



## INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY

**Tool Name:** 4.B Assessment Narrative

**Reference:** 4.25 Completing the Assessment Report, 4.31 Child Fatality and Near Fatality Assessments

**Effective Date:** August 1, 2024

**Version:** 5

This tool provides guidance to Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) Family Case Managers (FCM) on the purpose and the completion of the Assessment of Alleged Child Abuse or Neglect (311) and the Safe Assessment of Alleged Child Abuse or Neglect (311S).

### **Purpose of the Assessment Narrative**

The 311 may be used by DCS for the following purposes, including, but not limited to:

1. Notification of the assessment conclusions to the substantiated alleged perpetrator and/or parent, guardian or custodian of the alleged child victim;
2. Monitoring of assessments by management staff to ensure consistent compliance with DCS policy requirements and for case staffing purposes, to ensure best practices are being followed;
3. Approvals of relative placement for a child alleged to be a Child in Need of Services (CHINS), pre-adoptive placements and consents, and Foster Family Home license applications/revocations, including appropriate waivers;
4. Waivers of Child Protection Services (CPS) History by DCS; and
5. Evidence in a DCS administrative hearing, CHINS hearing, or Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) case.

**Note:** Others also use the 311 in discovery requests, law enforcement investigations, as evidence in criminal or juvenile delinquency cases, divorce or paternity actions, and in administrative hearings or other civil matters. The 311 may also be requested by the public and media in fatalities through an information request made through Central Office. The 311 should be written accurately and professionally to reflect the outcome of the assessment.

### **Completion of the Assessment Narrative**

When completing a 311 narrative, the FCM should follow these general guidelines:

1. Individuals referenced in the narrative should be specifically identified by name, as well as agency affiliation if relevant;
2. Write the narrative in paragraph format, using complete sentences, proper grammar and punctuation;
3. Use appropriate wording (e.g., no slang, no abbreviations unless previously identified, use quotes when quoting other sources or statements);
4. Be mindful of using words or phrases that can create bias or labeling (e.g., aggressive, defiant, filthy, noncompliant, unstable). Use nouns and verbs to describe behavior rather than value-based adjectives (see Buzzwords: Moving to Behavioral Descriptors);
5. Avoid overusing pronouns;
6. Do not cut and paste contact logs into the narrative;
7. Do not use all capital letters;

8. Utilize spell-check prior to submitting for supervisory approval; and
9. Be mindful of confidentiality policies when there is more than one (1) alleged perpetrator (see policy 2.06 Sharing Confidential Information).

Each 311 assessment narrative should include a:

1. Summary of the Preliminary Report of Alleged Abuse or Neglect (310);
2. Scope of the assessment;
3. Initial and subsequent assessment of the child's safety;
4. Conclusion statement for each allegation assessed; and
5. Notice section.

**Note:** Additional guidance is provided below for assessments that involve a near fatality/fatality and Institutional assessments.

**The following outlines information to be included in each 311 assessment narrative and 311S as applicable:**

1. Summary of the Preliminary Report of Alleged Child Abuse or Neglect (310)
  - a. The report date and the allegations selected on the Standard Decision Making (SDM) Tool including any additional related allegations identified during the assessment;
  - b. The name and date of birth (DOB) of all alleged child victims;
  - c. The name and DOB (or approximate age if not known) of all alleged perpetrators including additional perpetrators identified during the assessment;
  - d. Each alleged perpetrators' relationship to each alleged child victim;
  - e. The name and title of the assessing FCM and the date the assessment was assigned to the FCM;
  - f. The date the FCM, or assigned DCS office staff, completed a CPS History and criminal history search, and the findings of the search. See policy 4.03 Conducting the Assessment-Overview. See policy 4.03 Conducting the Assessment and Chapter 13 – Background Checks.

Example of the 310 summary for 311 and 311S:

On January 1, 2024, the Department of Child Services (DCS) received a report alleging John Doe (age 12) is a victim of physical abuse. The alleged perpetrators are Jane Doe (age 36), mother of John, and Jim Doe (age 37), father of John.

