

## For direct help

### Child Support Enforcement

800/447-4278

### Day Care Information

877/746-0829

### Medical Card

800/228-6533

### Payments

Central Payments Unit

800/525-0499

### Post Adoption & Guardianship Information & Referral Service

866/538-8892

### To report suspected child abuse or neglect contact the SCR Hotline:

800/25-ABUSE

800/252-2873

TTY 800/358-5117

### Advocacy Office Hours

Monday-Friday

8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

### Phone

217/524-2029

or

800/232-3798

### TTY

800/513-4980

### Fax

217/557-7278

## The Advocacy Office for Children and Families



*“The processes that the Department uses were established to serve the best interests of the children and families of Illinois. If we fail to do this, or if all appropriate resources are not applied to the problem, then we’re not fulfilling our obligation to children and families.”*

## The Advocacy Office for Children and Families

*Serves the children of Illinois by ensuring that the decisions and actions of the Department and its agents are guided by the concern for the child’s best interests.*

## What is the Advocacy Office?

The Advocacy Office for Children and Families responds to complaints, concerns, inquiries and suggestions about the Department of Children and Family Services. The staff provides referrals to appropriate DCFS staff and suggestions to executive staff for improvements and changes to the Department.

## Who can call the Advocacy Office?



Anyone can contact the Advocacy Office. Frequent callers include foster parents, biological parents, adoptive parents, service providers, children and adolescents, and DCFS staff.

## How can the Advocacy Office help me?

The Advocacy Office offers many services. Following are a few of the issues handled by Advocacy Office staff.



*The advocate's primary responsibility is to listen and convey to the caller that he or she has the right to be heard.*

### Youth Hotline

**Phone: 866/459-6884**

**TTY: 217/524-3715**

Also available during normal business hours, the Youth Hotline is available to handle complaints, concerns, inquiries and suggestions made by youth served by the Department.

### Policy Waivers

The Department's Director can grant waivers to policy requirements. Caseworkers and others may contact the Advocacy Office for Children and Families to seek waivers to policy. A common request is to expand the capacity of a foster home to care for more children than Department policy allows. The Advocacy Office will review requests and make recommendations to the Director's Office.

### Toll Free Help Line

**Phone:**

**800/232-3798**

**TTY:**

**217/524-3715**

The Help Line is available during normal business hours. The help line staff will answer your questions regarding child welfare issues, problems and concerns.

## What should I expect when I call the Advocacy Office?

Complaints or concerns made by the caller are handled by the advocates. The advocates will take the time to listen to the concerns of the caller. By working together, the advocate and caller will be able to determine the specific issues. Once this has been accomplished, steps can be taken toward a resolution.

The advocates are customer-friendly in that they address issues in a timely manner and maintain an impartial viewpoint. If the advocates are unable to answer your question, they will suggest a resource that is better able to assist you.

## What steps should I take before I call the Advocacy Office?



Problems may arise due to a difference of opinion or a misunderstanding. By taking the time to talk and listen, many issues can be resolved before contacting the Advocacy Office.



First, voice your concerns to your DCFS or private agency caseworker. If the caseworker does not provide satisfactory assistance, contact the caseworker's supervisor.

If your issue is still unresolved, contact the Advocacy Office either by letter or telephone.

## The Advocacy Office does not:

- Investigate actions that do not involve DCFS or the agencies with whom we contract
- Investigate the acts or decisions of courts, judges or their staff
- Investigate the Office of the Public Guardian or the Attorney General
- Investigate agencies of the federal government
- Accept or investigate a report of child abuse or neglect