

**Where will my child go if he/she is removed from my home?**

Your child will likely stay with relatives or foster parents. You can visit your child, unless the court says you cannot. You must follow certain rules for visiting your child. For the sake of your child, work with Children’s Protective Services (CPS). For example, send your child’s favorite toys. Tell CPS about how your child is used to doing things, like going to bed. Also, tell CPS if your child has any medical needs or allergies. It is okay to ask about your child. For example, you can ask about your child’s health and schoolwork.

**How do I get my child back?**

Your child cannot come home until it is determined by the court that your home is safe. You need to work with the foster care worker, your lawyer and the court to develop goals and determine what needs to happen before your child will be considered safe in your home. Once these goals are developed, you need to work to successfully complete them.

**Keep track of meetings, hearings and other dates.**

Make sure you keep appointments and go to court. It shows you want to make things better for your child(ren). Write down dates, times and meeting places. If you cannot attend, call and say so beforehand. Tell your worker if you need help getting to the meeting.

Meeting	Date	Time	Place

**Names and Phone Numbers to Remember**

CPS Worker	Name	Telephone Number

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# A Parent’s Guide to Working with Children’s Protective Services



## What is Children's Protective Services?

Children's Protective Services (CPS) is part of the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS). CPS believes that the best place for a child is with his or her family when it is safe for the child. It is the goal of CPS to strengthen families by providing services that address child safety and well-being.

### CPS visits begin when someone makes a complaint.

A report to CPS can be made by anyone who is worried that a child is not safe.

### CPS investigates to see if children are safe.

CPS may investigate if a child is:

- Being abused (being hurt).
- Being neglected (basic needs not met).
- At risk of being abused or neglected in the near future.

### CPS works with families.

Just like you, CPS wants safe and healthy children. If a child is not safe, CPS works with a family to change that. Together, we can help your family. Working with CPS is voluntary.

## The Steps CPS Must Follow

When a CPS worker gets a complaint about a child possibly being abused and/or neglected, the CPS worker must take steps to find out if the complaint is true. This is called an investigation.

### Step 1 – A CPS worker looks into the complaint.

The CPS worker will talk to:

- Your child(ren).
- You.
- Any other parent or person who cares for your child or lives in the same household.
- Other people who know your child and the situation.

The CPS worker needs to ask questions about what happened and about your family. The CPS workers may visit:

- Your child at school or day care.
- You at your home or job.
- People who know you.

CPS will notify the parents or guardians if the child was interviewed without their permission. A delay of the notification is allowed if the notice would affect safety or the investigation.

### Step 2 – A CPS worker writes a report.

A CPS worker writes a report about what was learned during the investigation. The report will document if:

- There was abuse or neglect.
- There is risk for future abuse or neglect.
- Your home is safe for your child.
- Your family needs to increase child safety and reduce the risk of abuse and/or neglect.

The report should be done in 30 days. If your child has not been abused or neglected, CPS stops here. If your child has been abused or neglected, CPS moves to Step #3.

### Step 3 – You and the CPS worker will develop goals and a safety plan for your family.

No one knows your family better than you do. Together you and the CPS worker will figure out the strengths of your family, what causes problems, and what services will make your home safe for your child. This information allows you and CPS to develop goals for your family.

### You may have to go to court if:

- You need court-ordered services to keep your child safe in your home.
- Your child is in danger and needs to be moved to a safer place.
- You are not able to make your home safe for your child.

- The law requires court involvement.

**Most** of the time, cases do **NOT** go to court.  
Less than 5% of CPS cases involve court.

### You should go to all hearings.

If your case goes to court, you will be told the date, time and place of the hearing. You will also get a copy of the paperwork given to the court. This is called the petition. The petition will say:

- Why the court needs to be involved.
- Why your child is not safe in your home.
- Where your child will be safe.

You have rights to:

- Have a lawyer.
- The court will get you one if you need one.
- Tell your side of the story.
- Provide names of relatives that may be able to care for your child.
- Have questions answered about your case and the court hearings.
- Meet with your CPS worker and support team to discuss services.
- Know what you need to do to make your home safe for your child.

Your child will also get his or her own lawyer, called a lawyer-guardian ad litem (LGAL).

**Removal is the last resort. When removal does happen, the CPS worker, the foster care worker and parents may work together to bring the child back home in a reasonable time.**

## Common Questions

### Can I find out who reported me to CPS?

No. It is against the law for CPS to release this information. The only exceptions are if a judge orders CPS to release this information or the person consents to the release.

### Will everyone know about my CPS visit or hearing?

CPS records are confidential. However, CPS court hearings are open to the public. This means anyone can attend the court hearing.

### Can I see the report CPS wrote about me?

Yes. You have a right to see reports. Ask your CPS worker or lawyer about seeing your report.

### How can I make a safe home for my family?

Parenting is very difficult. Part of being a good parent is knowing when you need help. A visit from CPS may be a chance for you to get help to be the best parent you can be. Talk to your CPS worker about your worries. Together, you can make a safe home for your child.

### I am angry CPS has visited me. What can I do?

We understand that it can be frustrating. However, working with CPS will help you and your child(ren) get back on track to a safe and healthy life. If you think CPS is not following policy and law, you can contact the manager and director of the local office. The phone number for the office can be found at [www.michigan.gov/mdhhs](http://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs). If you still have concerns, then you can contact the Office of Family Advocate at 517-373-2101 and/or the Office of Children's Ombudsman at 800-642-4326.

### Do I have to talk to CPS workers or let them in my home?

You have rights. Those include not speaking to CPS workers or letting them in your home. CPS is still responsible to investigate the complaint to keep your child(ren) safe. If CPS thinks a child may not be safe, it will seek assistance from law enforcement or may ask a judge for a court order allowing a worker into the home to speak to the children. The more you and CPS work together, the sooner the case can be resolved and any needed help or services can be provided to your family.