



INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES

CHILD WELFARE POLICY

Chapter 4: Assessment

Section 01: Reviewing Child Abuse and/or Neglect (CA/N) Allegations and Other Records

Effective Date: October 1, 2023

Version: 8

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POLICY OVERVIEW

A thorough review of the Child Abuse and/or Neglect (CA/N) allegations in the Preliminary Report of Alleged Child Abuse or Neglect (310), other available records, and family history is critical in the initial stage of the Indiana Department of Child Services' (DCS) assessment of the child's safety.

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PROCEDURE

Upon receipt of the 310 from the DCS Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline (Hotline), DCS local office management will:

1. Review the 310; and
2. Assign the 310 to a Family Case Manager (FCM), if it is determined the report will be assessed.

Note: DCS local office management will review each 310 prior to assigning to an FCM, including 310s received after hours, on weekends, and holidays.

DCS must conduct an assessment concerning a homeless unaccompanied minor who voluntarily enters an emergency shelter or shelter care facility without the presence or consent of a parent, guardian, or custodian. Per IC 31-36-3-3, DCS must conduct the assessment no later than 48 hours following notification by the emergency shelter or shelter care facility of the child's name, location, and whether the child alleges CA/N.

The FCM will:

1. Review the 310;
2. Review records regarding prior DCS contact with the family via the following sources to gain insight into potential safety concerns prior to making contact with a child and family, if available:
 - a. Case management system, and/or
 - b. Child support records.

Note: To contact your local Child Support Field Consultant, see the Indiana Child Support Bureau (CSB) Field Consultant Region Map.

3. Discuss the 310 with the assigned FCM of any open DCS assessment or ongoing case, if applicable;
4. Review any available pertinent information from outside sources (e.g., law enforcement agency [LEA], schools, public utility companies, and Bureau of Motor Vehicles [BMV]);
5. Obtain and review additional confidential information as needed (e.g., medical and social services records);
6. Consider the following when reviewing records:
 - a. The nature and extent of the family's current and previous involvement with DCS,
 - b. Any existing safety concerns for the child and/or for the FCM, and
 - c. Any issues that should be discussed with the child and family members.
7. Determine if the alleged perpetrator is a DCS employee or a child care worker (see policy 2.03 Child Care Worker Assessment Review Process and 4.45 Assessment of DCS Staff Alleged Perpetrators).

The FCM Supervisor will assist the FCM with reviewing information and provide support, as needed.

The DCS local office will ensure all assigned reports are sent to the appropriate LEA jurisdiction on a daily basis by:

1. Fax;
2. Email; or
3. Hand delivery.

Note: Reports received on weekends or holidays will be delivered the following business day.

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RELEVANT INFORMATION

Definitions

Homeless Unaccompanied Minor

A homeless unaccompanied minor is an individual who is under 18 years of age and is receiving shelter without a parent, guardian, or custodian present.

Forms and Tools

- [Indiana Child Support Bureau Field Consultant Region Map](#)
- Preliminary Report of Alleged Child Abuse or Neglect (SF 114) (310) - available in the case management system
- [Records Retention Schedule](#)

Related Policies

- [2.03 Child Care Worker Assessment Review Process](#)
- [2.13 Expungement of Records](#)
- [4.45 Assessment of DCS Staff Alleged Perpetrators](#)

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LEGAL REFERENCES

- [IC 31-9-2-44.1: "Exigent circumstances"](#)
- [IC 31-36-3-3: Notification to department; investigation of a child; notification to parents](#)

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PRACTICE GUIDANCE- DCS POLICY 4.01

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.

Unsubstantiated Child Abuse and/or Neglect (CA/N) History

Upon FCM Supervisor approval of an unsubstantiated assessment, DCS retains a hard copy of the documentation relating to an assessment of CA/N in the DCS local office for six (6) months. At that time, the file may be uploaded into the case management system and the hard copy file can be destroyed, or the hard copy file is transferred to the records center in accordance with the Records Retention Schedule. See policy 2.13 Expungement of Records.

Access to Unsubstantiated CA/N

Documentation in electronic form will be maintained until 24 years after the birth of the youngest child named as an alleged victim of CA/N in the unsubstantiated DCS assessment report. This documentation may be used in the assessment of a subsequent report concerning the same child or family; however, DCS may not rely solely on the unsubstantiated history to support substantiation. Unsubstantiated case documentation will not be available when it has been expunged to comply with a court order.

Thorough Review of Records

A thorough review of the CA/N intake information enables the FCM to begin the initial assessment of a child's safety. Factors such as the child's age and vulnerability and the family history are critical in this initial stage of assessment.

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