



# Child Protective Services Resource Guide for Educators



NC INTEGRATED  
CARE FOR KIDS

in partnership with  
The ABC Science Collaborative

## Child Protective Services Resource Guide for Educators

The comprehensive Child Protective Services Guide was developed by [NC Integrated Care For Kids](#) (NC InCK) and this resource was developed by The [ABC Science Collaborative](#) as a tool for school social workers and other educators who encounter Child Protective Services or have concerns about a child's welfare.

For additional resources and information, please see the full [Child Protective Services Guide](#) on the NC InCK website.

### What is Child Protective Services and who is in it?

Child Protective Services (CPS) is administered in all 100 North Carolina counties within local Departments of Social Services (DSS). CPS protects children from abuse and neglect while also attempting to keep them safely with their families.

A CPS case begins with a report of suspected abuse or neglect to the local DSS. If what is reported meets the statutory definition of abuse, neglect, or dependence, CPS begins an assessment. In this process, a CPS social worker assesses the safety of the child and the family's strengths and needs. This includes talking with extended family, friends, and providers who know the family. An assessment can last up to 45 days. A small number of families are elevated to In-Home Services following assessments. In this phase, the CPS social worker helps create and support concrete plans that the family can follow to address and fulfill their children's needs and keep them safe.

Local agencies may use different titles for CPS social workers, and different agencies may have social workers involved in more than one part of the process. Here are some titles that school social workers may encounter when working with CPS:

- **CPS Social Worker (or just CPS Worker):** Some agencies refer to all social workers as CPS 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. This term sometimes refers to a social worker who works both in-home and foster care cases

### What if I have concerns about abuse or neglect of a child?

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

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To make a report, contact the county DSS and ask to speak with CPS Intake. Use this [Local DSS Directory](#) to find the information for your county.

## What services are provided to families engaged with CPS?

CPS works with families to connect them to services to address needs that impact the safety and well-being of children. Some examples include:

- 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 Development Services Agency (CDSA) for children's developmental needs
- Health Department, Primary care, dental care
- Child care
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Local food banks and pantries facing domestic violence cases, regardless of legal citizenship status.

## What transitions can a CPS case undergo?

A CPS case can go through many transitions from Intake to Closed Case. Throughout the process, families may change CPS social workers. Here are the common case transitions and changes that may happen:

- **Assessment/Investigation → In-Home Services:** This transition occurs when the findings of the Assessment/Investigation warrant further involvement from CPS. In some counties, a new CPS social worker is assigned to the case. In others, the same CPS social worker who completed the assessment will continue working with the family
- **Assessment/Investigation → Closed Case:** This transition occurs when CPS did not find safety issues that warranted an In-Home Services case, and CPS is no longer involved with the family. Sometimes CPS social workers recommend other services that the family may benefit from
- **In-Home Services → Closed Case:** This transition occurs when the family has satisfactorily addressed the needs that led to CPS involvement, and CPS is no longer involved with the family
- **Assessment/Investigation or In-Home Services → Foster Care:** This transition occurs when there are significant safety issues that can't be resolved, and a child may enter foster care. In most counties, they will get a new social worker. In Orange County, the social worker may stay the same.
- **Staff turnover:** Sometimes the CPS social worker will change due to staff turnover

## What services are provided through local DSS offices?

The local DSS in each North Carolina county provides basic services to individuals and families who are eligible. Families can apply for most of these services online or in-person:



**Child Welfare Services:** Services related to child welfare, 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:** 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:** North Carolina's program that provides families with training and other services to help them become employed and move toward self-sufficiency



**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



For more information, please see the full [Child Protective Services Guide](#).