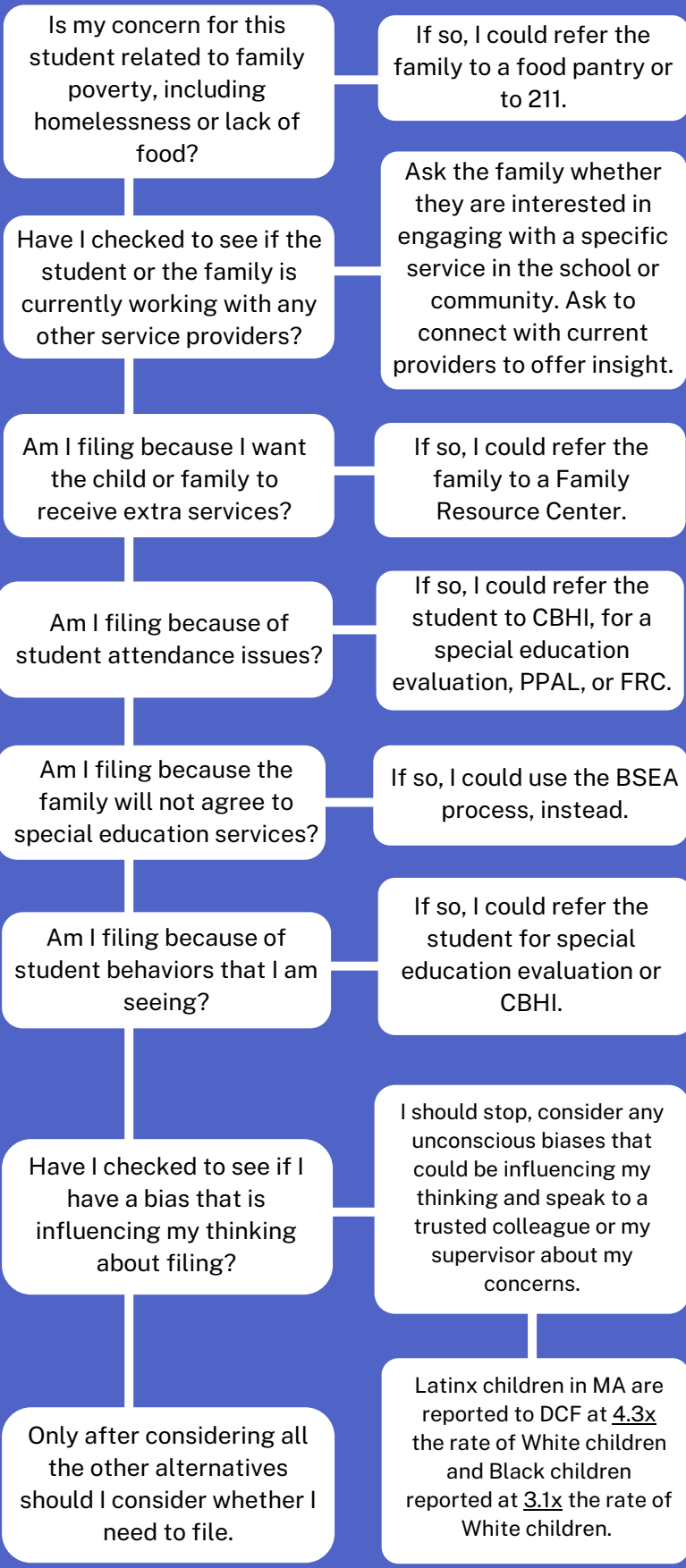
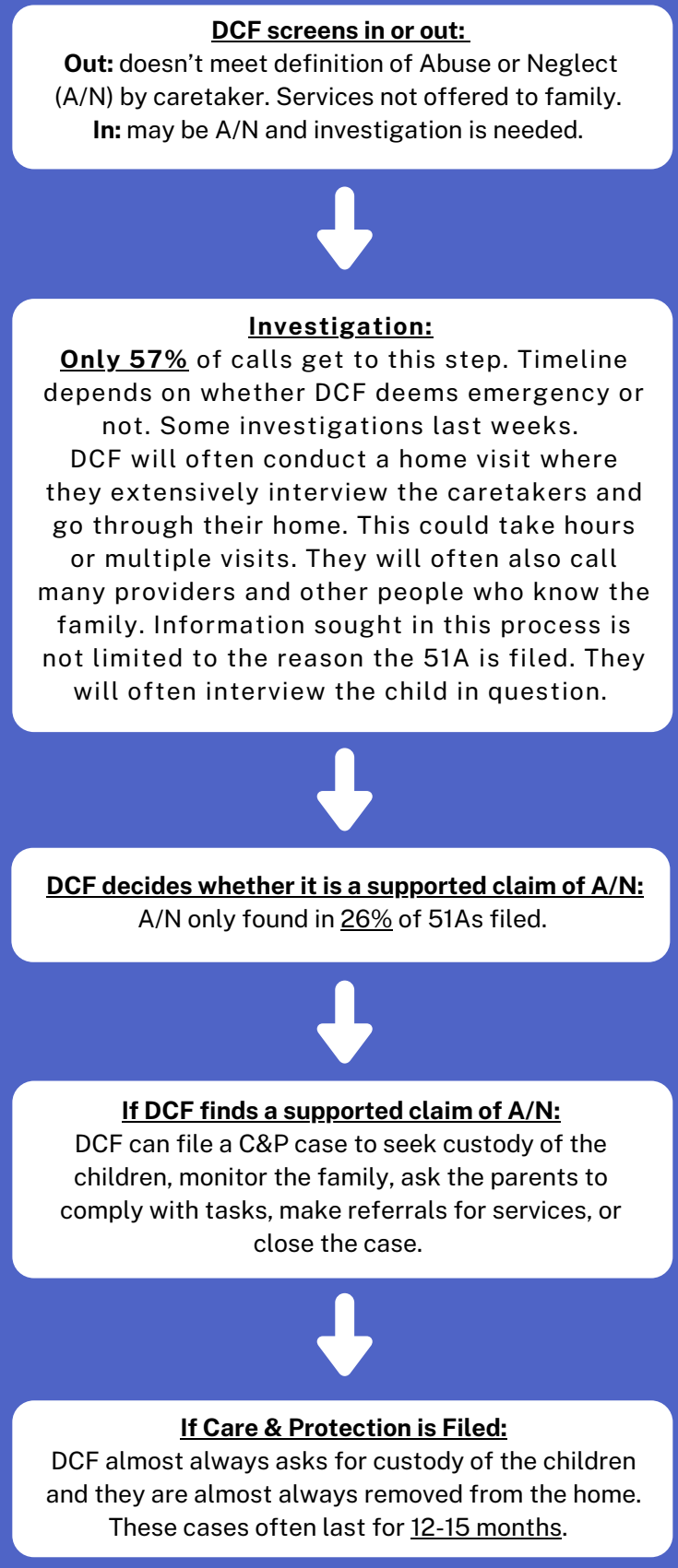


