



Children's Division's

Alternative Care After-Hours Protocol

1-800-392-3738

We're Here When You Need Us

Emergencies don't always happen during normal business hours. The Children's Division's Alternative Care After-Hours Protocol is available to ensure you have timely access to the support you need during nights, weekends, and holidays.

Alternative Care After-Hours Protocol

The Alternative Care After-Hours Protocol is for children in foster care who are case managed by Children's Division (CD). Each child's CD case manager will continue to be your primary contact during regular business hours, but they will no longer be expected to respond to calls, texts, or emails outside of normal business hours or during holidays.

When you need immediate assistance on behalf of a child(ren) in CD custody, please contact the Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline Unit (CANHU). This Line is staffed by CD professionals who are available to assist you in connecting with the after-hours team for urgent situations that cannot wait until the next business day. Please save this number so that you have it handy in the event of a crisis.

When you contact the CANHU, please indicate you are calling about an emergency. When you are connected with a CANHU worker, please state you are a placement or service provider for a child in foster care and that you need assistance from the after-hours team regarding an issue that cannot wait until the next business day. You will then be asked for information to assist in connecting you with an after-hours on-call worker located in your general area. Please be aware that any information provided during this call regarding potential concerns for child abuse or neglect will be screened by CANHU. The CANHU worker will then document your request and notify the after-hours on-call worker of your request for assistance.

About the Alternative Care After-Hours Team

The after-hours on-call workers are CD employees who have a regular daytime work schedule. They are assigned to respond to after-hours calls through an on-call rotation. They are not in the office working a shift after-hours. The on-call worker will attempt to contact you as soon as possible after receiving notification from CANHU, but you may experience a delay between the time you call CANHU and receiving a call back from the on-call worker.

While the after-hours on-call workers are from your area, they may not be familiar with you or the child(ren) you are calling about. They will need to ask you some background questions before they can support you.

The primary roles of the after-hours on-call workers are:

- To ensure that all children have a safe place to go, at least for the night. As such, you may also receive placement request calls from after-hours on-call workers.

- To support in deescalating crisis situations by giving suggestions or helping to develop safety plans.
- To provide guidance or referrals for community crisis resources.

When to Contact the Alternative Care After-Hours Team

- A child in foster care is at immediate risk of placement disruption.
- A child in foster care needs permission to be admitted to a hospital.
- A child in foster care cannot safely remain in their current placement.
- You need urgent guidance regarding a child in foster care that cannot wait until the next business day.
- You need assistance with an unexpected situation affecting the safety or care of a child in foster care.

When to Wait Until the Next Business Day

- Routine questions or updates
- Scheduling visits or meetings
- Documentation or paperwork
- Ongoing case planning
- Non-urgent concerns

Crisis and Emergency Support

The Alternative Care After-Hours protocol is not intended to replace existing crisis or support services and should only be used when you need immediate assistance from Children's Division outside of normal business hours.

If you or a child in foster care is experiencing a medical emergency or immediate threat to safety requiring law enforcement, EMS, or fire, call 911. After emergency responders have been contacted, notify the CANHU as soon as it is safe to do so.

If you or a child in foster care is experiencing a mental health, suicide, or substance use crisis, or any other emotional distress, you may call or text 988 or chat online at 988lifeline.org/chat. A local, trained crisis specialist at one of Missouri's 988 centers will help you navigate the situation. Crisis specialists are available to help you navigate situations and get connected to resources.

Mandated reporters must immediately report suspected child abuse or neglect. Reports can be made 24/7 by calling the [Missouri Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline](#) at **1-800-392-3738** or through the [Online System for Child Abuse & Neglect Reporting \(OSCR\)](#) for non-emergencies. The alternative care after-hours on-call team does not respond to reports of abuse or neglect or replace mandated reporting requirements.

Our Commitment to You

Our goal is to provide consistent, timely support whenever urgent needs arise while allowing the assigned Children's Division case manager to focus on providing you with quality support during regular business hours. This team-based approach helps ensure that someone is available to assist you whenever an urgent situation occurs.

Thank you for the care, commitment, and stability you provide for Missouri's children and families.