

The Indiana Department of Child Services

At the 2019 First Steps Conference on June 13–14, Christina Commons moderated an informative panel session with state partners and stakeholders who work alongside the First Steps program to provide needed services

for children and families. Each partner shared information about their program and how it intersects with First Steps. See below to read a summary of answers from the Indiana Department of Child Services.

A brief description of the program The Indiana Department of Child Services protects children who are victims of abuse or neglect and strengthens families through services that focus on family support and preservation. DCS also administers child support, child protection, adoption and foster care throughout the state of Indiana. The DCS central office is located in the Indiana Government Center South at 302 W. Washington St., Room E306.

What counties does the Department of Child Services serve?

The Department of Child Services serves all 92 counties. Consult [our map](#) to select the DCS local office director by county.

How does the Department of Child Services intersect with First Steps?

Currently all children with substantiated case involvement in child welfare under age 3 are referred to First Steps for developmental screening.

What is one thing First Steps providers should share with families?

We believe that the best place for children to grow up is with their own families when it is safe for them to do so and that families should have access to the resources and knowledge to prevent their children from experiencing abuse and neglect. If children have been removed from their home it is our legal responsibility to make reasonable efforts to reunify that family.

What is required of First Steps providers as far as giving information to the Department of Child Services/courts?

If you are subpoenaed to court, there are some things you can do to prepare. The DCS attorney may call you to prepare and schedule time to meet with them in person

or on the phone. Review reports you have prepared for this case.

Provide the same information in the courtroom as you did in prep. You may be asked to appear in court to provide information regarding services provided.

Know that you are representing your agency and the services provided. Only provide information you know to be true—things you have seen or done in your meetings with the family. DCS cases are heard in trial courts which have general jurisdiction. There is no jury and judges make the ultimate decisions. DCS is not the prosecution. Be prepared to testify with your client (the DCS family) in the room. This can be intimidating—it is important to be truthful. Usually, you may take one page of notes to the stand with you. These notes may be added to the evidence.

2019 FIRST STEPS CONFERENCE

STAKEHOLDER PANEL

As part of the Indiana Department of Child Services child and family team meeting, it is helpful when a First Steps provider participates in the family's plan.



www.in.gov/dcs/2372.htm

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When and why should First Steps providers refer a family to the Department of Child Services?

Everyone has an important role and responsibility to prevent child abuse and neglect. You can play a part in protecting a child and/or making it possible for a family in crisis to get the help and support they need. Contact the Indiana Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline 800-800-5556 if you suspect a child is a victim of abuse or neglect. It is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week and 365 days a year.

The Hotline is staffed with specially-trained family case managers, known as intake specialists, who are professionally trained to take reports of abuse and neglect. The intake specialists gather information from callers, determine whether the information provided meets statutory criteria for DCS to conduct an assessment, and if appropriate, route reports directly to DCS local offices for response and assessment.

When you contact the Hotline, the DCS intake specialist will ask you for information about the parties involved (victim, parent(s)/guardian(s), perpetrator) and the specific allegations giving rise to the call. Information you will be asked to provide may include:

- Child information: name, age, address, current location, person caring for the child and the medical treatment he or she needs or is receiving
- Parent/guardian information: name, address, phone number as well as any domestic violence, substance abuse, criminal history, mental health issues or past CPS history
- Alleged perpetrator information: name, address, phone number, relation to the child, behavioral issues and other children who may be at risk
- Physical abuse, sexual abuse, or neglect allegations: what happened, when, where, timeframe and specific conditions

Even if you are unable to provide all of the information above, contact the Hotline. Please do not wait for someone else to make the call—your call may be the critical first step in protecting a child. Please [visit our website](#) for more information on reporting.

Program contact information

Name	Contact
Indiana Child Abuse/Neglect Hotline	800-800-5556
Child Support Customer Service Kidsline	317-233-5437 and 800-840-8757
Indiana Child Support Bureau	childsupportwebinquires.dcs@dcs.in.gov
Child Support Home Page	www.in.gov/dcs/support.htm
Indiana Child Support Bureau	childsupportwebinquires.dcs@dcs.in.gov

Name	Contact
Indiana Department of Child Services Public Records Requests	dcspublic.Recordsrequest@dcs.IN.gov
DCS Customer Services Mail	dcs.CustomerService@dcs.in.gov
Foster Care Helpline	888-631-9510
Foster Parent & Service Provider Payment Inquiries	877-340-0309
Adoptive Parent Inquiries	877-265-0086



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