

# SECTION 1: WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF ARIZONA'S DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SAFETY?



## HOW DOES ARIZONA'S DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SAFETY WORK?

Arizona's child welfare system was developed to respond to concerns about children who may be abused or neglected. The "child welfare agency" responsible for child safety in Arizona is the Department of Child Safety (DCS). Families, private community agencies, and other service providers that work in mental health, substance abuse, healthcare, education, and domestic violence are all partners in the child welfare system serving the needs of children and families. When children are not able to be safe at home, the courts also become partners.

Arizona's child welfare agency (DCS) is responsible for:

- Responding to reports from individuals in the community who think that children are being abused or neglected
- Helping families solve problems that may result in abuse or neglect
- Helping children to be safe and secure
- Preventing separation of children from their families, whenever possible
- Working with families so their children can return home (when children have been separated from their families)
- Ensuring that children receive what they need while they are away from their families
- Exploring options for permanent caregivers of children who cannot safely return home

To accomplish these goals, the agency works with families to identify their strengths and needs. While working together with families, the agency helps to find the services and supports families need to keep their children safe and protected.

## WHY DOES THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SAFETY (DCS) GET INVOLVED WITH FAMILIES?

**To ensure the safety of children:** The major role of the Department of Child Safety is to ensure safety, permanency, and well-being of children. The law in Arizona gives the Department of Child Safety the responsibility for responding to and investigating reports that a child in Arizona is unsafe or at risk of harm due to abuse or neglect by a parent or other caregiver in the child's home.

**To provide services:** If a child is not safe, or is at risk to be neglected or harmed at home, the Department of Child Safety will provide services and strengthen the parents' protective capacities.

## PRACTICAL TIPS FOR FAMILIES

- The Department of Child Safety can be complicated. You should feel free to ask questions, even the same questions multiple times, if you need to.
- Check to see if there is a family organization in your community that can help support you or your family during involvement with the Department of Child Safety.
- If there is not a family organization, try to find other parents to talk to who have successfully navigated the child welfare system.

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Every state in the United States has their own child welfare agency, in Arizona it is the Department of Child Safety. While each state receives guidance from the federal government, child welfare agencies in each state (or jurisdiction) can look very different in their approach to protecting children and supporting families.

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