

	INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY	
	Chapter 2: Administration of Child Welfare Section 30: Domestic Violence	
	Effective Date: January 1, 2026	Version: 2

POLICY OVERVIEW

Understanding and assessing domestic violence (DV) is important for keeping children safe. When a child experiences DV it may pose a serious risk to their safety and well-being.

POLICY STATEMENT

Intake

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) looks into every report of child abuse or neglect to see if DV is happening. The DCS Hotline will recommend an assessment if the report shows any of the following:

1. A child saw or was in the home when someone was being hurt;
2. A child was hurt while trying to stop the DV or by being nearby incident;
3. The child may try to step in, which could be dangerous;
4. A child may get hurt during DV incident (like being held or stopped from leaving)
5. The person causing harm has weapons or made threats to use them, or threatened to kill or hurt themselves or others
6. DV happens often, or it's paired with other serious risks like drug use
7. The person causing harm stops the other parent/child from getting help or staying safe;
8. Someone in the family (including pets) has been hurt, kidnapped, or threatened with harm
9. The other parent has serious injuries (e.g. broken bones, bruises, cuts, shot, etc.)
10. DV is getting worse or happening more often

Assessments

When someone reports DV, DCS will follow the rules in policy [4.38](#) and look into the allegations right away, or no later than 24 hours after the report is received, if any of these things happen:

1. A parent, guardian, or the child calls to report DV, and it doesn't sound like the child is in serious danger right now.
2. The DV report says a dangerous weapon was used.
3. The DV happened in the last 2 days, and it doesn't sound like the child is in serious danger right now.

During assessment interviews:

1. Interviews should be one-on-one, and not with the person accused of DV in the room;
2. Everyone's safety is important, including the child, family, and DCS workers and should be considered when planning for the interview. Consider if the local law enforcement agency (LEA) should be involved in a joint assessment (see policy [4.29](#)).
3. If possible, plan on interviewing somewhere outside of the family's home;

4. When talking with the person accused of DV, the goal is to find ways to keep the child safe, not to make the person admit they did something wrong.

Note: Because of privacy laws, DCS staff may not be able to get information from staff of a DV program (residential or nonresidential). When the child and their parent are at a DV shelter, shelter staff may not be able to confirm if they are staying there.

A child should only be taken out of their home in cases of DV if it looks like their safety is in danger and safety plans will not work. The law in Indiana calls this “imminent risk of placement,” which means the child might have to leave the home to stay safe. Before making that decision, workers should try all other ways to protect the child. If the parent who didn’t hurt the child can’t keep the child safe or doesn’t want help, then moving the child may be needed. Just because there’s a report of domestic violence, it doesn’t mean the child will be removed right away. Also, unless there’s an emergency, the child shouldn’t be interviewed without the parent’s permission (see policies [4.06](#) and [7.01](#)).

Interviews should be completed in the following order:

1. Non-offending parent;
2. Child;

Note: It is important to understand how DV affects each child, not just what they child was exposed to or observed. When interviewing a child who is alleged to have been exposed to DV, DCS will focus the interview on the following:

- Impact on the child witnessing or being exposed to DV (see Practice Guidance);
- The child’s understanding and/or interpretation of the violence (how does the child explain what happened or what lead to the DV, is the child aware of the aftermath of the DV incidents); and
- The child’s concerns about safety.

3. Alleged DV offender; and

Exception: If there is concern for the child or their parent’s safety or concern the child may share information with the alleged DV offender, the interview with the child may be delayed. This should only happen in rare cases and the FCM Supervisor must be notified immediately and approve the decision.

4. Any other required interviews, as outlined in policy [4.04](#).

Note: Interviews with witnesses to a DV incident should be conducted with an understanding that the personal safety of the individuals is a consideration that may impact their willingness to discuss or be fully forthcoming about the abuse and/or violence occurring within the family. All interviews should focus on child safety.

LEGAL REFERENCES

- [IC 5-26.5-1-3: “Domestic violence”](#)
- [IC 31-26-5-1” Child at imminent risk of placement”](#)
- [IC 31-33-18-1: Confidentiality: exceptions](#)
- [IC 31-33-18-2: Disclosure of unredacted material to certain persons](#)
- [IC 35-37-6-1: “Confidential communication”](#)