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|  | INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE MANUAL | |
| | Chapter 4: Assessment | Effective Date: December 1, 2009 |
| | Section 3: Conducting the Assessment – Overview | Version: 4 |

POLICY

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) will conduct a thorough assessment.

DCS will seek Law Enforcement Agency (LEA) assistance as needed, in order to conduct the assessment.

Code References

1. [IC 31-33-8-7: Scope of the investigation](#)
2. [IC 31-33-8-2: Investigations by law enforcement agencies](#)
3. [IC 31-36-3: Homeless Children](#)
4. [IC 34-6-2-34.5: Domestic or family violence](#)

PROCEDURE

The Family Case Manager (FCM) will:

1. Notify the parent, guardian, or custodian of the allegation(s) and request consent to interview the child unless exigent circumstances exist. See separate policies, [4.5 Consent to Interview Child](#) and [4.6 Exigent Circumstances](#);

Note: An assessment involving domestic violence does not warrant an automatic removal to ensure the safety of the child(ren). Domestic violence does not always constitute exigent circumstances to interview the child(ren) without first seeking parental consent. See separate policy, [4.4 Required Interviews](#) for further information.

2. Locate the subjects of the Child Abuse and/or Neglect (CA/N) intake report (e.g. - the alleged victim, victim's parent(s), guardian(s), or custodian, and alleged perpetrator). See separate policy, [4.7 Locating the Subjects](#);
3. Identify him or herself and show proper identification at the onset of each interview.
4. Follow appropriate procedures for gaining entry into the home or facility. See separate policy, [4.8 Entry into Home or Facility](#);
5. Conduct the following interviews (in the order shown below, to the extent possible and practical):
 - a. Required Interviews¹ (See separate policy, [4.4 Required Interviews](#)):
 - 1.) The alleged child victim, all other children living in the home and any children not living in the home who were present at the time of the alleged incident. See separate policy, [4.9 Interviewing Children](#),
 - 2.) The parent(s), guardian(s), or custodian. See separate policy, [4.10 Interviewing the Parent, Guardian, or Custodian](#),

¹ If practical given the particulars of the situation, the FCM should conduct the interviews in this order.

- 3.) All witnesses,
 - 4.) If they exist, at least two (2) professionals believed to have knowledge that relates to the allegation(s),
 - 5.) The alleged perpetrator. See separate policy, [4.11 Interviewing the Alleged Perpetrator](#), and
 - 6.) The reporting source (unless the reporting source is anonymous).
- b. Any additional interviews necessary to gain adequate information from which to draw conclusions about the validity of the allegation(s). Examples may include, but are not limited to, extended family members, family friends, ministers, rabbis or priests, etc.
6. Visually examine an alleged child victim as necessary to confirm alleged or suspected bodily injuries. See separate policy, [4.14 Examining A Child](#). Photograph visible trauma found on any child or secure photographs that have been taken by a medical professional or LEA. See separate policy, [4.15 Photographing Trauma](#);
 7. Arrange for necessary medical and/or psychological examinations. See separate policy, [4.16 Medical and Psychological Examinations, Drug Screens and Substance Abuse Evaluations](#);
 8. Complete a [Safety Assessment](#), and if appropriate, a [Family Support/Community Services Plan \(SF 53243/CW3425\)](#). See separate policies, [4.18 Safety Assessment](#) and [4.19 Family Support/Community Services Plan for Conditionally Safe Children](#);
 9. Conduct an assessment of the home environment. See separate policy, [4.13 Assessing Home Conditions](#);
 10. During all interviews, gather additional demographic information that is not already included on the CA/N intake report;
 11. Provide the parent, guardian, or custodian and any known non-custodial parent, [Notice of Availability of Completed Reports and Information](#);
 12. If at any point during an interview in a home suspicions arise that a meth lab is present, immediately exit the home without alarming the adults and/or children. Call 9-1-1. Refer to the [Indiana Drug Endangered Children \(DEC\) Response Protocol](#);
 13. Discontinue the interview if at any point the FCM becomes concerned for his or her safety (e.g. - the individual becomes hostile or threatening or there are other dangerous conditions in the home). Seek supervisory input to make alternate arrangements to complete the assessment;
 14. If the alleged perpetrator is a DCS staff member, notify the accused employee's Regional Manager or the DCS Human Resources Office. See separate policy, [2.4 Assessment and Review of DCS Staff Alleged Perpetrators](#);
 15. Gather additional information necessary to make a determination about the validity of the allegations;
 16. Document all information gathered during the assessment;
 17. Seek supervisory input as needed throughout the assessment;
 18. Document good faith attempts if unable to complete any element of the assessment and seek supervisory input. See separate policy, [4.20 Good Faith Efforts](#);
 19. Send the [30 Day Report](#) to the administrator of the facility that made the CA/N report, if applicable. See separate policy, [4.21 30 Day Assessment Reports](#);
 20. If the alleged perpetrator is a child care worker or resource parent, notify the child care worker of his or her right to participate in an informational review prior to arriving at a finding. See separate policy, [2.3 Child Care Workers Assessment Review Process](#);
 21. Arrive at a finding of substantiated or unsubstantiated for each allegation. See separate policy, [4.22 Making an Assessment Finding](#);

