

	INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY	
	Tool: Suggested Interview Questions for the Children, Non-Offending Parent, and the Alleged Domestic Violence Offender	
	Reference: 2.F (2.30 Domestic Violence [DV])	
	Effective Date: June 1, 2022	Version: 2

The following is a guide that may be used to assist the Family Case Manager (FCM) when interviewing the non-offending parent, children, and the alleged Domestic Violence (DV) offender during assessments when DV has been alleged or identified (see policies [4.09 Interviewing Children](#), [4.10 Interviewing the Parent, Guardian, or Custodian](#), and [4.11 Interviewing the Alleged Perpetrator](#) for further information).

Note: These are examples of questions are to be used as a guide for FCMs while interviewing the non-offending parent, children, and the alleged DV offender. This is not intended to be used as a questionnaire.

Prior to beginning the interviews, it is important to:

1. Explain the Indiana Department of Child Services' (DCS) assessment process;
2. Provide assurance that the children's safety, as well as that of the non-offending parent's, is the goal of the assessment;
3. Provide assurance that the source of the information, or any information concerning safety that the non-offending parent has provided, will not be shared with the alleged DV offender;
4. Explain that referral information will be provided, as appropriate; and
5. Explain the limits of confidentiality.

Interviewing the Non-Offending Parent

Always interview the non-offending parent without the alleged DV offender present.

Note: If the non-offending parent refuses to be interviewed without the alleged DV offender, discuss this with the FCM Supervisor and document in the case management system. If the non-offending parent of DV is believed to be the alleged perpetrator of Child Abuse and/or Neglect (CA/N), see policy [4.11 Interviewing the Alleged Perpetrator](#) for further guidance.

Below are questions that may be used while interviewing the non-offending parent in a DV relationship.

1. Tell me about your relationship with your partner.
2. How do decisions get made about things such as discipline and money? What happens when you disagree? Where are the children when the disagreements happen?
3. Have you or other family members felt afraid or intimidated by another family member? In what ways?
4. Have you or another family member been hurt by anyone else in the family? Has this occurred in front of the children?

5. Do you ever worry about the safety of your children? If yes, tell me more about that.
6. How have the children been exposed to the violence: heard it happen, saw it happen, was told about it by siblings or others, or saw the aftermath (e.g., broken bones, bruises on parent, or other family members or stitches), and what do the children understand about the violence?
 - a. Have your children observed property damage?
 - b. Have your children ever overheard you being demeaned or called names?
7. Have the children ever been hurt, either accidentally or on purpose during an incident? Tell me about this.
8. How are you able to keep your children safe?
9. Has your partner:
 - a. Called your children degrading names?
 - b. Threatened to take the children from your care?
 - c. Accused you of being an unfit parent?
 - d. Threatened to hurt or kill you in front of the children?
 - e. Touched your children in a way that made you or the children feel uncomfortable?
 - f. Asked your children to report on what you do during the day?
 - g. Had your children spy on you?
10. Have any of your children:
 - a. Behaved in ways that remind you of your partner?
 - b. Physically hurt you or other family members?
 - c. Tried to protect you?
 - d. Tried to stop the violence?
 - e. Hurt themselves?
 - f. Hurt family pets?
 - g. Been fearful of leaving you?
 - h. Exhibited emotional/behavioral problems at home or school?
11. Describe how the children respond to the violence. Have you noticed any effects (e.g., sleep, school, or behavior)?
12. What does safety mean for you and your children? On a scale of 1-10 (where 10 is very safe all the time and 1 is not safe at all), how safe do you feel?
13. Do you have family or friends you can talk to about your problems?
14. Who are some of the people you turn to for support?
15. Do you feel free to do, think, believe what you want?
16. Do you have any current injuries or health problems?
17. Has your partner ever:
 - a. Isolated you from your family or friends or going someplace you wanted to go?
 - b. Been jealous or possessive?
 - c. Followed you to see where you go?
 - d. Accused you of being unfaithful?
 - e. Controlled your money?
 - f. Called you degrading names?
 - g. Made threats to hurt you or the children?
 - h. Made threats to kill you if you ever attempt to leave or divorce?
 - i. Hurt household pets, or threatened to hurt them?
 - j. Been violent to people outside the family?
 - k. Behaved recklessly to scare you (e.g., driving too fast with the children in the car)?
 - l. Threatened to report you to DCS or take away the children?

- m. Been diagnosed with or been suspected of having depression, Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), or another mental health condition?
 - n. Threatened to commit suicide?
 - o. Abused over the counter medications, prescriptions, illegal drugs and/or alcohol?
 - p. Prevented you from obtaining treatment (e.g., medical, drug/alcohol, mental health) or basic needs (e.g., food, clothing, shelter, or utilities)?
18. Has your partner ever physically used force on you (e.g., pushed, pulled, slapped, punched, hit, strangled/choked or kicked you)? If so, tell me about the worst episode. What was the most recent episode? How frequently does this happen?
19. How dangerous do you think your partner is?

