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COMMISSIONER

IMPORTANT KEY INFORMATION:

- ▶ Child in immediate danger, please call 911!
- ▶ Call local DFCS office to make a CPS Report!
- ▶ After-Hours (between 5:00 p.m. and 8:30 a.m.) call 1-855-GACHILD!

DFCS LEADERSHIP:

Ron Scroggy
Division Director

Kathy Herren
Deputy Director

David Kelley
Field Operations Director

CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES (CPS)

Every child needs to be treasured, protected and nurtured. Unfortunately, some parents are unable to care for their children. When neglect or abuse occurs, someone must step in to ensure their safety. The community, the police, the courts, and state and local agencies share this responsibility. In Georgia, the DHS' Division of Family & Children Services (DFCS) has a special role as the state agency designated to protect children and strengthen families.

IF YOU THINK A CHILD IS BEING HURT OR NEGLECTED...WHOM DO YOU CALL?

During the day, contact the local DFCS county office and provide them with the name and location of the child. For after hours, weekends and holidays, call 1-855-GACHILD to report abuse and/or neglect. Your report is confidential; however, it can be more helpful for the child if you are willing to tell who you are, and willing to testify in court if necessary. If you believe a child is in immediate danger, please call the police (911).

WHAT IS CONSIDERED CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT?

- Physical abuse is injury to a child under age 18 by a parent or caretaker which results in bruises, welts, fractures, burns, cuts or internal injuries.
- Neglect is the failure of the parent or caretaker to see that a child is adequately supervised, fed, clothed or housed.
- Sexual abuse occurs when a parent or other adult uses a child under age 18 for sexual gratification.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU CALL DFCS TO REPORT SUSPECTED ABUSE OR NEGLECT?

An Intake Worker will first determine whether the call is about the maltreatment of a child under 18 by a parent or caretaker. Reports that fall within the guidelines stated above are assessed by DFCS, frequently along with the police. The law requires DFCS to notify the police of all reports of physical and sexual abuse. In-person response times range from within 24 hours to five days depending on the nature and severity of the allegation, the age of the child, and history of the family with the agency, if any. The main concern throughout the assessment is the safety of the child.

UNDER WHAT CONDITIONS MAY DFCS REMOVE CHILDREN WHO ARE IN IMMINENT DANGER?

If the CPS staff determine that it is not safe for a child to remain at home, DFCS will file a petition with the local juvenile court to request temporary custody. A hearing will be held with juvenile court to discuss who should retain custody ongoing.

WHAT HAPPENS TO CHILDREN WHO ARE LEFT WITH THEIR FAMILIES AFTER DFCS HAS SUBSTANTIATED ABUSE OR NEGLECT?

DFCS works with families to provide services and referrals to decrease safety issues in the home and increase the parental capacities whenever possible. The most intensive services are provided to high risk families, which have been shown to reduce repeated abuse and neglect.

WHAT KINDS OF SERVICES ARE OFFERED TO THESE FAMILIES?

Services available to families include referral for alcohol and drug treatment, referrals for employment and child support, parenting education, counseling, in-home parent aides, and child care.

WHAT HAPPENS IF A CHILD IS STILL BEING NEGLECTED OR IS ABUSED AGAIN?

If conditions do not improve, DFCS may go to court to seek temporary custody of the child.

DOES GEORGIA EMPHASIZE KEEPING THE FAMILY UNIT TOGETHER AT ALL COSTS?

No. The most important consideration is the safety and protection of the child.

WHERE DO CHILDREN GO WHO MUST BE REMOVED FROM THEIR HOMES?

Children who are removed from their homes go to a relative's home that is deemed safe or into a foster home. DFCS evaluates all potential homes, to include relative and non-relative placements. Foster parents are screened and trained. Financial assistance is also provided to meet the needs of the child.