

	INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY	
	Chapter 4: Assessment	Effective Date: December 1, 2016
	Section 38: Assessment Initiation	Version: 5

STATEMENTS OF PURPOSE [REVISED]

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) will initiate every Child Abuse and/or Neglect (CA/N) assessment within the appropriate timeframe as determined by Indiana Law. An assessment will be considered initiated upon face-to-face contact with all of the alleged victims (see separate policies, [4.6 Exigent Circumstances](#) and [4.5 Consent to Interview Child](#) for additional information). The Family Case Manager (FCM) will notify the parent, guardian, or custodian in person or via phone, of the face-to-face contact with the alleged victim.

[REVISED] Note: In extreme circumstances where the FCM may be unable to initially make face-to-face contact with the child, the FCM may contact another person (other than the alleged perpetrator) who can provide information about the allegations, as well as, the condition and safety of the child. Contact with another person must be followed up with face-to-face contact with the child as soon as possible.

Assessments will be initiated within the following time frames: (see Practice Guidance for Response Time)

1. Within one (1) hour if the allegations would cause a reasonable person to believe that the child is in imminent danger of serious bodily harm;

Note: Law Enforcement Agency (LEA) assistance should be requested on all reports that require a one (1) hour response time (see Practice Guidance).

2. Within 24 hours if the allegations involve abuse but the conditions in item one (1) above do not apply, or
3. Within five (5) days if the allegations involve neglect and none of the conditions in items one (1) or two (2) above apply.

[REVISED] For reports involving alleged domestic violence:

1. DCS will initiate the assessment within 24 hours if the parent, guardian, custodian, or child calls to report alleged domestic violence and the allegations would not cause a reasonable person to believe that the child is in imminent danger of serious bodily harm; or
2. DCS will initiate the assessment within 24 hours if the alleged domestic violence occurred in the past 48 hours (regardless of the reporting source) and the allegations would not cause a reasonable person to believe that the child is in imminent danger of serious bodily harm.

DCS must conduct an assessment within 48 hours of receiving a report concerning a child who voluntarily enters an emergency shelter or a shelter care facility without the presence or consent of a parent, guardian, or custodian, unless the allegations would cause a reasonable person to believe that the child is in imminent danger of serious bodily harm, requiring a one hour

response. DCS must notify the parent, guardian, or custodian of the child within 72 hours of the child entering the shelter or a shelter care facility. However, if the department has reason to believe that the child is a victim of child abuse or neglect, the department may not inform the child's parent, guardian, or custodian of the specific shelter or facility the child has entered.

DCS will respond within one (1) hour of receiving a report from a hospital.

[REVISED] Note: FCMs should evaluate the case and staff with his/her supervisor to determine whether LEA assistance should be requested for the one (1) hour report. A one (1) hour report requesting Authorization for Hospital Release is an example of when LEA assistance may not need to be requested.

[REVISED] In order to ensure the safety of the child and meet the appropriate timeframes, assessments will be initiated regardless of the time of day (or night), weekends, or holidays. In extreme circumstances where DCS is unable to initiate an assessment timely (e.g., dangerous weather conditions), LEA assistance will be requested to initiate one (1) hour assessments on behalf of DCS.

[NEW] Note: In situations where LEA is on the scene and remains on the scene with all alleged victims until the FCM arrives as part of a one (1) hour assessment, the assessment will be considered initiated timely.

Code References

1. [IC 31-33-8-1: Investigations by local child protection service; time of initiation](#)
2. [IC 31-33-8-6: Investigatory duties of local child protection service; purpose](#)
3. [IC 31-36-3-3: Homeless Children](#)
4. [IC 34-6-2-34.5: Domestic or family violence](#)

PROCEDURE [REVISED]

The assigned FCM will:

1. Consider all known information about the CA/N allegations;
2. Request LEA assistance on all reports that require a one (1) hour response time and document LEA's response in a contact; and

Note: If LEA agrees to respond within the one (1) hour with DCS, the FCM will make contact with the responding officer to advise of the allegations and obtain any information LEA may have regarding the child or family before attempting to make initial contact with the child or family.

3. **[REVISED]** Ensure the assessment has been initiated by making face-to-face contact with all alleged child victims (see separate policies, [4.6 Exigent Circumstances](#) and [4.5 Consent to Interview Child](#) for additional information) and notifying the parent, guardian or custodian; or ensure contact with another person (other than the alleged perpetrator) who can provide specific information about the allegations, as well as, the condition and safety of the child if the FCM is not initially able to make face-to-face contact with the child. Contact with another person must be followed up with face-to-face contact with the child as soon as possible.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

[NEW] Initiation Timeframes

CA/N assessments will be initiated within one (1) hour if the allegations would cause a reasonable person to believe that the child is in imminent danger of serious bodily harm. These responses can include, but are not limited to, allegations regarding:

