



INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY

Chapter 4: Assessment

Section 50: New Child in Household of a Parent or Custodian with an Open Case

Effective Date: July 3, 2024

Version: 1

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POLICY OVERVIEW

Information on completing all necessary steps of an assessment may be found in policy 4.03 Conducting the Assessment – Overview.

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) completes a holistic assessment of alleged Child Abuse and/or Neglect (CA/N) to ensure the safety and well-being of all new children in the household of a parent, guardian, or custodian with an open DCS case (i.e., Informal Adjustment [IA], In-Home Child in Need of Services [CHINS], and Out-of-Home CHINS).

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PROCEDURE

Upon receipt of a Preliminary Report of Alleged Child Abuse or Neglect (310) regarding a new child in the home of a parent, guardian, or custodian with an open DCS case, the DCS local office will assign the report as an individual assessment, not to be screened out or handled as part of the open DCS case.

Note: A new child in the home may include a newborn infant or child that has moved into the home or regularly (or on a continual basis) visits the home.

The Family Case Manager (FCM) assigned to the assessment will:

1. Review and follow all procedural steps outlined in policy 4.03 Conducting the Assessment – Overview;
2. Notify the assigned permanency FCM and FCM Supervisor of the assessment, if applicable;

Note: The permanency FCM may assist the assessment FCM with initiation, if possible, to maintain a trust-based relationship and support transparency with the family.

3. Review the permanency case to understand the reason for DCS involvement and current case status;

Note: Considerations when reviewing the permanency case should include the Risk Assessment, criminal history, informal and formal supports, progress in services from provider reports, the family's protective factors and underlying needs, and whether the conditions for initial DCS involvement continue to exist.

4. Complete the Safety Assessment and Initial Family Risk Assessment, and provide the assessment outcomes to the FCM Supervisor (see policies 4.18 Establishing Initial Child Safety and 4.23 Initial Family Risk Assessment);
5. Convene a Child and Family Team (CFT) Meeting (with the permanency FCM, if applicable) to discuss the safety and risk concerns of the new child in the home;

Note: Utilize the Safety Assessment, Initial Family Risk Assessment, and the Family Functional Assessment (FFA) Field Guide as tools to assist the FCM, family, and CFT to mutually determine the family's strengths and underlying needs (see policies 4.18 Establishing Initial Child Safety, 4.23 Initial Risk Assessment, and 5.07 Child and Family Team (CFT) Meetings).

6. Develop a plan for the following during the CFT Meeting:
 - a. Safety Plan (see policy 4.19 Safety Planning),
 - b. Plan of Safe Care (POSC), if applicable (see policy 4.42 Plan of Safe Care), and
 - c. Appropriate services available to assist the family (see policy 4.26 Determining Service Levels and Transitioning to Permanency Services and Tool 4G: Community Resources and Prevention Services).
7. Support the family in accessing community resources and/or prevention services to meet their underlying needs (see Tool 4G: Community Resources and Prevention Services);
8. Document all information gathered during the assessment within three (3) business days in the case management system; and

Note: If the siblings to the new child in the home are in an out-of-home placement, the FCM should document information regarding the safety of the new child remaining in the home, if it is determined the new child can remain safely in the home.

9. Complete a Preliminary Inquiry (PI) if it is determined that DCS involvement is needed to ensure child safety;

Note: If it is determined that DCS involvement is not needed, a PI may be requested by local office management and should be completed within 24 hours and distributed to the FCM Supervisor.

The FCM Supervisor who supervises the assigned FCM will:

1. Email the Division Manager (DM)/Local Office Director (LOD) and Regional Manager (RM) to advise of the assigned assessment FCM;

Note: If the assessment is assigned to a different county from where the permanency case is open, the FCM Supervisor will notify via email the assigned permanency FCM, FCM Supervisor, and DM/LOD.

2. Facilitate a consultation to review risk and safety for the child with the permanency FCM and permanency FCM Supervisor, if applicable, the DM/LOD and the DCS Staff Attorney (if available) within 48 hours upon assessment initiation (see policy 4.18 Establishing Initial Child Safety);

Note: Prior to approving an infant to be released from the hospital, a consultation should occur with the FCM Supervisor, LOD, and DCS Staff Attorney.

3. Complete the Assessment Staffing Guide (ASG);
4. Collaborate with the permanency FCM Supervisor, if applicable, to ensure all case information is current and accurate; and
5. If it is determined a PI is needed, review the PI for approval as soon as possible but no later than 48 hours, and distribute to the DM/LOD.

