



# Child Welfare Guide: Child Protective Services

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## 1.0 Child Protective Services Overview

Child Protective Services (CPS) strives to ensure safe, permanent, nurturing families for children by protecting them from abuse and neglect while also attempting to keep children safely with their families. CPS is the front end of the child welfare system and is administered in all 100 North Carolina counties within local Departments of Social Services (DSS).

The purpose of this guide is to provide an overview of the Child Protective Services process and the experiences and needs families may have while involved with CPS. The guide outlines strategies Family Navigators can use to support families during and after involvement in CPS and how to incorporate CPS staff into integrated care teams.

For more information on Child Welfare Foster Care, please view the [NC InCK Foster Care Guide](#).

### 1.1 CPS Involvement and NC InCK

Some NC InCK members working with a Family Navigator may be involved with CPS through an assessment of abuse and neglect or in-home services for families. A family may become engaged with CPS before a Family Navigator reaches out to provide integrated care or a family may enter into an assessment with CPS while the Family Navigator is supporting them. In either case, Family Navigators may only learn of CPS engagement if the family discloses it to the Family Navigator.

In some cases, families may want to include the CPS worker in their NC InCK consent form and integrated care team, and, in other cases, they may decide not to. Supporting the family in the decision to include CPS in the integrated care team and weighing the tradeoffs of inclusion is an important role of the Family Navigator.

### 1.2 Intake Process

The first stage of the CPS process is referred to as “Intake.” When someone (the reporter) calls CPS with concerns about child abuse, neglect, or dependency, they complete the Intake process with a social worker. There is a standardized structured form used by all agencies for Intake. Reports are accepted if they meet the definition of abuse, neglect, or dependency. If reports do not meet these definitions, there is no further action taken. Depending on the needs identified in the report, CPS social workers will make face-to-face contact with the family and child immediately, within 24 to 72 hours, to conduct an assessment or investigation.

### 1.3 Assessments and Investigations

If a report is accepted (referred to as “screened in”), an assessment or investigation is initiated. These can last up to 45 days. During this process, the CPS social worker will meet with the family (usually multiple times) to discuss the allegations in the report and all subsequent information that is learned. During the initial meeting with the family, a Safety Assessment is completed to assess the child’s safety and make a plan to ensure the child’s safety if there are concerns. These plans sometimes include identifying a relative or friend to care for the child temporarily.

If a child is unsafe in their home and there is not a plan that can be made to keep them safe, then DSS will determine what action needs to be taken to keep the child safe. The goal of the assessment is for the CPS social worker to obtain a comprehensive view of the family’s strengths and needs by talking with the family, other family members, friends, and providers who have helpful knowledge about the family. The CPS social worker will make regular contact – weekly or bi-weekly – with the family during

the assessment process. Once a full assessment has been completed (this sometimes occurs before 45 days have elapsed), a Case Decision is made. Case Decisions of “Services Needed” indicate there are risk factors and safety concerns that need to be addressed with the family to prevent out-of-home placement for children and result in cases moving to In-Home Services. Sometimes during assessments and investigations, it is determined children are not safe in their homes. In these cases, with the approval of a Judge, DSS removes the children from the home and places them with a kinship provider or in a foster home.

#### 1.4 In-Home Services

A small subset of families that go through an assessment are elevated for In-Home Services. In-Home Services strengthen, support, and stabilize families with the goal of keeping children in their homes and preventing removal.

The CPS social worker develops the Family Services Agreement (FSA) during a Child and Family Team (CFT) meeting with the family and their supports. The FSA is a plan that outlines concrete action steps (activities) the family and their supports will take to address their children’s needs and to keep their children safe. The family’s needs are derived from a Strengths & Needs Assessment, which is completed during the assessment and updated every 90 days while the family is involved in In-Home Services.

Some common needs include:

- Mental Health
- Substance Use
- Parenting Skills
- Family Relationships
- Housing/Basic Needs
- Resource Utilization.

During In-Home Services cases, the CPS social worker refers parents and children to services and sometimes provides direct intervention to families. For outside services such as mental health care or substance use treatment, CPS can support identifying providers based on the insurance status of the guardian. However, there are sometimes challenges in accessing services for guardians both with and without insurance.

**TIP:** Family Navigators who determine families and CPS social workers are encountering barriers to service access for a child or family can offer to make service recommendations and connections.

CPS social workers make home or community visits with families twice a month or every week, depending on the risk level of the case. During visits, the family’s progress on their FSA is covered, barriers to completing the activities outlined in the FSA are addressed, and any new needs or issues are discussed. If a case has been opened in In-Home Services for over 6 months without considerable progress on addressing identified needs, the DSS agency discusses what next steps are needed. This could consist of taking the case to juvenile court for more oversight or asking a Judge for custody of the children and removing them from an unsafe environment.

