



PREVENTIVE LAW SERIES
CALIFORNIA
CHILD PROTECTION AGENCIES



Prepared by:
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WHAT ARE CHILD PROTECTION AGENCIES?

The California Department of Social Services is responsible for conducting investigations of child abuse and neglect and for developing programs and services to meet the needs of families requiring intervention.

WHAT SERVICES DO THEY OFFER?

1. **24-Hour Hotline:** Trained social workers are standing by 24-hours a day to take calls on child abuse, molestation, and neglect, at (800) 344-6000.
2. **Emergency Shelter Care:** The Polinsky Children's Center is a 24-hour facility in San Diego for the temporary emergency shelter of children who must be separated from their families for their own safety or whose parents cannot provide care due to incarceration or a physical or mental disability that has just arisen.

WHAT DO THEY DO?

1. **Emergency Response:** If the Hotline staff believes that a child is in immediate need of protection, an emergency response social worker is dispatched to the field and evaluates the situation within hours. In many cases, no action is necessary since the child is safe. In other cases, the social worker attempts to provide on-going services to allow the child to remain in the home. However, in some situations, children must be removed from the home for their own protection. **For example, if the police or other authorities determine that illegal drugs are present at the premises where a child resides then the child will be taken in emergency protective custody.**
2. **Court Intervention:** If a child is removed from the home, a court intervention worker is responsible for investigating and assessing whether the problem can be corrected and the child returned to the home. If the social worker and the parents can voluntarily agree on a plan to correct the situation, then the child may be returned to the home. However, sometimes the only alternative is to file a petition in the Juvenile Court to keep the child out of the home. When a petition is filed, the court will attempt to develop a reunification plan. The parents must comply with the reunification plan in order for the child to be returned to the home.

WHAT IF THEY TAKE MY CHILD?

If a social worker determines that a child must be removed from the home, they are required to turn the case over to a court worker within 2 hours of removal. The court worker will then have 48 hours to file a petition with the court for a detention hearing. At the hearing, the court will make a decision on where to place the child. Options range from foster care to returning the child to the home. If the parents contest the proceedings, a full hearing will take place within 60 days, at which time the parents will be allowed the opportunity to present evidence to rebut the charges.

OTHER DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES PROGRAMS

1. **FAMILY PRESERVATION PROGRAM** - assists families identified as high risk and helps those families get additional services so that they can avoid out-of-home placement and/or facilitate a quicker return of the child to the home. Call 858-694-5253 for more information.

2. **CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE TREATMENT PROGRAM** - provides a comprehensive treatment program serving families whose children have been molested by a family member. The program is staffed by a clinical psychologist, family counselors, and social workers.

LEGAL ASSISTANCE SERVICES

A legal assistance attorney is available by appointment Monday through Thursday from 0800 - 1030 and 1300 - 1500, and Friday from 0900 - 1100. Powers of attorney and notaries are available Monday through Friday at the same times. For more information, please contact the Legal Assistance Office, located in Building 56, 32nd Street Naval Station, San Diego, CA, by telephone at (619) 556-2211, or our office at Naval Air Station North Island – Coronado, Building 318 – Second Deck, above the Fleet and Family Support Center, Saufley Road, by telephone at (619) 545-6437.

RESOURCES:

County of San Diego Child Welfare Services:

www.sdcounty.ca.gov/hhsa/programs/cs/child_welfare_services/child_abuse_hotline.html

- Emergency Hotline: (800) 344-6000.
- Polinsky Children's Center: 9400 Ruffin Ct., San Diego, CA 92123; (858) 514-4600

Ventura County District Attorney's Office Child Support Division: (805) 654-5200

California Children and Family Services Division: <http://www.childsworld.ca.gov/>

Nevada Division of Child and Family Services: <http://dcfs.nv.gov/>