



# Colorado's Child Welfare System and the Perinatal Period

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# Mandatory Reporting

Mandatory reporters must call the Colorado Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline ( 844-CO-4-Kids) within 24 hours if they know or suspect child abuse or neglect.

In 2025, the General Assembly of the State of Colorado passed House Bill 25-1188, which updated the rules for mandatory reporters. ‘

CDHS has released a new [free training](#) we encourage you to take.



# Where Do I Call?



The county where  
the family resides



The State Hotline  
**1-844-CO-4-KIDS**



Local law  
enforcement



**COLORADO**  
Department of Human Services

# What Happens When I Call?

When calling to report a concern, a certified professional (often known as hotline staff) will gather the following information:

- A narrative regarding what the caller is worried about, including specifics about any injuries and impact on the child,
- Information about the children, their family, and any support system they might have,
- Information about the family's culture, their preferred language, and how to contact them,
- Any relevant information tied to safety, which includes safety of the child and safety for anyone responding to the allegation (this may include but is not limited to hazards in the home or the family's access to weapons),
- Contact information for additional parties who may have witnessed abuse or neglect or have more information about the allegation,
- Strengths of the family or additional protections in place.

Staff may be prompted to ask a caller additional questions, depending on what the reported concern is. You can see examples of these on the [Colorado Enhanced Screening Guide](#).

# What Happens When I Call?

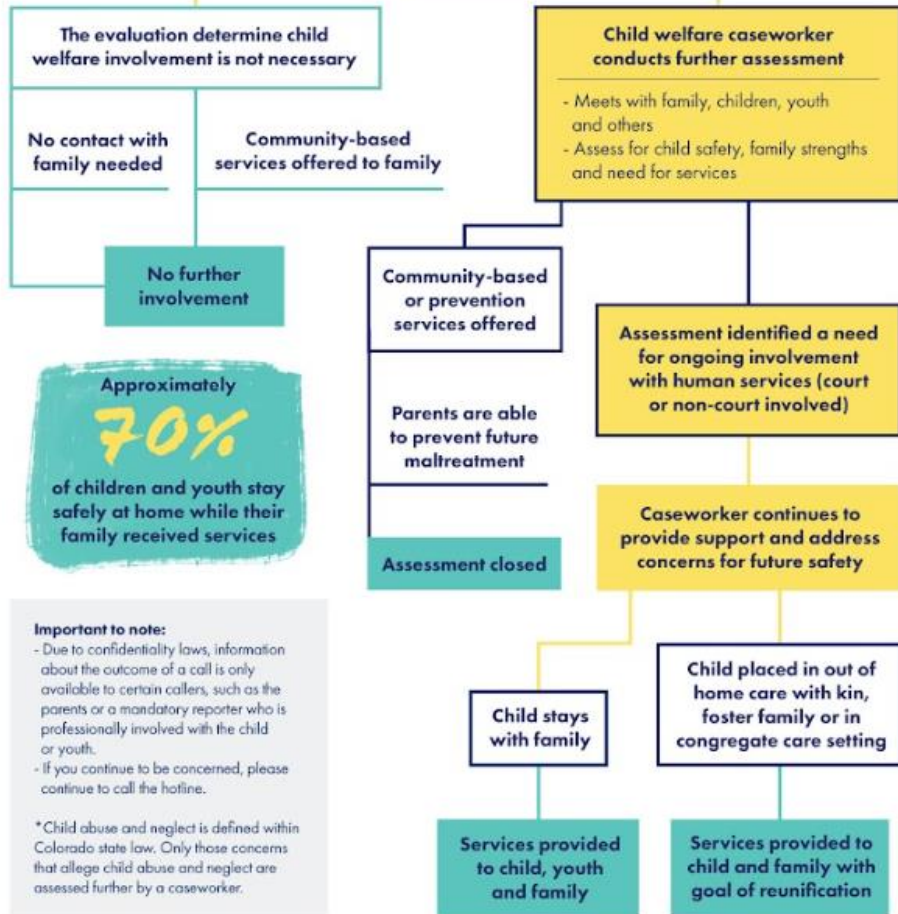
If perinatal substance use is identified as a in the referral, staff are prompted to ask 5 follow-up questions:

1. Was the infant born substance exposed? If “Yes” Infant Exposure
2. Is the infant experiencing withdrawal symptoms?
3. Was a plan of safe care or safe discharge plan created?
4. Was the infant born with physical impairments associated with substance exposure?
5. Were resources, referrals, or services offered for the infant and caregiver to address their health and substance use treatment needs?



Share what you know  
with a trained call taker

Team of caseworkers determines if  
abuse or neglect may have occurred\*



**Important to note:**

- Due to confidentiality laws, information about the outcome of a call is only available to certain callers, such as the parents or a mandatory reporter who is professionally involved with the child or youth.
- If you continue to be concerned, please continue to call the hotline.

\* Child abuse and neglect is defined within Colorado state law. Only those concerns that allege child abuse and neglect are assessed further by a caseworker.

# What happens after I call?



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# What Happens After I Call?

When a county department receives a report, the information is reviewed by certified staff (often referred to as a RED Team) to determine if the concerns meet the statutory requirements for a response by a caseworker. As part of this process the team will also review:

- the family's history with child welfare,
- the child or youth's vulnerabilities, and
- previous actions by county departments.

If the information reported in the referral is historical, consideration is given to how that historical information may currently impact the safety of a child.

Most calls don't result in a visit from a caseworker or child welfare involvement. If a call is determined not to meet the statutory requirements for a response by child welfare, consideration is given to whether prevention services are appropriate and available in the community.