## 1.5 CPS Roles and Titles a Family Navigator May Encounter

Different agencies use different titles for CPS social workers, and, in some agencies, CPS social workers do more than one portion of the process. Below, terms Family Navigators may hear used for a social worker serving an NC InCK member have been outlined:

- **CPS Social Worker (or just CPS worker):** Some agencies refer to all social workers as CPS social workers. Some agencies use this term only for social workers who are doing assessments and investigations.
- **Investigator, Assessment, and Treatment (IA&T) Social Worker:** This social worker does investigations and assessments and provides In-Home Services.
- **In-Home Social Worker:** This social worker provides in-home services to families.
- **Investigation/Assessment (I/A) Social Worker:** This social worker does assessments and investigations
- **Ongoing Social Worker:** This social worker provides In-Home Services, and this term sometimes refers to a social worker who carries both in-home and foster care cases.

## 2.0 Family Navigator Interactions with CPS

### 2.1 Learning a Child is Engaged with CPS

NC InCK does not have access to or provide information about whether a child is engaged with CPS. A Family Navigator would know a family is engaged with CPS if the family discloses this information or if a CPS social worker contacts the Family Navigator.

### 2.2 If Family Navigators are contacted by CPS

#### 2.2.1 If a CPS social worker contacts a Family Navigator during Assessment

During the Assessment phase of a case, statute allows the CPS social worker to request information and updates from the Family Navigator without consent.

Some questions the CPS social worker may have for the Family Navigator include:

- What kind of support do you offer the family, and how long have you offered that support?
- How frequently do you speak with the family? When was the last time you spoke with them?
- Do you have any safety concerns about the family or are there areas where they may benefit from additional support?
- What are the strengths of the family that you have observed or that have been shared with you?
- Are you aware of current family supports and, if so, what are they and how were you made aware?
- Are you willing to be a collateral contact for the family?

#### 2.2.2 Consent and CPS Involvement

The CPS social worker cannot share any information with the Family Navigator, beyond the information that there is an open assessment, without consent from the family. However, during the In-Home phase of a case, the CPS social worker is required to obtain consent from the family to give and receive updates from Family Navigators.

### 2.3 Talking with Families about CPS Involvement

The Family Navigator may ask a family about their child welfare involvement as part of the process of getting to know the family, and they may identify who the supports and agencies involved in their life are in order to build their integrated care team. Below are three reasons why having the CPS social worker on an integrate care team might benefit a family:

- The Family Navigator or integrated care team can support CPS goals aimed at maintaining a child safely at home.
- The Family Navigator and integrated care team can serve the family at least one year, providing continuous support during and after a CPS assessment.
- The CPS social worker and Family Navigator can coordinate to hold Child Family Team meetings when NC InCK integrated care team meetings occur so that meetings are streamlined for families.

Some families may choose not to disclose their child welfare engagement. Other families may initially choose not to disclose CPS involvement and later decide to disclose once they develop a rapport with the Family Navigator. Families may not want to include their CPS social worker in their integrated if they are in the middle of an investigation or assessment or have an adversarial relationship with their social worker.

Similarly, families may not want to share their CPS engagement status due to stigmas associated with CPS involvement, a desire for privacy, or fear of repercussions for themselves and their children. Regardless of family choice, Family Navigators should be compassionate as well as professionally supportive and collaborative.

## 2.4 Recommended Ways to Engage CPS Workers in an NC InCK Care Team

The examples below outline ways Family Navigators and CPS workers can work together to best meet the needs of NC InCK members and their families.

### 2.4.1 Collaborating with CPS to Support Family Goals

- When there is consent from families, Family Navigators are encouraged to connect with the assigned CPS social worker to explain the Family Navigator role and purpose of the integrated care team.
- Based on family preferences, Family Navigators might provide information about their role with the family, what the family has been working on, and the purpose of the child's integrated care team and who has been included in the integrated care team.
- The CPS social worker and the Family Navigator can identify ways the goals of CPS overlap with those of other integrated care team members, including the family. CPS works on goals with families specific to child safety, but addressing child and family well-being needs is also a requirement.

**TIP:** A completed NC InCK consent form is important for discussing integrated care goals and needs with anyone working alongside a child or family. The CPS social worker may need a copy of the NC InCK consent form the parent signed to allow the social worker to speak with NC InCK, and they may have to get their own consent form signed as well.

## 3.0 Community Supports for Families Engaged with CPS

### 3.1 Structural Barriers in Accessing Basic Needs

Families engaged with CPS may experience structural barriers that inhibit them from obtaining needed resources for their family to thrive. Some examples of structural barriers include: inadequate access to healthcare, education, child care, food, housing, and employment.

