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August 2, 2007

Members of the Arizona Legislature

The Honorable Janet Napolitano, Governor

Ms. Tracy Wareing, Director  
Arizona Department of Economic Security

Transmitted herewith is a report of the Auditor General, a Questions-and-Answers document on the Department of Economic Security, Division of Children, Youth and Families, Child Protective Services—Child Abuse Hotline. The document was prepared pursuant to and under the authority vested in the Auditor General by Arizona Revised Statutes §41-1966.

Our questions-and-answers documents were created to provide answers to multiple questions on a particular subject area. We hope that these questions-and-answers documents will fill a need and provide you with timely and useful information on topics of particular interest.

My staff and I will be pleased to discuss or clarify items in this document.

This document will be released to the public on August 3, 2007.

Sincerely,

Debbie Davenport  
Auditor General

Enclosure

## QUESTIONS and ANSWERS

### Summary

This document answers questions about Arizona's state-wide toll-free Child Abuse Hotline for receiving calls concerning suspected child abuse and neglect. Trained hotline staff classify and prioritize calls to determine whether an investigation is needed and if so, how quickly CPS must respond. Doctors, school personnel, and others who have responsibility for the care and treatment of minors are required by law to report suspected child abuse and neglect.



2007

## Child Abuse Hotline

### Question 1: What is the Child Abuse Hotline?

**The Hotline is a toll-free telephone line operated by trained CPS staff, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year to receive reports of suspected child abuse and neglect.**

In November 1994, the Division of Children, Youth and Families established a centralized intake unit called the Child Abuse Hotline, which uses a state-wide toll-free telephone number (1-888-767-2445) to receive calls of suspected child abuse and neglect. The Hotline's toll-free telephone number is listed on the Department's Web site and in Arizona phone directories state-wide under "child abuse" and in the emergency and government pages.

Hotline management provides training to mandated reporters (see Question 3) regarding what and how to report child abuse in Arizona. Training is provided upon request to schools, medical and court personnel, and community organizations such as domestic violence shelters, counseling agencies, and substance abuse treatment centers. Training is also provided to other department divisions

and state agencies whose employees have direct responsibility for children in the course of their work, such as the Division of Developmental Disabilities and the Departments of Education and Health Services.

When the Department receives allegations of abuse and neglect by other means—such as by fax or mail—those allegations are immediately forwarded to the Hotline for processing. During state fiscal year 2006, the Hotline received almost 94,700 calls and written correspondence, which were categorized as communications and reports (see Question 2).

The Hotline is operated 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year by hotline staff who have received safety and risk assessment training. According to division management, over 76 percent of hotline staff have prior CPS field experience. When a person calls, hotline staff ask a number of standardized screening questions including: "When and where did the incident occur?"; "Who abused the child and were there any witnesses?"; and "Can you describe the injury including the location, size, shape, and color?" The Division developed the standardized screening questions with the assistance of other experts such as Attorney General staff, medical personnel, and law enforcement officials.

**Question 2: How are reports of suspected child abuse and neglect categorized and prioritized?**

**Based on the information received from the caller, hotline staff evaluate and categorize each call as a communication or a report. Reports are then prioritized in terms of severity so that CPS knows how quickly it must respond.**

The Division's standardized hotline screening questions are used to gather information in order to categorize each call as either a communication or a report. Calls not meeting the criteria for a report are categorized as a communication and according to division management, many relate to social service or community concerns, such as information about a family being evicted; therefore, no investigation is required.

Calls are categorized as reports that CPS must investigate if:

- There is an allegation that a person under the age of 18 is the subject of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, neglect, abandonment, or exploitation;
- A parent, guardian, or custodian has:
  - Inflicted, may inflict, permitted another person to inflict or had reason to know another person may inflict abuse or neglect; or

- The alleged abusive person has not been identified and the parent, guardian, or custodian has not been ruled out as the person who inflicted, permitted another person to inflict or had reason to know another person would inflict abuse or neglect; and
- There is sufficient information to locate the child.

During state fiscal year 2006 and the first 10 months of fiscal year 2007, the Hotline received a monthly average of about 7,900 calls and written correspondence. Of those monthly calls and correspondence, an average of about 2,900 (37 percent) were categorized as reports.

