Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services

Los Angeles County Child Protection Hotline
Accessible 24/7. Call (800) 540-4000 to report suspected child abuse or neglect in Los Angeles County.

1 Specially trained child welfare social workers take the call and gather information from the caller to complete an initial, thorough assessment. Calls vary in length but average 15 minutes.

2 The Hotline supervisor, known as a Supervising Children's Social Worker (or SCSW), reviews and approves the call decision before any action is taken, providing additional accountability for the process.

SCSWs monitor, approve, delegate and assign Hotline work. There is generally a 6:1 ratio of Children's Social Workers to SCSWs.

3 Action is taken based on the call decision within a clearly specified response time.

4 Connections are made in alignment with each call decision, e.g., community resources, cross-reporting to law enforcement.

What Happens When Someone Calls the Hotline
Comprehensive action that prioritizes the child's safety
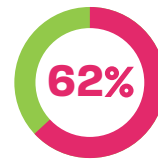
Call Decisions

- Referral to connect the family with supportive and/or preventative services that are free, accessible in the community and culturally appropriate (Community Prevention Linkages)
- No threat of safety, therefore no action is needed
- Safety concern: A social worker must visit the family in-person within five days
- Immediate safety risk: A social worker must visit the family within 24 hours or less; in some instances, a response is required within two hours

By the Numbers

In 2022, there were

186,384 calls made to the Hotline alleging child abuse/neglect.

62%
Consultations, informational inquiries or follow-up calls

13%
Evaluated out (not investigated and assessed for community linkage)

25%
In-person assessment

19.7%
Five-day response

5.5%
Immediate investigation response

Community Prevention Linkages

Many calls do not rise to the level of in-person investigations, but the social worker taking the call recognizes that the child or family may benefit from additional support and connects them to responsive or preventative services. Examples of these types of services include:

- Parent, youth and peer support groups
- Food drives
- Legal assistance
- Parenting classes
- Computer and financial literacy
- Structured parent-child and family-centered bonding activities
- Wellness activities, such as art, music, yoga and gardening

In 2022, there were 6,298 referrals to Community Prevention Linkages.

Cross-Reporting

- The Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) must report sexual abuse, physical abuse, severe neglect, emotional abuse and exploitation allegations to law enforcement. Allegations of general neglect and caretaker absence/incapacity do not require a cross-report.
- Law enforcement agencies are required to report known or suspected instances of child abuse or neglect to the county child welfare or probation department.
- DCFS also cross-reports to other agencies and counties when a call does not fall under DCFS's jurisdiction. This includes cross-reporting to the LA County Probation Department, law enforcement and Community Care Licensing.

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Innovation, Equity and Partnership

Adapting to meet community needs and advancing systemic change

+ Poverty is not a reason for DCFS to remove a child from the family home, nor is poverty a reason to initiate an investigation. In these instances, DCFS prioritizes linking to community services so families can access needed support.

+ DCFS continues to adapt to meet the changing needs of the community.
  • Initiatives and innovations include the Community Prevention Linkages at the Hotline and the addition of the state's Family Urgent Response System (FURS) line.

+ DCFS is committed to prioritizing child safety while also strengthening equity. Some of our work includes:
  • Exploring expanded trainings and resources for mandated reporters to support improved reporting
  • Providing anti-bias training for DCFS staff

+ Overreporting disproportionately impacts children and families of color, with harmful ripple effects.
  • Overreporting can reinforce stereotypes, erode trust and result in families becoming more isolated and not seeking help when they need it – contributing to conditions in which a child is less safe.

+ A review of data shows that Black and African American children are overrepresented at all levels of DCFS involvement, from the initial call to the Child Protection Hotline and substantiated allegations of abuse and maltreatment, to entries into care, to remaining in foster care for longer periods of time.
  • For example, in 2022, Black residents accounted for less than eight percent of LA County's population but represented more than 19 percent of all allegations reported to the County child welfare system and 27 percent of children in care.

+ DCFS has several pilot projects currently underway intended to address systemic issues of race inequity and disproportionality in child protection work.

" Beyond the calls that generate in-person responses, what's often overlooked is that the Hotline is used by many to seek resources, ask questions or share feedback about DCFS. As Hotline Social Workers, we balance our time between assessing for abuse/ neglect criteria and providing a helping hand to the community we serve."

Katherine Rossi Munoz,
Children's Social Worker, DCFS

" The Child Protection Hotline is so much more than a call center. The Hotline is a group of extremely dedicated social workers working 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to safeguard the well-being of children all across Los Angeles County. It's the front line of the department, and with that comes a whole-hearted commitment to the families we serve, never losing focus on child safety first."

Nathalie Mejia,
Children's Social Worker, DCFS

Additional Links
DCFS Website

Glossary

Data and Monthly/
Annual Fact Sheets

When to Call the Hotline

Media Inquiries

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