22. If necessary, conduct a [Risk Assessment](#) and [Strengths and Needs Assessment](#). See separate policies, [4.23 Risk Assessment](#) and [4.24 Strengths and Needs Assessment](#);
23. Take additional actions if necessary to assure the child's safety, including implementing child and family services. See separate policy, [4.26 Determining Service Levels and Transitioning to Case Management](#);
24. Complete the Assessment Report. See separate policy, [4.25 Completing the Assessment Report](#); and
25. If any allegations are substantiated, send notice to the perpetrator(s) regarding their rights to a review and an appeal of the decision. See separate policies, [2.1 Requests for Administrative Review](#), and [2.5 Administrative Appeal Hearings](#).

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

Domestic Violence Assessments

The primary focus of intervening in domestic violence cases is the ongoing assessment of the risk posed to child(ren) by the presence of domestic violence. The challenge in providing Child Protection Services (CPS) in domestic violence cases is to keep the child(ren) safe without penalizing the non-offending parent and without escalating the violent behavior of the alleged domestic violence offender. The primary responsibility of DCS is to determine the overall risk to the child(ren) and take appropriate action to ensure their continued safety.

Every family will be assessed for the presence of domestic violence whether or not it was a part of the [Preliminary Report of Alleged Child Abuse or Neglect \(SF 114/CW0310\)](#) intake report. The purpose of this assessment is to assess the nature, severity, and impact of the alleged domestic violence on the child(ren).

CAN assessments may increase the risk to the child(ren) and other family members when domestic violence is present. It is important to consider how the assessment process will affect the safety of all involved and take action as outlined in this chapter.

FORMS AND TOOLS

1. [Preliminary Report of Alleged Child Abuse or Neglect \(SF 114/CW0310\)](#) – Available in ICWIS
2. [Safety Assessment](#) – Available in ICWIS
3. [Family Support/Community Services Plan \(SF 53243/CW3425\)](#) – Available in ICWIS
4. [Notice of Availability of Completed Reports and Information \(SF 48201/CW0024\)](#) – Available in ICWIS
5. [Notice of Availability of Completed Reports and Information \(SF 51886/CW0024S\)](#) – Spanish – Available in ICWIS
6. [30 Day Report](#) – Available in ICWIS
7. [Risk Assessment](#) – Available in ICWIS
8. [Strength and Needs Assessment](#) – Available in ICWIS

RELATED INFORMATION

Physically Seeing and Interviewing All Children in the Home

It is necessary for DCS to conduct a **face-to-face** interview with **all** children living in the household because they may have witnessed the alleged CA/N, and there is a possibility that they may also be victims. For children who are too young or unable to communicate, an interview will consist of face-to-face interaction with the child at a level that is appropriate given the child's developmental status.

Gathering Additional Information

Sources of additional information may include but are not limited to: relatives, neighbors, school officials, teachers and other employees, physicians, other professionals, or agencies in the community, and law enforcement. Such persons should only be contacted when the FCM has reason to believe they have pertinent information.

It is important to note that the purpose of gathering additional information is to gain knowledge that may aid in the assessment, not to release **confidential information** already gathered. Confidentiality regarding the reporting source of the additional information must also be maintained.

Communication with Supervisor

Because the Supervisor provides the first level of quality assurance within the system, it is important the Supervisor be updated and consulted as necessary throughout the assessment.

Contacting LEA

Each DCS local office must develop Inter-Agency Agreements with their local LEA to outline procedures on the handling of new CA/N intake reports.

Homeless Unaccompanied Minors

Exigent circumstances exist when assessing a report of a homeless unaccompanied minor receiving shelter without the presence or consent of a parent, guardian, or custodian present. The parent, guardian, or custodian of the child must be notified within **48 hours** of DCS receiving the report, but no later than **72 hours** of the child entering the shelter. DCS must notify the parent, guardian, or custodian that the child is in a shelter and has been interviewed by DCS. If DCS has reason to believe that the child is a victim of child abuse or neglect, DCS may not notify the parent, guardian, or custodian as to the specific shelter or facility the child has entered. If DCS determines that the child is unsafe and the coercive intervention of the court is needed, refer to separate policy, [4.28 Involuntary Removals](#) for procedures to follow.