



Client Guide to Rights, Responsibilities and Services: Assessment

- Executive Director Nicole Caldwell, MBA

What is Guernsey County Children Services?

Guernsey County Children Services (GCCS) is the agency responsible by Ohio Law for assessing reports of child abuse, neglect, and dependency. When a report is accepted, we are required to assess the situation to determine whether abuse and/or neglect may have, or is likely to occur, or if the child is dependent. We also assess families who may be in need of services (FINS). We work with families to make sure their children are safe. We do this in cooperation with families and in most cases we do this while children remain in their home. Rarely, children cannot be kept safe in their homes and are placed away from their parents, generally temporarily. There is a detailed pamphlet describing your rights and responsibilities should this occur.

Do I Have Rights?

Yes! You have many rights which is why we wanted you to have the information in this brochure. While we cannot cover every situation, this guide is meant to provide you general information. Should you have questions this guide does not answer, please talk with your caseworker or his/her supervisor. If you do not receive answers to your questions, or if you have a complaint, we will be happy to work with you to resolve these issues. The agency has a Client Grievance and Complaint Policy and Procedure. If you would like a copy, ask your caseworker or contact our receptionist. This packet must generally be completed and filed within 30 days of the occurrence of the issue you wish to be addressed. Most issues generally are resolved by talking with the staff member working with you and your family. If you know or believe you are a member or eligible for membership within an Indian Tribe please inform your caseworker. We will work with you to determine your membership status and put you in contact with representatives of any tribal nation of which you may be a citizen.

Your caseworker: _____

Your caseworker's phone #: _____ ext. _____

Supervisor: _____

Guernsey County Children Services
274 Highland Avenue
Cambridge, Ohio 43725
Monday-Friday 8:30 am to 4:30 pm

Phone: 740-439-5555
Fax: 740-439-5521
After Hours Hotline: 740-439-5555
After 4:30 pm M-F
Weekends and Holiday

What to expect from GCCS



Below is some general information about our assessment process. Please ask your Caseworker any other questions you may have.

- When we meet with you, we will inform you of the *specific* concerns which have been reported to us.
- We are required to have one of our *caseworkers* talk with you *face-to-face*, talk with all adults in the home, and talk with all children in the home privately. If they are too young to talk, we must at least *observe* them.
- We must ask the child privately for *his/her explanation* of what may have happened to him, and ask you for *your explanation* of any harm the child may have suffered, or about a situation that had potential to cause harm.
- By law, we cannot tell you the name of the person who made a report to us. *This is both State and Federal law.*
- We may check for past records about your family, in our county or elsewhere, and may also check criminal records of adults in the home.
- You have the right to talk with a lawyer at any time during the assessment or after it is done, at your expense.
- It is our practice to get your permission to enter your home, however:
 - In an emergency where our caseworker has reason to believe your child is in immediate danger, he/she may contact law enforcement or seek a court order allowing us to enter your home.
 - We may also seek a court order if a parent keeps us from finishing our assessment or denies us access to a child.
- We will keep your personal information - such as names, addresses, and the facts of your case *confidential*. We generally will ask you to sign a written release of information, but during the assessment phase we are not required to do so in every situation.
- We may request that you take a child for a physical or mental health examination. If you have a family doctor or the child already has a therapist, please let us know.
- We have the legal right to take photographs of any visible injuries on a child.
- We will ask you to allow us to communicate with others in order to better serve you and in limited cases we may release information without your permission. Please ask your caseworker about these situations.
- If English is not your or your child's first language, or if you have a serious handicap (such as a hearing impairment), we will provide an interpreter to help during the assessment.
- We are concerned about you and your child's health. If you use tobacco products and want help in quitting, please contact the Guernsey County Health Department at 740-430-3577 or your health care provider. If you or your child are ill, contact your health care provider or Southeastern Ohio Regional Medical Center or another hospital for assistance. We may refer your child to Help Me Grow or your family to other services after meeting with you.
- Though you have a right to refuse to participate in the assessment process, we may refer your family to law enforcement, the county prosecutor or juvenile court if we determine your children may be unsafe. We may also redner a decision without your input. This is of course not our preference and hope to work with you to support and ensure your children are safe. We may also close our case without further involvement by our agency. In all of these situations you will be notified in person and/r writing generally before these actions occur.

Your Comments are Welcome



From time to time, GCCS also surveys clients and others who have had contact with the agency. Your answers to the survey questions are confidential and voluntary. The information gathered is used to help GCCS improve its services.