schooling.**

## What are Child Protective Services?

North Carolina state law requires that all counties provide Child Protective Services to ensure the safety of all children in the state. The law also requires that children's basic needs, such as food, clothing, shelter, education and health, are being adequately met.

The law applies to ALL children under the age of 18, whether or not they are involved with the Department of Social Services in other programs.

## Where do reports come from?

The law requires that anyone who suspects that a child is being abused or neglected must report his or her concerns to the Child Protective Services unit at the Department of Social Services. Reports come from many sources. Many are from family members, friends and neighbors, but they also are called in by day care and school personnel, doctors and nurses, ministers and Sunday school teachers, police officers, appliance installers and repairmen, bus drivers, and sometimes by people just passing by.

## How do you make a report?

Anyone can make a report of child abuse or neglect by calling, writing or visiting the Child Protective Services Unit of the Catawba County Department of Social Services. The telephone number is 828-324-9111, and it may be used 24 hours a day. All a citizen must do is ask for the social worker on duty. That worker will listen to and take down all the information given.

It is helpful to share the following:

- The name, address and age of the child
- The name and address of the child's parents or caretakers.
- The child's condition, including injuries, if any.
- Whether there are brothers, sisters, or any other people in the household.
- Any information about weapons in the home, alcohol or drug abuse.

A reporter does not have to prove that abuse or neglect has happened; they must only have reasonable grounds for suspicion. You do not need permission from anyone to make a report. It is very helpful to the social worker to know the relationship between the reporter and the child and family, but a reporter does not have to identify himself or herself to make a report.

## When are reports investigated?

If the report includes any information that is considered to be abuse or neglect under the law, the Child Protective Services unit must investigate and assess the situation.

It is only by the process of investigation that the social worker learns if the report is true or not. It must be assumed that reports are made in good faith by people who are concerned about the welfare of children.

The law forbids the Department of Social Services social worker from telling who made the report. The only way the department can identify a reporter is if the agency is ordered by a court to do so.

Who made the report is not the issue. Whether or not the children are safe is the focus of the investigation.