A CPS report may involve more than one allegation as well as multiple children. Based on information obtained, hotline staff categorize each allegation within a report by the type of abuse (i.e., physical, emotional, etc.) and assign a priority risk to each allegation to determine an appropriate response time (see below). For example, one report may include an allegation of priority 1 physical abuse for one child and priority 2 neglect for the same child and a sibling for a total of 3 allegations. The supervisor who oversees the CPS case manager assigned to investigate the report may shorten or lengthen the standard response times based on aggravating and mitigating factors, such as the child victim expressing fear of maltreatment if returned home, or if the perpetrator has no access to the child victim during the determined response time. The highest-risk allegation within a report determines how quickly CPS must begin its investigation.

Summary of Child Abuse Report Priority, Risks, and Response Times

Category	Maximum Response Times			
	Priority 1 <u>High Risk</u>	Priority 2 <u>Moderate Risk</u>	Priority 3 <u>Low Risk</u>	Priority 4 <u>Potential Risk</u>
Aggravated	N/A	24 hrs	48 hrs	72 hrs <sup>1</sup>
Standard	2 hrs	48 hrs	72 hrs	7 consecutive days
Mitigated	24 hrs	72 hrs	72 hrs <sup>2</sup>	N/A

<sup>1</sup> Excluding weekends and holidays.

Source: The Division's *Child Abuse Hotline Procedures Manual*.

**Question 3: Who are mandatory reporters of suspected child abuse and neglect?**

Persons having a responsibility to care for children, such as law enforcement personnel, school personnel, doctors, and other healthcare professionals, are known as "mandatory reporters" and are required by law to immediately report suspected child abuse or neglect.

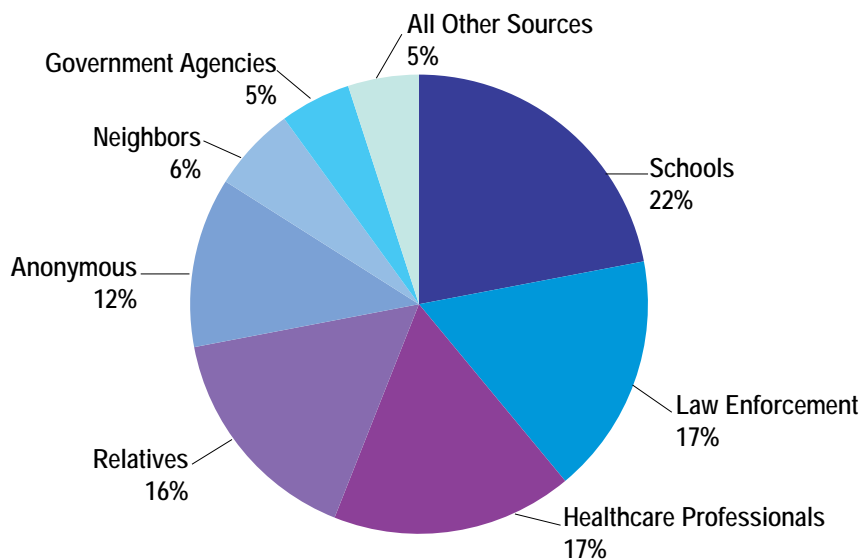
A.R.S. §13-3620 mandates that certain persons have a duty to report child abuse and neglect. Persons required by law to report child abuse and neglect include law enforcement personnel, school personnel, doctors, and other healthcare professionals, clergy, parents or guardians, or any other person who has responsibility for the care or treatment of the minor. These persons must report suspected child abuse and neglect immediately to a peace officer or CPS by telephone or in person. Peace officers receiving reports are required to notify the Child Abuse Hotline of the reported allegations. A dedicated line is available for law enforcement to contact the Hotline. Mandatory reporters making verbal reports must also submit a written report to CPS within 72 hours.

**Question 4: Who uses the Hotline to report child abuse and neglect?**

The Hotline received an average of nearly 2,900 reports of suspected child abuse and neglect each month, most frequently from schools, law enforcement agencies, and healthcare professionals.

During state fiscal year 2006 and the first 10 months of fiscal year 2007, the Hotline received about 64,000 reports of suspected child abuse and neglect, an average of about 2,900 reports each month. According to division data, most child abuse and neglect reports are made by school personnel (22 percent), law enforcement agencies, and healthcare professionals (17 percent each) (see figure below).

Sources of CPS Reports  
State Fiscal Year 2006 and the First 10 Months of State Fiscal Year 2007



Source: Auditor General staff analysis of report data from the Division's Children's Information Library and Data Source (CHILDS) automated system for state fiscal year 2006 and the first 10 months of state fiscal year 2007.



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