

CHILD WELFARE SERVICES (formerly Child Protective Services)

If a family is reported for possible child abuse or neglect, the family may be visited at home by a police officer or by a social worker from Child Welfare Services (CWS).

There are four types of harm to children:

- 1) Physical abuse: Injuring a child by beating, kicking, biting, burning, shaking or other ways of physically harming a child.
- 2) Child neglect: Abandoning or not supervising a child; not meeting a child's physical, educational, or medical needs.
- 3) Sexual abuse: Any sexual activity between an adult and a child (under 16 years old).
- 4) Emotional abuse: Frequent screaming, name calling, or rejection of the child.

Most families are never reported for child abuse or neglect. However, families that are visited by CWS should carefully review and keep all paperwork. If there is any question or concern about understanding the social worker, the family should request that the social worker bring an interpreter or cultural liaison to help with communication and understanding. Children should never be used as interpreters. Do not sign any paperwork unless you understand what it says. It is important to remain calm and cooperative.

In many cases, there will be an ohana (family) conference where family members and supportive people are brought together to discuss the situation and come up with a plan to ensure that the children are safe and the family receives needed services. This plan may include placement of the child outside of the parents' home with other family members or friends.

CHILD WELFARE SERVICES (Continued)

If CWS believes it is not safe for the children to remain in the home, the children will be placed with a relative, with a foster family, or in an emergency shelter. If this happens, the parents may wish to contact an elder or community leader and a lawyer to make sure that both the family and CWS have enough information. There may be a court hearing where a judge decides whether it is safe for the children to return home. CWS will work with the family to make the home safe for the children's return.

CWS will help the family learn how to resolve conflicts and use effective discipline methods with their children. CWS may help the family get needed services in the home or at an agency.

If more information is needed, ask for a copy of the "Guide to Child Welfare Services" from any CWS office or worker.

