



INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES
CHILD WELFARE POLICY

Chapter 3: Hotline

Effective Date: March 1, 2021

Section 01: Receiving Calls

Version: 5

POLICY OVERVIEW

An individual who has reason to believe that a child is a victim of Child Abuse and/or Neglect (CA/N) is a mandated reporter and has the duty to make a report of CA/N. Allegations of CA/N may be made through the centralized CA/N Hotline (Hotline) available 24 hours per day, seven (7) days per week. The reporter may reach the Hotline at the toll-free telephone number (800-800-5556).

Note: A person who makes a CA/N report is immune from any civil or criminal liability that might otherwise be imposed because of such actions if the report is made in good faith.

PROCEDURE

All allegations of CA/N must be received by the Hotline in order for an intake report to be created. The Hotline will accept oral, written (hard copy), and electronic reports or requests. Calls received from a Law Enforcement Agency (LEA) that enters the provided access code will be routed to the front of the queue.

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) local office will assist any individual from the community who wishes to make a report in person at the DCS local office. The DCS local office will ensure that the individual has access to a telephone to make their report to the Hotline. If the caller is unable or unwilling to place the call to the Hotline, the DCS local office should take the report and subsequently call the Hotline to report the allegations.

The Hotline Intake Specialist (IS) will:

1. Record the date and time of the call;
2. Engage the caller in a courteous and professional manner;
3. Ask relevant questions to gather as much information as possible about the child, family, and allegations;
4. Actively listen to the reporter and take detailed notes;
5. Make an initial determination as to the disposition of the call to be one of the following:
 - a. Homeless Unaccompanied Minor: Proceed with completing a CA/N intake report regardless of whether abuse and/or neglect is alleged.
 - b. CA/N allegations: Proceed with creating a (310). See policy, 3.02 Creating a Child Abuse and/or Neglect (CA/N) Intake Report for additional information.
 - c. Service Requests: Proceed with creating a Service Request (310SR). See policy, 3.03 Service Request Intake Reports for additional information.
 - d. Other action to be taken:
 - i. **Out-of-State CA/N allegations:** Reports in which the alleged CA/N occurred in another state will be referred to a local county DCS office for final disposition as with all allegations of CA/N. The local county office may choose to assess the

report or screen out the report. Should the local county office choose to screen out the report, the local county office will forward the CA/N information to the appropriate child welfare agency. No further action will be required by DCS unless courtesy interviews are requested by the out-of-state agency.

- ii. **Allegations of CA/N occurring on tribal land of the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians in St. Joseph County:** Reports in which the alleged CA/N incident occurred on tribal land of the Pokagon Band in St. Joseph County will be referred to St. Joseph County for final disposition. See Tool 2.B Disposition of CA/N Reports Involving an Indian Child of the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians and policy 2.12 Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA). See forms and tools to view a map of the Pokagon Band's Tribal land.
- iii. **Information only:** If the caller is requesting the phone number of a community resource or service, provide the caller with the requested information; no further action required.
- iv. **Collateral information:** If a caller would like to provide additional information for an open assessment or case, this will be documented as Information and Referral (I&R) and forwarded to the FCM, FCM Supervisor and the county distribution list of the open assessment or case.
- v. **Inquiries:** If a caller is interested in the status of a CA/N report, assessment or case see procedures in policy, 2.06 Sharing of Confidential Information.
- vi. **Complaints:** Refer the caller to the appropriate person by following the chain of command, escalating only if previous complaints went unresolved.
- vii. **Resource parenting inquiries:** Refer the caller to call 1-888-631-9510, the Foster Care Helpline to be connected to a Regional Foster Care Specialist.
- viii. **Adoptive Parenting inquiries:** Refer the caller to call 1-888-25-ADOPT, to be connected with the Special Needs Adoption Program Specialist in their region.

LEGAL REFERENCES

- [IC 31-33-5: Duty to Report Child Abuse or Neglect](#)
- [IC 31-33-5-1: Duty to make report](#)
- [IC 31-33-5-2: Report; notification of individual in charge of institution, school, facility, or agency](#)
- [IC 31-33-5-3: Effect of compliance on individual's own duty to report](#)
- [IC 31-33-7: Receipt of Reports of Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect](#)
- [IC 31-33-18: Disclosure of Reports: Confidentiality Requirements](#)
- [IC 31-20-50-1: Homeless children and youths](#)
- [IC 31-36-3: Homeless Children](#)

RELEVANT INFORMATION

Definitions

Homeless Child (as defined by the Department of Education)

"Homeless Child" is defined as a child who lacks a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence. It includes:

1. A child who shares another person's housing due to loss of child's housing or economics; lives in a hotel, motel or campground because of economic hardship; lives in an emergency or transitional shelter; is abandoned in a hospital or other place not intended for general habitation; is awaiting foster care placement;

2. A child whose primary nighttime residence is a public or private place not ordinarily used to accommodate human beings;
3. A child who lives in a car, a park, a public space, an abandoned building, a bus station, a train station, substandard housing, or a similar setting is homeless; and
4. A child of a migratory worker who also fits in categories 1-3 above is homeless.

Mandated Reporters

Any individual who has reason to believe that a child is a victim of child abuse or neglect has the duty to make a report; therefore, everyone in Indiana is considered a “mandated reporter.”

Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians

The Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians is a federally recognized tribe with headquarters in Michigan. The Pokagon Band maintains Tribal/Sovereign land in South Bend, Indiana within St. Joseph County, which is under jurisdiction of the Pokagon Tribe. See policy, 2.12 Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) for additional information regarding the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians.

Professional Reporters

Professional reporters, as defined by Indiana Law, are members of the staff of a medical or other public or private institution, school, facility, or agency. These reporters are legally obligated to report the alleged CA/N to the person in charge of the organization for which they work and to make a report to DCS.

Forms and Tools

- [Tool 2.B: Disposition of CA/N Reports Involving and Indian Child of the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians](#)
- [Child Welfare Information System](#)
- [Preliminary Report of Alleged Child Abuse or Neglect \(SF114\) \(310\)](#)
- [Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians Tribal Lands Map](#)
- [Service Request \(310SR\) \(SF 49548\)](#)

Related Policies

- [2.06 Sharing of Confidential Information](#)
- [2.12 Indian Child Welfare Act \(ICWA\)](#)
- [3.02 Creating a Child Abuse and/or Neglect \(CA/N\) Intake Report](#)
- [3.03 Service Request Intake Reports](#)