

	INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE MANUAL	
	Chapter 4: Assessment	Effective Date: May 1, 2014
	Section 38: Assessment Initiation	Version: 4

POLICY [REVISED]

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) will fully initiate every Child Abuse and/or Neglect (CA/N) assessment within the appropriate timeframe as determined by Indiana Law.

Assessments will be fully initiated within the following timeframes:

1. Within **one (1) hour** if the allegations would cause a reasonable person to believe that the child is in imminent danger of serious bodily harm; or
2. Within **24 hours** if the allegations involve abuse but the conditions in item one (1) above do not apply; or
3. Within **five (5) days** if the allegations involve neglect and none of the conditions in items one (1) or two (2) above apply.

Note: See exceptions below.

[REVISED] An assessment will be considered “fully initiated” upon face-to-face contact with the alleged victim or contact with another person (other than the alleged perpetrator) who can provide information on the allegations and conditions of the child. The Family Case Manager (FCM) will notify the parent, guardian, or custodian in person or via phone, of the face to face contact with the alleged victim. Please see policies [4.6 Exigent Circumstances](#) and [4.5 Consent to Interview Child](#) for additional information.

[NEW] The local DCS office will request Law Enforcement Agency (LEA) assistance on all reports that require a one (1) hour response time as listed above. See Practice Guidance.

[REVISED] Response times are measured from the conclusion of the call to the Indiana Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline. This means for **one (1) hour** assessments, the FCM must make face-to-face contact with the child and make efforts to notify the parents within **one (1) hour** of the conclusion of the call to the Indiana Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline.

[REVISED] Assessments will be fully initiated regardless of the time of day (or night), and regardless of weekends or holidays, in order to meet the appropriate timeframes and ensure the safety of the child. In situations where DCS is unable to fully initiate an assessment timely due to extreme circumstances (weather, etc.) LEA assistance will be requested to initiate one (1) hour assessments on behalf of DCS.

For reports involving alleged domestic violence, DCS will fully initiate the assessment:

1. If LEA is on the scene and has requested assistance, DCS will respond within **one (1) hour** to the scene;
2. If the parent, guardian, custodian, or child(ren) calls to report alleged domestic violence, DCS will fully initiate the assessment within **24 hours**;

3. If the alleged domestic violence occurred in the past **48 hours** (regardless of the reporting source), DCS will fully initiate the assessment within **24 hours**; or
4. If the alleged domestic violence occurred in excess of **48 hours** prior to the report and the child(ren) are not believed to be in physical danger, DCS will fully initiate the assessment within **five (5) days**.

For reports concerning children who voluntarily enter an emergency shelter or a shelter care facility without the presence or consent of a parent, guardian, or custodian, DCS must conduct an assessment within **48 hours** of receiving the report. DCS must notify the parent, guardian, or custodian of the child within **72 hours** of the child entering the shelter or a shelter care facility. However, if the department has reason to believe that the child is a victim of child abuse or neglect, the department may not notify the child's parent, guardian, or custodian as to the specific shelter or facility the child has entered.

DCS will respond within one (1) hour of receiving a report from a hospital.

[NEW] Note: FCMs should evaluate the case and staff with his/her supervisor to determine whether LEA assistance should be requested.

Code References

1. [IC 31-33-8-1: Investigations by local child protection service; time of initiation](#)
2. [IC 31-33-8-6: Investigatory duties of local child protection service; purpose](#)
3. [IC 31-36-3-3: Homeless Children](#)
4. [IC 34-6-2-34.5: Domestic or family violence](#)

PROCEDURE

[REVISED] The assigned FCM will:

1. Consider all known information about the CA/N allegations;
2. Request LEA assistance on all reports that require a one (1) hour response time and document LEA's response in a contact;

[NEW] Note: If LEA agrees to respond within the one (1) hour with DCS, the FCM will make contact with the responding officer to advise of the allegations and obtain any information LEA may have regarding the child or family before attempting to make initial contact with the child or family.

3. Ensure the assessment has been fully initiated by making face-to-face contact with the alleged child victim and notifying the parent, guardian or custodian; or
4. Ensure the assessment has been fully initiated through contact with "another person" (other than the alleged perpetrator) who can provide specific information on the allegations and the condition of the child.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

[REVISED] Assessments can be fully initiated within the following timeframes:

Within **one (1) hour** if the allegations would cause a reasonable person to believe that the child is in imminent danger of serious bodily harm. These responses can include but are not limited to allegations regarding:

