



INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY

Chapter 4: Assessment

Effective Date: October 1, 2021

Section 09: Interviewing Children

Version: 8

POLICY OVERVIEW

A timely, thorough, and thoughtful response to child safety concerns is critical in effectively protecting children. This response includes interviewing children in order to complete a thorough assessment of all reports of alleged Child Abuse and/or Neglect (CA/N). The interview provides the child with an opportunity to provide information regarding CA/N, which may assist in reaching an appropriate assessment finding.

PROCEDURE

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) will conduct or arrange an individual face-to-face interview with:

1. The alleged child victim;
2. All other children living in the home (including children who live in the home part-time due to a custody arrangement or who have visitation in the home); and
3. Any child not living in the home who were present at the time of the alleged incident, regardless of the allegation.

Note: For a child who is 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.

A trained forensic interviewer may conduct the interview if the child is an alleged victim of sexual abuse, severe physical abuse, human trafficking, or other circumstances that could lead to criminal charges being filed; however, DCS will be present during the interview. This interview may be conducted at a Child Advocacy Center (CAC).

The Family Case Manager (FCM) will:

1. Inquire about the household composition and identify all children who require a face-to-face interview, including children who live in the home part-time or have visitation in the home. If the child is not listed as a victim, the child should be interviewed as a witness;
2. Contact the appropriate Law Enforcement Agency (LEA) to plan for a joint assessment if allegations of domestic violence (DV), sexual abuse, human trafficking, or other allegations of a criminal nature are reported. DCS will conduct an additional interview if DCS is unable to assess the child's safety and well-being during the joint LEA interview. For more information, see policy 4.29 Joint Assessments;

Note: See policy 2.21 Human Trafficking for additional information regarding agencies to contact in cases of alleged human trafficking and additional steps to be taken during the assessment.

3. Notify the child's parent, guardian, or custodian of the allegations listed on the Preliminary Report of Alleged Child Abuse or Neglect (310);

Note: If a child who lives in the home part-time or has visitation in the home is listed as a victim, the child's custodial parent shall also be advised of the allegations listed on the 310.

4. Obtain consent from a parent, guardian, or custodian prior to interviewing any child. See policy 4.05 Consent to Interview Child for additional information;

Note: If it is determined exigent circumstances exist and consent from a parent, guardian, or custodian will not be obtained prior to the interview, procedural steps outlined in policy 4.06 Exigent Circumstances for Interviewing Alleged Child Victims must be completed.

5. Staff the assessment with an FCM Supervisor and consider all relevant factors to determine when to video/audio tape the interview with the alleged victim. The FCM should explain to the child, to the extent possible, if a decision has been made to record the interview;

Note: Video/audio taping should be utilized in situations when allegations of sexual abuse, severe physical abuse, human trafficking, or other unique cases could lead to criminal charges being filed.

6. Schedule the interview with the child. See Relevant Information for additional information regarding a contact versus an interview;
7. Conduct the interview in a non-threatening and neutral location and/or setting (e.g., CAC or child's school) that provides privacy for the child, so the child may feel safe;
8. Honor a parent, guardian, or custodian's request to be present during the interview **if** the parent, guardian, or custodian's presence will not impede or influence the child's responses during the interview;

Note: The interview should never be conducted in the presence of, or within hearing distance of, the alleged perpetrator. In cases of suspected human trafficking, the child's parent, guardian, or custodian may be the child's trafficker or the trafficker may be dishonest and report being the child's parent, guardian, or custodian. In cases of suspected human trafficking, see policy 2.21 Human Trafficking for further guidance.

9. Develop rapport with the child and explain at the beginning of the interview what will happen with the information obtained during the interview and with whom the information will be shared;
10. Contact LEA if at any time during the interview there is an indication the child may be a perpetrator of a criminal offense or delinquent act. Any additional questioning of the child without the participation of LEA will be limited to the concerns that do not implicate the child as a possible perpetrator. See policy 4.11 Interviewing the Alleged Perpetrator for additional steps to follow regarding interviewing a child who is an alleged perpetrator;
11. Engage the child in the development of the Safety Plan if age and developmentally appropriate. For additional information, see policy 4.19 Safety Planning; and
12. Document all contacts, the child's interview, and the impact CA/N has had on the child in the case management system within three (3) business days.

The FCM Supervisor will:

1. Assist the FCM throughout the interview process through regular staffing and clinical supervision; and
2. Ensure information is entered timely in the case management system.

LEGAL REFERENCES

- [IC 31-34-13: Child videotape testimony in child in need of services proceedings](#)
- [IC 5-26.5-1-3: "Domestic violence"](#)
- [IC 34-6-2-34.5: "Domestic or family violence"](#)
- [IC 35-42-3.5: Human Trafficking](#)

RELEVANT INFORMATION

Definitions

Child Advocacy Center (CAC)

A CAC is a neutral, safe, and child appropriate location where multi-disciplinary teams assess disclosures of child sexual abuse, severe physical abuse, human trafficking, and other unique cases of CA/N.

Clinical Supervision

Clinical supervision is a process in which an individual with specific knowledge, expertise, or skill provides support while overseeing and facilitating the learning of another individual.

Contact

A contact is any communication or an in-person observation. A contact includes, but is not limited to:

1. Face-to-face communication in the home, office, or other location;
2. Use of virtual technology;
3. Telephone call;
4. Fax;
5. Email;
6. Voice Mail; and
7. Correspondence.

Interview

An interview is a contact that occurs when a person is individually questioned about the allegations of a CA/N report not in the presence of family members or witnesses.

Forms and Tools

- [Safety Plan \(SF 53243\)](#)
- Indiana Human Trafficking Screening Tool - Available in the case management system
- [Preliminary Report of Alleged Child Abuse or Neglect \(SF 114\) \(310\)](#)

Related Policies

- [2.21 Human Trafficking](#)
- [4.05 Consent to Interview Child](#)
- [4.06 Exigent Circumstances for Interviewing Alleged Child Victims](#)
- [4.11 Interviewing the Alleged Perpetrator](#)
- [4.19 Safety Planning](#)
- [4.29 Joint Assessments](#)