



About: Children's Services

Background

Hamilton County Children's Services is the local public organization legally responsible for taking reports of child abuse, neglect and dependency; investigating those reports; and acting to protect child victims and children at risk. 241-KIDS, a part of Children's Services, is the county's 24-hour line for reporting allegations of abuse and neglect.

Children's Services is part of the Hamilton County Department of Job and Family Services.

Children's Services has 520 employees and a budget of about \$100 million. Hamilton County residents support a tax levy that raises \$41 million a year to keep kids safe.

Children's Services is part of a child protection system. All parts work together. They include juvenile court, law enforcement, and private service providers. In addition, everyone should act to protect children by reporting suspected abuse or neglect and reaching out to families in trouble. Professionals who work with children, such as doctors and teachers, are required by law to report suspected child maltreatment.

Examples of abuse and neglect:

- 3-year-old home alone
- Adult sexual contact with a child
- Non-accidental injuries
- Squalid, hazardous home

Why does it happen? Examples:

- Substance abuse
- Immature, unskilled or overwhelmed parent
- Untreated mental illness

**In 2004,
Hamilton County
Children's Services...**

Served 16,108 children

Handled 62,870 calls to 241-KIDS

Investigated 5,569 reports of child abuse and neglect

Worked to protect 8,266 children in an average month, including 1,481 children who were in foster, relative or group care

Finalized 94 adoptions

In an average month, about one out of every 25 Hamilton County children is involved with Children's Services.

More information: 241-KIDS (5437); www.hcjfs.org

Services, eligibility and applications

Eligibility:

241-KIDS/Children's Services: Anyone can make a report of suspected abuse or neglect to 241-KIDS. Children's Services is available to families and children when there is an identified risk for child abuse or neglect. No application is necessary.

Foster Parents: Any resident of Ohio over the age of 21 can apply to become a licensed foster parent. For more information, call (513) 632-6366 or visit www.hcfoster.org.

Adoptive Parents: Our Adoption and Foster Care section will help an adult interested in adoption. For more information, call (513) 632-6366 or visit www.hcadopt.org.

Services:

Operate 241-KIDS

Investigate reports of child abuse and neglect

Provide ongoing help when children are at significant risk of serious harm. Services include drug abuse and mental health treatment, emergency housing, and parent training.

Involve families and community partners in decisions

When necessary, place children in temporary care with relatives, foster parents or in group settings

Seek protective, temporary or permanent custody through Juvenile Court

Recruit and train foster and adoptive families

Support foster homes

Prepare children for adoption

Arrange for post-adoption services to families

Train older foster teens in skills for independent living

Trends and Highlights

We face many challenges, including:

- High costs for care and treatment of children removed from home
- Recruiting and retaining foster and adoptive parents
- Improving relations with our partners, such as Juvenile Court
- Shortages of certain services in our community, such as options for delinquent youth
- Federal reviews that focus on outcomes

Goal: better outcomes, lower cost:

A new unit called Utilization Management determines the correct levels of care that children need and reviews all out-of-home placements. The unit has helped reduce the numbers of children in placement, turned around skyrocketing costs and realized savings of 8% in 2003 and 10% in 2004.

Initiative improves housing, costs:

When costs for emergency housing soared, Children's Services built partnerships with homeless shelters, assigned housing specialists and improved client tracking. These steps reduced costs to use a local motel - the least desirable alternative - by more than two-thirds and families received more coordinated care.

Adoption improvements:

Hamilton County and the state have a Corrective Action and Resolution Plan to eliminate discriminatory adoption practices which were found by a federal investigation. The plan imposes significant changes in foster care and adoption processes. It is designed to better serve waiting children and families who want to adopt.

Help and contact information

Mailing address

HCJFS
222 E. Central Parkway
Cincinnati, OH 45202

Telephone

General: 946-1000
Foster Care/Adoption: 632-6366
Report abuse/neglect: 241-KIDS (5437)
Ways to help: 946-2188

Web sites

www.hcjfs.org
www.hcfoster.org
www.hcadopt.org