A review of the SDM Tool indicated the report was sent for assessment for caregiver action that will likely cause injury.

Family Case Manager (FCM) Danielle Brown was assigned to this assessment on January 2, 2024.

On January 2, 2024, FCM Brown searched the Child Protection Index regarding Jane Doe and found the following:  
10/29/20 Substantiation for neglect (educational neglect).

On January 2, 2024, FCM Brown searched the Child Protection Index regarding Jim Doe and found no history.

On January 2, 2024, FCM Brown completed a criminal history search for Jane Doe. The following was found:

07/16/2021 35-48-4-11(a)(1)/MB: Possession of Marijuana; 35-48-4-8.3(b)(1)/MC: Possession of Paraphernalia

On January 2, 2024, FCM Brown completed a criminal history search for Jim Doe and found no history.

2. Scope of the Assessment (not applicable for 311S)

- a. A summary of the events, interviews, and relevant facts that led to the assessment findings, not a step-by-step detailed account of the assessment. Provide an explanation if a required interview is not conducted. In some instances, documenting that a visit was unannounced may be relevant. The date or time frame of an alleged incident may be critical information necessary to reach an informed conclusion and should be included (see policies 4.03 Conducting the Assessment – Overview and 4.11 Interviewing the Alleged Perpetrator);
- b. Relevant observations, either as part of an interview or separately if no interview is conducted, including whether the FCM's observations were documented by photographs (see policy 4.14 Examining and Photographing a Child and/or Trauma);
- c. Relevant information obtained through records and reports the FCM reviewed (e.g., police reports, medical records, court orders). Document the date and outcome of a PEDS referral, if applicable (see policy 4.16 Medical Examinations, Psychological Testing, Drug Screens, and Substance Abuse Evaluations); and
- d. Any arrests made related to the alleged abuse or neglect incident. If charges are filed, state the charges and court case number.

**Note:** The 311S does not require the information listed in steps 1-4. The Scope of the Assessment section in the 311S should say, "Assessment".

Example for 311:

On January 2, 2024, FCM Brown interviewed the mother, Jane Doe, in the home. Jane reported she has never used physical discipline to punish John. Jane stated typical forms of punishment include John being sent to his room, getting his phone taken away, or being grounded from seeing his friends.

On January 2, 2024, FCM Brown interviewed John in the home. No pertinent information was disclosed at this time.

On January 3, 2024, John was forensically interviewed at Jenny's Place by Dan Jones. John disclosed numerous times he has been hit, kicked, and choked by his parents. John disclosed he has been choked to the point of losing consciousness multiple times. John disclosed his father has shoved him to the ground, kicked him multiple times, and then stepped on his neck. John appeared tearful and shaky while disclosing this information.

On January 3, 2024, FCM Brown observed an interview conducted by Officer Leonard Perkins with Jane and Jim Doe at the Elkhart County Jail. Jane admitted to the allegations stating she has hit, kicked, and choked Joey on multiple occasions as a form of discipline. Jim reported he would like his attorney present before making a statement.

On January 5, 2024, FCM Brown reviewed medical records received from Elkhart Memorial Hospital suggesting John could suffer from episodes of memory loss due to a reactionary response to the physical abuse in the household.

On January 7, 2024, Derek Fairchild, Jim's attorney, declined to have Jim make a statement at this time due to the pending criminal charges.

Example for 311S:  
Assessment.

3. Initial and Subsequent Safety of the Child(ren)

- a. A brief statement indicating how the safety of each victim was ensured including each surviving child in the case of fatality assessments;
- b. The date the Initial Safety Assessment (as well as any subsequent safety assessments, if applicable) was completed and the outcome of the assessment;
- c. The date of removal, if the alleged victim was removed from the home, original placement type, and measures utilized to prevent the removal (e.g., safety plan, CFT Meeting [see policy 5.07 Child and Family Team Meetings]);
- d. The date and reason for the child's return if any child was removed from the home environment and returned home before the completion of the assessment;
- e. A brief description of any service referrals, including the identity of the agency or service provider;
- f. Any protective orders in place and the case number;
- g. A description of any casework plan that has been developed (e.g., Community Services and Safety Plan); and
- h. The date of any CFT Meetings and include information relevant to the outcomes reached by the CFT.

