

	INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY	
	Chapter 4: Assessment	Effective Date: January 1, 2012
	Section 04: Required Interviews	Version: 4

STATEMENTS OF PURPOSE

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) will conduct the following required interviews during **all** Child Abuse and/or Neglect (CA/N) assessments:

1. The alleged child victim;
2. 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;
3. The parent, guardian, or custodian;
4. The alleged perpetrator;

Exception: DCS will not interview the alleged perpetrator when certain conditions apply. See policy [4.11 Interviewing the Alleged Perpetrator](#) for additional information.

5. The reporting source (unless the reporting source is anonymous);
6. Identified witnesses; and
7. Professionals believed to have first-hand knowledge that relates to the allegation(s), if such professionals are accessible.

Note: Contact vs. Interview

A contact can be any communication or an in-person observation. An interview occurs when a person is individually questioned about the allegations of a CA/N report not in the presence of family members or witnesses. A contact is not always considered an interview.

A contact includes but is not limited to:

1. Face-to-Face home, other office;
2. Telephone;
3. Fax;
4. Email;
5. Voice Mail; and/or;
6. Correspondence.

DCS will interview the non-custodial parent regarding the CA/N assessment or document in the case management why the contact or interview with that person could not be made.

DCS will conduct or arrange an individual face-to-face interview with the alleged child victim(s), 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 regardless of the allegation(s). 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.

DCS will conduct any additional interviews necessary to gain adequate information from which to draw conclusions about the validity of the allegation(s).

Note: Legitimate exceptions to this policy are discussed in the individual policies for each interview type (i.e., [4.11 Interviewing the Alleged Perpetrator](#)) as well as in the policy [4.07 Locating the Subjects](#).

Code References

N/A

PROCEDURE

The Family Case Manager (FCM) will conduct the following interviews in the following manner for all assessments:

1. An **in-person** interview with the **alleged child victim**. See policy [4.09 Interviewing Children](#);
2. An **in-person** interview with **all other children** living in the home and any other children present in the home at the time of the alleged incident;
3. An **in-person** interview with one or both of the **parent(s), guardian, or custodian(s)**. The interview will take place on the same day that the interview takes place with the alleged child victim, unless not possible. See policy [4.10 Interviewing the Parent, Guardian or Custodian](#);
4. An **in-person** interview with the **alleged perpetrator**. See policy [4.11 Interviewing the Alleged Perpetrator](#);
5. An in-person or phone interview with the **reporting source** (unless the reporting source is anonymous);
6. An in-person or phone interview with every person who is known to have **witnessed** the incident. The FCM will document in case management system if no witnesses exist; and
7. An in-person or phone interview with **professionals** who did not make the report, but believed to have first-hand knowledge that relates to the allegation(s), results of the incident, injury to the child victim, or circumstances of the family being assessed, if such professionals are accessible. The FCM will document in the case management system if no such professionals exist.

Interviews Involving Domestic Violence

All interviews should be performed separately. Consider completing interviews outside of the home when possible. All interviews must be performed without the alleged domestic violence offender present. Consider the safety of all family members and DCS staff when structuring interviews.

Interviews should be completed in the following order:

1. Non-offending parent;
2. Child(ren); and
3. Alleged domestic violence offender.

Exception: If there is danger for the non-offending parent and/or child(ren) and the child(ren) cannot keep information from the alleged domestic violence offender (the child may identify with the alleged domestic violence offender and may disclose contents of the interview), the interview with the child(ren) may be postponed. This will occur only in very rare instances and the FCM Supervisor must be notified immediately and approve the decision.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

Interviews with Witnesses to a Domestic Violence Incident

These interviews should be conducted with an understanding that the personal safety of the individuals is a consideration that may impact their willingness to discuss the abuse and/or violence occurring within the family. All interviews should focus on child safety.

FORMS AND TOOLS

N/A

RELATED INFORMATION

Professionals

Examples include, but are not limited to, therapists, social workers, school personnel, medical professionals, and religious leaders (priests, rabbis, ministers, etc.). Professionals in this context do not include DCS employees (Directors, Supervisors, etc.).

Witnesses

Based on the information uncovered during the assessment, the FCM may become aware of one or more persons who witnessed the alleged CA/N. The FCM should seek to locate and interview those persons.