



## INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES

### CHILD WELFARE POLICY

#### Chapter 4: Assessment

#### Section 10: Interviewing the Parent, Guardian, or Custodian

**Effective Date:** June 1, 2022

**Version:** 6

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#### POLICY OVERVIEW

One of the primary elements of a Child Abuse and/or Neglect (CA/N) assessment is interviewing. The purpose of the interview is to inform of the assessment, gather information needed to complete the assessment, and make a finding of CA/N.

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#### PROCEDURE

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) is required to conduct a face-to-face interview with the parent(s), guardian(s), or custodian(s) of an alleged victim of CA/N, unless one (1) or both cannot be located or refuse an interview. The interview will take place on the same day as the interview with the alleged child victim, unless not possible, and in a private place where there will be no interruptions.

If the parent, guardian, or custodian is the alleged perpetrator, the Family Case Manager (FCM) will follow all procedures outlined in policy 4.11 Interviewing the Alleged Perpetrator. Additionally, if more than one (1) parent, guardian, or custodian is being interviewed and the individual is identified as an alleged perpetrator, the interviews should be conducted separately. The FCM should attempt to locate and interview each noncustodial parent. See policy 5.04 Locating and Engaging Noncustodial Parents.

If the parent, guardian, or custodian is **not** the alleged perpetrator, the FCM will:

1. Determine if there are any barriers to communication with the parent, guardian, or custodian and take necessary action to make appropriate, reasonable accommodations;
2. Secure identifying information and request the individual's Social Security number (SSN);

**Note:** The FCM cannot legally demand and/or require the disclosure of the parent, guardian, or custodian's SSN.

3. State the reason for the interview, including each allegation and the potential outcomes (e.g., substantiation or unsubstantiation of the assessment);
4. Allow the parent, guardian, or custodian to respond to each allegation and to provide their side of the story;
5. Focus the interview on the safety of the child;

**Note:** For any questions regarding custody or custodial arrangements, contact the DCS Staff Attorney.

6. Look for and ask questions regarding any indications of CA/N;
7. Observe the interactions between the parent, guardian, or custodian and other family members, including the child;
8. Assess whether the parent, guardian, or custodian may be a victim of domestic violence (DV), keeping the safety of all parties in mind when completing the interview, and provide the parent with information about available community resources, as appropriate (see 4.G Tool: Community Resources and Prevention Services);
9. Obtain the names of other family members and/or individuals who may be able to provide additional information to support the assessment outcome;
10. Discuss any stress factors that may be present;
11. Use reflective listening skills during the interview with the parent, guardian, or custodian to ensure a shared understanding;
12. Explain that the assessment is not complete, and explain what will happen next, and how they will be informed of results of the assessment;
13. Introduce the Child and Family Team (CFT) Meeting process and encourage the parent, guardian, or custodian to consider utilizing this method of practice to develop plans to address child safety and problem solve concerns or issues as they are identified. Explain that the process may serve to reinforce the child and/or family's strengths, assist in identifying informal supports, and develop plans to address child and/or family needs;
14. Ask the parent, guardian, or custodian to sign any appropriate release of information forms and document the outcome in the case management system; and
15. Provide each parent, guardian, custodian, including an alleged father and any known noncustodial parent, and alleged perpetrator with a copy of the Notice of Availability of Completed Report and Information and document in the Assessment of Alleged Child Abuse or Neglect (311) report. If the parent is a minor, provide the notice to the minor parent and the minor parent's parent, guardian, or custodian. If the alleged perpetrator is a child, provide the notice to the alleged child perpetrator's parent, guardian, or custodian.

**Note:** In assessments that involve alleged DV, the non-offending parent should never be given the responsibility of providing the Notice of Availability of Completed Reports and Information to the alleged DV offender; this includes sending the Notice of Availability of Completed Reports and Information in the mail or leaving it at the house with the non-offending parent; rather, the FCM should deliver this notice to the alleged DV offender in person if the parties reside together.