- a. Child fatality & Near Fatality,
- b. Shaken infants,
- c. A child who has suffered from serious physical injury to any part of the body due to suspected CA/N such as fractures, broken bones, head injuries, extensive and serious bruising, or internal injuries,
- d. A child is intentionally burned or scalded,
- e. A child too young or disabled to ensure his or her own safety is actively unsupervised. Disabilities include but are not limited to sight or hearing impairments, limited mental capabilities or other severe handicapping conditions,
- f. A child who has been abandoned or deserted,
- g. Failure to thrive resulting in immediate need for medical attention,
- h. A child is sexually abused and the alleged perpetrator has access to the child,
- i. A child, parent, guardian or custodian is actively attempting suicide,
- j. Active domestic violence present in home or a child has been injured as a result of domestic violence,
- k. The presence of an active methamphetamine lab, or
- l. Specific allegations that a parent, guardian or custodian is actively using illicit drugs or abusing prescription medications.

[NEW] Note: FCMs should evaluate the case and staff with his/her supervisor to determine whether LEA assistance should be requested or if the contact should be for the purpose of notification.

Twenty-four (24) hours responses can include but are not limited to allegations regarding:

- a. Reported bruising, scratches, welts
- b. Suspected inflicted injury to a child,
- c. Serious injury is threatened, or
- d. A child, parent, guardian or custodian has previously attempted suicide.

Five (5) day responses can include but are not limited to allegations regarding:

- a. Supervision concerns,
- b. Insufficient food, shelter, or clothing,
- c. Unsanitary living conditions, or
- d. Educational Neglect.

[NEW] FCMs will consider any relevant factors or information regarding the assessment in determining if contact with “another person” is the best way to ensure safety of the child.

Example: David is placed in a residential facility. He revealed his previous roommate forced him to engage in sexual activity approximately 6 months ago. The facility filed a 310 and the assessment was assigned. The assessor contacted the director of the facility and found that the alleged perpetrator has not been David’s roommate for over a month. He and David reside in separate areas of the facility and have no contact. Though the FCM has not yet had face-to-face contact with David, the assessment has been initiated through contact with the facility director, who assured David’s safety. A face-to-face interview with David would take place no later than the next business day.

[NEW] It is important to make the distinction between fully initiating and response times. If an FCM has responded in the appropriate timeframe, it does not necessarily mean that the assessment has been fully initiated. If an FCM responds, and is unsuccessful in making contact

with the alleged victim or with another person who can speak to the condition of the child (other than the perpetrator) the assessment has not been fully initiated.

Example: The Indiana Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline received a report that 4 year-old Mary has bruising on her buttocks from a spanking she received from her mother. The 310 was assigned and the FCM made a visit to Mary's residence within 30 minutes of receiving the report. Mary's mother answered the door and talked with the FCM; however, she said Mary was visiting a relative and would not return until the next morning. The assessment is not yet fully initiated because the FCM has not assured Mary's safety through face-to-face contact or through contact with another person other than the alleged perpetrator.

[NEW] In situations where children have serious injuries (head injuries, broken bones) or injuries that are time sensitive (i.e. bruises, burns) it is important to make sure the evidence collected is reflective of the seriousness of the injury.

Example: Five year-old Sara just returned home Friday evening from her court-ordered visitation with her father. She had several belt marks on her upper thighs and one belt mark on the back of her hand. She also had a partial hand print on the side of her face. Sara told her mother that her father got really angry and whipped her for getting her clothes dirty right before they were getting ready to leave. Sara's mother called in a report to the Indiana Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline and the case was assigned to an on-call FCM about 6 PM. The FCM contacted Mother who said Sara was not scheduled to visit with her father again until the following Wednesday. The FCM made arrangements to see the child at Mother's home that evening. The FCM could assure the safety of the child through the mother.

FORMS AND TOOLS

N/A

RELATED INFORMATION

IC 31-36-3-3 Notification to department; investigation of a child; notification to parents

Sec. 3. (a) Except as provided in subsection (d), if a child voluntarily enters an emergency shelter or a shelter care facility, the shelter or facility shall notify the department, not later than twenty-four (24) hours after the child enters the shelter or facility, of the following:

- (1) The name of the child.
- (2) The location of the shelter or facility.
- (3) Whether the child alleges that the child is the subject of abuse or neglect.

(b) The department shall conduct an investigation concerning the child not later than forty-eight (48) hours after receiving notification from the emergency shelter or shelter care facility under subsection (a).

(c) The department shall notify the child's parent, guardian, or custodian that the child is in an emergency shelter or a shelter care facility not later than seventy-two (72) hours after the child enters the shelter or facility. However, if the department has reason to believe that the child is a victim of child abuse or neglect, the department may not notify the child's parent, guardian, or custodian as to the specific shelter or facility the child has entered.

(d) An emergency shelter or a shelter care facility is not required to notify the department of a child who is an emancipated minor.