

AGENCY ROLES AND DESCRIPTIONS

The following list describes various professionals and organizations that are involved when a child is abused or neglected. This is **not** a list of mandated reporters of child abuse or neglect.

Child Protection Hotline [CPH]

CPH is a section in the Department of Children and Family Services [DCFS]. CPH answers calls reporting suspected child abuse, neglect, and exploitation 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. Professional staff evaluate all calls to determine service needs for children and their families. After assessment, appropriate reports are forwarded to protective services offices throughout the county and/or law enforcement for further investigation. Emergent calls received outside of normal business hours are referred to the Emergency Response Command Post [ERCP] for immediate response. In addition, staff provide child abuse and neglect consultation as well as information and referral services at the same phone number.

In Los Angeles County, DCFS is the designated county welfare department pursuant to Penal Code [PC] §11165.9 and the CPH is the mechanism for making a report of suspected child abuse or neglect.

The CPH telephone number is (800) 540-4000; Telephone Device for the Deaf [TDD] number is (800) 272-6699.

Community Care Licensing Division [CCLD]

CCLD is a regulatory enforcement program whose ultimate responsibility is to protect the health and safety of children and adults who reside in, or spend a portion of their time in, out-of-home care.

County Counsel

As attorney for DCFS, County Counsel assumes the burden of proof at the detention, jurisdictional, disposition, review, and selection and implementation hearings held in the dependency court.

Court-Appointed Counsel for Children in Dependency Court

Welfare and Institutions Code [WIC] §317 requires appointment of counsel for children in any case where it appears to the court that the child would benefit from appointment of counsel. The practice in Los Angeles County is to appoint counsel for children in every case. Counsel for children generally are appointed from one of the law firms under the umbrella of Children's Law Center Los Angeles. Alternatively, counsel may be appointed from a panel of private attorneys available for appointment. In general, counsel for the child is charged with the representation of the child's interest, including the duty to undertake independent investigation on behalf of the child. A primary responsibility of counsel is to advocate for the protection, safety, and physical and emotional wellbeing of the child.

Criminal Court

The criminal court assumes jurisdiction over criminal violations as set forth in the California Penal Code and other related codes. This court adjudicates the guilt of a person charged with a crime. If an accused is found guilty, this court determines the appropriate punishment for the crime committed.

Delinquency Court

The Los Angeles Superior Court Juvenile Division is divided into two component parts: one to handle juvenile delinquency cases and one to handle juvenile dependency cases. The delinquency court assumes jurisdiction over children who have committed criminal violations, infractions, or status offenses. The court adjudicates petitions pursuant to the Welfare and Institutions Code and other related codes. If a petition is sustained, this court determines the appropriate rehabilitative course for the minor.

Department of Children and Family Services

DCFS assumes responsibility for child protective services in the County of Los Angeles. DCFS is vested with the responsibility of investigating allegations of in-home child abuse, neglect, abandonment, exploitation, and caretaker incapacity. In addition, it provides services to children and families within the system. The Children's Social Worker [CSW] has responsibility for investigating abuse and neglect allegations, determining whether a child should be detained from his or her parents or guardians, and whether a petition alleging that the child comes within the jurisdiction of the dependency court should be filed. DCFS works toward reunification of the child with the family whenever possible, and when reunification is not an option, DCFS also works toward a child's permanency by providing adoption and other services. As the public child welfare agency for Los Angeles County [the designated county welfare department], DCFS

provides a wide range of services including emergency response, family maintenance, family reunification, permanent placement, concurrent planning, and adoption services.

Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation [DCR]-- Parole

The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation operates all state prisons, oversees correctional facilities, and supervises all parolees released from that system. After being paroled, an offender remains under the supervision of parole staff. This "conditional release" provides an extra measure of control over the offender's behavior. The term of parole is based upon the crime, the period of time served, and the parolee's behavior. Before being paroled, an offender agrees to abide by certain conditions. Those who are violent or predatory may be directed to stay away from certain individuals or locations. If the parolee fails to adhere to these conditions, parole can be revoked and the parolee can be sent back to prison.

