

Child Protective Services (CPS) Process

No two child welfare cases are the same as family dynamics and stressors vary. While the below diagram provides a high-level overview of the CPS process, it is important to note that a child can be removed at any time if deemed unsafe. When a child is safe, a case can be closed at any step of the process.



A concerned citizen or mandated reporter suspects child abuse and/or neglect and contacts county or tribal child protective services agency.





Report is Assessed

Determine if the allegation meets the legal definition of child abuse and/ or neglect as defined in Wisconsin's Children Code.





Case is Assigned a Priority

This is based on the severity of the possible harm and how immediate the risk is to the child.

> Same day response

24 - 48 hours

5 business days

Case is Assigned to Child Welfare Professional

Child welfare workers have 60 days to complete an Initial Assessment, which includes interviews with the child and the parent(s), family members, and other adults who are in contact with the child, such as doctors and nurses, and completing a home inspection. There are two decisions that need to be made:

Maltreatment Finding: The determination of whether there is a preponderance of evidence indicating that maltreatment has occurred (substantiated) or not (unsubstantiated). This finding does not determine what if any services will be offered.

Safety Decision: The determination of whether a child is safe or unsafe based on the safety assessment and analysis.



Maltreatment Finding

Unsubstantiated

Substantiated

Safely Reside

Child Can

in the Home

The CPS agency may refer the family for voluntary CPS services or other community services, as needed.

Safety Decision



Child Cannot Safely Reside in the Home

determines that a child needs to be placed in OHC to ensure safety, the child is placed into OHC and a CHIPS order may be filed.

If the CPS worker

Placement with relatives (preferred)

Placement in a non-relative home

Congregate Care



Whether a child remains in home or not, the child welfare worker is responsible for ensuring the family and child have access to services and supports needed to regain safety and child well-being. In consultation with the parent(s), the worker builds a plan to help monitor progress towards reunification and/or closing of the case.



Timely permanence for each child is achieved by identifying permanency goal(s), including reunification, transfer of guardianship, or TPR and adoption. The court regularly reviews these goals for progress.