

Introduction to NC Child Welfare System

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3 Topics



Report



Assessment



Outcomes

1. Reports



County Department of
Social Services
(Reside or Found)

Mandated Reporter



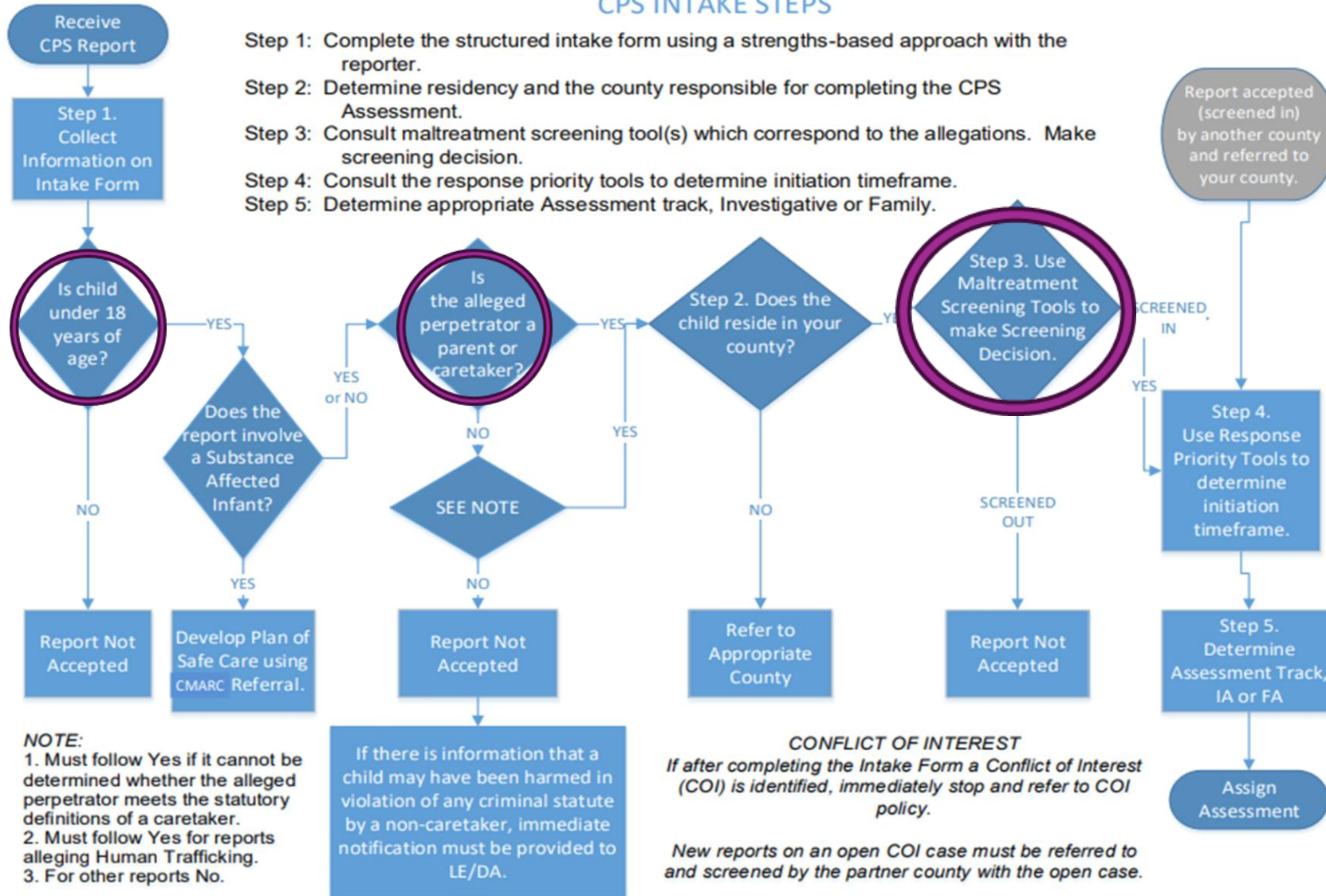
DSS Response



CPS INTAKE Intake Steps



CPS INTAKE STEPS



20 Screening Tools

CPS INTAKE

Maltreatment Type Screening Tools

Attachment A

A. Physical Injury Screening Tool Directions: This is not an all-inclusive list. There may be information that is reported that must be screened in for an assessment.

Is the parent/caretaker causing serious non-accidental physical injury, which creates a substantial risk of death, disfigurement, or impairment?

Fractures, subdural hematoma, dislocations, sprains, internal injuries, burns, and inflicted injuries such as extensive welts, bruises, lacerations, bites and abrasions would be indicative of abuse. The specific injuries listed are not intended to be an all-inclusive list but are an indication of information that does warrant an Investigative Assessment. There may be instances where a child has bruises that do not rise to the level of abuse but are considered unsafe discipline (refer to Unsafe Discipline Maltreatment Screening Tool), as well as situations where there may be bruising and there is no abuse or neglect.

Is the parent/caretaker causing the child to be at a substantial risk of serious non-accidental abuse or injury?

This refers to a situation when the parent/caretaker knows that the environment has a substantial risk for serious non-accidental abuse or injury and allows the child to remain in this environment. In situations where the child has unexplained injuries, and there is no clear perpetrator, these reports would be accepted, as the statute refers to "creates or allows to be created".

Has the parent been driving while intoxicated?

If the allegations are that a parent or caretaker is driving under the influence of mind-impairing substances, regardless of whether they are prescribed or not and the child is in the car, the report **must** be accepted for assessment. It is irrelevant whether or not the caretaker was criminally charged as the statute reads, "creates or allows to be created." A child is unsafe in a moving vehicle with an impaired caretaker driving. All of these reports must be accepted for abuse.

