



INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY

Chapter 4: Assessment

Section 02: Preparing for the Assessment

Effective Date: December 1, 2022

Version: 7

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POLICY OVERVIEW

Adequate preparation prior to initiating an assessment may be vital to completing a timely, thorough, and thoughtful response to reports of Child Abuse and/or Neglect (CA/N).

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PROCEDURE

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) will take all foreseeable and necessary precautions to protect the safety of each alleged child victim, other children in the home, the Family Case Manager (FCM), and/or other responders during the assessment. To the extent possible, the FCM will take necessary steps for adequate preparation prior to initiating any interview or assessment of home and living conditions.

Before initiating any interview or assessment of the home and living conditions, the FCM will:

1. Consider environmental factors that might pose a danger to the child and/or FCM. Examples of such safety concerns include, but are not limited to:
 - a. History of domestic violence (DV). See policy 2.30 Domestic Violence for more information;
 - b. Locations that are extremely isolated or in high-crime areas;
 - c. Indications of mental illness, substance use, human trafficking, or volatile behavior;
 - d. Firearms or other weapons in the home;
 - e. Indications of illegal drug manufacturing in the home;
 - f. Household members who are criminal suspects and/or have outstanding arrest warrants; and
 - e. Dangerous pets and/or animals in the home or on the property.
2. Review all policies related to interviewing, including, but not limited to:
 - a. 4.04 Required Interviews,
 - b. 4.05 Consent to Interview Child,
 - c. 4.06 Exigent Circumstances for Interviewing Alleged Child Victims,
 - d. 4.08 Entry into Home or Facility,
 - e. 4.09 Interviewing Children,
 - f. 4.10 Interviewing the Parent, Guardian, or Custodian,
 - g. 4.11 Interviewing the Alleged Perpetrator,
 - h. 4.13 Assessing Home Conditions,
 - i. 4.14 Examining a Child and Photographing a Child and/or Trauma,

- j. 4.30 Institutional Child Protection Services (ICPS) Unit Assessments, and
 - k. 4.47 Human Trafficking.
3. Develop an interview plan:
 - a. Determine who needs to be interviewed,
 - b. Determine whether it is best for family members to be interviewed separately or together, and
 - c. Determine the best order for the interviews.
 4. Arrange interpreter services if parties to the assessment are Limited English Proficient (LEP) and for those who communicate using American Sign Language. See policy GA-3 Language Services and contact the International and Cultural Affairs (ICA) Liaison for additional guidance (see Forms and Tools);

Note: All DCS local offices should have a plan for the availability of interpreter services when needed.

5. Assess the appropriateness of the development and/or utilization of a Child and Family Team (CFT) during the assessment preparation;
6. Complete the following prior to contacting the family if DV or other acts of violence were identified during the Child Abuse and/or Neglect (CA/N) intake (see policy 2.30 Domestic Violence for additional guidance):
 - a. Contact Law Enforcement Agency (LEA) to determine if the family has had previous incidents of DV and/or police runs to the home for violence,
 - b. Determine if a detective has already been assigned to the case. Discuss with LEA, whether DCS and LEA may work together during the assessment, and

Note: DCS will not delay the initiation or completion of any assessment, regardless of LEA involvement. See policy 4.29 Joint Assessments.

- c. Consider the safety of all family members prior to scheduling interviews.
7. Review policy 4.47 Human Trafficking prior to contacting the family if human trafficking was identified or is suspected during the CA/N intake;
 8. Plan interviews with LEA if the CA/N allegations are of a criminal nature and when any risk factors have been identified that could threaten the safety of the child, the FCM, and/or other responders. See policy 4.29 Joint Assessments for additional information;
 9. Plan the location of each interview with the goal of optimizing the safety of the child, the FCM, and any other responders to the extent possible and practical;
 10. Consider any known or suspected safety risks for each location where an interview will occur and determine appropriate safety precautions (e.g., LEA assistance). Seek supervisory input when necessary;
 11. Confirm the address of destination;
 12. Confirm that all equipment is in working order (e.g., cell phones and tablets); and
 13. Start the assessment. See policy 4.03 Conducting the Assessment – Overview.

The FCM Supervisor will:

1. Review all information pertaining to the risk of the situation and assist the FCM in planning and preparing for the assessment, as needed; and
2. Ensure all FCMs have access to appropriate, functioning assessment and interviewing equipment (e.g., cell phones and tablets).

RELEVANT INFORMATION

Definitions

N/A

Forms and Tools

- ICA Liaison Email Inbox– internationalandculturalaffairs@dcs.in.gov

Related Policies

- [GA-3 Language Services](#)
- [2.30 Domestic Violence](#)
- [4.03 Conducting the Assessment - Overview](#)
- [4.04 Required Interviews](#)
- [4.05 Consent to Interview Child](#)
- [4.06 Exigent Circumstances for Interviewing Alleged Child Victims](#)
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- [4.29 Joint Assessments](#)
- [4.30 Institutional Child Protection Services \(ICPS\) Unit Assessments](#)
- [4.47 Human Trafficking](#)

LEGAL REFERENCES

- [IC 5-26.5-1-3: "Domestic violence"](#)
- [IC 34-6-2-34.5: "Domestic or family violence"](#)
- [IC 35-42-3.5: Human and Sexual Trafficking](#)

PRACTICE GUIDANCE- DCS POLICY 4.02

Practice Guidance is designed to assist DCS staff with thoughtful and practical direction on how to effectively integrate tools and social work practice into daily case management in an effort to achieve positive family and child outcomes. Practice Guidance is separate from Policy.

N/A

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