

Date: _____

Parent/Family Name: _____

Caseworker: _____

I acknowledge the receipt of An Introduction to Lorain County Children Services: A Guide to Family Assessment, the booklet that contains information on how reports are made and investigated or assessed, along with my rights. My signature serves as Acknowledgment Only indicating I have received an explanation of my rights and a copy of this book.

Signed: _____

If signature refused, caseworker please initial and mark refused.



WHAT ABOUT EXAMINING MY CHILD?

The LCCS caseworker will observe the child/children for injuries or signs of abuse or neglect. Under Section 2151.421 of the Ohio Revised Code, anyone who is required to report concerns about child abuse or neglect is permitted to take photographs and make the necessary arrangements to X-ray the child/children as part of a medical evaluation. This can be conducted without parental/caretaker consent. That includes the LCCS caseworker.

Photographs of the living conditions in which the child/children resides may also be taken with the consent of the parent/caretaker.

WILL INFORMATION BE SHARED WITH OTHERS?

LCCS is required to share whatever information is necessary to assist a professional service provider or other agency involved, such as law enforcement or the Prosecutor's Office, whose goal is the protection of your child.



WHAT IF I HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT THE PROCESS?

If you are concerned that you are not being treated fairly or with respect, please discuss your concerns with your caseworker or his or her supervisor. You may call our Ombudsman at 440-329-5340 for additional help in resolving your concerns.

If, after talking to the worker, the supervisor and the Ombudsman, you still feel your concerns were not addressed, you may call Scott H. Ferris, Executive Director at 440-329-5340 or file a formal grievance. If this still does not resolve your concerns, you may call the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services Office of Children and Families Help Desk at 1-866-635-3748 for more help.

WHAT ARE MY RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AS A PARENT?

You Have Responsibilities:

- Help your caseworker to have reasonable access to you, your home, and your children in order to complete a risk assessment of your child and family circumstances.
- Help your caseworker in defining your family's strengths and/or needs.
- If you are of Native American heritage, let your caseworker know. Our agency complies with the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and will assist you as needed.

You Have the Right:

- To be treated with courtesy and respect.
- To receive services in a non-discriminatory manner.
- To be spoken with in words that you understand.
- To ask questions and make your ideas known.
- To hear and talk about your strengths, family risks, and safety issues.
- To take part in talking about, designing, and reviewing your case plan.
- To express and practice your religious and spiritual beliefs.
- To decide whether to receive services, to refuse any services that aren't required by law or court ordered, and to know the possible consequences if you choose not to receive the services.
- To decide whether or not to take part in surveys or research. If you decide not to, there will be no consequences.
- To complain about the way you or your children have been treated, or about concerns you have.
- To have those complaints looked into through a review of your case, and to get an answer.
- To seek legal advice.
- To review parts of your record (Records of investigations are not available for review). Please request a review form from our receptionist or your caseworker.
- To receive a letter regarding the findings of an investigation about you or your children, and to appeal those findings if you disagree with them.

If you prefer a language other than English, we will provide you with an interpreter at no cost to you. If you would like this brochure in Spanish, please ask for one.



MISSION STATEMENT

In partnership with the community, the staff, foster parents, and volunteers of Lorain County Children Services are committed to the safety and well-being of abused, neglected and dependent children and will provide the highest quality protection, permanency, and prevention services for children and families.

LORAIN COUNTY CHILDREN SERVICES

226 Middle Avenue · Elyria OH 44035

www.childrenservices.org

440-329-5340/ M-F 8:00AM – 4:30 PM
After Hours/Weekend Hotline 440-329-2121

If a child is in immediate danger or needs immediate medical attention, please call 911.



Introduction to Lorain County Children Services



INTRODUCTION TO LORAIN COUNTY CHILDREN SERVICES; A GUIDE TO FAMILY ASSESSMENT INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this brochure is to help you understand the Lorain County Children Services (LCCS) reporting and response process. Please contact your LCCS caseworker if you have questions that are not answered by the information provided in this brochure.

Si hablan español, por favor pida a un interprete.

WHY HAS A LORAIN COUNTY CHILDREN SERVICES CASEWORKER CONTACTED ME?

You have been contacted because Lorain County Children Services received a report of possible abuse, neglect, or dependency of a child or children in your care. When a report is made, we are required to investigate to see whether it is true or not.

If the person making the report is concerned about your child's safety or well-being, we will talk with your child, you, and others who can help us understand the situation and determine what actions, if any, may be necessary.

After we assess your situation, we may:

- End the investigation with no other involvement,
- Refer you to other community services, or;
- Open a case with your family.