Abuse Screening Tools

- Physical Injury
- Sexual Abuse
- Cruel/Grossly Inappropriate Behavior Modification
- Emotional Abuse
- Moral Turpitude
- Human Trafficking

Neglect Screening Tools

- Improper Care
- Improper Supervision
- Unsafe Discipline
- Abandonment
- Improper Medical/Remedial Care
- Injurious Environment
- Illegal Placement/Adoption
- Fail to follow JFT via DJJ
- Substance Abuse
- Substance Affected Infant
- Domestic Violence

Improper Care

H. Improper Care Screening Tool Directions: This is not an all-inclusive list. There may be information that is reported that must be screened in for an assessment.

Is the parent/caretaker failing to provide sufficient food?

The parent/caretaker needs to provide sufficient food for the child to prevent nutritional deficiencies. A report would be accepted in situations where adequate food has not been provided for timeframe that interferes with the health needs of the child based on age and other conditions. A CPS Assessment to determine whether food neglect exists must occur when a child shows symptoms of malnutrition, dehydration, or food poisoning. If the county child welfare services agency receives a report and the only information is there is no food in the home, this report would be accepted, and a CPS Assessment would be conducted. A CPS Assessment must occur if the parent/caretaker fails to meet specific dietary needs of the child.

Is the parent/caretaker failing to provide appropriate and reasonable clothing?

A CPS Assessment to determine whether clothing neglect exists must occur when the child suffers illness, exposure or frostbite due to inadequate clothing or the clothing is insufficient to protect the child from the elements. This may include severe sunburn. Consideration is given to whether the clothing is sufficient to protect the child from the elements and health hazards.

Is the parent/caretaker failing to ensure proper hygiene?

Depending on the age and needs of the child, it is a concern when a serious health hazard is present, and the parent/caretaker is not taking appropriate action to eliminate the problem.

Is the parent/caretaker failing to provide adequate shelter?

The parent/caretaker needs to provide housing or emergency shelter or make alternate arrangements in the event the family is homeless. The parent/caretaker needs to ensure the child is safe and protected from the elements.

Is the parent/caretaker failing to provide a basic education?

Educational neglect pertains to the failure of the parent/caretaker to meet the child's educational needs. Educational neglect may take the form of permitted chronic truancy, failure to enroll or provide alternative education, or inattention to special education needs.

The allegation of permitted chronic truancy would apply after the inability of the school to engage the parent/caretaker in efforts to improve the child's attendance. N.C.G.S. §115C-378 describes a school principal's responsibilities in relation to children who are repeatedly absent and sets out circumstances in which a principal must notify DSS regarding unlawful absences. After 10 accumulated unexcused absences in a school year, the principal, or the principal's designee, is required to confer with the student and the parent, guardian, or custodian to determine if a good faith effort has been made to comply with the compulsory school attendance law. If there is a determination that a good faith effort has not been made, the principal is required to notify the district attorney and DSS in the county where the child resides. Upon receiving notification by the principal or the principal's designee, DSS must determine whether to undertake an investigation under N.C.G.S. §7B-302. Intervention by DSS must occur only after the school's efforts have

proven to be unable to ensure the child's attendance. However, the reporting of educational neglect by schools may also result in the reporting of other forms of abuse or neglect. School truancy, whether excessive, unexcused or not, may be an indicator of other forms of underlying abuse or neglect in the home. The allegation of permitted chronic truancy does not pertain to children who willfully refuse to attend school.

In North Carolina, children between the ages of seven and sixteen must be enrolled in a public school or an equivalent or receive private instruction through home schooling. Educational neglect may take the form of failure to home school, to register, or to enroll a child of mandatory school age. North Carolina courts have consistently found that it is "fundamental that a child who receives proper care and supervision in modern times is provided a basic education" and that willful failure and refusal to send children to school or to provide children with an alternative education, constitutes neglect for improper care and injurious environment. *In re McMillan*, 30 N.C. App. 235 (1976)

Lastly, educational neglect may take the form of refusing to allow or failing to obtain recommended special education or remedial education services. The North Carolina Court of Appeals found neglect where a father refused to send his mentally handicapped child to public school, and its special education programs, because the father insisted on educating his children at home. *In re Devone*, 86 N.C. App. 57 (1987) The court noted that the child needed additional stimulation outside the home and that denial of the remedial care available in the public schools constituted neglect and lack of proper care. The *Devone* Court, quoting *In re Huber*, 57 N.C. App. 453 (1982), stated, "[t]o deprive a child of the opportunity for normal growth and development is perhaps the greatest neglect a parent can impose upon a child."

Is the parent/caretaker providing drugs/alcohol to the child?

The parent/caretaker providing alcohol/drugs to the child or consuming alcohol/drugs with the child are situations that meet the definition of neglect and a CPS Assessment must occur.

FOOD

APPROP
CLOTHING

HYGIENE

SHELTER

EDUCATION

GIVING
SUBSTANCES

Dependency Screening Tool

CPS INTAKE

Maltreatment Type Screening Tools

Attachment A

- R. **Dependency Screening Tool Directions:** This is not an all-inclusive list. There may be information that is reported that must be screened in for an assessment.

Is the child without a parent/caretaker?