### 3.2 Services Provided to Families Engaged with CPS

CPS may recommend the following services to a family for support. Family Navigators should coordinate with the family and CPS worker to determine how best to support referrals, engagement, and care team integration for families receiving the services below:

- Mental health interventions for parents
- Substance abuse interventions for parents
- Parenting classes or supports
- Domestic violence survivor and perpetrator resources
- Behavioral health interventions for children
- Housing entities to support permanent housing for families
- Children's Developmental Services Agency (CDSA) for children's developmental needs
- Health Department (WIC, Care Management for At Risk Children (CMARC), Primary Care, Dental)
- Child Care
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Local food banks and pantries

### 3.3 Services Provided Through Local DSS Offices

The local Department of Social Services in each county provides the following basic services to individuals and families based on eligibility. Families can apply for most of these services in person or online and will need to be present during the application process. Family Navigators may be able to support families by helping them through the online application process and help families understand the required documents needed for each service.

- [Child Welfare Services](#): These services include information on all services related to child welfare, including CPS, foster care, adoption, and more.
- [Child Support Services](#): These services are available to anyone who needs help collecting child support.
- [Food and Nutrition Services](#) (formerly Food Stamps): A federal food assistance program that provides low-income families with the food they need. Benefits are issued via electronic benefit transfer (EBT) cards.
- [Work First Family Assistance](#): NC's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. It provides parents with training and other services to help them become employed and move toward self-sufficiency. Families in which grandparents and relatives are caring for their children can receive support that prevents children from entering the foster care system.
- [Energy Assistance](#): There are several programs offered to cover or offset the cost of energy related to heating and cooling households.
- [Refugee Services](#): NC Refugee Assistance Program (NC RAP) is a program that helps refugees become economically self-sufficient. NC RAP consists of two services: Refugee Public Assistance and Refugee Support Services.

Your local county DSS Directory can be found [here](#).

## 4.0 Family Navigator's Role During Transitions in CPS

There can be several points of transition during a child welfare case. The changes are listed below with information about how the Family Navigator role may change or support a transition.

## 4.1 Common Transitions in CPS Cases

### 4.1.1 From Assessment/Investigation to In-Home Services

When this transition occurs, in some counties a new social worker is assigned to the case. In other counties, the social worker who completed the assessment will continue working with the family.

**Family Navigator Role:** If the family consents to Family Navigator communication with CPS, they can contact the In-Home Services social worker and explain their role. Family Navigators can have a discussion with the family and CPS social worker about the family's goals and ways the two entities can work together to support child safety and goals.

### 4.1.2 From Assessment/Investigation to Closed Case

When this transition occurs, CPS did not find safety issues that warranted an In-Home Services case, and they are no longer involved with the family. Sometimes they linked the family to services during the assessment or closed the case and recommended the family may benefit from some services.

**Family Navigator Role:** Upon closure, the CPS social worker is no longer engaged with the family or Family Navigator. The Family Navigator can work with the family to help support any open service needs determined by CPS and the family during the assessment process.

### 4.1.3 From In-Home Services to Closed Case

When a family has satisfactorily addressed the needs that led to CPS involvement, their case is closed.

**Family Navigator Role:** The Family Navigator can play a critical role in continuing to support the family after the CPS social worker is finished with their case. The Family Navigator can continue to hold integrated care team meetings and be the point of contact for the families. Sometimes the CPS social worker holds a closure meeting or visit with the family. This would be a good opportunity for the Family Navigator to attend the meeting or visit, talk with the family about their ongoing needs, and discuss ways their integrated care team can support them.

### 4.1.4 From Assessment/Investigation or In-Home Services to Foster Care

If there are significant safety issues that cannot be resolved, then a child may enter foster care. In most counties, this means they will get a new social worker. In Orange County, the social worker may stay the same or change.

**Family Navigator Role:** Most children will experience a change in Medicaid program eligibility and Medicaid Family Navigator when they enter foster care. The Family Navigator should strive to complete a warm handoff with the new Family Navigator at CCNC to update them on the family's Shared Action Plan (SAP) and the integrated care team. Please see [NC InCK's Family Navigator Guide](#) for more information on warm handoffs.

### 4.1.5 Staff Turnover

Sometimes the family's CPS social worker will change due to staff turnover.

**Family Navigator Role:** The Family Navigator can reach out to the agency to identify the new social worker for the family or ask the family if CPS has been part of their integrated care team. It may be necessary to explain NC InCK and the role of the Family Navigator to the new social worker.



## 5.0 Family Navigator and Concerns about Abuse or Neglect of an NC InCK Member or Family Member

North Carolina's reporting laws require anyone who suspects that a child is abused, neglected, or dependent to make a report to the county DSS where the child resides. Information about statutory definitions of abuse, neglect, and dependency can be found [here](#).

