OVERVIEW
Your child has a fracture which is not uncommonly associated with child abuse. In these circumstances, most states, require that a report be filed with the state to document the injury. These reports are reviewed by the local Child Protection Services agency. Typically, a representative will review the injury and the situation to ensure that this injury is not a matter of abuse.

Your child will be treated by your physician for this injury. While medical information is given to the representative from Child Protective Services, your physician is not part of the investigative process and does not make determinations of abuse.

BACKGROUND
Child abuse and neglect are a significant problem. Data on incidence of child abuse varies depending on the source and definitions. However, one of the most reliable information sources is published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration on Children, Youth, and Families. This yearly report is based on data collected by the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System from state based child protection agencies. In 2001, there were an estimated 2.7 million referrals, representing roughly 5 million children. Of these referrals, almost 1 million children were confirmed to be victims of abuse or neglect. That means about 12.4 out of every 1,000 children in the United States were found to be victims of maltreatment in 2001 alone. Children die every day as a result of abuse or neglect. In 2001, an estimated 1,300 children died as a result of abuse or neglect. The majority of these children were three years of age or younger.

Maltreatment can take many forms, and some children can suffer from more than one type. In 2001, neglect was most common and affected 59.2%. Physical abuse affected 18.6%. Sexual abuse was found in 9.6%, and emotional/psychological abuse was found in 6.8%. Boys and girls are equally likely to suffer maltreatment. In 2001, 48% of child victims were male, and 51.5% were female. Almost 75% of all victims of abuse and neglect were under the age of 12. In 2001, roughly half of children who were maltreated were white, 25% were African American, and 14.5% were Hispanic. In 2001, 80.9% of perpetrators were parents, and 15.9% were non-parents (e.g., other caregivers, babysitters, extended family members). Females were more often perpetrators than males (59.3% females, 40.7% males). Children who are victims of maltreatment are likely to be maltreated again.
CLINICAL EVALUATION
Child abuse takes many forms, most of which are not easily identifiable by a physician or easily described or reported by the child or family. Your child will typically be examined by a pediatrician or emergency medicine physician. Specific injuries will be treated appropriately. Additional studies or examinations may be needed. Additional x-rays, called a skeletal survey are often done to look for signs of other fractures. Additional examinations are sometimes done by an eye doctor or child maltreatment specialist. The results of these evaluations will be provided to the child protective services.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
What is Child Protective Services?
Child Protective Services is a state government agency that receives, investigates, and assesses reports of child abuse and neglect by parents, family, or household members. State law requires that certain injuries must be reported to the Child Protective Services and requires an investigation for the primary purpose of protecting children. Determinations are made regarding the safety of the child and appropriate recommendations are made. If needed, services may be offered to help solve problems and to help parents learn to care for and discipline children.

What happens in the investigation?
A Child Protective Services caseworker will review the details of the injury. They will talk to the family and visually examine the child. They will discuss the injury with you to gain an understanding of the risk of abuse or neglect to the child. As necessary, the caseworker may interview other people with information about the situation and may want to visit the home. A visit from a Child Protective Services caseworker can be difficult and confusing. It is important to cooperate in taking these steps to complete the investigation. If necessary, Child Protective Services has the authority to ask a court for an order to obtain any necessary information and to protect the child as indicated by the investigation.

What happens if the child is found to be risk of child abuse and neglect?
A child that is found to be at risk of child abuse and neglect means that there is a reasonable likelihood that the child will be abused or neglected, in the foreseeable future. If this determination is made, the caseworker will decide if immediate safety services are needed or if services can be provided to reduce the risk of abuse or neglect. Children will not be removed from their homes except to protect them from abuse or neglect and only when there are no reasonable efforts that can be made to provide for the child’s safety in the home. When children are removed, the caseworker meets with the family to develop a case plan that addresses visitation, child support, rehabilitative services, any court-ordered provisions, and the return of the child to the home when it is safe. In rare occasions, the home remains unsafe for the child and the court may end the parents' rights to the child, and will find another permanent family for the child. You have the right to consult with a lawyer at any point at your own expense. You may be urged to hire a lawyer if court action is initiated. In some cases, the court may appoint a lawyer or legal aid may be available.

What records are maintained by Child Protective Services?
The law requires Child Protective Services to keep the report and investigation confidential from the public, information is given only to the people who were investigated, the victim's parents, law enforcement officials, courts, and county or district attorneys.

What can I do if I disagree with the conduct or findings of the CPS investigation?
Speak to the caseworker. An open discussion may settle the matter. If your concerns cannot be resolved with the caseworker, you should discuss your concerns with the caseworker's supervisor.

MORE INFORMATION
Further information can be obtained on the internet. Your local public library can help you explore these sources if you are interested. Two good sites for expert and peer reviewed information are the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons at www.aaos.org and www.emedicine.com.

FEEDBACK
If you have questions or comments, please contact the office or submit them to the web site at www.pedortho.com.