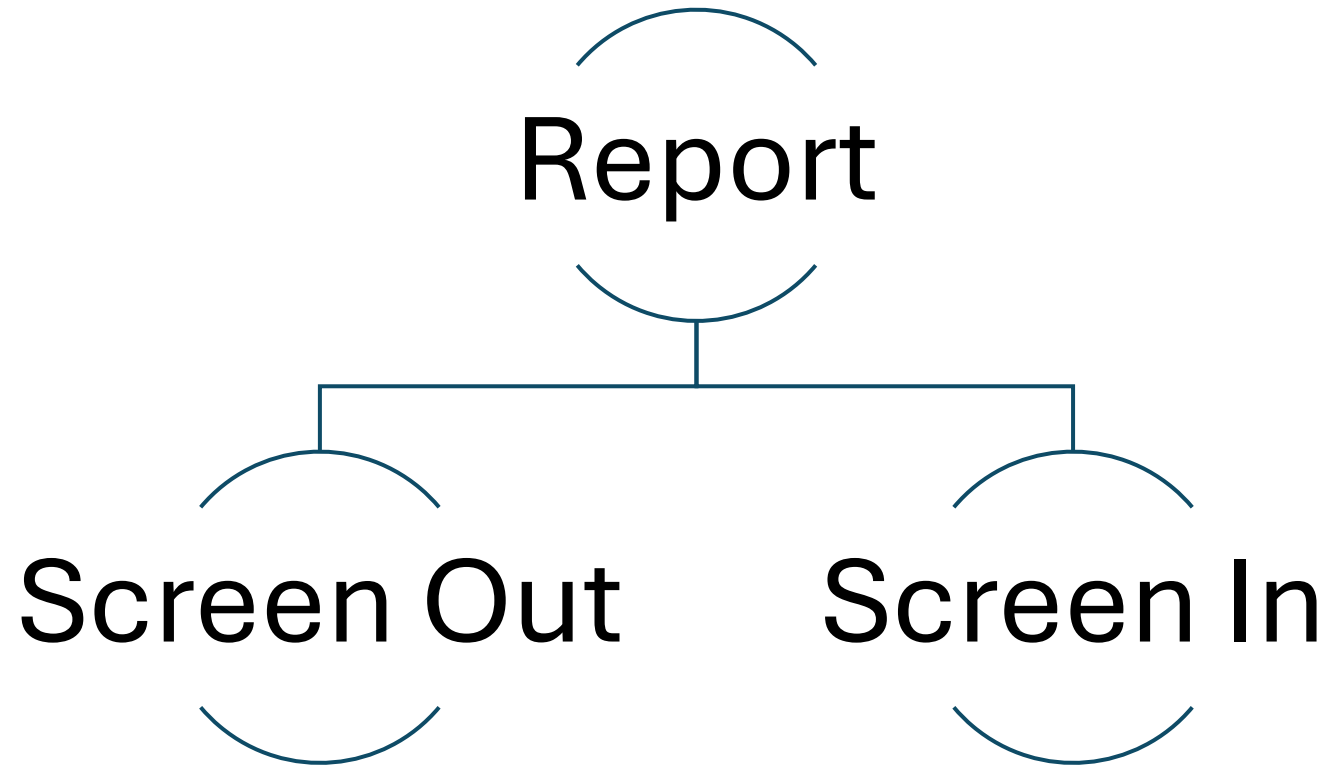
A child can be dependent due to the absence of a parent/caretaker. The parent/caretaker's absence may be due to hospitalization, incarceration, or any situation in which the parent/caretaker is unavailable and there are no alternative arrangements to provide appropriate care. Dependency also refers to the lack of ability of the parent/caretaker. A parent who is hospitalized or incarcerated is not necessarily unwilling to provide care but is unable to provide care due to the present circumstances. An infant who has been safely surrendered is dependent.

Children or youth who appear to be unaccompanied, whose parent/caretaker is absent, or who have run away from home may be vulnerable to exploitation or may have already been exploited through sex trafficking or labor trafficking. Intake workers should consider if the child is a victim of human trafficking and consult the [Human Trafficking Screening Tool](#). Intake workers may need to ask questions to further explore the child's circumstances regarding access to basic needs (food, clothing, shelter), who is providing those needs, and whether the child is exchanging sexual acts to meet these needs or for anything else of value.

Is the parent/caretaker lacking capacity to provide care and supervision to the child without having an appropriate alternative child care arrangement?

Dependency can also occur in situations where the parent/caretaker is incapacitated due to mental or physical illness, substance abuse, or any situation which impacts the ability of the parent to provide appropriate care. If the parent/caretaker fails to ensure an appropriate alternative child care arrangement, the child is dependent, and a CPS Assessment must occur.

2-Level Review



Screen Out

Notify Law
Enforcement
if
abuse/crime
not by the
“WHO”

- Reporter information may be shared

Notice to Reporter



w/in 5 working days of report



Whether accepted for assessment



Whether referred to law enforcement

And

Process for Reporter to Challenge Screen Out

- Inform no assessment, basis for decision, right for review
- w/in 5 business days of receiving notice

Child Welfare Services Constituent Concerns Office

The Constituent Concerns Office responds to questions, concerns, complaints, and general questions about Child Welfare Services within North Carolina and the role of the county/local Department of Social Services (DSS) in child welfare matters. Anyone may contact this office when they have a concern about the involvement of DSS and the proper handling of a Child Welfare Case, including Child Protective Services (CPS) assessment, an In-Home Services case, a Foster Care case, or a case where the plan is changing to adoption. Inquiries may be sent by phone, email, and mail.

Members of the Constituent Concerns Team will listen to an individual's concerns, share information with them about child welfare services within the state, share child welfare policy, and determine if it is necessary to consult with the local DSS about the concerns. If the office does consult with a local DSS, the goal is to determine whether the local department has complied with law, rule, and policy during the CPS assessment or the provision of services for the handling of a child welfare case.

