

## Public Health & Human Services Division FAQs

**Q1.** I am having difficulty with my ex-spouse or ex-boyfriend/girlfriend regarding custody issues. Can I get the County Attorney's Office to represent me in a custody dispute?

**Answer:** No. The County Attorney only represents the St. Louis County Public Health and Human Services Department in child protection cases. If you have concerns that your child is being abused or neglected, you should contact St. Louis County Public Health and Human Services. If you simply need legal representation in a custody dispute, you may contact a legal aid program or hire a private attorney.

**Q2.** Whom can I call to report child abuse or neglect?

**Answer:** You may call either the County Public Health and Human Services Department or law enforcement. On weekdays from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., the St. Louis County Public Health and Human Services Department, Initial Intervention Unit can be reached at (218) 726-2012. In Northern St. Louis County, the Initial Intervention Unit hours on weekdays are from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., and their telephone number is (218) 749-7100. Law enforcement investigation numbers are:

- Duluth Police-SCAN Unit-- (218) 730-5464
- St. Louis County Sheriff's Department – (218) 336-4356

On weekends and holidays, a child protection report can be made to the local law enforcement agency. At any time of day, in a child protection emergency when a child is in immediate danger, dial 911.

**Q3.** My neighbor is collecting welfare benefits while the father of her children lives there and they are both working. Whom can I contact to report suspected welfare fraud?

**Answer:** You should call the St. Louis Public Health & Human Services Department, Fraud Prevention Unit, Community Complaint Line. In Duluth the number is (218) 733-2706; the Range number is (218) 262-6025.

**Q4.** Whom do I contact regarding medical assistance liens?

**Answer:** Medical Assistance liens may be determined by calling the St. Louis County Benefit Recovery Unit at (218) 726-2589.

**Q5.** What services are provided by the St. Louis County Child Support Collections Division and the St. Louis County Attorney's Office?

**Answer:** These offices work together to establish and enforce orders for support of children.

This can include locating absent parents, establishing paternity, establishing child support, medical support, obtaining reimbursement for child care expenses, enforcing payment of support and modification of support orders.

**Q6.** How can I receive child support services from St. Louis County?

**Answer:** If you receive public assistance, you automatically receive these services. If you do not receive public assistance, you can apply at the St. Louis County Child Support Collections Division. To apply for services or to seek additional information on your child support case, contact your local St. Louis County Child Support Office:

**Duluth:** (218) 726-2016

**Virginia:** (218) 749-7126

**Hibbing:** (218) 262-6000

You can also download an application from the Minnesota Child Support Enforcement Division web site at: <https://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserver/Public/DHS-1958-ENG>. The application is also available in Hmong, Somali, and Spanish.

**Q7.** Where can I receive additional information regarding child support?

**Answer:** Individuals can get up-to-the minute information about payments online at Minnesota Child Support Online, or by telephone 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, at (800) 657-3512. Parents need their 10-digit participant number and personal identification number (PIN) to get their case and payment information. Information about the participant number and PIN is found on Minnesota Child Support Online.

**Q8.** I receive child support collection services through the St. Louis County Child Support Collections Division. Does the County Attorney's Office represent me in actions to establish, modify, or enforce support orders?

**Answer:** No, the St. Louis County Attorney's Office represents the Child Support Collections Division. If you want legal representation, you can hire an attorney to present your issues.

**Q9.** With what types of crimes can juveniles be charged?

**Answer:** Juveniles commit crimes ranging from felonies, including first degree murder, gross misdemeanors, misdemeanors, petty misdemeanors, status offenses, and local ordinance violations.

**Q10.** When is a juvenile entitled to a public defender?

**Answer:** Generally, whenever there is a possibility of out-of-home placement (misdemeanor level charges or more severe), and when there is financial need.

**Q11.** Are juvenile delinquency proceedings open to the public?

**Answer:** Delinquency hearings are generally closed to the public. There are some exceptions, such as when a 16 or 17-year-old has been charged with a felony. Crime victims may also be allowed to attend hearings.

**Q12.** What types of hearings may occur in the juvenile court process?

**Answer:** A child may be required to attend some or all of the following:

1. Detention hearing. The judge decides whether the child needs to remain in secure detention or whether there is a less restrictive alternative.
2. Arrestment hearing. This is also known as the first appearance on the charges. The child will plead guilty or not guilty, or admit or deny the charges.
3. Certification hearing. This may be required to decide whether the child should be treated as an adult and referred to adult court, or designated an Extended Jurisdiction Juvenile, or remain in juvenile court. This hearing may or may not take place, depending on the nature of the charges, the age of the child, and other factors decided by the assistant county attorney.
4. Omnibus hearing. This hearing is used to decide any potential Constitutional issues.
5. Pre-trial settlement conference. This hearing is sometimes used when settling the case prior to trial.
6. Trial. When the case remains in juvenile court, the court (not a jury) decides whether the charges have been proven beyond a reasonable doubt.
7. Disposition hearing. When the child has been found guilty of an offense, the judge hands down the sentence or disposition.