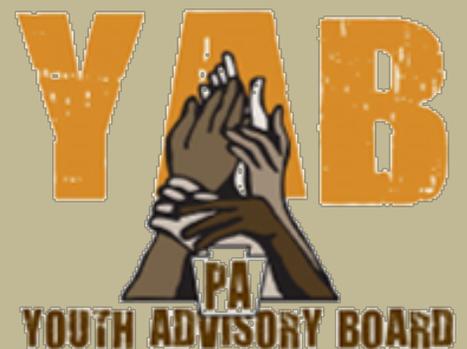


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Child Welfare 101



Welcome to the Child Welfare 101 Training!

This guide is your personal handbook to navigate the Child Welfare 101 Training. Child Welfare 101 is a youth-friendly introduction to the Child Welfare System on the Federal and State-wide levels. This workshop is intended to help youth gain a basic understanding of the child welfare system. The knowledge gained is intended to help support youth advocacy efforts.

Are there things that you've always wondered with regards to the Child Welfare System in Pennsylvania? Are you not exactly clear on the process? We can help!

After this training, you should be able to:

- Understand more about the Child Welfare System
- Be able to utilize information to advocate as well as educate others about the basics of Child Welfare

What is the Child Welfare System?

The child welfare system is a group of services designed to promote the well-being of children by ensuring safety, achieving permanency, and strengthening families to care for their children successfully.

What is the task of the Child Welfare System?

- Receive and investigate reports of possible child abuse and neglect
- Provide services to families that need assistance in the protection and care of their children
- Arrange for children to live with kin or with foster families when they are not safe at home
- Arrange for reunification, adoption, or other permanent family connections for children leaving foster care

What is Child Abuse?

- A recent act or failure to act by a perpetrator which causes non-accidental serious physical injury to a child under 18 years of age.
- An act or failure to act by a perpetrator which causes non-accidental serious mental injury to or sexual abuse or sexual exploitation of a child under 18 years of age.
- A recent act, failure to act or series of acts or failures to act by a perpetrator which creates an imminent risk of serious physical injury to or sexual abuse or sexual exploitation of a child under 18 years of age.
- Serious physical neglect by a perpetrator constituting prolonged or repeated lack of supervision or the failure to provide the essentials of life, including adequate medical care, which endangers a child's life or development or impairs the child's functioning.

Who controls the Child Welfare System?

The Federal government funds each state's Child Welfare System via the Department of Health and Human Services but defers to the states with regards to management and the delivery of services. For Pennsylvania, this department is the PA Department of Human Services.

How does one make a report of Child abuse or neglect in the state of Pennsylvania?

- Call ChildLine PA: 1-800-932-0313
- Make an online report: <https://www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis/public/home>

What is ChildLine PA?

ChildLine PA is an organizational unit of the Department of Human Services, which operates a 24-hour-a-day statewide toll-free telephone system for receiving reports of suspected child abuse, referring reports for investigation and maintaining the reports in the appropriate file.

Who can make a ChildLine report?

Any concerned person can report suspicions of child abuse or neglect.

- Mandated reporters are certain adults who are legally required to report suspected child abuse if they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is a victim of child abuse. The law requires that the mandated reporter identify themselves and where they can be reached. In addition to having documentation that the report was made, this information is also helpful so that if clarification on the situation or additional information is needed, the children and youth caseworker can contact the mandated reporter. Most Childline reports are made by Mandated Reporters.
- Permissive reporters are individuals who are encouraged to report suspected child abuse, although not required by law. Permissive reporters can make a report at any time they suspect a child is the victim of child abuse. Permissive reporters may report anonymously.

How are qualified cases identified?

Each report made is received by child protective services (CPS) workers and are either "screened in" or "screened out." A report is screened in when there is sufficient information to suggest an investigation is warranted. A report may be screened out if there is not enough information on which to follow up or if the situation reported does not meet the State's legal definition of abuse or neglect.

What happens if a case is deemed to be worthy of investigation?

The reporter may be referred by the Childline PA worker to:

- County children and youth agencies or the Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF) Regional Offices for investigation or assessment
- Law enforcement officials for investigation
- Department of Human Services program offices for review and possible licensing action

What kind of information is required for submission in a report?

