

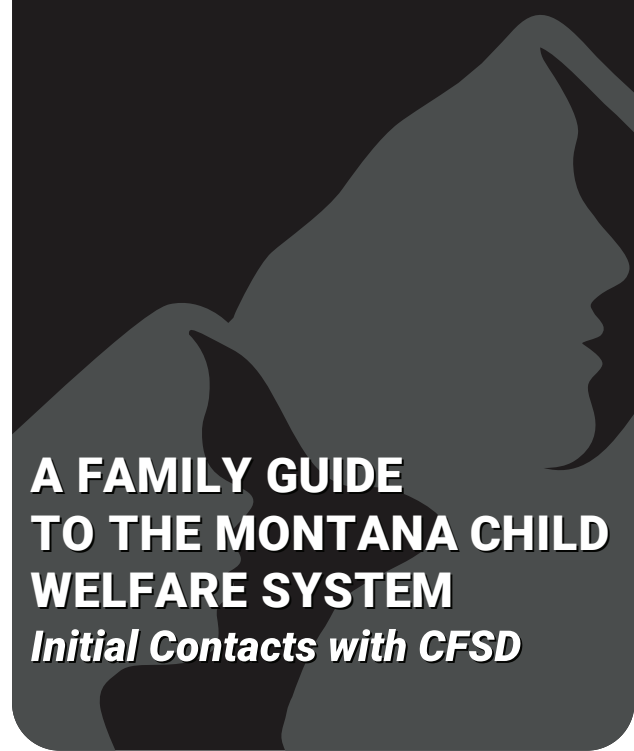


**WHAT YOU NEED TO  
KNOW ABOUT INITIAL  
INTERACTIONS WITH  
CHILD AND FAMILY  
SERVICES DIVISION**

Child and Family Services Division (CFSD) is a state agency that provides services to the children and families of Montana. The mission of the Child and Family Services Division is to keep children safe and families strong.



DEPARTMENT OF  
**PUBLIC HEALTH &  
HUMAN SERVICES**



**A FAMILY GUIDE  
TO THE MONTANA CHILD  
WELFARE SYSTEM**  
*Initial Contacts with CFSD*

## **WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT INITIAL INTERACTIONS WITH CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES DIVISION**

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CFSD is contacting you because a report was made to the Child Abuse Hotline. Any person concerned about the safety of a child can make a report to the Child Abuse Hotline 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Some people have jobs that make them, “mandatory reporters,” meaning they are required by law to promptly notify the Child Abuse Hotline at any point that they have reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect. The identity of the person that made the report is confidential and cannot be revealed by any employee of CFSD. It is important to know that state law requires CFSD to investigate all reports that meet statutory criteria of suspected child abuse and neglect. It is also important to know that an investigation in and of itself does not necessarily mean abuse or neglect has taken place. Often, CFSD’s involvement becomes an opportunity to provide support services that can help a family.

### **WHAT HAPPENS DURING AN INVESTIGATION?**

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A Child Protection Specialist (CPS) will do the following during an investigation:

- Interview and observe all the children in your home. Per Montana law 41-3-202, your child may be interviewed at school, daycare, or any other place the child is present.
- Interview all adults in your home.
- Request to visit with your family in your home environment.
- Interview collateral contacts/resources who know your family. This can include but is not limited to talking with school staff, medical personnel, daycare providers, law enforcement officers, family, friends, or any other individuals you may identify.
- Will complete the investigation within 60 days.
- Treated respectfully and without discrimination

If safety concerns are identified, the CPS will work with you and your family to alleviate safety concerns which will include creating a plan to control for safety, while referring you to services in the community for additional support.

### **DO I HAVE A SAY IN THE MATTER?**

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You have the right to direct the upbringing, education, health care, and mental health of your child and are the expert on your family. Your participation is extremely important so that CFSD can make an informed assessment of the allegations and how your family functions by understanding your family’s unique circumstances. You are not required to speak with the CPS, permit entry to your home or to submit to a drug/alcohol test; however, your CPS wants to hear your side of the story and your response to the allegations. Regardless of your level of participation, CFSD is still required to make a decision regarding your child’s safety and any statements made can be utilized in an administrative or court proceeding. At any point during an investigation a decision could be made to intervene in your family’s life for the purposes of keeping your child safe. You may seek/consult legal counsel at any time.