

INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES		
Policy Number: HR-3-8	Effective Date: February 1, 2024	Version: 5.0
POLICY TITLE: WORKER SAFETY		
OVERVIEW: The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) is committed to providing a safe and healthy work environment (including physical, emotional, and psychological safety and well-being) for all employees, clients, and visitors.		

I. DEFINITIONS

- A. Credible, immediate threat: A verbal or written threat, including that communicated by means of an electronic communication device, a threat implied by a pattern of conduct, or a combination of verbal, written, or electronically communicated statements and conduct. These threats are made with the intent and apparent ability to carry out the threat so as to cause those who are the target of the threat to reasonably fear for their immediate safety.
- B. Psychological safety: A shared belief held by members of a team that the team will not embarrass, reject, or punish an individual for speaking up¹. The four (4) stages of psychological safety² are:
 1. Inclusion safety: The stage of psychological safety that satisfies the basic human need to connect and belong. A person feels safe to be and is accepted for being oneself, including the person’s unique attributes and defining characteristics.
 2. Learner safety: The stage of psychological safety that satisfies the need to learn and grow. A person feels safe to exchange in the learning process by asking questions, giving and receiving feedback, experimenting, and making mistakes.
 3. Contributor Safety: The stage of psychological safety that satisfies the need to make a difference. A person feels safe to use one’s skills and abilities to make a meaningful contribution.
 4. Challenger Safety: The stage of psychological safety that satisfies the need to make things better. A person feels safe to speak up and challenge the status quo when there’s an opportunity for change or improvement.
- C. Work environment: Includes all locations where DCS job-related duties are performed. This includes, but is not limited to, DCS offices, courts, and in-home visits.

II. REFERENCES

- A. [GA-17 Critical Incident Response](#)
- B. [IC 34-26-6: Workplace Violence Restraining Orders](#)
- C. [IC 34-28-8-9: Regulation or prohibition of firearm possession or carrying a firearm by employee; when authorized](#)
- D. [Indiana State Personnel Department \(SPD\) Prevention of Workplace Violence Policy](#)
- E. [State of Indiana Employee Handbook](#)

¹ Edmondson, A. (1999, June). Psychological Safety and Learning Behavior in Work Teams. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 44(2), 350- 383.

² Clark, T. R. (2020). *The 4 Stages of Psychological Safety: Defining the Path to Inclusion and Innovation*. United States: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

III. STATEMENTS OF PURPOSE

- A. DCS is committed to providing safe, dependable working conditions and services to employees, clients, and visitors. DCS will maintain a “zero-tolerance” policy for workplace violence. Violations of this policy may lead to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.
- B. DCS believes that DCS employees should practice good risk management, because ultimately employees are responsible for their overall safety.
 - 1. All DCS employees are responsible for adhering to safety measures, practices, and rules, and they will conduct themselves in a manner which minimizes risk to themselves and others; and
 - 2. DCS employees shall strive to be aware of their surroundings and safety needs to the best of their ability. Should staff members feel unsafe, they should get to an area of safety and immediately consult with a member of their management team.

Note: DCS recognizes that risk management practices may vary based on the employee’s work setting (e.g., urban area vs. rural area; field staff vs. administrative staff). See “Safety and Accidents” in the [State of Indiana Employee Handbook](#) for more information.

- C. DCS will not tolerate violence, threats, harassment, intimidation, or other disruptive behavior within the work environment, with clients, associates of DCS employees (e.g., family and friends), or other stakeholders with whom the agency partners or interacts. DCS employees are required to notify their supervisor of any such behavior they have witnessed or experienced. If an employee’s immediate supervisor is unavailable or is party to the incident, the report should be made to an alternative supervisor or management level (e.g., Local Office Director [LOD], Division Manager [DM], Regional Manager [RM], Chief Counsel, Assistant General Counsel, Deputy General Counsel, or Deputy Director [for Central Office employees]). The person receiving the report will document all reported behaviors in the [Workplace Incident Report](#) form and report the incident to DCS Human Resources.
- D. In the event of a credible, immediate threat to an individual’s safety, either the employee or the employee’s supervisor should immediately notify the appropriate Law Enforcement Agency (LEA). The employee’s supervisor will also discuss with the LOD and/or RM and DCS Chief Counsel for the region or, for non-field staff, the Deputy Director and Chief Counsel of Legal Affairs that a request for a Workplace Protection Order be filed, as outlined in [IC 34-26-6](#). If the DCS Child Abuse Hotline (Hotline) receives a report of a threat, the Hotline will contact the local office emergency contact. See the [SPD Prevention of Workplace Violence Policy](#) for more information.