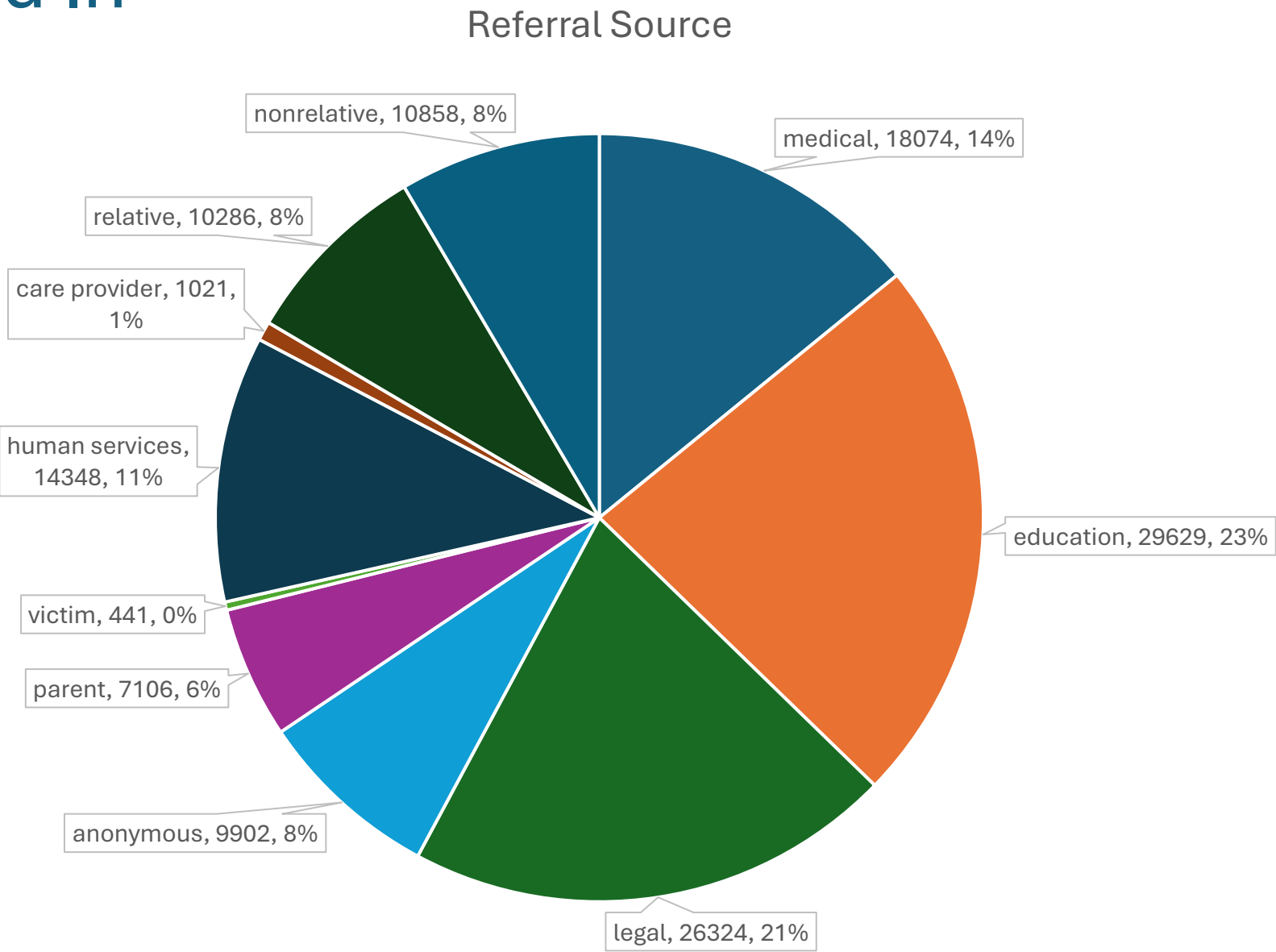
The Constituent Concerns Team has no authority over court rulings, and this team also does not have the legal authority to make decisions for a local DSS. The team does consult with local departments about the concerns raised and, when necessary, offers guidance and assistance to the local department for the case.

If you have questions or concerns about the involvement of DSS and the provision of child welfare services with your family or someone you know, you may contact this office at **919.527.6340** or email us at DSSwebRequestsChildwelfare@dhhs.nc.gov