- Name and physical description of the child
- Age or approximate age range of the child
- Name, home address and telephone number of legal guardian or parent of the child
- Name or physical description of suspected child abuse perpetrator

- Home address and telephone number of suspected child abuse perpetrator
- Suspected perpetrator's relationship to the child
- Description of the suspected injury to the child
- Where the incident took place or occurred
- Any concern for the child's immediate safety
- Your relationship to the child
- Your contact information, unless you are a permissive reporter, who can make anonymous reports

What is being assessed during an investigation?

- Assure safety
- Investigate abuse
- Identify concerns
- Assess risk
- Assess for General Protective Services

What are General Protective Services (GPS)?

General Protective Services or (GPS) are services to prevent potential harm to a child. These are general concerns of a child/youth/family such as:

- Non-serious injury or neglect
- Inadequate shelter
- Truancy
- Inappropriate discipline
- Hygiene issues
- Abandonment
- Issues that threaten a child's healthy growth or development

What happens in Substantiated (founded) cases?

If a child has been abused or neglected, the course of action depends on the severity of the maltreatment, an assessment of the child's immediate safety, the risk of continued or future maltreatment, the services available to address the family's needs, and whether the child was removed from the home and a court action to protect the child was initiated. The following general options are available:

- No or low risk—The family's case may be closed with no services if the maltreatment was a one-time incident, the child is considered to be safe, there is no or low risk of future incidents, and any services the family needs will not be provided through the child welfare agency but through other community-based resources and service systems.
- Low to moderate risk—Referrals may be made to community-based or voluntary in-home child welfare services if the CPS worker believes the family would benefit from these services and the child's present and future safety would be

enhanced. This may happen even when no abuse or neglect is found, if the family needs and is willing to participate in services.

- **Moderate to high risk**—The family may again be offered voluntary in-home services to address safety concerns and help reduce the risks. If these are refused, the agency may seek intervention by the juvenile dependency court. Once there is a judicial determination that abuse or neglect occurred, juvenile dependency court may require the family to cooperate with in-home services if it is believed that the child can remain safely at home while the family addresses the issues contributing to the risk of future maltreatment. If the child has been seriously harmed, is considered to be at high risk of serious harm, or the child's safety is threatened, the court may order the child's removal from the home or affirm the agency's prior removal of the child. The child may be placed with a relative or in foster care.

Where can I find more information about the PA code with regards to the abuse of a child?

<http://www.legis.state.pa.us/CFDOCS/LEGIS/LI/consCheck.cfm?txtType=HTM&t1=23&div=00.&chpt=063.&CFID=224154444&CFTOKEN=11851291>

What happens to parents in instances where allegations are founded?

Caregivers who are found to have abused or neglected a child are generally offered support and treatment services or are required by a juvenile dependency court to participate in services that will help keep their children safe. In cases of low risk, in-home services and supports may be provided, including parent education, child care, counseling, safety planning, and more. In more severe cases or fatalities, police are called on to investigate and may file charges in criminal court against the perpetrators of child maltreatment. Whether or not criminal charges are filed, the name of the person committing the abuse or neglect may be placed on a State child maltreatment registry if abuse or neglect is confirmed. A registry is a central database that collects information about maltreated children and individuals who are found to have abused or neglected those children. These registries are usually confidential and used for internal child protective purposes only. However, they may be used in background checks for certain professions that involve working with children to protect children from contact with individuals who may mistreat them.

What happens to children in instances where allegations are founded?

Depending on the severity of the case, children may remain at home or be removed into foster care.

What happens when a family is referred for in-home services?

In low-risk cases, children may remain in their own homes with their families, and the families may receive in-home services and supports. These may include parent

education, safety planning, counseling, and more. Families may also be connected with community services that provide concrete help (e.g., housing, food) as well as services such as therapy, parent training, and support groups.

What happens when it is determined that a child must be placed out-of-home, following an incident and determination?

Most children in foster care are placed with relatives or foster families, but some may be placed in a group or residential setting. While a child is in foster care, he or she attends school and should receive medical care and other services as needed. The child's family also receives services to support their efforts to reduce the risk of future maltreatment and to help them, in most cases, be reunited with their child. Visits between parents and their children and between siblings are encouraged and supported, following a set plan. Every child in foster care should have a permanency plan. Families typically participate in developing a permanency plan for the child and a service plan for the family, and these plans guide the agency's work.