Division of Juvenile Justice [DJJ] (formerly California Youth Authority)

The DJJ (under the DCR) has jurisdiction over all educational training and treatment institutions established and maintained in the State as correctional schools for delinquent wards of the juvenile court. The DJJ works closely with law enforcement, the courts, prosecutors, probation and a broad spectrum of public and private agencies concerned with problems of youth.

Dependency Court

The dependency court adjudicates cases involving children who have suffered or are at risk of suffering physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, neglect, or exploitation at the hands of their parents or legal guardians. It is charged with enforcing, interpreting, and administering juvenile court law, while overseeing each case as it proceeds through the dependency system. The legal process is intended to protect children, preserve and strengthen families where possible, and provide children with legal permanence.

Educators

Educators have regular contact with children outside the home and they are often the first persons to whom children disclose abuse or neglect. As mandated reporters school employees are now actively involved in the identification and reporting of suspected abuse or neglect. After a report has been made, it is important that school personnel provide consistent and structured support for the child.

Inter-Agency Council on Child Abuse and Neglect [ICAN]

ICAN is the county agency mandated by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors to coordinate services for the prevention, identification, and treatment of child abuse or neglect. ICAN's activities are carried out through a variety of committees comprised of both public- and private-sector professionals with expertise in child abuse and neglect.

ICAN Child Abduction and Reunification Task Force

The Los Angeles County Child Abduction and Reunification Task Force is a multi-disciplinary team that addresses child abduction and reunification. The goal of the task force is to reduce trauma to children and their families by providing free counseling through community mental health centers. The task force has developed expertise in the abduction and reunification of court-dependent children. Find the Children is the coordinating agency for the task force and is responsible for holding monthly meetings.

ICAN Adolescent/Teen Suicide Death Review Team [CASRT]

CASRT was instituted by the Los Angeles County Office of Education [LACOE] in partnership with the Los Angeles Unified School District [LAUSD] and the Los Angeles Department of Mental Health [DMH]. The multi-agency team meets monthly to review cases of suicides committed by children and adolescents under age 18. The team studies warning signs, risk factors and protective factors involved in the suicides for the purpose of furthering the adoption of the goals and objectives of the National Strategy of Suicide Prevention. Findings of the team are featured in the annual ICAN Child Death Review Team Data Report. The team sponsors awareness and "gatekeeper" training as well as engaging in discussions centering around policy issues related to suicide prevention. Recommendations from the team are formulated to encourage systems to be responsive in implementing prevention strategies designed to reduce the incidence of suicide deaths of our youth.

ICAN Child Death Review Team

The ICAN Child Death Review Team is a multi-agency committee of various professionals formed pursuant to PC §11166.7 and coordinated by ICAN. The team meets monthly to review deaths of children in the county. The goals of the team include identifying child deaths and developing preventive interventions. The monthly meetings are confidential by law.

Juvenile Dependency Mediation Court

Juvenile dependency mediation is an alternate dispute resolution program within the juvenile court. Mediation provides a formal, non-adversarial forum conducted by highly trained professionals to assist the parties in reaching a mutual agreement on dependency issues before the court.

Law Enforcement

Los Angeles County's public safety agencies are diverse in size and responsibility. Law enforcement services are provided by city police departments or by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. In addition, other county, state, federal, school police, probation, and prosecutorial agencies provide specific law enforcement services to county residents and visitors. State law or agency policy requires most members of these agencies to receive reports and to take action when they learn that a child under age 18 is the victim of suspected child abuse or neglect.

Law enforcement agencies whose responsibilities include the criminal investigation of child abuse are also diverse in administrative structure. Many agencies have investigative units or detective bureaus comprised of one or two investigators who generally handle child abuse cases. Investigators also may be assigned other crimes to investigate in addition to child abuse allegations. Other agencies may be structured with many investigators who specialize exclusively in child abuse matters including child homicide.