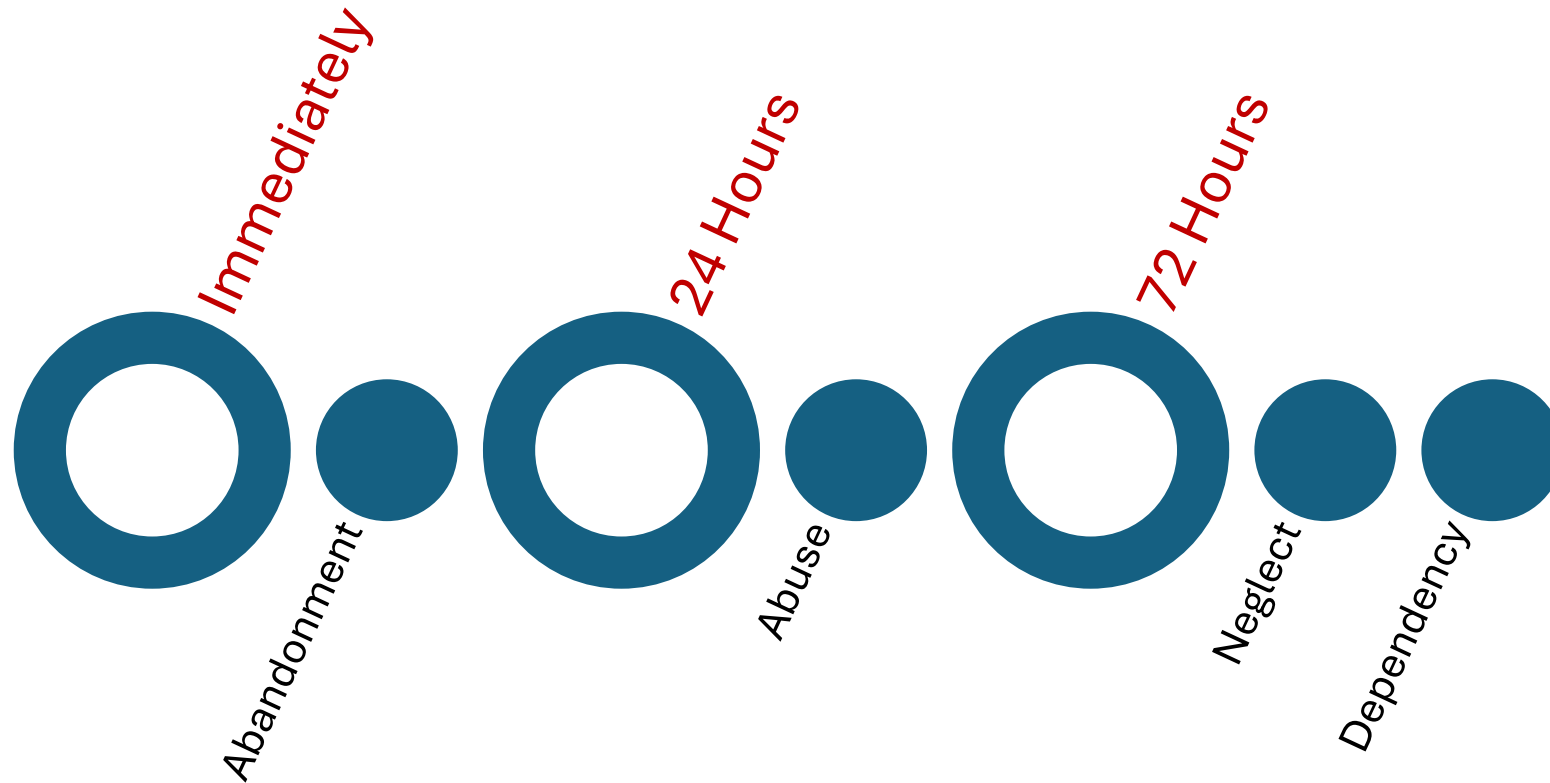
Call:
919-527-6340

Email:
**DSSwebRequestChildwelfare
@dhhs.nc.gov**

2023-2024: Screened In 114,542 Children



2. Assessments





Assessment





Home where child lives



Contact Collaterals

G.S. 7B-302(e)



Director may consult... may make written request for any information, “whether or not confidential” that in director’s opinion is relevant. Access to and copies of shall be provided to extent permitted by federal law and regulations.