Questions to Ask Before You File a 51A



What Happens If You Call DCF



So You're Thinking of Filing a 51A For Mandated Reporters in Massachusetts

Did You Know?

90% of educator-filed abuse or neglect reports are **screened out or unsupported**.

After being placed in DCF custody, students are:

3x more likely to be chronically absent;

7x more likely to experience grade retention; and

4x more likely to receive out of school suspension.

Per DCF's regulations, homelessness or poverty alone are not grounds for abuse or neglect.

Resources/Alternatives to Filing

CBHI (Children's Behavioral Health Initiative):

Behavioral health service providers for kids on MassHealth.

FRC (Family Resource Center): Connects families to parenting programs, support groups, early childhood services, information and referrals

Food Pantry: Helps families find a local food pantry.

PPAL (Parent/Professional Advocacy League):

Statewide family organizing that supports the well-being and mental health of children and families through education, advocacy and partnership.

211: Connects families to health and human services available in their community.

Handhold: Web-based support for parents with their child's mental health needs.

DCF Promising Approaches Guidance

"Mandated reporters are encouraged to carefully review each family's situation and to consider thoughtfully whether or not to file a report with the Department of Children and Families."

"Mandated reporters are encouraged to assess carefully the caretaker's and child's conditions, and to evaluate whether community services and support will strengthen the caretaker's resolve and ability to safeguard the child."

Definitions

Neglect (110 CMR 2.00): Failure by a caregiver, either deliberately or through negligence or inability, to take those actions necessary to provide a child with *minimally adequate* food, clothing, shelter, medical care, supervision, emotional stability and growth, or other essential care, including malnutrition or failure to thrive; provided, however, that such inability is not due solely to inadequate economic resources or solely to the existence of a handicapping condition.

Abuse (110 CMR 2.00): The non-accidental commission of any act by a caregiver which causes or creates a substantial risk of physical or emotional injury or sexual abuse of a child; or victimization of a child through sexual exploitation or human trafficking, regardless if the person responsible is a caregiver.

51A: A report to DCF alleging abuse or neglect of a child by a caregiver or sexual exploitation.

Department of Children & Families (DCF): The state agency that handles child welfare matters, from evaluating reports of abuse or neglect to termination of parental rights and adoption.

Care & Protection (C&P): A juvenile court case in which DCF alleges that a child is at risk for abuse or neglect by a caregiver.

Mandated Reporter: A person who is required to report alleged abuse or neglect by the nature of their job.

Further Reading

[DESE Promoting Student Engagement, Learning, Wellbeing and Safety Guide](#)

[DESE & DCF Joint Advisory Regarding Mandated Reporting Responsibilities of School Personnel](#)

["Preventing Child Abuse: Is More Reporting Better?" by Dr. Mical Raz](#)

["The Tool We Have': Why Child Protective Services Investigates So Many Families and How Even Good Intentions Backfire' by Kelley Fong](#)

[Stable Placement, Stable School: Improving Education Outcomes of Children in Foster Care In Massachusetts by Massachusetts Court Improvement Program](#)