

Indiana Department of Child Services

Child Abuse Hotline

Indiana Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline

1-800-800-5556

If you suspect a child is being abused or neglected, call Indiana's Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline today. It is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. You do not have to be afraid anyone will find out who made the report because you can report abuse and neglect anonymously.

[The Indiana Department of Child Services Structured Decision Tool and Manual at Intake](#)

What is the Indiana Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline?

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) established the Indiana Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline (Hotline) to ensure consistent handling of calls alleging child abuse and neglect. The Hotline serves as the central reporting center for all allegations of child abuse or neglect in the State of Indiana. The Hotline is staffed with 62 specially-trained Family Case Managers, known as Intake Specialists, who are professionally trained to take reports of abuse and neglect. These Intake Specialists gather information from callers, determine whether the information provided meets statutory criteria for DCS to conduct an assessment, and if appropriate, route reports directly to DCS local offices for response and assessment.

The History and Benefits of the Hotline

The centralized Hotline was developed to bring consistency to the way abuse and neglect calls were managed across the state. The Hotline streamlines the Agency's approach to taking reports, improves the Intake Specialists' ability to gather information from callers, and expedites the process of preparing comprehensive reports and disseminating those reports to local offices for assessment. The Hotline also allows Family Case Managers in the local offices to spend more time partnering with children and families because they are no longer responsible for handling intake functions. It also allows DCS Intake Specialists to ask more probing questions to obtain comprehensive information about factors that may impact worker safety.

The Hotline's computerized call system provides DCS with an opportunity for quicker data entry, as well as the ability to track the number of calls received and the timeliness and quality of responses to callers. The state-of-the-art system allows staff the opportunity to listen to individual calls. If specific concerns regarding a particular call are raised, staff can utilize these features to review the call and address any concerns.

The centralized Hotline unit began taking calls January 1, 2010 in Marion County. Throughout 2010 DCS continued a gradual, planned transition of counties to the new system. This transition was completed on August 30, 2010.

Who works at the Hotline?

The Hotline is staffed with trained Intake Specialists and at least one Supervisor every shift, twenty-four hours per day, seven days a week, 365 days per year. The Hotline staff includes: the Hotline Director, Assistant Director, 9 Intake Supervisors, 62 Intake Specialists and an Administrative Assistant.

Intake Specialists must have a bachelor's degree and at least 15 credit hours in a social service related field. A recent snapshot of the staff illustrates the diverse background of the Hotline staff:

- 48 Hotline staff have field experience working for the Department of Child Services
- 2 individuals worked for the Marion County Child Abuse Hotline
- 10 people worked for agencies that contracted with DCS
- 1 person worked for Indiana State Police (ISP)
- 1 person is an Attorney
- 1 person worked in Probation

Making Reports to the Hotline

Who is required to report child abuse or neglect?

Under Indiana law any individual who has a reason to believe a child is a victim of abuse or neglect has the duty to make a report; therefore, each citizen of Indiana is considered a "mandated reporter." While reporting child abuse is everyone's responsibility, Indiana law requires some in certain occupations to do so. These professional reporters are staff members in a medical or other public or private institution, school, facility, or agency. These reporters are legally obligated by their profession to report alleged child abuse or neglect.

Everyone has an important role and responsibility to prevent child abuse and neglect. Children need everyone to stand up for their safety when they may be in harm's way or when families in crisis or turmoil need support from those close to them. By contacting the Indiana Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline if you suspect a child is a victim of abuse or neglect, you can play your part in protecting a child and/or making it possible for a family in crisis to get the help and support they need.

Can the person making the report remain anonymous?

State law requires DCS to protect the identity of those reporting abuse or neglect allegations. DCS keeps the name and contact information of all report sources confidential. While DCS accepts child abuse and neglect allegations from persons who wish to remain anonymous, DCS encourages individuals to provide contact information to Intake Specialists. Providing your contact information is helpful because it allows the Family Case Manager who is assigned the report to follow up with you to ask additional questions or to seek clarification when more information is needed.

What will I need to provide when making a report?