When we finish our investigation and assessment, we will send you a letter telling you our conclusions and recommendations. Cases are closed when there is assurance that the children are safe.

WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT?

Abused Child (taken from the Ohio Revised Code 2151.031): Any child who is a victim of sexual activity, is endangered, or exhibits evidence of any injury or death inflicted other than by accidental means or at variance with the history given of it, or because of acts or omissions of his parents, guardian, or custodian, suffers physical or mental injury that harms or threatens a child's health or welfare.

Neglected child (taken from O.R.C. 2151.03): Any child who is abandoned by his parents, guardian or custodian, lacks adequate parental care because of the faults of the parents, or whose parents neglect or refuse to provide him with proper or necessary sustenance, education, medical or surgical care, or any other care made necessary by his mental condition.

Dependent child (taken from O.R.C. 2151.04): Any child who is homeless, destitute, or without adequate parental care through no fault of his parents, guardian or custodian; who lacks proper care or support by reason of the mental or physical condition of his environment, is such as to warrant the State, in the interest of the child, to assume his guardianship; or any child who is residing in a household in which a parent, guardian or custodian or other member of the household has committed an act that was the basis for an accusation that a sibling of the child, or another child who resides in the household is an abused, neglected or dependent child and, because of circumstances surrounding the abuse or neglect of the sibling and other conditions of the household, the child is in danger of being abused or neglected by that parent, guardian, custodian or other member of that household.

WHY WOULD SOMEONE MAKE A REPORT?

The purpose of reporting is to identify abused and neglected children as soon as possible so that the child's safety and well-being can be addressed.

Some signs that people notice and may report to LCCS include, but are not limited to:

- A child with questionable injuries
- A young child who is left alone
- A child who has unattended health care problems or medical needs
- A child who is consistently hungry or appears malnourished
- A child who has a sexually-transmitted disease or other signs of sexual abuse

WHO MADE THE REPORT?

Anyone can make a report of suspected child abuse or neglect. The person making the report is not required to provide his/her name. Because of confidentiality laws, the name of the reporter will not be released unless there is a court order to do so. Certain professionals who work with children are mandated by law to immediately report suspected child abuse and neglect.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER A REPORT IS MADE?

LCCS will respond to child abuse and neglect reports by conducting safety and family assessments and an investigation. The goals of both assessments and the investigation are to:

- Assess child safety
- Strengthen and support families, whenever possible
- Assist the family in preventing future child maltreatment

“FAMILY IN NEED OF SERVICES”

Your family may be contacted by LCCS when:

- The report, while true, is not required by law or policy to be investigated.
- There is no immediate threat to the child's safety or well-being.
- The family may benefit from services.

Reports which are initially determined to be appropriate for a Family in Need of Services response may be reconsidered for an investigation, if there is evidence of serious abuse or neglect, or child safety concerns.



WHAT HAPPENS DURING A SAFETY AND FAMILY ASSESSMENT?

In most cases, the LCCS caseworker and family members work together to complete a child safety and family needs assessment. Meeting with the case worker provides an opportunity for you, as a parent, to share your concerns and perspectives on how to raise your child/children, to identify family needs, to ask questions, and to obtain immediate feedback.

During a family assessment, the LCCS caseworker will:

- Conduct an initial safety assessment and develop a safety plan for the child, if needed
- Talk face-to-face with you, your children, and others who may live with you
- Talk to others who may have information about the safety and well-being of your child, including doctors, counselors, and family members
- Look for signs of injury, abuse, or neglect
- Observe your home's environment
- Check for prior reports of abuse or neglect
- Complete a risk assessment with your family and determine what services, if any, are needed to prevent future abuse or neglect
- Request your assistance in identifying other individuals who may be able to help your family if services are needed to keep your children safe
- Arrange for services to support your family

LCCS usually completes the initial family assessment within 30 days from the date of the report.

If your family needs services, the LCCS caseworker will develop a case plan with you, and link you to available community resources such as family counseling, substance abuse services, children's programs, day care, etc.

You may also choose to decline services for your family that are offered as a result of the family assessment. The case will be closed if there is no threat to your child/children's safety. If your child/children's safety is a concern, the LCCS caseworker will consider asking the court to require additional services to ensure the safety of your child/children.

WILL LCCS TALK TO MY CHILD WITHOUT MY CONSENT?

In order to provide an objective child safety assessment, particularly when there is concern about the immediate safety of the child or the child's ability to speak honestly, the LCCS caseworker may speak with a child and his/her siblings without parental consent and outside the presence of the parent/caretaker.

If the LCCS caseworker talks with your child or children without your prior knowledge, you will be notified about the interview as soon as possible.