The DM/LOD will:

1. Complete a consultation with the FCM, FCM Supervisor, and DCS Staff Attorney (if available) within 48 hours of assessment initiation;
2. Maintain communication with the out of county permanency DM/LOD, if the assessment is assigned to a different county from where the permanency case is open; and
3. If it is determined a PI is needed, review the PI for approval as soon as possible but no later than 48 hours, and distribute to the RM.

The RM will:

1. Forward the 310 to the Chief Counsel and Deputy Chief Counsel upon email notification of the 310 from the DCS Child Abuse Hotline (Hotline);
2. If it is determined a PI is needed, review the PI for approval as soon as possible but no later than 48 hours; and
3. Contact the Assistant Deputy Director of Field Operations and Assistant General Counsel, if it is determined further review is needed.

The DCS Staff Attorney will:

1. Complete a consultation, if available, with the FCM, FCM Supervisor, and DM/LOD within 48 hours of assessment initiation; and
2. If it is determined a PI is needed, review the PI for approval as soon as possible but no later than 48 hours.

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RELEVANT INFORMATION

Definitions

Protective Factors

Protective Factors are conditions or attributes in individuals, families, and communities that promote the safety, stability, permanency, and well-being of children and families.

Underlying Needs

Underlying needs are the root source of an individual and/or family's challenges. An underlying need determines the appropriate use of services or interventions.

Forms and Tools

- [4.G Tool: Community Resources and Prevention Services](#)
- [Assessment Staffing Guide \(SF 56567\)](#)
- Family Functional Assessment (FFA) Field Guide – available on the [Indiana Practice Model SharePoint](#)
- Initial Family Risk Assessment – available in the case management system
- Preliminary Inquiry (PI) – available in the case management system
- Preliminary Report of Alleged Child Abuse or Neglect (310) – available in the case management system
- [Protective Capacities and Protective Factors: Common Ground for Protecting Children and Strengthening Families](#)
- Safety Assessment – available in the case management system

Related Policies

- [4.03 Conducting the Assessment - Overview](#)
- [4.18 Establishing Initial Child Safety](#)
- [4.19 Safety Planning](#)
- [4.23 Initial Family Risk Assessment](#)
- [4.26 Determining Service Levels and Transitioning to Permanency Services](#)
- [4.42 Plan of Safe Care](#)
- [5.07 Child and Family Team \(CFT\) Meetings](#)

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LEGAL REFERENCES

- [IC 31-33-8-1: Investigations by local child protective services; time of initiation](#)
- [IC 31-33-8-2: Investigations by law enforcement agencies](#)
- [IC 31-33-8-7: Scope of assessment by department of child services; order for access to home, school, or other place, or for mental or physical examinations; petition to interview child; order; requirements](#)
- [IC 31-34-12-4.5: Presumption if living in household with adult who committed or has been charged with specified offense](#)

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PRACTICE GUIDANCE- DCS POLICY 4.50

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.

Child and Family (CFT) Meeting

According to the Child Welfare Policy and Practice Group, a Child and Family Team (CFT) meeting is a gathering of family members, friends, members of the family's faith community and professionals who join together to jointly develop individualized plans to strengthen family capacity, to assure safety, stability, well-being, and permanency and to build natural supports that will sustain the family over time. Bringing a family together with a solution focused team of supports contributes to a variety of potential benefits, such as:

1. Preventing abuse and neglect and speeding up permanency;
2. Preventing removal and placement disruptions;
3. Strengthening engagement with families and older youth;
4. Improving the quality of assessments about strengths and needs;
5. Increasing the likelihood of matching the appropriate services to needs;
6. Identifying kinship placement opportunities;
7. Increasing the capacity to overcome barriers; and
8. Creating a system of supports that will sustain the family over time and provide a safety net after agency involvement ends.

Consideration of Protective Factors to Ensure Safety

Protective Factors are directly connected to the strengths of the family and may be used as a resource to learn new skills and solve problems. By using a protective factors approach, child welfare professionals and others can help parents find resources and supports that emphasize their strengths while also identifying areas where they need assistance, thereby mitigating the chances of child abuse and neglect. When completing a Safety Plan, consider the protective factors listed on the Protective Capacities and Protective Factors: Common Ground for Protecting Children and Strengthening Families document under Forms and Tools as part of an evaluation of the family's ability to ensure the safety of the child.

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