### 5.1 For NC InCK Members Engaged in CPS or Foster Care

The Family Navigator should call the county DSS where the child resides to make a report with the intake social worker. The Family Navigator can then call to let the social worker involved with the family know about the report. CPS social workers do not disclose who made a report. The only circumstance where this information is shared is if a judge orders it to be disclosed.

### 5.2 For NC InCK Members Not Currently Engaged with CPS or Foster Care

The Family Navigator should call the county the child resides in to make a report with any concerns. It should be noted that any county will take a report, even if the child does not reside there. After the report is made, the county that takes it will send the report to the county where the child resides. CPS social workers do not disclose who made a report. The only circumstance where this information is shared is if a judge orders it to be disclosed.

### 5.3 How to Make Reports in Each of the NC InCK Model Counties

#### 5.3.1 Emergency situations

In an emergency when a child or family member may be in immediate danger, Family Navigators may choose to call 9-1-1 instead of a local DSS office. If you call 9-1-1, you may request a CIT (crisis intervention trained) officer depending on the needs of the family and child.

#### 5.3.2 On weekends, holidays, or before or after normal work hours

For all counties, call 9-1-1 and ask for the on-call CPS social worker to make a report. You can also call the county's non-emergency number for law enforcement entities and ask to be routed to the on-call CPS social worker to make a report.

#### 5.3.3 CPS Intake Information by County

**Table 1. CPS Intake Information by County**

County	Contact information	Regular Hours	Information
Granville County	919-693-1511	8:30am-5pm, Monday- Friday	Ask to speak to CPS Intake.
Vance County	252-436-0407	8:30am-5pm, Monday-Friday	Ask to speak to CPS Intake.
Durham County	919-560-8424  Non-emergency number for after- hours, weekends, and holidays: 919- 560-4600	8:30am-5pm, Monday-Friday	Ask to speak to CPS Intake.  Ask for the on-call social worker.

Orange County	919-245-2818	8am-5pm, Monday- Friday	This is the CPS Intake line.
	Non-emergency number for after- hours, weekends, and holidays: 919- 732-5063		

Alamance County	336-229-2908, 336-229-2909, or 336-570-6532  Non-emergency number for after- hours, weekends, and holidays: 336-229-3503	8am-5pm, Monday-Friday	Ask to speak to CPS Intake
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## 6.0 Key Contacts by County DSS Office for NC InCK Service Area

**Table 2. Key Contacts by County DSS Office for NC InCK Service Area**

County	Address	Office Hours	Main Phone	Key Contacts
Alamance	319 N Graham Hopedale Rd #C, Burlington, NC 27217	8am-5pm	336-570-6570	<b>Angela Cole, Children Services Program Manager</b> Phone: 336-229-2239 Fax: 336-228-2029  <b>Rebecca Lambert, Children Services Program Manager</b> Phone: 336-570-3955
Durham	414 E Main St. Durham, NC 27701	8:30am-5pm	919-560-8000	<b>Elizabeth Ann Granby, Program Manager</b> Phone: 919-560-8346 Email: <a href="mailto:egranby@dconc.gov">egranby@dconc.gov</a>  <b>Quanesha Archer, Intake &amp; Collaborative Services</b> Phone: 919-560-8487 Email: <a href="mailto:qarcher@dcnoc.gov">qarcher@dcnoc.gov</a>
Granville	410 W Spring Street Oxford, NC 27565	8:30 am-5pm	919-693-1511	<b>Dana Mustian-Lyles, Child Protective Services Supervisor</b> Phone: 919-603-3336 Email: <a href="mailto:dana.mustian-lyles@granvillecounty.org">dana.mustian-lyles@granvillecounty.org</a>

Orange	113 Mayo St., Hillsborough, NC 27278 OR P.O. Box 8181 State Courier #: 17-50-11	8am- 5pm	919-245- 2800	<b>Carrie Phillips, Child Protective Services Investigative Supervisor</b> Phone: 919-245-2254 Email: <a href="mailto:cphillips@orangecountync.gov">cphillips@orangecountync.gov</a>  <b>Jessica Lewis, Child Protective Services Intake/Investigative Supervisor</b> Phone: 919-245-2755 Email: <a href="mailto:jlewis@orangecountync.gov">jlewis@orangecountync.gov</a>
Vance	305 Young Street; Suite B Henderson, NC 27536	8:30 am- 5pm	252-492- 5001	<b>Yaisa Howard, Social Work Supervisor III</b> Investigation, Assessment, & In-Home Services Phone: 252-436-0407 Email: <a href="mailto:yaisa.howard@vance.nc.gov">yaisa.howard@vance.nc.gov</a>  <b>Tony Taylor, Program Manager</b> Phone: 252-436-0407 Email: <a href="mailto:tony.taylor@vance.nc.gov">tony.taylor@vance.nc.gov</a>