

	INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY	
	Chapter 4: Assessment Section 38: Assessment Initiation	
	Effective Date: January 1, 2026	Version: 11

POLICY OVERVIEW

Indiana law says the Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) must initiate assessments within certain timeframes based upon the allegations in the Preliminary Report of Alleged Child Abuse or Neglect (310). Starting the assessment of Child Abuse and/or Neglect (CA/N) on time helps to ensure the child's safety and well-being.

POLICY STATEMENT

DCS will initiate assessments regardless of the time of day, including weekends and holidays.

Note: The response time begins when the DCS local office receives notification of the intake report.

DCS will initiate every CA/N assessment within:

1. Two (2) hours if the allegations would lead a reasonable person to believe the child is in immediate danger of serious harm;
2. Twenty-four (24) hours if the allegations involve abuse but not immediate danger; or
3. Five (5) days if the allegations involve neglect and there is no immediate danger or abuse.

Special Circumstances

Hospital Assessments

If a hospital makes a report and the child is expected to be released the same day, DCS will:

1. Respond within two (2) hours; and
2. Provide the hospital with a release form when it has been determined the child is safe to be released.

Note: Face-to-face contact should happen unless the child is unavailable due to medical intervention.

DV Assessments

For reports of alleged domestic violence (DV), DCS will initiate the assessment right away or within 24 hours, if any of these conditions are met (see policy [2.30](#)):

1. Incident happened in the past 48 hours, and the report does **not** suggest the child is in immediate danger of serious harm; or
2. Incident involved a deadly weapon; or
3. The parent, guardian, or custodian or the child makes the report, and the report does **not** suggest the child is in imminent danger of serious harm.

New Allegations

All new CA/N allegations must be reported to the Hotline and **cannot** be handled as a part of the current assessment or permanency case. If the allegations meet the legal definition of CA/N, the report will:

1. Be assessed separately; and
2. Not screened out.

If a DCS employee sees or gets a report of CA/N while on the scene and starts an assessment by making sure the child is safe through face-to-face contact, they must report it to the DCS Child Abuse Hotline within 24 hours of leaving the scene.

Emergency Shelter or Shelter Care Facility

If a child enters an emergency shelter or a shelter care facility without a parent, guardian, or custodian, DCS must:

1. Start the assessment within 24 hours of receiving the report; and

Exception: If allegations show the child is in immediate danger of serious harm, DCS must initiate the response within two (2) hours.

2. Notify the parent, guardian, or custodian where the child is within 72 hours of the child entering the facility.

Exception: If DCS believes the child is a victim of CA/N and the parent, guardian, or custodian the alleged perpetrator, they may not be told the specific shelter or facility the child has entered.

LEGAL REFERENCES

- [IC 31-33-8-1: Investigations by local child protection service; time of initiation; investigations of child care ministries](#)
- [IC 31-33-8-6: Investigatory duties of local child protection service; purpose](#)
- [IC 31-36-3-3: Notification to department; investigation of a child; notification to parents](#)
- [IC 34-6-2.1-50: "Domestic or family violence"](#)