



INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES
CHILD WELFARE POLICY

Chapter 5: General Case Management
Section 25: New Child in the Household of a Parent or Custodian with an Open Case

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POLICY OVERVIEW

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) ensures the safety and well-being of all new children in the household of a parent guardian, or custodian with an open DCS case (i.e., Informal Adjustment [IA], In-Home Child in Need of Services [CHINS], and Out-of-Home CHINS). It is imperative for the Family Case Manager (FCM) to demonstrate respect and empathy when a new report will be made to the Indiana DCS Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline (Hotline) regarding a new child in the household with an open DCS case.

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PROCEDURE

DCS will engage the family and assess child safety and risk throughout the lifespan of an open DCS case (see policy 5.03 Engaging the Family and 5.C Tool: Face-To-Face Contact Guide).

Upon discovery of a new child in the household of a parent, guardian, or custodian with an open DCS case, the FCM will:

- 1. Inform the parent, guardian, or custodian that a new report will be made to the Hotline and a resulting assessment will be initiated to evaluate the new child and family's safety, risk, and needs (see Practice Guidance for providing support to the family when a new report will be made to the hotline);

Note: A new child in the home may include a newborn infant or child that has moved into the home or regularly (or on a continual basis) visits the home.

- 2. Contact the Hotline immediately at 1-800-800-5556 or by email at DCS HotlineReports@dcs.in.gov;

Note: The report to the Hotline should include detailed open case information, past history, and risk factors that currently or previously existed within the family and household.

- 3. Communicate with the assessment worker regarding case information (e.g., past history, current court status, compliance with services, and the current Safety Assessment and Family Risk Assessment), if applicable;
4. Attend a consultation to review risk and safety for the child with the assessment FCM and the assessment FCM Supervisor, if applicable, the Division Manager (DM)/Local

Office Director (LOD), and the DCS Staff Attorney (if available) within 48 hours upon assessment initiation;

5. Monitor the implementation of the plan developed during the CFT Meeting (see policy 4.50 New Child in the Household of a Parent or Custodian with an Open Case);
6. Support the family in accessing community resources and/or prevention services to meet their underlying needs as identified during the CFT Meeting (see Tool 4G: Community Resources and Prevention Services); and
7. Document the demographic information of the new child in the household and all actions taken within three (3) business days in the case management system.

The FCM Supervisor assigned to the case will:

1. Ensure the FCM has communicated with the parent, guardian, or custodian about the need for filing a new report with the Hotline;
2. Ensure the FCM has contacted the Hotline regarding the new child in the home of a parent, guardian, or custodian with an open DCS case;
3. Attend a consultation with the assessment FCM and assessment FCM Supervisor, if applicable, the LOD and the DCS Staff Attorney (if available) within 48 hours of assessment initiation; and
4. Collaborate with the assessment FCM Supervisor to ensure all case information is current and accurate, if applicable.

The DM/LOD will:

1. Attend the consultation with the assessment and permanency FCM and FCM Supervisor, and DCS Staff Attorney (if available) within 48 hours of assessment initiation; and
2. Maintain communication with the out of county assessment LOD, if the assessment is assigned to a different county from where the permanency case is open.

The DCS Staff Attorney, if available, will attend a consultation with the assessment and permanency FCM and FCM Supervisor, and LOD within 48 hours of assessment initiation.

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RELEVANT INFORMATION

Definitions

Protective Factors

Protective Factors are conditions or attributes in individuals, families, and communities that promote the safety, stability, permanency, and well-being of children and families.

Underlying Needs

Underlying needs are the root source of an individual and/or family's challenges. An underlying need determines the appropriate use of services or interventions.

Forms and Tools

- [4.G Tool: Community Resources and Prevention Services](#)
- [5.C Tool: Face-To-Face Contact Guide](#)
- Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline – 1-800-800-5556
- Indiana DCS Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline email – DCSHotlineReports@dcs.in.gov
- Initial Family Risk Assessment – available in the case management system

- [Protective Capacities and Protective Factors: Common Ground for Protecting Children and Strengthening Families](#)
- Safety Assessment – available in the case management system

Related Policies

- 4.50 New Child in the Household of a Parent or Custodian with an Open Case
- [5.03 Engaging the Family](#)

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LEGAL REFERENCES

- [IC 31-34-12-4.5: Presumption if living in household with adult who committed or has been charged with specified offense](#)

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PRACTICE GUIDANCE- DCS POLICY 5.25

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.

Child and Family Team (CFT) Meeting

According to The Child Welfare Policy and Practice Group, a Child and Family Team (CFT) meeting is a gathering of family members, friends, members of the family's faith community and professionals who join together to jointly develop individualized plans to strengthen family capacity, to assure safety, stability, well-being, and permanency and to build natural supports that will sustain the family over time. Bringing a family together with a solution focused team of supports contributes to a variety of potential benefits, such as:

1. Preventing abuse and neglect and speeding up permanency;
2. Preventing removal and placement disruptions;
3. Strengthening engagement with families and older youth;
4. Improving the quality of assessments about strengths and needs;
5. Increasing the likelihood of matching the appropriate services to needs;
6. Identifying kinship placement opportunities;
7. Increasing the capacity to overcome barriers; and
8. Creating a system of supports that will sustain the family over time and provide a safety net after agency involvement ends.

Consideration of Protective Factors to Ensure Safety

Protective Factors are directly connected to the strengths of the family and may be used as a resource to learn new skills and solve problems. By using a protective factors approach, child welfare professionals and others can help parents find resources and supports that emphasize their strengths while also identifying areas where they need assistance, thereby mitigating the chances of child abuse and neglect. When completing a Safety Plan, consider the protective factors listed on the Protective Capacities and Protective Factors: Common Ground for Protecting Children and Strengthening Families document under Forms and Tools as part of an evaluation of the family's ability to ensure the safety of the child.

Providing Support to the Family When New Report Will Be Made to the Hotline

It is best practice for the Family Case Manager (FCM) to use respect, empathy, and a strengths-based approach when discussing with the parent, guardian, or custodian that a new report will be made to the Indiana Department of Child Services Hotline (Hotline) and a resulting assessment may be initiated. Having open and transparent conversations, including but not limited to, a Child and Family Team (CFT) Meeting with each parent helps to build a trust-based relationship by aligning with the DCS Practice Model. This also allows each parent to discuss any questions or concerns they may have about a new Hotline report.

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