If you call to make a report, an Intake Specialist will ask you for information about the circumstances creating a risk of harm to the child including **who** was involved, **what** occurred, **when** and **where** it occurred, the extent of any **injuries sustained**, and any other relevant information.

When you contact the Hotline, Intake Specialists will ask you for information about the parties involved (victim, parent(s)/guardian(s), perpetrator) and the specific allegations giving rise to the call. Information you will be asked to provide may include:

1. Child Information: name, age, address, current location, person caring for child, and need/receiving medical treatment
2. Parent/Guardian Information: name, address, phone number as well as any domestic violence, substance abuse, criminal history, mental health issues, or past CPS history
3. Alleged Perpetrator Information: name, address, phone number, relation to the child, behavioral issues, and other children who may be at risk
4. Physical abuse, sexual abuse, or neglect allegations: what happened, when, where, timeframe, and specific conditions

Even if you are unable to provide all of the information above, please contact the Hotline to make a report if you suspect a child is a victim of abuse or neglect. An Intake Specialist will review the information you are able to provide to determine whether it meets the statutory requirements for DCS to initiate an assessment. Please do not wait for someone else to make the call – your call may be the critical first step in protecting a child.

What happens once a report is made?

The Intake Specialist will document the information you provide during the call and will review the allegations with you prior to ending the call. The Intake Specialist then sends the typed report to a Hotline Supervisor for review with a recommendation to either assign or screen out the report. If the Supervisor agrees with the recommendation to assign the report, the report is transmitted electronically to the DCS local office in the county where the allegation is claimed to occur so it can be assigned to a local Family Case Manager. The Family Case Manager is then responsible for initiating and conducting an assessment of the allegations.

Why wouldn't a report get sent to the local office?

DCS is required to evaluate every report of child abuse and neglect that it receives and determine:

1. If the allegations meet the statutory definition of child abuse or neglect and should therefore be assigned for assessment; and
2. If the report contains enough information to identify or locate the child and

- initiate an assessment; and
3. How quickly the assessment must be initiated.

The terms "child abuse" and "child neglect" are defined by Indiana statute. DCS will not assign a report for assessment if the allegations do not meet the statutory definition of child abuse or neglect. If the report does not meet the Indiana guidelines to assign for assessment it is not sent to the local office for assessment. Child abuse and neglect intake reports that are not assigned for assessment are referred to as "screen-outs." Hotline Supervisors must review and approve all screen-outs. In addition, each week a random number of screen-outs are reviewed by a committee of DCS field, legal and policy staff to ensure consistent application of statutory guidance.

When contacting the Hotline, please provide Intake Specialists with detailed and descriptive information about the situation you are reporting as this allows them to more accurately determine the need for an assessment.

For additional information on the Indiana statutory definitions of child abuse and child neglect please see [IC 31-33](#) and [IC 31-34](#). For additional information on DCS Child Welfare Intake Policies please see the [DCS Child Welfare Policy Manual, Chapter 3 – Intake](#). For additional information on the matrices DCS Hotline staff utilize to guide decision-making with regard to educational neglect, fatalities, insects, substance abuse, suicidal youth; please see the [Hotline Decision Matrices](#) .

What if I call the Hotline and I have to wait?

There are times when all Intake Specialists are taking calls or entering reports. If you find yourself on hold please be patient and do not hang up. Your call will be answered by the next available Intake Specialist. The Intake Specialists are trained to handle each call as quickly as possible while ensuring quality reports are completed. If you are calling regarding an emergency situation and/or if you believe the victim is in imminent danger please dial 911 immediately.

How do Law Enforcement Agents report child abuse or neglect?

Law Enforcement Agents (LEA) should call the Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline especially in cases of emergency. DCS values its partnership with law enforcement and recognize the critical nature of their calls. To ensure law enforcement officials have the highest priority, they have an access code which routes their calls to the front of the call sequence. On average, law enforcement officials utilizing the access code are connected to the hotline within 46 seconds.

LEA may also fax or e-mail reports of abuse or neglect, but DCS strongly suggests LEA call in allegations to the Hotline.

[Indiana Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline Statistics](#)

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