



Information for Foster Parents

Safety assessments following reports of child abuse or neglect in your foster home

What happens if an allegation of abuse or neglect is made against me?



An assessment of alleged abuse or neglect in a foster home starts when someone calls the Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services (DMCPS) reporting line at (414) 220-SAFE to report that they believe a child is being abused or neglected. If the report meets the legal definition of abuse or neglect, it is screened in and assigned to an DMCPS Initial Assessment specialist who will assess the immediate safety of the child.

The DMCPS worker talks to the child and visits the foster home to speak with family members and others who may have information to share about the allegation. Depending on the information reported, the social worker may take the child for a medical exam. The child will be removed from the home if the social worker finds the child is not safe.

Within three days of the call being screened in, an independent agency will also begin an assessment process. This is to determine whether or not maltreatment occurred. This person will also interview your foster child, family members, and others. The independent agency has up to 60 days to complete the assessment and find the allegation to be substantiated or unsubstantiated, which means what occurred does or does not meet the legal definition of child abuse or neglect. DMCPS uses an independent agency to do this assessment to ensure there is no conflict of interest between the foster parent and DMCPS.

Foster homes are placed “on hold” during the assessment process. You will receive a letter from the agency that has licensed you telling you about the hold status. This means that no new children can be placed with you until the assessment process is complete.

What can a foster parent do to speed up the assessment?

Foster parents should make themselves and the foster child and other family members available to speak with staff. Answering questions honestly is important and keeps the assessment moving forward.

What happens once a decision is made?

The licensing agency receives a copy of the independent assessment and reviews it carefully. If the report is substantiated as child abuse or neglect, it affects your foster care license. You will be provided with information on what will happen next and how to appeal the decision.

Even if the allegation was not substantiated, it may affect decisions to place children in your home or your licensing renewal. Please understand that DMCPD and its partner agencies must do everything to ensure children placed in foster care are safe and well. This means minimizing risks to child safety.

What can I do to ensure the safety of a child in my home?

Learn and follow the foster care rules and regulations. Be sure to follow the rule about no physical discipline. Ask for help on behavior challenges you are experiencing with your foster child.

Ensure your foster child is supervised appropriately for his/her age.

Have every child placed in your home examined at the Child Protection Center within five days of the temporary physical custody hearing if your home is the first placement for the child. You will receive information about this appointment. At this exam, the doctor will record any injuries on the foster child, as well as identify any medical needs.

Who can I contact if I have questions during the assessment process?

The child's case manager or your licensing specialist will be able to answer questions for you about the assessment and about how it may affect placement of children in your home and your license.

DCF is an equal opportunity employer and service provider. If you have a disability and need to access this information in an alternate format, or need it translated to another language, please contact (414) 343-5500 or 711 TTY.

For civil rights questions call (608) 422-6889 or
711 TTY (Toll Free).