Not all law enforcement agencies in the county have as a primary responsibility the investigation of crime. Many agencies rarely become involved in an incident of child abuse or a child welfare issue and must rely on another agency to complete an investigation and assume control over protective custody issues.

Los Angeles Child Advocates Office -- Court Appointed Special Advocates [CASA]

As provided in WIC §§100-109, CASA serves the needs of children in the dependency court system by providing the best possible information to the hearing officers making decisions about the child's future. The CASA recruits, trains, supervises, and supports community volunteers who investigate the circumstances of the child, facilitate the provision of services, monitor compliance with the orders of the court, and advocate in the court and in the community for the best interests of the child.

Medical Professionals

Medical professionals are responsible for providing a comprehensive examination of a child and to treat any illness or injury the child may suffer. They also collect critical forensic evidence, both visually and physically, to help corroborate the child's account of the abuse or neglect. Moreover, medical professionals who provide services to abused children must perform additional tasks mandated by the state, and they must be available to testify to their findings in court.

Mental Health Professionals

A mental health professional's primary goal is to facilitate healing for the child who has been victimized and may include working with family members to negotiate changes in the child's environment, including family relationships. A mental health professional also helps to minimize re-traumatization of the child who is a witness during the legal process.

Multi-Disciplinary Interview Centers [MDIC]

An MDIC is host to the Multi-Disciplinary Interview Team [MDIT] and is both a place and a process that provides for a coordinated, child-sensitive investigation of child sexual abuse, physical abuse, and neglect cases by professionals from many disciplines and agencies. The MDIT method emphasizes improving agency coordination, sharing information, reducing the number of child interviews, and ultimately aiding in the prosecution of the suspect. Within this context, a team approach reduces system-related trauma to the child. Often MDICs can provide a child-sensitive, collaborative interview for other types of cases in which a child witnesses a violent crime.

An MDIT must have three or more people and usually includes, but is not limited to, a medical professional, a mental health professional, a trained child forensic interview specialist, and representatives from law enforcement, DCFS, a prosecuting agency, the Victim-Witness Program or other child advocates, or public education professionals. Peer review, case review and case tracking are vital elements of the MDIC process.

Probation Department

The probation department recommends and enforces court-ordered sanctions for probationers, including the detention of juvenile offenders and the arrest of adult offenders; prevents and reduces criminal activity by developing and implementing strategies from early intervention through supervision.

Prosecutors

A **City Attorney** or **City Prosecutor** has jurisdiction for prosecution of misdemeanors and infractions committed within the city boundaries.

The **District Attorney** has jurisdiction for prosecution of all felonies committed in Los Angeles County and misdemeanors committed in cities which do not have a criminal city attorney.

The **Attorney General** has jurisdiction over cases in which the District Attorney's Office has declared a conflict of interest or has been recused. The office also handles criminal appeals.

The **United States Attorney** has jurisdiction over federal offenses.

Public Defender/Alternate Public Defender

The Public Defender, upon request of the defendant or upon order of the court, represents any person who is not financially able to retain counsel, and who is charged with the commission of a crime or an act which constitutes juvenile delinquency.

Regional Centers

Regional Centers coordinate services for people with developmental disabilities. There are 21 Regional Centers in California operated by private, non-profit corporations which contract with the State Department of Developmental Services. Los Angeles County has seven Regional Centers.

Sexual Assault Felony Enforcement [SAFE] Team

The SAFE Team is a multi-jurisdictional law enforcement task force administered by the U.S. Department of Justice and the FBI. It is comprised of federal, state, and local law enforcement officers, who investigate major child exploitation cases, Internet pornography cases, child sexual assault rings, and any sexual assault cases referred for special handling. These officers, deputies, and agents are available for advice and consultation.