# What Happens After I Call?

The decision of how quickly to initiate an assessment is based on specific reported information that is credible and indicates whether a child may be unsafe or at risk of harm as defined in statute (7.103.61). Response time can vary between 8 hours to 3 or 5 calendar days depending the level of safety concern.

A child welfare caseworker, they will meet with the family to assess child safety, family strengths, and whether there is a need for services or support. The caseworker may also speak with collaterals to better understand the safety, risk, and protective factors of the family.

As a result of an assessment, families may be referred to community-based services, or continue working with a county department of human services through a court-involved or non-court-involved case.

# What Happens After I Call?

If a call requires a response from a child welfare caseworker, it will be assigned for assessment and assigned to one of two tracks:

- **Family Assessment Response (FAR)**  
FAR is used for low- to moderate-risk situations. This pathway focuses on assessing family strengths and needs without requiring a formal finding of abuse or neglect.
- **High Risk Assessment (HRA)**  
HRA is used for serious, egregious, fatal or near-fatal situations, as well as cases involving sexual abuse or institutional abuse. This pathway requires a formal determination regarding abuse or neglect.





## A Note on Plans of Safe Care

In Colorado child welfare professionals are the only professionals required to complete a Plan of Safe Care; healthcare providers are not legally required to complete a POSC with families.

However, as best practice, health care providers are asked to work with pregnant people and their families to create a POSC prior to child welfare involvement. This may be during the prenatal period or as soon as prenatal substance use is identified.



# Plan of Safe Care Collaboration

A POSC must address:

The health, support, and substance use treatment needs of the infant AND family or caregiver(s).

Plans of Safe Care include referrals and follow-up care for:

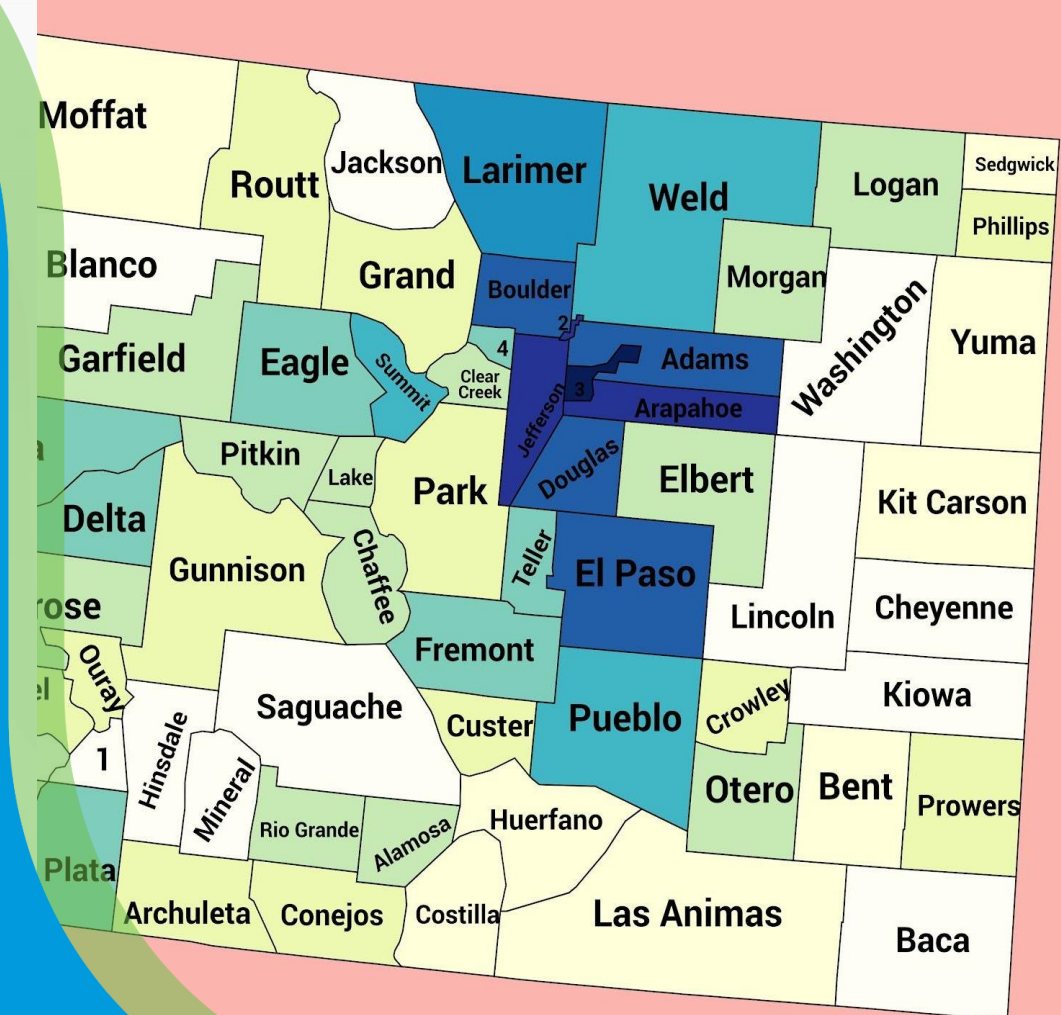
- Infant's health and well-being
- Physical health of impacted caregiver and family
- Behavioral health of impacted caregiver and family
- Parenting/family support





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# Colorado is State Supervised County Administered



## State Supervised County Administered



Federal law → interpreted and implemented by States



State laws → Colorado Code of Regulations



State laws and regulations → interpreted and implemented by counties

Thank you!  
Questions?