



Child safety is at the heart of child welfare practices and drives the decision-making processes of those involved in child welfare cases.

Child welfare cases are confidential by state and federal statutes.

Oklahoma Human Services is committed to protecting the safety and wellbeing of Oklahoma's children. Every child welfare case is different and the specific details in those cases impact decisions made by the agency, courts, District Attorneys and others who participate in any case. Additionally, any details concerning child welfare cases are confidential by state and federal statutes, so we are unable to discuss the facts or circumstances of any child welfare case with anyone who is not authorized by statute or permitted by an order of the court.

Oklahoma Human Services is committed to transparency and accountability.

Our agency:

- works with law enforcement, district attorneys, and the judicial system every day, in every county throughout the state to ensure children are safe and cases are handled in a timely, professional manner.
- works with legislators and the Governor's office throughout the year to address constituent concerns and assist families involved with Child Welfare Services.
- continues to maintain good-faith efforts in the [Pinnacle Plan](#), the state's foster care reform plan implemented in 2013 and evaluated by three out-of-state child welfare experts who specialize in improvement strategies for child welfare systems.
- works alongside community partners to ensure children and families have the resources they need to keep children safely in the home, when appropriate, and access to resources at the conclusion of their case to help their families maintain safety for their children.

Oklahoma Human Services values the children and adults we serve and believes that families belong together.

When a report of child abuse or neglect is received, Oklahoma law requires Child Welfare Services to assess the child's safety as determined by the agency's guidelines and other criteria. When there is suspected abuse or neglect, Child Welfare Services investigates and assesses the circumstances to ensure the safety of the child involved. A complete written report of the investigation or assessment, together with recommendations, is then submitted to the appropriate district attorney's office.

Only a judge can decide to remove children from their home. Law enforcement can place children in temporary, protective custody but only for 23 hours. After which, a court order is needed to keep the child in custody.

The decision to recommend removal of the children from their parents is only made after a determination that immediate removal is necessary to protect the child from further abuse or neglect. This is a last resort when the child(ren) in the home have been deemed unsafe.

Our Child Welfare team does everything they can to prevent the removal of children from their parents and to strengthen families so children can safely stay with their parents. Many families currently involved in the Child Welfare System are receiving support from Family Centered Services, a program designed to assist with family strengthening services and prevent parent-child separation. When a child must be removed from their parent's home to ensure the child's safety, Child Welfare Services exhausts all efforts to return the child home safely and avoid the termination of parental rights by a judge in the court system. Nearly half of children who enter our state's foster care system are returned to their parents.

All Oklahomans have a legal responsibility to report suspected abuse or neglect. Reports can be made at any time to the Oklahoma Human Services Abuse and Neglect Hotline at 1-800-522-3511. The hotline is available 24 hours-a-day, 7 days-a-week.