**Note:** The 311S does not require the information listed in 1-8. The Initial and Subsequent Safety of the Child(ren) section in the 311S should say, "Staffed with SafeACT."

Example for an unsubstantiated assessment for 311:

An Initial Safety Assessment was completed on 01/03/2024. Outcome: SAFE.

Jenny's safety was able to be established through safety planning with the family on January 04, 2024. Jenny's mother is a sober caregiver at her apartment, and Jenny's grandmother is a sober caregiver at her home. Both parents demonstrated knowledge relevant to Jenny's developmental milestones and appeared to have a strong relationship with Jenny. A Child and Family Team (CFT) Meeting was facilitated on 01/17/2024 to support the safety plan and the parents were able to identify informal supports they can utilize. FCM Brown put in a Community Partners referral on 01/20/2024.

Example for 311S:

Staffed with SafeACT.

Example for a substantiated assessment for 311:

An Initial Safety Assessment was completed on 01/03/2024. Outcome: UNSAFE.

Jenny's safety was unable to be ensured in her parent's home. During FCM's home visit on 01/01/2024, drug paraphernalia was observed throughout the home within the reach of Jenny. The parents were unwilling to clean up the home. Both parents tested positive for marijuana and heroin throughout the course of the assessment. Jenny was observed to have a flat affect and did not appear to have formed appropriate attachment to her parents.

Due to the nature of the concerns, Jenny was removed from the home on 01/03/2024 and placed with maternal grandparents, Bob and Joanne Doe.

#### 4. Conclusion Statement

For each individual allegation (whether substantiated or unsubstantiated), include a brief synopsis of how relevant facts found during the scope of the assessment led to the assessment finding(s) (see policy 4.22 Making an Assessment Finding). The conclusion statement for the 311 and 311S should include the following:

- a. Whether the allegations were regarding abuse and/or neglect;
- b. The abuse or neglect maltreatment type (e.g., environment life/health endangering, sexual misconduct with a minor, inappropriate discipline, bruises/cuts/welts);
- c. Whether each allegation was substantiated or unsubstantiated;
- d. Alleged perpetrator's name;
- e. Alleged child victim's name;
- f. The relevant act or omission of the alleged perpetrator;
- g. How the act or omission impacted the alleged child victim;
- h. Any court action taken by DCS (e.g., Informal Adjustment [IA] or Child in Need of Services [CHINS]); and
- i. A statement indicating that the permanency FCM was notified of the conclusion of the assessment if an Informal Adjustment or CHINS case is open.

Example for an unsubstantiated assessment for a 311 and 311S:

Neglect (lack of supervision) is unsubstantiated against Jason Doe in regard to John Doe due to a lack of the preponderance of the evidence to support the allegations as true. The Scott County Sheriff's Department received a report of a young child walking down the street unaccompanied by an adult. Shortly after LEA arrived, Jason appeared to be searching for John and reported he realized John was not in the home and immediately began searching for him. Time frames from LEA and Jason's interview indicate John was away from the home for less than 5 minutes before he was found. John appeared healthy, with clean clothes, and was happy to see Jason when he was found.

Example for a substantiated assessment for a 311:

Physical abuse (inappropriate discipline and bruises/cuts/welts) is substantiated against Jane Doe in regard to Jenny Doe due to the preponderance of the evidence to support the allegations to be true. Jenny disclosed to DCS that Jane caused the bruising to her face after slamming her head into the wall as punishment. Jane's father, John Doe, informed DCS that Jane admitted to him that she caused the injury. Jane had told Jenny to be dishonest about the injury and kept her home from school to hide the injury. FCM Brown observed a blackish-purple bruise covering Jenny's entire left cheek.