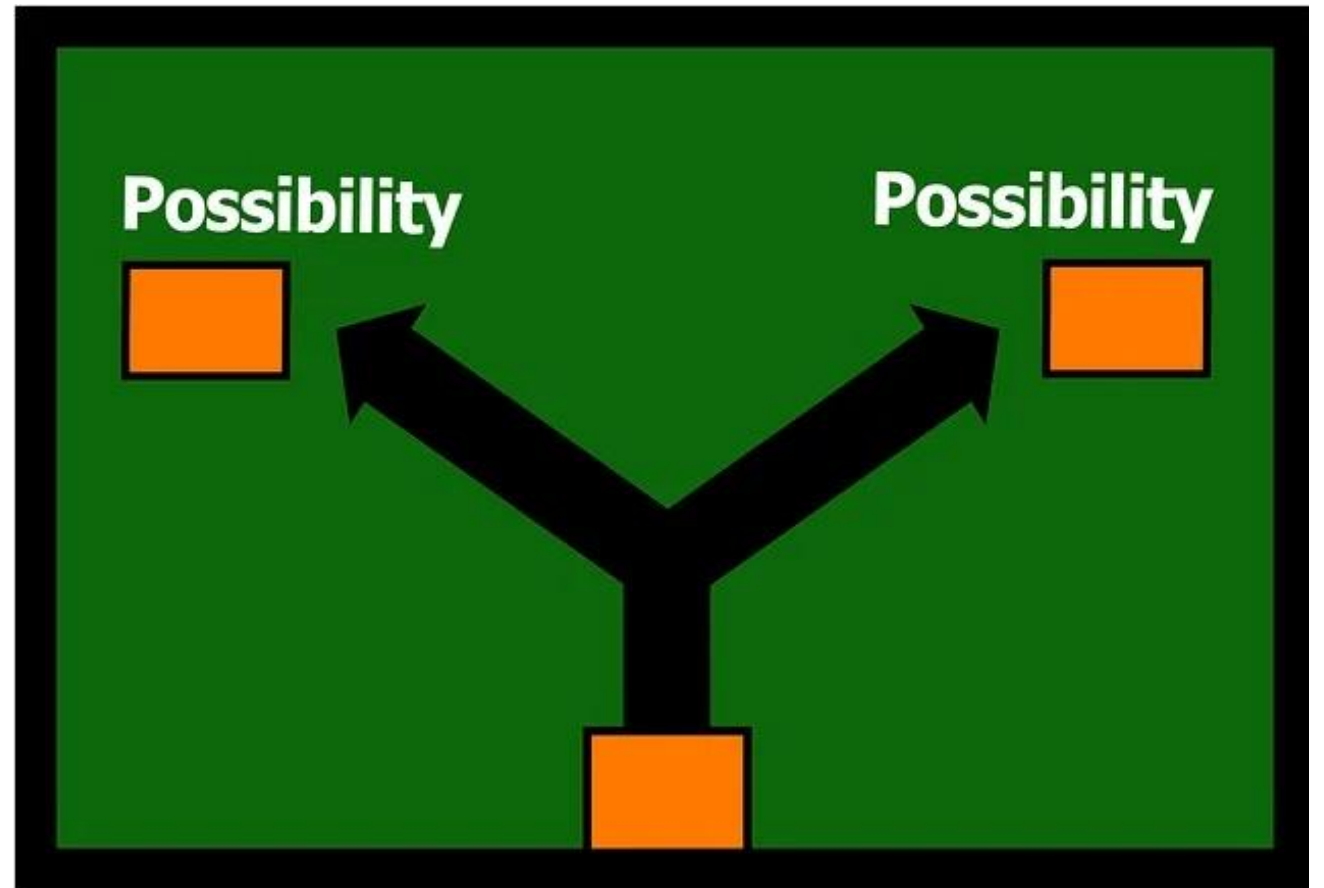
HIPAA OK

Failure without Lawful Excuse

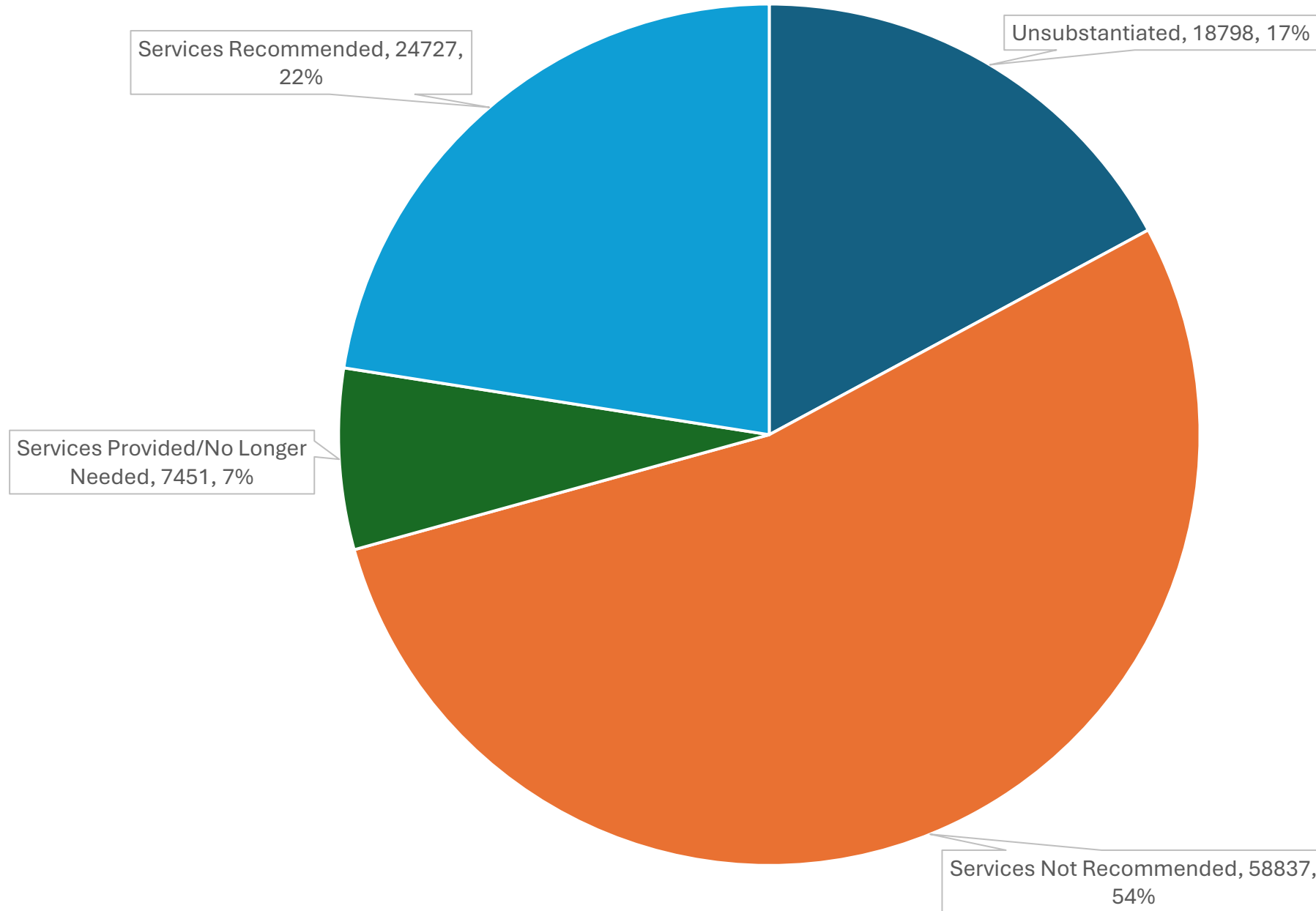
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA				 <i>File No.</i>	
County				In The General Court Of Justice District Court Division	
IN THE MATTER OF				PETITION - OBSTRUCTION OF OR INTERFERENCE WITH JUVENILE ASSESSMENT (ABUSE/NEGLECT/DEPENDENCY)	
<i>Name And Address Of Juvenile</i> 					
<i>Juvenile's Date Of Birth</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Race</i>	<i>Sex</i>		
<i>Name Of Petitioner</i> 					
<i>Name And Address Of Respondent 1</i> 				<i>Name And Address Of Respondent 2</i> 	

