

# Children & Family Services

Dedicated to protecting children and empowering families



## Keeping children safe

*Children & Family Services is dedicated to helping families protect children from harm, safeguarding children who have been abused or neglected, and ensuring that children have a safe and permanent homes.*

## What is child abuse?

*California law defines child abuse as any of the following:*

- Non-accidental physical injury of a child
- Sexual abuse or exploitation of a child
- Willful cruelty or unjustifiable punishment of a child
- Neglect of a child, including failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care or supervision.

Child abuse or neglect can occur in any family, regardless of cultural or ethnic background, socioeconomic status or religious beliefs. When a child is abused or neglected, he or she may need immediate protection, or a family may need extra support to ensure the safety of the child; this is when Children & Family Services may become involved.

## How does Children & Family Services respond to protect children?

If the concern doesn't rise to the level of abuse or neglect, a social worker may work with a community organization to connect the family with the services or support needed. When abuse or neglect appear to be involved, a social worker may speak with the child, the parents, and possibly others to assess the child's safety and the needs of the family. In some instances, the child is able to remain at home while the family works to ensure a safer environment. In other cases, a child may need to be removed from the home to ensure his or her safety, and the Juvenile Court becomes involved to monitor the situation.

Whenever possible, a child removed from home will be placed in the home of a relative. If no relative is available who meets the required approval process, the child may be placed in a foster home or group home. The ultimate goal is to return the child to the care of the parent or guardian as soon as it is deemed safe.

## Ensuring the safety of the child

Once involved with Children & Family Services, the parent or guardian together with a social worker, develops a plan which may include counseling, substance abuse treatment, parent education or other services to address the family's needs. When the parent completes the goals in the plan and the Juvenile Court determines that the child can safely live with the parent or guardian, involvement with Children & Family Services and the court can end.

If a child cannot be safely returned to the care of his or her parent or guardian, an alternative permanent placement is arranged. Adoption by a relative is preferred, though if none is available, other possibilities include adoption by a non-relative, legal guardianship, or continued foster care.

Ensuring the privacy of children served is of utmost importance. While information required to protect the child is shared between the agencies responsible, including law enforcement and the courts, information about child abuse investigations cannot be disclosed to outside parties without a court order.

General inquiries about our services can be directed to Children & Family Services at (805) 477-5312. Parents with questions about their open case are asked to contact their social worker directly.

## Additional programs and assistance available for those we serve

- Team / Family Decision Making
- Dependency Drug Court
- Independent Living Program
- Parents Helping Parents – (805) 384-1555
- Adoption – (805) 654-3210
- Foster Parent & Relative Caregiver Support – (805) 654-3405

**To report suspected child abuse or neglect, please call: (805) 654-3200 or 1-800-754-7600.**

Early intervention is key to the long-term preservation of the family and the immediate safety of the child.

Ventura (805) 654-3409 Oxnard (805) 240-2700 East County (805) 955-2290



COUNTY OF VENTURA

Toll-Free:  
(866) 904-9362  
www.vchsa.org