

How Does the Child Welfare System Work?

Report of Abuse or Neglect

Emergency Response
Intake Social Worker assesses potential danger to child

Case Closed
76% of cases are closed after initial investigation
(Source: State Dept of Social Services 1990)

Voluntary Family Maintenance
Families remain together; parents receive services and participate in programs (counseling, drug rehab, parenting classes). Worker evaluates periodically to determine need for ongoing services.

Dependency Petition
If, after initial investigation, child is believed to be in danger and has been taken into protective custody by Law Enforcement, Social Worker files a petition to remove child temporarily from the home. Must occur within 48 hours of removal.

Detention Hearing
Held within one Court day of filing the petition. Judge decides if further custody is urgently needed or if child can be released safely to parents.

Jurisdictional Hearing
Held within 10 Court day of detention hearing. Judge weighs evidence and decides to either make the child a dependent of the Court or releases child to parents.

Dispositional Hearing
Court hears evidence, decides what is necessary to further protect child and resolve problems that brought the family to Court.

Judge dismisses case

Court-Ordered Family Maintenance
Families remain together; parents receive services and participate in programs (counseling, drug rehab, parenting skills).

Family Reunification
Child placed outside home in foster care. Families have reunification plan, must participate in services to get child back.

6 month status review hearings

6 month status review hearings not to exceed 18 months from date of initial removal.

Case closed If Judge determines that parents are capable of raising children without Court's intervention.

Judge may continue **Family Maintenance** for another 6 months or recommend **Family Reunification**

Reunite Family

Permanent Placement
Child cannot safely be returned to home. Long term plan made.

Adoption

Guardianship

Long-term Foster Care