Note: Field Staff will use the AlertMedia app for all in-person interactions with clients. In addition, the AlertMedia app is available for Legal Staff. In case of an immediate threat, once activated the AlertMedia alert will notify LEA that the alarm has been activated. An employee may press the “Panic Button” on the AlertMedia app to signal for LEA when not in a session.

- E. DCS recognizes that the nature of its mandate requires daily activities that may expose employees to risk; however, employees are not expected to place their own safety in jeopardy. It is essential that all employees use their training and personal skills to minimize potential safety threats that may be involved when interacting with families to ensure both their own safety and the safety of any child present in the home. Although risks to employees cannot be completely eliminated, they can be dramatically reduced by increasing awareness. See the [Worker Safety Protocol](#) for more information.
- F. DCS recognizes that working closely with children who experience child abuse and/or neglect is often very stressful and traumatic. In order to promote the emotional and psychological well-being of its employees, DCS offers and encourages its staff to utilize the [Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\)](#), [Critical Incident Response](#), and the [Emergency Operation Plan- Local Office](#) as necessary.

IV. PROCEDURE

- A. All DCS Staff will follow all established reporting and check-in procedures.

Note: Working closely with children who experience child abuse and/or neglect is often very stressful and traumatic. In order to promote the emotional and psychological well-being of its employees, DCS offers and encourages staff to utilize the [EAP](#), [Critical Incident Response](#), and the [Emergency Operation Plan- Local Office](#) as necessary.

- B. Field Staff will and Legal Staff may:

- 1. Activate the AlertMedia app prior to face-to-face interactions with clients by entering the location of the meeting and selecting the timer option or inserting the charger or headphones (see AlertMedia Instruction Video for further guidance); and

Note: If using the timer, change the time if the visit extends past the originally anticipated length of the visit. Also, end the session on AlertMedia, once the visit has ended, as the AlertMedia Monitoring Center will be notified if the session is not ended prior to the timer expiring.

- 2. Activate the alarm by pulling the charger or headphones, allowing the timer to expire, or using the volume panic button by pressing “up-down-up-down” on the volume buttons in case of an immediate threat. An employee may press the “Panic Button” on the AlertMedia app to signal for LEA when not in a session.

Note: After the AlertMedia Monitoring Center confirms officers are onsite, an Incident Summary will be sent via text and e-mail to the employee and the AlertMedia Notification Team (i.e., local management team and the chain of command).

- C. A management team member will be aware of the location of employees while in the field, particularly when visits extend after normal office hours. Ensure at least one (1) other employee is aware when an employee will be alone in the office.

- D. Each DCS LOD will:

- 1. Devise written procedures to maintain safety in and around the local office and ensure the RM is provided a copy of these procedures;

2. Act as the Safety Officer for the county and appoint a designee in case of absence. See the [Emergency Operation Plan- Local Office](#) for further information regarding the responsibilities of the Safety Officer;
3. Establish reporting and check-in procedures for all employees;
4. Meet quarterly with Supervisors to discuss safety procedures and any safety concerns or incidents;
5. Report to their RM any safety concerns that may warrant a request to the Facilities & Real Estate Director and/or the Director of Safety and Security regarding building security and employee safety; and
6. Develop a procedure for “flagging” case files of families and individuals with a history of/or suspected violent criminal activity, violence, or threats.

Note: Any potential worker safety concerns should be noted in the case management system if they are known during intake. The DCS Hotline will notify the local office emergency contact when they receive reports of a threat. The concerns that arise after intake should be noted using procedures established at the DCS local office.

