

	INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY	
	Chapter 3: Child Abuse Hotline	Effective Date: May 1, 2014
	Section 1: Receiving Calls	Version: 3

STATEMENTS OF PURPOSE

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) Child Abuse Hotline (Hotline) will be available to receive reports of Child Abuse and/or Neglect (CA/N) 24 hours per day, seven (7) days per week, through the toll-free Hotline telephone number (800-800-5556).

All allegations of CA/N must be received by the Hotline in order for an intake report to be created.

The Hotline will accept oral, written (hard copy) and electronic reports or requests.

Calls received from a Law Enforcement Agency (LEA) that enters the provided access code will be routed to the front of the queue.

Code References

1. [IC 31-33-5: Duty to Report Child Abuse or Neglect](#)
2. [IC 31-33-7: Receipt of Reports of Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect](#)
3. [IC 31-33-18: Disclosure of Reports; Confidentiality Requirements](#)
4. [IC 20-50-1: Homeless Children and Foster Care Children](#)
5. [IC 31-36-3: Homeless Children](#)

PROCEDURE

The Hotline Intake Specialist (IS) will complete the following steps for all calls received:

1. Record the date and time of the call;
2. Engage the caller in a courteous and professional manner;
3. Ask relevant questions to gather as much information as possible about the child, family, and allegations;
4. Actively listen to the reporter and take detailed notes;
5. Make an initial determination as to the disposition of the call to be one of the following:
 - a. **Homeless Unaccompanied Minor:**
Proceed with completing a CA/N intake report regardless of whether abuse and/or neglect is alleged.
 - b. **CA/N allegations:**
Proceed with creating a [Preliminary Report of Alleged Child Abuse or Neglect \(SF 114\)](#). See separate policy, [3.2 Creating a Child Abuse and/or Neglect \(CA/N\) Intake Report](#).
 - c. **Service Requests:**
Proceed with creating a [Service Request Intake Report](#). See separate policy, [3.3 Service Request Intake Reports](#).
 - d. **Other action to be taken:**

- 1) **Out of State CA/N allegations:** Reports where the alleged CA/N occurred in another state will be referred to the appropriate child welfare agency in that state. No further action will be required by DCS unless courtesy interviews are requested by the out of state agency.
- 2) **Information only:** If the caller is requesting the phone number of a community resource or service, provide the caller with the requested information; no further action required.
- 3) **Collateral information:** If a caller would like to provide additional information for an open assessment or case, this will be documented as Information and Referral (I&R) and forwarded to the FCM, FCM Supervisor and the county distribution list of the open assessment or case.
- 4) **Inquiries:** If a caller is interested in the status of CA/N report, assessment or case see procedures in separate policy, [2.6 Sharing of Confidential Information](#).
- 5) **Complaints:** Refer the caller to the appropriate person by following the chain of command, escalating only if previous complaints went unresolved.
- 6) **Resource parenting inquiries:** Refer the caller to call 1-888-631-9510, the Foster Care Helpline to be connected to a Regional Foster Care Specialist.
- 7) **Adoptive parenting inquiries:** Refer the caller to call 1-888-25-ADOPT, to be connected with the Special Needs Adoption Program Specialist in their region.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

Reports from Judges, Prosecutors, and LEA

Incoming reports from Judges and Prosecutors should be screened in and recommended for assessment based on the expectation that the report meets legal sufficiency. LEA officials requesting immediate assistance are screened in and recommended for assessment.

The Quality of the CA/N Intake Report Impacts Child Safety

Receipt of a call made at the Hotline is the critical first step in the State's process of assuring the alleged victim's safety. The importance of this step cannot be overemphasized. How the call is handled and documented can have a significant impact on the next steps in the process. The quality of the information gathered and how the IS engages the caller impacts the ability of DCS to make a decision about whether or not the report will be assigned for assessment. The quality of the information gathered will also impact the ability of DCS to conduct an effective assessment.

Customer Service is Imperative

Calls placed to the Hotline are often the only contact the community has with DCS. To the community, the IS provides the first impression of the level of public service available through DCS. A negative customer service experience may cause a caller to hesitate to make future CA/N reports. Therefore, the IS should always communicate with callers in a courteous and helpful manner.

LEA Requesting Immediate Assistance at the Scene

When the LEA Access Code is entered, those calls will be forwarded to the front of the queue. The IS will collect essential information from the Report Source before requesting immediate assistance from the DCS local office. At the end of the call, the IS will complete the report in the Management Gateway for Indiana's Kids (MaGIK) and send to the Hotline Intake Supervisor who will route it to the DCS local office. Immediate Assistance is necessary when LEA requests an FCM on the scene immediately to ensure safety of a child.

Walk-In Reports at DCS Local Office

The DCS local office will assist any individual from the community who wishes to make a report in person at the DCS local office. The DCS local office will ensure that the individual has access to a telephone to make their report to the Hotline. If the caller is unable or unwilling to place the call to the Hotline, the DCS local office should take the report and subsequently call the Hotline to report the allegations.

Forwarding Additional Information

If the FCM assigned to the assessment or case is not available and the caller is unwilling to leave a voicemail or the call is of an urgent nature, the IS will gather the additional information to be forwarded to the FCM and FCM Supervisor via email if it is urgent.

Transferring CA/N Intake Reports to Other States

The following page on the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services web site may be helpful to locate contact information for child welfare agencies in other states:

http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/reslist/rl_dsp.cfm?rs_id=5&rate_chno=11-11172

Homeless Unaccompanied Minor

When a child enters a homeless or emergency shelter without the presence or consent of a parent, guardian, or custodian the shelter must notify DCS within 24 hours. The shelter will provide the name of the child, the location of the shelter, and if the child alleges that he or she was abused and/or neglected. DCS must conduct an assessment no later than 48 hours after receiving notification from the emergency shelter or shelter care facility.

Children in Homeless Shelter with a Parent, Guardian, or Custodian

When allegations of CA/N are reported for children who are residing in or receiving services from a homeless shelter with their parent, guardian, or custodian the standard intake and assessment procedures should be followed.

FORMS AND TOOLS

1. [Preliminary Report of Alleged Child Abuse or Neglect \(SF 114\)](#)
2. [Service Request Intake Report–MaGIK](#)

RELATED INFORMATION

Mandated Reporters

[IC 31-33-5-1](#)

Any individual who has reason to believe that a child is a victim of child abuse or neglect has the duty to make a report; therefore, everyone in Indiana is considered a “mandated reporter.”

Professional Reporters

[IC 31-33-5-2, 3](#)

Professional reporters, as defined by Indiana Law, are members of the staff of a medical or other public or private institution, school, facility, or agency. These reporters are legally obligated to report the alleged CA/N to the person in charge of the organization for which they work and to make a report to DCS.

Immunity of Persons Making CA/N Reports

[IC 31-33-6](#)

A person who makes a CA/N report is immune from any civil or criminal liability that might otherwise be imposed because of such actions if the report is made in good faith.

Homeless Child (as defined by the Department of Education)

[IC 20-50-1](#)

"Homeless Child" is defined as a child who lacks a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence. It includes:

1. A child who shares another person's housing due to loss of child's housing or economics; lives in a hotel, motel or campground because of economic hardship; lives in an emergency or transitional shelter; is abandoned in a hospital or other place not intended for general habitation; is awaiting foster care placement;
2. A child whose primary nighttime residence is a public or private place not ordinarily used to accommodate human beings;
3. A child who lives in a car, a park, a public space, an abandoned building, a bus station, a train station, substandard housing, or a similar setting is homeless; and
4. A child of a migratory worker who also fits in categories 1-3 above is homeless.