

CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES

Protective services are legally mandated, non-voluntary services for families that encompass specialized services for maltreated children (abused, neglected, and/or dependent) and those who are at imminent risk of harm due to the actions of, or lack of protection by, the child's parent or caregiver. Child Protective Services, provided by county Departments of Social Services, are designed to protect children from further harm and to support and improve parental/caregiver abilities in order to assure a safe and nurturing home for each child. Generally, such services provided in the homes of these families are preventive, rehabilitative, and nonpunitive with efforts directed toward identifying and remedying the causes of the maltreating behavior. This is accomplished through parent/caregiver cooperation and consent or, in the event conditions pose serious issues for the child's safety, through the agency's petition to the court.

The county DSS's foremost responsibility is to protect the child and to assure a safe environment. The removal of a child from his or her home should only occur when the risk of harm to the child is so great that his or her safety cannot be assured in the home. The decision to remove a child should be based on an analysis of the risk of harm balanced with implementing reasonable efforts to ensure safety within the family.

The county DSS receives reports of alleged abuse, neglect, or dependency from the individuals in the community. **In North Carolina, any person who has cause to suspect that a child is being abused or neglected, or is dependent is required by law to report their concerns to the DSS ([N.C.G.S. § 7B-301](#)). The number for Stokes County DSS is 593-2861; the after hours number is 1-800-672-2851. Reports are accepted 24 hours a day.**

If the conditions described in the report would, if true, meet the definition of child abuse, neglect, or dependency, and the alleged perpetrator is a parent, guardian, custodian or caretaker by statutory definition, and if the alleged victim is a child under the age of 18 years of age, the county DSS where the child resides or is found is required to initiate an assessment of all children residing in the home in order to determine if protective services are needed ([N.C.G.S. § 7B-302](#)).

All children and their families are eligible for protective services regardless of their income. The provision of services is based solely on the child's immediate or continuing need. Agencies must provide protective services twenty-four hours a day, seven days per week.