

	INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE MANUAL	
	Chapter 4: Assessment	Effective Date: May 1, 2009
	Section 13: Assessing Home Conditions	Version: 2

POLICY

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) will conduct an assessment of the home of an alleged child victim if:

1. The alleged Child Abuse and/or Neglect (CA/N) occurred in the child's home;
2. During the course of the assessment, concerns about the condition of the home and its impact on child safety and well-being arise;
3. DCS will assess the home to determine if any conditions exist that support the allegations and/or raise additional concerns about the safety and well-being of the alleged child victim and any other children living in the home;
4. A visit or visits to the home to conduct an assessment may be announced or unannounced; and
5. DCS will seek a court order and assistance from Law Enforcement Agency (LEA) when it is necessary to conduct an assessment of a home if access is denied.

[NEW] See Practice Guidance for a list of indicators of domestic violence.

Code References

[IC 34-6-2-34.5: Domestic or family violence](#)

PROCEDURE

The Family Case Manager (FCM) will:

1. Make a determination about whether to arrive announced or unannounced to conduct an assessment of the home;
2. Consider any risks associated with visiting the home relating to the safety of the FCM and the child;
3. Seek permission to enter from an adult in the home. If permission is denied, seek a court order and assistance from LEA to gain entry. See separate policy, [4.8 Entry into Home or Facility](#);
4. Exit the home immediately and without alarming the persons inside if at any time the FCM suspects the home may contain a meth lab. See [Indiana Drug Endangered Children \(DEC\) Response Protocol](#);
5. Discontinue the interview if at any point the FCM becomes concerned for his or her safety (e.g., persons in the home become hostile or threatening or there are other dangerous conditions in the home). Seek supervisory input to make alternate arrangements to complete the assessment;
6. Examine every room of the home, paying particular attention to areas where the child may eat, sleep, play, and bathe;
7. Examine the kitchen (refrigerator, cabinets, pantry, etc.) to verify adequate food supply;
8. Document the conditions of the home in writing; photograph any adverse conditions;

9. Add new allegations to the assessment report if applicable due to information gained during the assessment of the home environment; and
10. If applicable, complete an emergency removal of the child from the home if conditions are found that warrant such action. See separate policy, [4.28 Involuntary Removals](#) for further details.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

[NEW] During a home visit, observe for potential indicators of domestic violence

During each home visit, the FCM will observe for the following potential signs of domestic violence. If the FCM believes that domestic violence may be present, see separate policy, [4.10 Interviewing the Parent, Guardian, or Custodian](#).

1. Evidence of damage to property (i.e., holes punched in walls, doors ripped off hinges);
2. Evidence of phone ripped out of wall; telephone is broken, disconnected or missing;
3. Reluctance of adults/partners to be interviewed separately; one adult/partner answering questions for the other (i.e., not letting the other person talk);
4. One adult/partner appears emotional, nervous, or extremely uncomfortable and uncooperative while the other partner looks together and cooperative;
5. One adult/partner seems afraid of the other adult/partner;
6. Children being overly protective of one parent;
7. Pet abuse;
8. Visible injuries or injured areas hidden;
9. Flinching or signs of anxiety;
10. Use of dominating or intimidating body language;
11. Weapons are present in the home, weapons are openly visible or weapons are not secured;
12. Home not adequately accessible for a family member's disabilities;
13. Presence of guard animals, especially if family members exhibit fear of them; and/or
14. Home is in an isolated location.

FORMS AND TOOLS

N/A

RELATED INFORMATION

General

The purpose of the assessment of the home is to assess and evaluate conditions in the home that relate to child health and safety and/or assist in making a finding regarding the allegations.

Unannounced Visits for Assessments

The FCM must decide whether or not to announce the visit for the home assessment based on the nature of the allegations and the need to protect the child.

See separate policy, [4.8 Entry into Home or Facility](#).