

Useful terms:

Social Worker or Caseworker: The person assigned to watch over the well-being of the minor and who works closely with the biological parents and the foster parents.

Guardian ad Litem: Lawyer appointed by the court to represent the interest of children in the courtroom.

Juvenile Court: Court where legal decisions are made when it comes to children.

Public Defender: Lawyer appointed by a court or employed by a government agency whose work consists primarily in defending indigent defendants in criminal and some civil cases such as in juvenile court proceedings.

Assistant State's Attorney: Public prosecutor in charge of all proceedings in Juvenile Court.

Foster Care Home: A home where a child lives away from his or her parents until a solution is found for abusive or neglectful family problems.

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If you don't agree with a decision made by DCFS or the private agency in charge of your children's case, you can appeal through the Service Appeal System.

For more information call:

DCFS
Administrative Hearings Unit
17 N. State Street 7th Floor
Chicago, Illinois 60602
Tel.: 312-814-5540

Remember:

1. Do not beat your children or allow your family members to beat them.
2. Seek immediate help if you are aware someone has mistreated or abused your children.
3. When you allow your children to be abused by someone else, you become an accomplice in the abuse.

In case DCFS has taken custody of your children:

1. Get the full name of the social worker or caseworker assigned to the case.
2. Ask that all pertinent information in the case be provided in your primary language.
3. If there's something you don't clearly understand, ask questions as many times as you need. Never leave a meeting with your caseworker if you still have questions.
4. Contact the General Consul of Mexico in Chicago:

Department of Protection
General Consul of Mexico
204 S. Ashland Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60607

Telephone Numbers:
312-738-2383 Ext. #1226 or #1228
312-738-2023 Direct Line
Toll Free 888-755-5511
Fax: 312-491-9237

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You, Your Children, the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services and Child Abuse



Consulado General de México

Guide for Parents Who are Mexican Nationals

The object of this brochure is to inform you about situations that are considered “child abuse” or “child neglect” in the United States – situations that, if found true, will give the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) the right to intervene and possibly take legal custody of your children. For the majority of cases, DCFS tries to work with families to resolve abuse and neglect cases without taking protective custody of children.

This brochure will also tell you what to do if your children have been removed from your home by DCFS and who to contact in case of any problems.

What are child abuse and neglect?

Child abuse and neglect covers a broad range of conditions, but basically it refers to parents or caregivers who either physically, sexually or emotionally harm a child or allow a child to become physically, sexually or emotionally harmed.

Some examples of abuse or neglect:

- Beating your children, even if it's discipline.
- Leaving them in the care of an individual who beats or mistreats them.
- Not providing adequate food, clothing or a safe environment for living.
- Leaving them alone, even though you're going to work, without adult care.
- Not providing medical care in case of a serious illness or accident.

Keep in mind that home remedies might be effective in providing relief for certain illnesses. However, a medical problem that is not addressed properly might have serious negative consequences for a child.

What is DCFS?

The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services is a state agency that:

- Receives and investigates allegations of child abuse and neglect (1-800-252-2873).
- If necessary for the safety of children, takes minors out of their parents' home and places them in temporary foster homes or with relatives until problems are resolved.
- Provides necessary services to reunite families such as parenting classes, psychological support and housing assistance.
- Grants licenses for the establishment of foster homes.
- Assists in the adoption process if a child can't return home.

What happens after DCFS takes legal custody of your children?

1. DCFS will conduct a study of the family condition that resulted in placing your children under their care.
2. DCFS will detail a service plan within 45 days.
3. DCFS will see that a doctor examines your child.

4. DCFS, in conformity with the Burgos Consent Decree, is required to provide services in the Spanish language to families and children whose primary language is Spanish.
5. DCFS will notify the General Consul of Mexico in cases when Mexican children or the children of Mexican parents are removed from home.

When your children are with DCFS, you have the right to:

- A report on the physical and emotional condition of your children.
- A clear explanation of each step of the legal process and treatment as well as your participation in the process.
- Have services in the Spanish language, if that is your preference.
- Have relatives considered as possible foster care parents even if the relatives reside in Mexico.
- Be informed of when and where you can visit your children, unless there's a court order indicating otherwise.
- Be notified immediately of any Administrative Case Reviews or other legal hearings. It is important that you do not miss the meetings, because they often lead to a solution for problems.
- Immediately inform the caseworker assigned to the case if you feel uncomfortable with the temporary foster home of your children. If you don't get an answer, talk to the caseworker's supervisor.