- E. All DCS Field staff will complete Worker Safety training biannually.
- F. All DCS employees will:
 1. Practice safe working habits;
 2. Wear state issued identification at all times while working;
 3. Take reasonable safety precautions when working;
 4. Refrain from activities that jeopardize workplace safety and/or create unsafe working conditions;
 5. Refrain from carrying a firearm while on duty. See the [State of Indiana Employee Handbook](#) and [IC 34-28-8-9](#) more information;
 6. Immediately report to their direct Supervisor if they feel their work environment is unsafe. If the concern is regarding an employee’s direct Supervisor, the employee should report the concern to the Supervisor’s manager and/or DCS Human Resources. See the [State of Indiana Employee Handbook](#) and [SPD Prevention of Workplace Violence Policy](#) for more information;
 7. Report all safety incidents involving risk to safety to their Supervisor and DCS Human Resources (see the [State of Indiana Employee Handbook](#) for more information). Examples include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Threats of injury (e.g., intimidation, harassing mail or phone calls, stalking, display of weapons),
 - b. Physical assault (injured or not injured),
 - c. Hazardous field situations (e.g., high risk or unsafe housing conditions, gang or drug activities, threatening animals, vandalism, theft),
 - d. Sexual harassment,
 - e. Use of a weapon, and
 - f. Verbal aggression, which evokes a sense of danger.
 8. Notify their Supervisor and/or DCS Human Resources of any workplace injuries/exposures within 24 hours (no matter how minor) and complete the [Indiana Worker's Compensation First Report of Employee Injury, Illness](#) form, as employees are subject to Indiana Workers’ Compensation provisions. If an employee fails to

report an injury, the employee may be held financially responsible for any or all medical costs;

Note: If an employee needs medical care after a work injury, DCS and the State's Workers' Compensation administrator will direct the care. Contact DCS Human Resources for additional information on obtaining medical care following a workplace injury/exposure. See the [State of Indiana Employee Handbook](#) for more information.

9. Take threats from parents, children, family members, employees, and all other individuals seriously. Employees will staff these concerns with their Supervisor and/or DCS Human Resources to determine how to proceed safely; and
10. Use the [EAP](#), [Critical Incident Response](#), and the [Emergency Operation Plan- Local Office](#) as necessary.

F. All Supervisors will:

1. Discuss safety procedures and recent incidents in unit meetings, at least quarterly. Discussion may include, but is not limited to, plans for fire, emergency weather, intruder, hostile clients, and medical emergencies (e.g., location of first aid kit),
2. Investigate and report all safety concerns to their LOD or Deputy Director or designee (for non-field staff employees) to discuss solutions to address safety concerns (e.g., security guard, building lock down) in a timely manner. When necessary, concerns should be reported to LEA and discussed with the DCS Chief Counsel of their region or, for non-field staff, the Chief Counsel of Legal Affairs that a request for a Workplace Protection Order be filed,
3. Report all injuries to DCS Human Resources whether or not medical care is required and complete the [Indiana Worker's Compensation First Report of Employee Injury, Illness](#) form if the employee is unable to complete the form, and
4. Consult with DCS Human Resources for assistance if an injury occurs to an employee.

G. All Deputy Directors or designees will contact the Facilities & Real Estate Director and the Director of Safety and Security via e-mail if the safety concerns warrant a request for building security or other assistance is needed to promote employee safety.

V. FORMS, DOCUMENTS, AND TOOLS

- A. [AlertMedia Resources](#) - available on the Safety and Emergency Operations SharePoint
- B. Director of Safety and Security email - dcssafety.security@dcs.in.gov
- C. [Emergency Operation Plan- Local Office](#)- available on the Safety and Emergency Operations SharePoint
- D. [Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\)](#)
- E. Facilities & Real Estate Director email - dcs.facilities@dcs.in.gov
- F. [Indiana Worker's Compensation First Report of Employee Injury, Illness \(SF 34401\)](#)
- G. [Tool HR-3-A- Worker Safety Protocol](#)
- H. [Workplace Incident Report \(SF 55863\)](#)

APPROVED

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Department of Child Services