

Licensing Division Child Protective Services

Foster Home Specific Frequently Asked Questions

Q What is a Licensing Division/Child Protective Services (LD/CPS) Investigation?

A When the Department of Children, Youth & Families (DCYF) receives a report alleging a child has been abused or neglected in foster care, the report is investigated to determine whether or not abuse or neglect occurred. An LD/CPS Investigator completes the investigation and assesses the safety of children in foster homes.

Q What is LD/CPS investigating when they investigate Child Abuse and Neglect (CA/N)?

A LD/CPS is investigating CA/N as defined by the law, RCW 26.44.020. The law defines child abuse or neglect as sexual abuse, sexual exploitation or injury of a child which causes harm to the child's health, welfare, safety or the negligent treatment or maltreatment of a child by a person responsible for or providing care to the child. LD/CPS is also assessing the safety of children when they investigate.

Q What are examples of incidents investigated by LD/CPS?

A Examples of incidents investigated by LD/CPS include, but are not limited to: disciplinary practices that result in injuries, inappropriate restraints, lapses in supervision that place children in danger, inappropriate administration of medication, sexual contact or physical altercations between children.

Q How will I know there is a LD/CPS investigation?

A A LD/CPS Investigator will contact you at the earliest point in the investigation that does not jeopardize child safety or the integrity of the investigation. They may contact you by phone or in person. The LD/CPS Investigator may come to your home unannounced.



Q What will I be told about the investigation?

A During your in-person interview, you will be informed of the allegations such as negligent treatment/maltreatment, physical abuse, sexual abuse or sexual exploitation. The LD/CPS Investigator will share with you as much information as possible without jeopardizing the integrity of the investigation.

Q Can I tell the investigator what happened from my point of view?

A Yes, that is the purpose of the interview. This is your time to explain what happened and your opportunity to provide any other relevant information or documentation. You may also contact the investigator at any time to share any additional information or to ask questions about the investigation.

Q Can I provide a written statement?

A Yes, you may provide a written statement as long as it is received prior to the closure of the case. Any statements or documentation provided will be considered during the investigation and will be placed in the LD/CPS case file.

Q Can I have someone present for the interview?

A Yes, you may have a neutral third party adult present during the interview as long as you have signed a consent form to share information and it does not jeopardize the integrity of the investigation.



Q Who else is interviewed during an LD/CPS investigation?

A During the course of the investigation, all alleged victim children are interviewed within 24 to 72 hours. All foster children in the home will be interviewed and the LD/CPS Investigator may ask permission to interview your child(ren). State law allows DCYF, including LD/CPS, to interview alleged victims and foster children without their parents' permission. LD/CPS will also interview witnesses and collateral contacts.

Q Will law enforcement be involved?

A If a crime is alleged, LD/CPS will notify law enforcement. Law enforcement makes their own determination whether or not to investigate. If law enforcement chooses to investigate, LD/CPS defers to law enforcement and they take the lead on the investigation.

Q How long will the investigation take?

A LD/CPS makes every effort to complete each investigation within 45 days; however, some investigations may take longer. If the investigation goes over 45 days, you will receive written notification. Unless law enforcement or a prosecuting attorney is involved, state law requires LD/CPS to complete the investigation within 90 days.

Q Will foster children be placed in my home during an investigation?

A This decision will be made on a case-by-case basis. Children will not be placed in your home if there is a stop placement put on your home by the department or per your request.

Q Will the foster children be removed from my home during an investigation?

A Sometimes foster children are removed during an investigation. This decision is made with the goal of ensuring the safety of the children. DCYF is the legal guardian of foster children and has the responsibility to move foster children when it is necessary to ensure their safety and well-being.

Q What about tribal children in my care?

A The tribes will be notified about the investigation and they will make placement decisions.

Q Will the foster children be returned to my home when the investigation is complete?

A This will depend on the outcome of the investigation and what is in the best interest of the children.

Q Will my licensor know about the investigation?

A Yes, your licensor will be made aware of the investigation and the outcome.

Q What are the possible outcomes or findings of an investigation?

A Investigation outcomes or findings are either founded or unfounded. Findings are defined by state law (RCW 26.44.020 and WAC 110-30-0030).

Founded: More likely than not abuse or neglect occurred.

Unfounded: More likely than not abuse or neglect did not occur or there was not enough information to determine whether or not abuse or neglect occurred.

Law enforcement has a different burden of proof than CPS. This means one can have a founded finding for abuse even if law enforcement does not file criminal charges.

Q What is risk-only investigation?

A A risk-only investigation is an investigation that assesses the present and future rating of risk to children. There are no findings with risk only investigations.

Q How will I be notified of the outcome of the investigation?

A When the investigation is complete, you will receive a findings letter. If the finding is founded, the appeal process will be outlined in the letter.

Q Can I request a copy of my investigation?

A Yes, you may make a request through public disclosure at: dcyfpublicdisclosure@dcyf.wa.gov.

Q How will this affect my employment?

A In most circumstances, unfounded findings will not affect your employment. However, if you have a founded finding and you are employed by an agency that works with children or vulnerable adults, it may affect your employment.

Foster Intervention and Retention Support Team (FIRST)

FIRST is a resource that is available to foster parents to provide you with assistance during a LD/CPS investigation. They also provide referrals to community resources. You may contact FIRST at 866-393-6186.

As a licensed foster parent, where can I get more information?

www.dcyf.wa.gov/services/foster-parenting.

If you would like copies of this document in an alternative format or language, please contact DCYF Constituent Relations (1-800-723-4831 | 360-902-8060, ConstRelations@dcyf.wa.gov).