What is Permanency?

Permanency is the idea that child welfare agencies must find safe, permanent homes for involved youth as quickly as possible.

Why is Permanency important?

Permanency is important because maintaining contact between a child and their parents, siblings and other family members, as well as with significant others, is an important part of planning for children in care regardless of their permanency plan. Contact helps children maintain their identity as well as their sense of belonging and culture. Children need stability in order to thrive, and a child's sense of self is intimately connected to the 'nature of' the interactions with significant others.

What is a permanency plan?

A permanency plan is a written, agreed upon plan that outlines the goals in a child's life with regards to connections and permanency. The plan should be executed in a way to give maximum consideration for best fit and serving the needs of the youth being placed.

What is the most likely and common permanency plan for youth in the system?

Family reunification, except in unusual and extreme circumstances, is the permanency plan for most children.

What is a concurrent permanency plan?

In some cases, when prospects for reunification appear less likely, a concurrent permanency plan is developed. If the efforts toward reunification are not successful,

the plan may be changed to another permanent arrangement, such as adoption or transfer of custody to a relative (Kinship care).

What requirements exist for a person to qualify to be a Kinship caregiver?

- An individual who is 19 years of age or older or who is 18 years of age and not a full-time student in a secondary school or in the equivalent level of vocational or technical training.
- Is exercising responsibility for the care and control of the child. This means actually participating in making plans for the support, education and maintenance of the child and supervising carrying out the plans, and making the application for assistance on behalf of the child. The finding that a relative is exercising care and control of the child shall be made whether the relative is the parent or other relative of the child.
- Is maintaining a home where the child lives with him, or is in the process of setting up a home where the child will go to live with him within 30 days after he receives the first TANF payment.
- A qualified relative

What qualifies a person as a relative for Kinship Care?

- A blood relative who is within the fifth degree of kinship to the dependent child, including a first cousin once removed. Second cousins and more remote cousins are not within the fifth degree of kinship. A first cousin once removed is the child of one's first cousin or the first cousin of one's parent. The fifth degree of kinship includes great-great grandparents and great-great-great grandparents. The fifth degree of kinship also includes other relationships prefixed by great, great-great, grand or great-grand. Blood relatives include those of half-blood.
- A parent by legal adoption and any of the adopting parent's blood or adoptive relatives as described above
- Stepfather, stepmother, stepbrother and stepsister.
- A spouse of a person named in this subparagraph, even though the marriage is terminated by death, separation or divorce.

Independent Living Project (ILP)

What is Independent Living (IL)?

The goal of IL is to assist with the following:

- Self-supporting employment
- Enrollment in college/vocational training or complete high school/GED
- Stable place of residence after discharge from foster care

What services can IL provide?

- Needs assessment/Case Planning
- Life skills training (cooking, money management, maintaining a home, etc.)
- Prevention Services (safe sex, drug and alcohol use, suicide, mental health)
- Vocational Training
- High School Support and Retention
- Preparation for GED
- Individual or Group Counseling
- Assistance in Obtaining Higher Education
- Job Placement
- Subsidized Employment
- Practice IL Placement (Supervised IL)
- Location of Permanent Housing
- Room and Board
- Stipends for Youth
- Aftercare Services
- Services for Teen Parents
- Retreats or Camps
- Indirect Services

What are aftercare services?

All of the above services provided to Individuals from ages 18-21.

Am I eligible? How are my services started?

All youth, ages 16-21, involved with County Children and Youth Agencies or a Juvenile Probation Office, regardless of the type of placement setting, are able to get IL services.

If you left care on or after your 16th birthday, you are eligible for IL services.

If you relocate to a different state or county, you may receive IL services in those areas.

You may continue to receive IL services until your 21st birthday

How can you be referred for IL Services?

You may be referred for IL services by your foster parents, caseworkers, staff members at your placement setting or an IL Coordinator. Call your local County Children and Youth Agency for more information.

Do I have to participate?

IL is a voluntary service - you make the choice to participate.

How do I find my county's IL contact information and explanation of services?