For interviews conducted with the non-offending parent in a relationship where DV is alleged, the FCM will provide information about available community resources, follow all procedures above, and will:

1. Never ask the non-offending parent about DV in the presence of the alleged DV offender;
2. Assure the non-offending parent that they are concerned about their safety and the safety of the child. DCS will not confront the alleged DV offender with information shared regarding abuse without first discussing it with the non-offending parent;
3. Not attempt to force the non-offending parent to disclose about the abuse. Use of good engagement and questioning skills by the FCM will ease the non-offending parent during the interview process and may help them to share more information about the DV;

4. Explain that the child may experience immediate and long-term harm from exposure to DV and document this discussion in the case management system;
5. Not assume that resistant or uncooperative non-offending parents want or choose to be in violent relationships. Recognizing and attending to the fears and issues faced by the non-offending parent will increase the FCM's ability to engage the non-offending parent's participation in pursuing safety;
6. Provide information about community resources;
7. Discuss what will happen with the information gathered; and
8. Ask about safe times to make future contact.

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## RELEVANT INFORMATION

### Definitions

#### Alleged Father

An alleged (putative) father is a male who has asserted to be the father of a child, or who claims to be the father of a child but has not been adjudicated the father through a paternity action filed in court having jurisdiction, has not signed a paternity affidavit, and is not presumed to be a child's father under IC 31-14-7 (1) or IC 31-14-7-1(2).

#### Noncustodial Parent

A noncustodial parent is a mother, father, or alleged father (biological or adoptive) who does not have legal or primary physical custody of the child.

#### Parent

A parent is a child's biological or adoptive parent, including an alleged father.

### Forms and Tools

- [4.G Tool: Community Resources and Prevention Services](#)
- Assessment of Alleged Child Abuse or Neglect (SF 113) (311) - available in the case management system
- [Assessment Staffing Guide \(SF 56567\)](#)
- [Notice of Availability of Completed Reports and Information \(SF 48201\) \(English version\)](#)
- [Notice of Availability of Completed Reports and Information \(SF 51886\) \(Spanish version\)](#)
- [Notice of Availability of Completed Reports and Information \(SF 54536\) \(Burmese version\)](#)
- [Notice of Availability of Completed Reports and Information \(SF 53113\) \(Amharic version\)](#)

### Related Policies

- [4.11 Interviewing the Alleged Perpetrator](#)
- [5.04 Locating and Engaging Noncustodial Parents](#)
- [5.07 Child and Family Team \(CFT\) Meetings](#)

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## LEGAL REFERENCES

- [IC 31-9-2-88: "Parent"](#)

- [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 31-33-18-4: Notice to parent, guardian, or custodian of availability of reports, information, and juvenile court records; release form; copying costs](#)
- [IC 34-6-2-34.5: "Domestic or family violence"](#)

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## PRACTICE GUIDANCE- DCS POLICY 4.10

*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.*

### **Adult Indicators of Domestic Violence (DV)**

The following are possible indicators of DV in adults:

1. Evidence of physical injuries;
2. Feelings of depression, anger, and emotional distress;
3. Low self-esteem and suicidal thoughts;
4. Frequent medical problems;
5. Violence in family of origin;
6. Requests for financial assistance;
7. Isolation from friends and family;
8. Damaged property (holes in the wall, etc.);
9. Minimizing abuse;
10. Offender's accusations of infidelity;
11. Abuse of family pets;
12. Limited access to financial resources;
13. Child overly protective of one (1) parent;
14. Reluctance of adults to be interviewed separately; and/or
15. One (1) parent or adult answers all the questions.

### **Observing All Homes of the Child**

If a child spends time in multiple homes, it is best to visit every home the child goes to regularly, including the home of any parent, guardian, or custodian of that child. This will allow an observation of safe sleep practices, utilities, home conditions, occupants, and food (see the Assessment Staffing Guide [ASG]).

### **Resources for Domestic Violence**

The following resources are available for DV:

1. Indiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
Crisis Line: 1-800-332-7385, <http://www.icadvinc.org/>
2. Indiana Coalition to End Sexual Assault & Human Trafficking  
<https://icesaht.org/>
3. National Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
1-800-799-SAFE (7233) or TTY 1-800-787-3224, [www.ncadv.org](http://www.ncadv.org)

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