Working with

Child Welfare Professionals

in Drug Endangered Children (DEC) Efforts

The child welfare system in all states is complicated. Professionals working with child welfare as partners should understand how their system works in their state to reduce frustrations, increase efficiency, and increase effectiveness when working together. Child welfare workers have substantial responsibilities and play an important role in helping children and families by:

- Investigating child abuse and neglect
- Identifying/assessing the safety of children
- Identifying and assessing the risks to children
- Gathering and analyzing information and evidence to inform decisions
- Assessing the needs of the family
- Providing targeted resources services
- Ensuring child safety and well-being
- Providing permanency for children

The first line of contact with child welfare that many professionals experience is often the child abuse and neglect hotline. Other professionals should make themselves knowledgeable on the questions that will be asked of them prior to making a child abuse hotline call. Child welfare agencies often use an information-gathering sheet to assist in determining whether it has enough evidence to meet state law requirements for initiating an investigation. Rather than providing brief information, all professionals should shift their focus to providing as much information as possible to aid child welfare in determining whether it can and should investigate. All professionals become a collaborative partner with child welfare in identifying children who have been abused or neglected or are at significant risk.

The information provided to child welfare at any point can help illustrate potential child maltreatment. Detailed information, pictures, and videos from professionals may be critical in enabling child welfare to help the child(ren) and family. The more information provided, the better equipped child welfare is to make decisions about whether to or how best to intervene with the children and families involved.

Depending on the requirements under state laws, child welfare time frames to see the alleged child victims may include:

- Immediate response: The child is in imminent danger/risk of harm or has already been harmed.
- 24-hour response: The child is not in imminent danger/risk of serious harm, or the child is at moderate risk.
- Multiple-day response: There are no current safety threats; there is lower risk to the child.
- No response: There is not enough information regarding abuse or neglect.

Child welfare often does not have a lot of time to complete a child abuse and neglect investigation. The timeframes to close an investigation vary depending on the state or Tribe but can be as quickly as 30 days. Child welfare cases can be open longer as needed to keep children safe and with services in place.

For more information please contact us at info@nationaldec.org or on our website at www.nationaldec.org.

This project is supported by Grant No. 2017-AR-BX-K003 awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. The Bureau of Justice Assistance and the Office for Victims of Crime are components of the U.S. Department of Justice’s Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and the Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking (SMART). Points of view or opinions are those of the authors, contributors, or presenters and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.