



Safety Assessments Following Reports of Child Abuse or Neglect in your Foster Home

Information for Foster Parents

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 (414) 220-SAFE to report the endangerment of a child. If the report meets the legal definition of abuse or neglect, it is screened in and assigned to a Division of Milwaukee Child Welfare (DMCW) initial assessment specialist who will assess the immediate safety of the child.

The initial assessment specialist 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 initial assessment specialist may take the child for a medical examination. The child will be removed from the home if the initial assessment specialist finds the child is not safe.

Following the assessment for child safety, an independent agency begins an assessment to determine whether or not maltreatment occurred. The social worker will interview your foster child, family and others. The independent agency has up to 60 days to complete the assessment and determine the allegation to be substantiated or unsubstantiated, which means it did or did not occur.

DMCW uses an independent agency to do this assessment to ensure there is no conflict of interest between the foster parent and DMCW.

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, the foster child and other family members available to speak with the social worker. Answering questions honestly is important and keeps the assessment moving forward.

Does anything happen if the report is unsubstantiated?

The licensing agency receives a copy of the independent assessment and reviews it carefully. Even if the allegation was not substantiated, it may affect decision to place children in your home or your licensing renewal. Please understand that DMCW 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 prevent child abuse or neglect allegations?

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 their age.

Have every child placed in your home examined at the Child Protection Center within five days of placement. At this exam, the doctor will record any injuries on the foster child, as well as identify any medical needs. The initial assessment specialist who placed the child with you will help you make an appointment.

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

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