



INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES

CHILD WELFARE POLICY

Chapter 3: Child Abuse Hotline

Section 01: Receiving Reports of Suspected Child Abuse and/or Neglect (CA/N)

Effective Date: July 3, 2024

Version: 8

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POLICY OVERVIEW

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline (Hotline) is available for individuals to contact and make a report when they have reason to believe a child is a victim of Child Abuse and/or Neglect (CA/N). Receipt of a call made to the Hotline is a critical first step in the DCS's process of assessing the alleged child victim's safety.

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PROCEDURE

Allegations of CA/N are reported to the Hotline, which is available 24 hours per day, seven (7) days per week. The reporter may reach the Hotline at the toll-free telephone number (1-800-800-5556), by email (DCSHotlineReports@dcs.in.gov), or by fax (317-234-7596 or 317-234-7595). The Hotline will accept oral, written (hard copy), and electronic reports or requests. In Indiana, anyone who suspects a child is a victim of CA/N is a mandated reporter. A person who makes a CA/N report is protected from any civil or criminal liability that might otherwise be imposed because of such actions if the report is made in good faith.

Note: Hotline calls received from a law enforcement agency (LEA) that enters the provided access code will be routed to the front of the queue.

The DCS local office will assist any individual from the community who wishes to make a CA/N report in person at the DCS local office. The DCS local office will ensure the individual has access to a telephone to make a CA/N report to the Hotline. If the reporter is unable or unwilling to place the call to the Hotline, the DCS local office should take the CA/N report and subsequently call or email the Hotline to report the allegations.

The Hotline Intake Specialist (IS) will:

1. Record the date and time of the call;
2. Engage the caller in a courteous and professional manner;
3. Ask relevant questions to gather as much information as possible about the child, family, and allegations;
4. Actively listen to the reporter and take detailed notes; and
5. Make an initial determination as to the disposition of the call to be one (1) of the following (see Tool 3.A Hotline Intake Overview Flowchart):

- a. CA/N allegations: Proceed with creating a Preliminary Report of Alleged Child Abuse or Neglect (310). See policy 3.02 Creating and Evaluating a Child Abuse and Neglect (CA/N) Intake Report,
- b. Homeless Unaccompanied Minor: Proceed with completing a CA/N intake report regardless of whether CA/N is alleged,
- c. Professional Service Request (PSR): Proceed with creating the PSR Intake form. See Relevant Information and policy 3.03 Professional Service Request (PSR), or
- d. Safe Haven infant: Send the intake report to the DCS local office for an emergency placement to be arranged for the child.

Additional Hotline Actions

Adoptive Parenting Inquiries

For adoption inquiries, the IS will refer the caller to 1-888-25-ADOPT to be connected with an Adoption Consultant in the caller's region.

Collateral Information

When collateral information is received regarding an open assessment or case, the IS will:

1. Document the additional information obtained from the caller for the open assessment or case as an Information and Referral (I&R); and
2. Forward the I&R to the FCM, FCM Supervisor, and the county distribution list of the open assessment or case.

Complaints

If the call is a complaint, the IS will refer the caller to the appropriate person by following the chain of command and will escalate the call only if previous complaints went unresolved.

Family Evaluation

If the call is regarding a family evaluation, the IS will send the family evaluation to the DCS local office.

Inquiries

The IS will follow procedures outlined in policy 2.06 Sharing Confidential Information if a caller is interested in the status of a CA/N report, assessment, or case.

LEA Requesting Immediate Assistance at the Scene

When LEA calls to request immediate assistance, the IS will:

1. Ask if there are any allegations of CA/N;
2. Request essential information from the report source before requesting immediate assistance from the DCS local office;
3. Contact the DCS local office directly, upon ending the call, and email notes to the DCS local office, if requested;
4. Complete one (1) of the following:
 - a. The 310 if there are allegations of CA/N, or
 - b. The Professional Service Request Intake form if there are no allegations of CA/N.
5. Follow the respective process as outlined in policies 3.02 Creating and Evaluating a Child Abuse and/or Neglect Intake Report or 3.03 Professional Service Request (PSR) Intake.

New Child Residing in a Household with a Parent or Caregiver with an Open DCS Case

If the call is regarding a new child residing in the household of a parent or caregiver with an open DCS case, the intake report will be routed to the county where the parent or caregiver resides.

Resource Parenting Inquiries

If a caller is inquiring about resource parenting, the IS will refer the caller to the Foster Care Helpline (1-888-631-9510) to be connected to a Regional Foster Care Specialist (RFCs).

Self-Referrals

If a caller is inquiring about referrals, the IS will provide the caller with the requested resource information, such as a phone number of a community resource or service.

Third-Party referral

If the call is about a third-party referral, the IS will collect resource information for a family. Examples of a third-party referral include but are not limited to a school seeking Community Partners for a family, a relative seeking legal aid information for a mother or father, or a neighbor requesting food pantry information.

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RELEVANT INFORMATION

Definitions

Mandated Reporter

A mandated reporter is any person who has reason to believe a child is a victim of CA/N. All mandated reporters must report the incident to the Hotline.

Professional Service Request (PSR)

A PSR is a request from a designated professional reporter, as defined by Indiana law (IC 31-33-5-2), as members of the staff of a medical or other public or private institution, school, facility, or agency, including a request for information from an out-of-state child service agency, where there is no allegation of CA/N. A professional reporter, other than a member of the staff of a hospital licensed under IC 16-21-2, is legally obligated to report the alleged CA/N to DCS first, and then to the person in charge of the organization for which they work or volunteer. See IC 31-33-5-2.5 for guidance on hospital staff reporting requirements.

Forms and Tools

- [Child Welfare Information Gateway](#)
- DCS Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline - 1-800-800-5556
- DCS Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline email - DCSHotlineReports@dcs.in.gov
- DCS Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline fax - 317-234-7596 or 317-234-7595
- DCS Foster Care Helpline - 1-888-631-9510
- Preliminary Report of Alleged Child Abuse or Neglect (SF 114) (310) - available in the case management system
- Professional Service Request Intake - available in the case management system
- [Tool 3.A Hotline Intake Overview Flowchart](#)

Related Policies

- [2.06 Sharing of Confidential Information](#)
- [3.02 Creating and Evaluating a Child Abuse and Neglect \(CA/N\) Intake Report](#)
- [3.03 Professional Service Request \(PSR\)](#)

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LEGAL REFERENCES

- [IC 20-50-2-1: Application](#)
- [IC 31-33-5: Chapter 5. Duty to Report Child Abuse or Neglect](#)
- [IC 31-33-5-1: Duty to make report](#)
- [IC 31-33-5-2: Report; notification of individual in charge of institution, school, facility, or agency](#)
- [IC 31-33-5-2.5: Notification of individual in charge of hospital; report](#)
- [IC 31-33-5-3: Effect of compliance on individual's own duty to report](#)
- [IC 31-33-7: Chapter 7. Receipt of Reports of Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect](#)
- [IC 31-33-18: Chapter 18. Disclosure of Reports; Confidentiality Requirements](#)
- [IC 31-36-3: Chapter 3. Homeless Children](#)

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PRACTICE GUIDANCE- DCS POLICY 3.01

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.

Excellent Customer Service is Imperative

Calls placed to the Hotline are often the only contact the community has with DCS. To the community, the IS provides the first impression of the level of public service available through DCS. A bad customer service experience may cause a reporter to hesitate to make future reports; therefore, the IS should always communicate with reporters in a courteous and helpful manner.

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