G.S. 7B-303

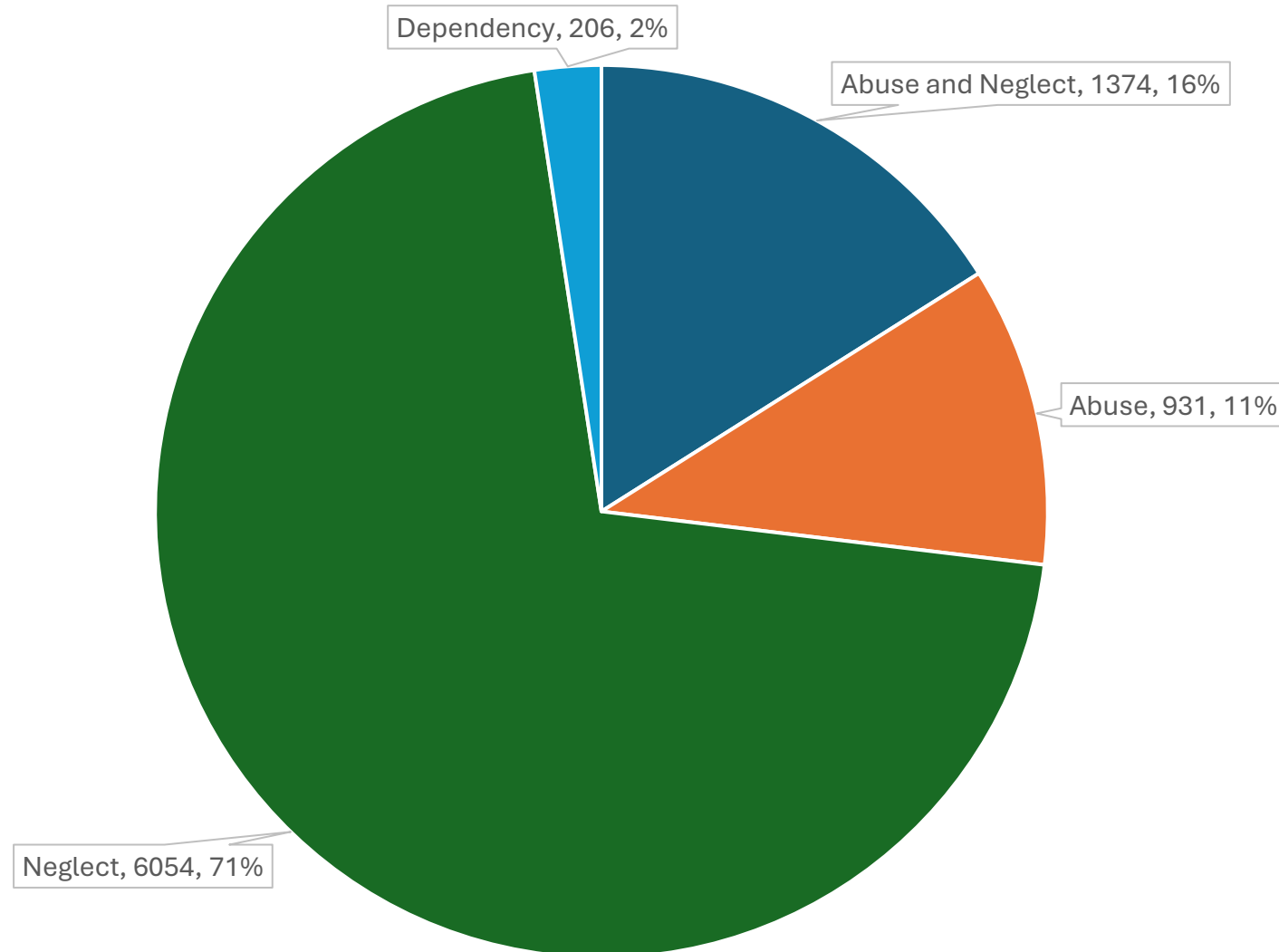
3. Outcomes



2022-2023



Findings (Not Exclusive) 2023-2024





Protective Services

- Referrals
- Case Plan for In-Home Services
- Temporary Custody Possible
- Petition Filed in Court with or without Nonsecure Custody



2nd Notice to Reporter

- w/in 5 working days of completing Ax
- Whether there is a finding
- If action is being taken
- If so, what
- Whether petition was filed



Recourse for Reporter



If no petition filed, request review by prosecutor or Division of Social Services