1. Child Fatality & Near Fatality;
2. Shaken infants;
3. A child who has suffered from serious physical injury to any part of the body due to suspected CA/N such as fractures, broken bones, head injuries, extensive and/or serious bruising, or internal injuries;
4. A child is intentionally burned or scalded;
5. A child too young or disabled to ensure his or her own safety is actively unsupervised. Disabilities include but are not limited to sight or hearing impairment, limited mental capabilities or other severe handicapping conditions;
6. A child who has been abandoned or deserted;
7. A child has failure to thrive resulting in immediate need for medical attention;
8. A child is sexually abused and the alleged perpetrator has access to the child;
9. A child or parent, guardian, or custodian is actively attempting suicide;
10. An active domestic violence situation in the home of a child has been injured as a result of domestic violence;
11. The presence of an active methamphetamine lab; and/or
12. Specific allegations that a parent, guardian or custodian is actively using illicit drugs or abusing prescription medications.

Note: FCMs should evaluate the case and staff with his/her supervisor to determine whether LEA assistance should be requested or if the contact should be for the purpose of notification.

Twenty-four (24) hour responses may include, but are not limited to, allegations regarding:

1. Reported bruising, scratches, welts;
2. Suspected inflicted injury to a child;
3. Serious injury is threatened, and/or
4. A child or parent, guardian, or custodian has previously attempted suicide.

Five (5) day responses may include, but are not limited to, allegations regarding:

1. Supervision concerns;
2. Insufficient food, shelter, or clothing;
3. Unsanitary living conditions; and/or
4. Educational Neglect.

FCMs will consider any relevant factors or information regarding the assessment in determining if contact with another person is the best way to ensure safety of the child.

Example: David is placed in a residential facility. He revealed his previous roommate forced him to engage in sexual activity approximately six (6) months ago. The facility filed a 310 and the assessment was assigned. The assessor contacted the director of the facility and found that the alleged perpetrator has not been David's roommate for over a month. He and David reside in separate areas of the facility and have no contact. Though the FCM has not yet had face-to-face contact with David, the assessment has

been initiated through contact with the facility director, who ensured David's safety. A face-to-face interview with David would take place no later than the next business day.

In situations where children have serious injuries (e.g., head injuries or broken bones) or injuries that are time sensitive (e.g., bruises or burns), it is important that the evidence collected is reflective of the seriousness of the injury.

Example: Five (5) year-old Sara just returned home Friday evening from her court-ordered visitation with her father. She had several belt marks on her upper thighs and a belt mark on the back of her hand. She also had a partial hand print on the side of her face. Sara told her mother that her father got really angry and whipped her for getting her clothes dirty right before they were getting ready to leave. Sara's mother called in a report to the Indiana Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline (Hotline) and the case was assigned to an on-call FCM at approximately 6:00 PM. The FCM contacted Sara's mother who informed the FCM that Sara was not scheduled to visit with her father again until the following Wednesday. The FCM made arrangements to see the child at her mother's home that evening. The FCM could ensure the safety of the child through the mother.

Response times are measured from the conclusion of the call to the Hotline. This means for one (1) hour assessments, the FCM must make face-to-face contact with the child and make efforts to notify the parents within one (1) hour of the conclusion of the call to the Hotline.

It is important to make the distinction between initiating an assessment and response times. If an FCM has responded in the appropriate timeframe, it does not necessarily mean that the assessment has been initiated. If an FCM responds, and is unsuccessful in making contact with the alleged victim or with another person (other than the perpetrator) who can speak to the condition and safety of the child the assessment has not been initiated.

Example: The Hotline received a report that four (4) year-old Mary has bruising on her buttocks from a spanking she received from her mother. The 310 was assigned, and the FCM made a visit to Mary's residence within 30 minutes of receiving the report. Mary's mother answered the door and talked with the FCM; however, she said Mary was visiting a relative and would not return until the next morning. The assessment is not yet initiated, because the FCM has not ensured Mary's safety through face-to-face contact or through contact with another person other than the alleged perpetrator.

FORMS AND TOOLS

[NEW] [Hospital Release Authorization SF 54337](#)

RELATED INFORMATION

IC 31-36-3-3 Notification to department; investigation of a child; notification to parents

Sec. 3. (a) Except as provided in subsection (d), if a child voluntarily enters an emergency shelter or a shelter care facility, the shelter or facility shall notify the department, not later than twenty-four (24) hours after the child enters the shelter or facility, of the following:

- (1) The name of the child.
- (2) The location of the shelter or facility.
- (3) Whether the child alleges that the child is the subject of abuse or neglect.

(b) The department shall conduct an investigation concerning the child not later than forty-eight (48) hours after receiving notification from the emergency shelter or shelter care facility under subsection (a).

(c) The department shall notify the child's parent, guardian, or custodian that the child is in an emergency shelter or a shelter care facility not later than seventy-two (72) hours after the child enters the shelter or facility. However, if the department has reason to believe that the child is a victim of child abuse or neglect, the department may not notify the child's parent, guardian, or custodian as to the specific shelter or facility the child has entered.

(d) An emergency shelter or a shelter care facility is not required to notify the department of a child who is an emancipated minor.

ARCHIVED 6/30/18