

Child Protective Services Role in Child Death Investigation

Child Fatality Definition

1. Any unexplained death of a child when the cause of death is unknown or pending an autopsy report.
2. Any child death caused by abuse resulting from direct action of the child's caretaker or the consequence of the child's caretaker's failure to stop another person's direct action that resulted in the death of a child. Child fatalities are always treated as severe child abuse.
3. Any child death that is the result of the caretaker's failure to meet childcare responsibilities.

Notice of Child Fatality or Near Fatality

Policy Statement:

The Department of Children's Services shall work collaboratively with law enforcement and other agencies to ensure the safety of children in a home where there has been a child fatality.

Purpose:

Upon receipt of information of a child fatality or near fatality, CPS case workers will notify DCS Administration and take necessary steps to ensure that any other children in the household are safe.

Required Tasks

- ◆ Interview parents/caretakers
- ◆ Interview other children in the home and take photographs
- ◆ Home visit
- ◆ Interview other persons living in the home
- ◆ Site visit if abuse occurred other than the home
- ◆ Interview perpetrator if other than a parent/caretaker

Required Tasks (continued)

- ◆ Interview witnesses, collaterals, other adults in the home, other professionals or agencies
- ◆ DCS records check
- ◆ Notify District Attorney
- ◆ Convene CPIT - (Child Protective Investigative Team)

Recommended Tasks

- ◆ Contact reporter for more information
- ◆ Psychological evaluation
- ◆ Other records check
 1. Criminal Records Check
 2. Area Hospitals/Clinics

Role of CPS and Law Enforcement

- **CPS has statutory responsibility to be involved in the investigation.**
- **CPS and LE have differing roles that compliment each other.**
- **One coordinated investigation is better than two separate investigations.**
- **LE should assume the leadership role in the investigation regarding criminal prosecution.**

Recognizing Potential Child Abuse

- Child has repeated injuries that are not properly treated or adequately explained
- Seems frightened of the parents
- Child begins to act unusually, ranging from withdrawn or aggressive behavior
- Child discloses being abused by perpetrator

Recognizing Signs of Potential Child Neglect

- Lacks medical and/or dental care
- Beggars or steals food or money
- Lacks sufficient clothing for the weather
- Has poor weight gain
- Very poor hygiene, such as a strong, foul odor, chronic lice or regularly unwashed clothing

Recognizing Signs of a Potentially Abusive Parent/Caretaker

- Appears to be indifferent to the child
- Appears depressed or isolated from community
- Possible drug/alcohol history
- Has a history of abuse as a child
- Blames, belittles or berates the child
- Disorganized home life

What to Expect when Contacting the DCS Hotline

- Specific allegations), date(s), and description of the injuries or dangers
- Identities of alleged perpetrator(s) and their relationship to the victim
- Witnesses to the incident(s) and how to reach those witnesses
- Details of any physical evidence
- Perpetrator's current access to the child

Central Intake Hotline

To report child abuse and/or neglect for medical, legal and law enforcement professionals ONLY:

1-877-237-0026

Central Intake Hotline

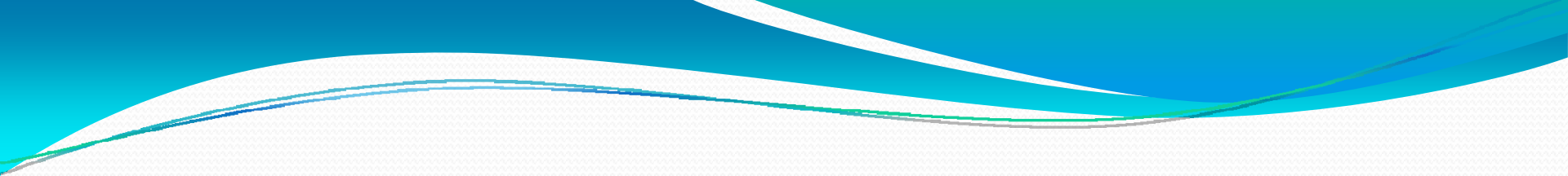
The following toll-free numbers are
for PUBLIC use:

1-877-542-2873 (ABUSE)

OR

1-877-237-0004

Fax Number: 615-253-6588



**If you are interested in
becoming a foster parent,
please call 1-877-DCS-KIDS
(327-5437) or by visiting
parentachild.org**

Contact Information

Chasty Zeolia, CPS Team Leader
2193 Feather's Chapel Road Suite 2
Blountville, TN 37617
Desk 423-279-1976
Fax 423-279-0061
chasty.zeolia@state.tn.us