Example for a substantiated assessment for a 311 on an open case:

Sexual abuse (child molesting) is substantiated against Jason Doe in regard to Jenny Doe due to the preponderance of the evidence to support the allegations to be true. During a forensic interview, Jenny disclosed Jason Doe to have touched her inappropriately under her clothes in the vaginal area. Jason Doe denied the allegations to law enforcement and DCS, and he stated he would comply with a voice stress test; however, Jason Doe did not attend the voice stress test at the time it was scheduled. Due to the disclosure made by Jenny, criminal charges of child molestation against Jason Doe have been filed. At this time, Jenny is involved in a current out-of-home CHINS case and is receiving ongoing therapy services under DCS' supervision.

## 5. Notice Section

The 311 and 311S should include the following information regarding providing notices:

- a. The names of persons provided with the Notice of Availability of Completed Reports and Information and Request for Release of Completed Reports and Information and the dates the notices were provided; and
- b. For substantiated assessments: A statement indicating the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) forms will be sent by mail or hand delivered after the approval of the assessment. For Child Care Workers/Resource Parent assessments, add the date the Notice of DCS Decision to Unsubstantiate Allegations of Child Abuse/Neglect or the Notice of Intent to Substantiate Allegations of CA/N by a Child Care Worker or Licensed Resource Parent was mailed or hand delivered, as well as the Child Care Worker Assessment Review (CCWAR) meeting date and the outcome of the CCWAR, if applicable.

Example for 311 and 311S:

A Notice of Availability was provided to Jane Doe on 02/15/2024.

A Notice of Availability was provided to John Doe on 02/15/2024.

A Request for Release of Completed Reports and Information was provided to Jane Doe on 02/15/2024.

A Request for Release of Completed Reports and Information was provided to John Doe on 02/15/2024.

### **Post Assessment Approval - Reversal Information Due to Administrative Process**

Upon completion of an administrative process (Administrative Review or Administrative Hearing), if the classification of allegations is reversed on one (1) or more allegations, the post assessment section should reflect the final decision. If any reversal of the classification of the allegations occurs after the original approval of the 311, the body of the narrative should remain intact.

If the allegations in an approved 311 are reversed, after the original narrative, state the following information in the statement:

1. The date of the reversal;
2. The name and title of the person who authorized the reversal (e.g., the Local Office Director [LOD], Administrative Law Judge [ALJ], court);
3. What procedure occurred that resulted in the reversal (e.g., administrative review, administrative hearing, Judicial Review); and
4. The basis of the reversal if the reversal is authorized through administrative review.

Example:

On February 15, 2024, Regional Manager (RM) John Henry conducted an administrative review and reversed the decision to substantiate allegations of neglect (environment life/health endangering) by Jane Smith in regard to Jason Doe, a minor child, because RM John Henry determined Jane Smith was not a parent, guardian, or custodian to Jason Doe.

### **Post Assessment Approval - Reversal Information Due to Adverse CHINS Findings**

If a court having jurisdiction over a CHINS case under IC 31-34 has determined that the child was not a victim of abuse or neglect as substantiated or that the perpetrator did not commit the child abuse or neglect as substantiated, the post assessment section should reflect the final determination. If any reversal of the classification of the allegations occurs after the original approval of the 311, the body of the narrative should remain intact.

If the allegations in an approved 311 are reversed, after the original narrative, state the following information in the statement:

1. The date of the reversal; and
2. The CHINS case in which the adverse judicial findings occurred.

### **Additional Information for Fatality/Near Fatality Assessments**

The following information should also be included in the 311 for fatality/near fatality assessments:

1. The cause and manner of death identified in the autopsy reports and the State issued death certificate. Document the reason for not having an autopsy report if it is not available, and include additional documentation related to the death (e.g., coroner's report, coroner's inquest);
2. Provide a brief statement, for near fatalities, stating the child's condition was certified as life threatening by a licensed physician and include the licensed physician's name;
3. Whether DCS had any contact with the child or the perpetrator before the fatality or near fatality occurred. If DCS had contact, include the following information:
  - a. Frequency of contact or communication with the family (this includes face-to-face, telephonic, or written correspondence) and the date the last contact or communication occurred before the fatality or near fatality,
  - b. Any prior assessments and whether each assessment was substantiated or unsubstantiated, and
  - c. A summary of the child's most up-to-date case status at the time the fatality or near fatality assessment is closed, including:
    - i. Whether the child's case was closed before the fatality or near fatality,
    - ii. Reasons the case was closed if closure occurred prior to the near fatality or fatality, and
    - iii. Date of case closure.
4. A statement addressing any impairment, or lack thereof, on the part of parents/caregivers/alleged perpetrators at the time of the incident resulting in the fatality or near fatality;
5. A statement indicating whether drug or alcohol screens were conducted on parents/caregivers/alleged perpetrators and the results of those screens;
6. Statements regarding the following for sleep-related deaths:
  - a. Who placed the child to sleep,
  - b. The environment where the child was placed (e.g., adult bed, couch, crib, bedding),
  - c. Who last saw the child alive, and
  - d. Who found the child unresponsive.
7. Provide a statement that prescription medications were verified by the FCM for all household members and caregivers for ingestion related fatalities or near fatalities.

**Note:** No CAPTA forms should be provided without prior approval from the Central Office Fatality Unit (see policies 2.02 Administrative Review Process and 4.31 Fatality and Near Fatality Assessments).

### **Additional Information for Institutional Assessments**

The following information should also be included in the 311 for institutional assessments:

1. Include the Resource Number of the facility or the Licensed Child Placement Agency (LCPA) at the beginning of the assessment narrative if the institution is a residential treatment facility or resource parent licensed through an LCPA;
2. Whether the alleged child victim (and alleged perpetrator, if appropriate) was a private or agency placement. If an agency placement, state which agency (e.g., DCS, Probation, Department of Education [DOE], Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services);
3. The last three (3) residential placements for the child victim, if applicable (see policy 4.30 Conducting Institutional Investigations by the ICPS Unit); and
4. A statement that the DCS licensing unit was notified of the assessment conclusion.

### **Forms and Tools**

- Assessment of Alleged Child Abuse or Neglect (311) (SF 113) – available in the case management system
- [Buzzwords: Moving to Behavioral Descriptors](#)
- [Notice of Availability of Completed Reports and Information \(SF 48201\)](#)
- [Notice of DCS Decision to Unsubstantiate Allegations of Child Abuse/Neglect \(SF 53030\)](#)
- [Notice of Intent to Substantiate Allegations of CA/N by a Child Care Worker or Licensed Resource Parent \(SF 53028\)](#)
- Preliminary Report of Alleged Abuse or Neglect (310) (SF 114) – available in the case management system
- [Request for Release of Completed Reports and Information \(SF 53112\)](#)
- [Safe Assessment of Alleged Child Abuse or Neglect \(311S\) \(SF 57056\)](#)
- [Safety Plan \(SF 53243\)](#)

### **Related Policies**

- [2.02 Administrative Review Process](#)
- [2.06 Sharing Confidential Information](#)
- [4.03 Conducting the Assessment – Overview](#)
- [4.11 Interviewing the Alleged Perpetrator](#)
- [4.14 Examining and Photographing a Child and/or Trauma](#)
- [4.16 Medical Examinations, Psychological Testing, Drug Screens, and Substance Abuse Evaluations](#)
- [4.22 Making an Assessment Finding](#)
- [4.30 Conducting Institutional Investigations by the ICPS Unit](#)
- [4.31 Fatality and Near Fatality Assessments](#)
- [5.07 Child and Family Team Meetings](#)
- [Chapter 13-Background Checks](#)

### **Legal References**

- [IC 31-34: JUVENILE LAW: CHILDREN IN NEED OF SERVICES](#)