CPS Investigation Preparation Guide

A calm, practical checklist for organizing information and asking informed questions.

START HERE: You do not have to solve everything in one conversation. Focus on safety, clarity, documentation, and getting advice that applies to your state.

A practical, family-centered guide

This resource is designed to help people organize information, ask informed questions, and locate appropriate support. It is educational—not legal advice. Procedures, rights, deadlines, and agency practices vary by state, tribe, court, and individual case. Confirm current requirements with a qualified attorney or the relevant agency.

Before an investigation or agency contact

An investigation can move quickly and feel overwhelming. Your first priorities are the child's immediate safety, understanding what is being asked, and keeping a clear record. Stay calm, be respectful, and avoid guessing when you do not know an answer.

- Write down the name, title, agency, phone number, and supervisor contact information of each person who contacts you.
- Ask what the concern is, what the next step will be, and whether there is a deadline or scheduled meeting.
- Ask whether participation in a proposed service, interview, or plan is voluntary or required by a court order or statute. Request the explanation in writing.
- Do not sign a document you do not understand. Ask for time to read it and to consult an attorney.
- Do not destroy, alter, or hide records. Preserve original messages, notices, and documents.

Questions you can ask

- “What specific safety concern are you assessing?”
- “What facts or information are being relied upon?”
- “What is expected of me, and what is the legal or policy basis?”
- “Is there a court order? If so, may I have a copy?”
- “Who is the assigned supervisor, and how can I contact them?”
- “What services are available, what do they cost, and are there alternatives?”
- “How will my information be recorded, shared, and corrected if inaccurate?”

Keep a contemporaneous contact log

Make an entry as soon as practical after each call, visit, meeting, or message. Separate what you personally observed from what someone else told you. Use exact words for important statements where possible.

Date / time	Person & role	Method / location	Summary / next step

Organize records

- Keep notices, court papers, service referrals, appointment confirmations, school or medical records, and relevant communications in date order.
- Save electronic messages in their original form when possible; keep a backup in a secure location.
- Create a one-page timeline with dates, events, people present, and supporting documents.
- Keep a separate list of questions for your attorney and the agency. Update it after each contact.
- Do not post confidential case details, identifying information about children, or unverified allegations publicly.

If you disagree with information in a record

Avoid editing an agency or court record yourself. Ask the agency or your attorney about the formal process for requesting access, submitting a correction, adding a response, or challenging information. Rules and deadlines differ by jurisdiction.

Record / date	What appears inaccurate	Supporting information	Request made / response

Get qualified help

Consider consulting a lawyer who handles dependency or child welfare matters in the state where the case is pending. If you cannot afford counsel, ask the court clerk, local legal aid organization, or state bar referral service about eligibility and appointment procedures. Do not assume every family qualifies for appointed counsel at every stage.

For a national legal aid locator, visit Legal Services Corporation – Get Legal Help. For general child welfare information, visit Child Welfare Information Gateway.

Important safety note

If a child or another person is in immediate danger, contact local emergency services. Do not delay urgent safety action to complete a worksheet. Keep sensitive records secure and share them only with people who have a legitimate need to know.

Prepared by A Voice 4 Our Children. Review date: November 5, 2026. Verify links, laws, contact details, and procedures before relying on them. This publication does not create an attorney-client relationship or guarantee any outcome.