5 working days from receipt of DSS notice



1 reviewing entity or both; shared or independent review



Conference with reporter



Decision w/in 20 days from receipt of request for review



In Home Services

- Case Plan
- Voluntary
- Address Conditions
- Ensure Safety

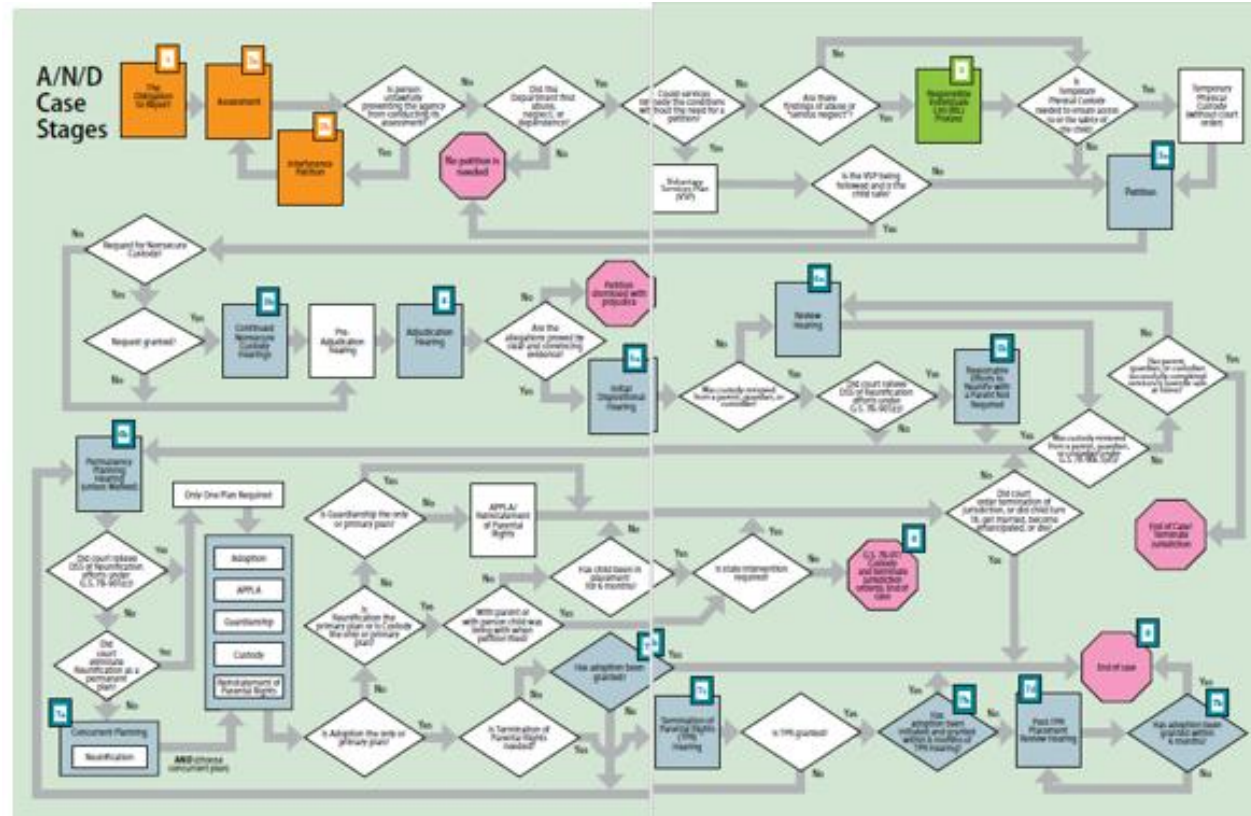


Examples?

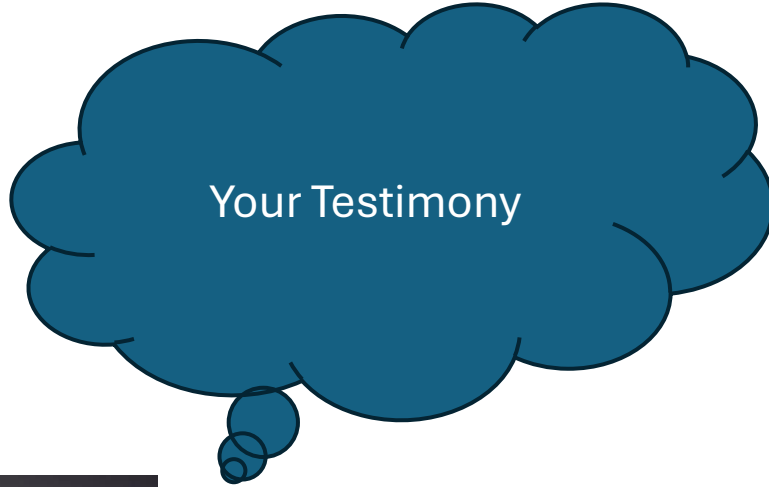
Court Action

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA				File No.	
County				In The General Court Of Justice District Court Division	
IN THE MATTER OF				JUVENILE PETITION (ABUSE/NEGLECT/DEPENDENCY)	
<i>Name And Address Of Juvenile</i> 					
<i>Juvenile's Date Of Birth</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Race</i>	<i>Sex</i>		
<i>Name Of Petitioner</i> 				G.S. 7B-101, -400, -402	
				<i>Condition Alleged</i> ☐ Abused ☐ Neglected ☐ Dependent	
Spoken Language Court Interpreter Needed For Any Party, Victim, Or Witness? (If Yes, identify person(s) and language(s). Interpreter provided free of court proceedings at no cost.)					

Complicated Process with Many Stages



May be Involved



Purposes

Protect children and constitutional rights

Provide services that respect family autonomy and child's need for safety, continuity, and permanence

Consider facts, **child's needs and limitations, and family's strengths and weaknesses**

Standards for removal and **prevent unnecessary and inappropriate separation** of children from parents

No One Size Fits All



Report



Assessment



Outcomes

Statistics in this Presentation

Obtained 10/25/2025 from the UNC Chapel Hill Jordan Institute for Families website: <http://ssw.unc.edu/ma/>

Duncan, D.F., Flair, K.A., Stewart, C.J., Guest, S., Rose, R.A., Malley, K.M.D., Reives, W. (2020). Management Assistance for Child Welfare, Work First, and Food & Nutrition Services in North Carolina (v3.2).