

Foster parenting: Abuse or neglect allegations

What can I do to prevent abuse or neglect reports?

1. Learn and follow the foster care rules and regulations. Attend mandatory trainings.
2. Have every child placed in your home examined by the Child Protection Center right away when they arrive at your home. At this exam, the doctor will record all the scars, bruises and marks on the foster child. This will help show that you are not the person who made those marks. Call the Child Protection Center at (414) 277-8980.
3. Follow the rule of no physical discipline. You cannot hit a foster child. Ask Children's Wisconsin about the other ways that you can discipline foster children.

To learn more about becoming a foster parent or an adoptive parent for a child in foster care, contact Children's Wisconsin at (414) KID-HERO (414-543-4376).



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What do these terms mean?

Allegation or report: A statement made by a person saying that a foster parent has abused or neglected a foster child. The allegation or report needs to be checked out to see if it is backed up by facts.

Independent investigation: An investigation that is done by a private agency to look into an allegation of abuse or neglect against a foster parent. This investigation is done independently by a private agency to make sure that all sides of the story are looked at fairly.

Investigation: Studying all the facts related to an allegation.

On hold: A foster home that is placed “on hold” cannot have children placed in it until the hold is taken off. A home is placed “on hold” after an allegation of abuse or neglect is made against the home.

Private agency: An organization that is separate from the Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services. The Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services cannot have influence and does not have a “say” in the decisions made by the private agency.

Substantiated: The investigation found that the reported abuse or neglect did happen. The foster parent’s license will be revoked (taken away) and the foster parent will no longer be able to take care of foster children. A letter saying that

the foster parent’s license is revoked will be sent to the foster home. This letter will give an address where the foster parent can write to appeal (argue) the decision.

Unsubstantiated: There was not enough evidence (or facts) to prove that the allegations were true. The specialists from Children’s Wisconsin will receive a copy of the independent investigation report and decide whether to remove the hold or not, based on the report. Foster parents will receive a letter from Children’s Wisconsin if the hold is taken off their home.

What happens during an investigation?

Step 1

An investigation into abuse or neglect in a foster home starts after someone calls (414) 220-SAFE to report that they believe a child is in danger. Staff at the Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services answer the call and ask the caller for more information about the type of abuse or neglect.

Step 2

An initial assessment staff person will visit the foster parent’s home. It is this person’s job to ensure the children are safe in the home while an investigation into the allegation takes place. A worker will determine if the children are safe by looking at the home and talking to people in the home about the abuse or neglect report. They also will talk to the children at the home or at their school. If someone reports physical or sexual abuse, the initial

assessment staff may take the child to the Children’s Wisconsin Child Protection Center. If initial assessment staff determines that it is not safe for a child to stay in the foster home, the child will be taken to another placement.

Step 3

A foster home that has an abuse or neglect allegation made against it will be placed “on hold.”

Step 4

The case will be referred (passed on) to a private agency. This private agency will conduct an independent investigation of the home. During the independent investigation, the person from the private agency will ask the foster family and the foster children questions to figure out what happened. They also will look at all records (or information) related to the foster family and the abuse allegation. This can take up to 60 days to finish.

What can a foster parent do to speed up the investigation?

Foster parents should make themselves and the foster children (if they are still in the home) available for questions. Answering questions honestly is important and keeps the investigation moving. After the independent investigation is finished, the private agency will determine if the report of abuse or neglect is found to be “unsubstantiated” or “substantiated.”