Note: The more types of abuse there are, the more dangerous the situation is likely to be for the adult victim and the children. If the abuse is happening more frequently and/or getting more severe, the risk for the adult victim and children is high.

20. Does your partner have any weapons? Does your partner have access to weapons owned by others?
21. Were you ever assaulted while you were pregnant?
22. Have you been exposed to DV in any previous relationships?
23. Have you ever used a DV violence shelter or group? Was it helpful? Do you have/have you had a DV advocate? If so, have you had a lethality assessment completed?

Note: If they have not contacted a DV advocate, recommend that they do. Also, if the individual has not had a lethality assessment, explore whether the individual is willing to call or have the FCM call for them to have the lethality assessment completed (by doing this there is no record on the individual's phone).

24. Have you ever called the police or filed a protective order? What happened (e.g., did your partner respect the order)?
25. Have you:
- a. Told anyone about the abuse?
 - b. Seen a counselor or therapist?
 - c. Left the home as a result of the abuse?

26. What do you think will happen when this meeting is over and I leave?
27. Will it increase the risk of harm to you or the children if I ask your partner some questions? Will the children tell your partner what I ask them?

Note: If the victim is fearful of the consequences of questioning the offender, then it should not be done until safety can be achieved. Safety always comes first.

28. How can we help you keep you and your children safe (e.g., provide information on legal services or short-term housing/funding)?
29. What do you need right now to stay away from your abuser?

Interviewing Children

Below are questions that may be used while interviewing the children.

Sometimes when parents fight they get angry. Sometimes this is scary for children. I want to ask you a few questions about when your parents fight and what you think about it.

1. Arguments happen in all families. What happens when your parents (boyfriend, girlfriend, partner, etc.) argue? What do they argue about?
2. What do you do when your parents (boyfriend, girlfriend, partner, etc.) are fighting?
 - a. Stay in the room.
 - b. Go to a sibling.
 - c. Leave or hide.
 - d. Ask parents to stop.
 - e. Call someone.
 - f. Go for help.
 - g. Other.
3. What do you think about when this is happening?
4. When your parents (boyfriend, girlfriend, partner, etc.) are fighting, does this make you sad, scared, or worried?
5. Do they ever get hurt?
6. Are you ever afraid to go home?
7. Has anyone ever thrown things or broken things?
8. Have you heard anyone being demeaned or called names?
9. Have you or anyone else been hurt when your parents (boyfriend, girlfriend, partner, etc.) were fighting?
10. Have you ever tried to stop the fighting between your parents (boyfriend, girlfriend, partner, etc.)? What happened?
11. Do you have any pets? If so, who takes care of the pets? Have the pets ever been hurt?
12. Do you find that you think about your parents fighting a lot?
 - a. When do you think about it?
 - b. What do you think about?
 - c. Do ever think about them fighting while you are in school or playing?
13. Do you ever have trouble sleeping at night? Do you have nightmares?
14. Have you talked to any other grownups about this problem? What happened?
15. Do you know if either of your parents (boyfriend, girlfriend, partner, etc.) own any weapons? Do you know where they keep them?
16. What would you like your parents to do to improve their relationship with you, each other, or help you to feel safer?
17. In an emergency, who would you call?
 - a. What is their phone number?
 - b. What would you say if you called them during an emergency?

Note: If children don't have some idea of whom to call, give them basic information or help them think of where they could go if their parents are fighting. Information gathered in this interview should always be shared with the adult victim to help them understand the effects of DV on the children if the children's safety will not be compromised.

Interviewing the Alleged Domestic Violence Offender

The purpose of interviewing the alleged DV perpetrator is to assess risk, not to elicit a confession. Do not confront the alleged DV perpetrator with information obtained from children or the non-offending parent. If at any point during the interview you feel that the alleged perpetrator is too dangerous, conclude the interview and consult with an FCM Supervisor regarding next steps.

Below are questions that may be used while interviewing the alleged DV offender.

The FCM may use the following as a guide for the interview with the alleged DV offender:

1. Tell me about your relationship with your partner.
2. Describe your relationship with your children/partner's children or other household members.
3. How do decisions get made?
4. There are disagreements in all relationships. What happens when you and your household members disagree? Where are the children when these disagreements happen?
5. What do you do when you do not get your own way?
6. Have you ever been so angry that you wanted to hurt someone? Have you ever tried to hurt someone?
7. Do you ever worry about the safety of your children? If yes, tell me more about that.
8. Do you or any of your household members use alcohol or drugs? How often?
9. Do you own or have access to weapons?
10. Have you ever been told that violence/fighting is a problem for you? By whom?
11. Have you ever pushed, pulled, hit, kicked, slapped, or punched anyone in your family or a household member or a pet? If so, describe.
12. Have you ever caused property damage, either your property or someone else's property?
13. Do your partner, children, or other household members ever seem afraid of you?
14. Who are your partner's family/friends? How often does your partner see or talk with them?
15. How do the children interact with others? What activities/extracurriculars are the children involved in outside of the home?
16. How has the children been exposed to the violence: heard it happen, saw it happen, told about it by siblings or others, or saw the aftermath (e.g., broken bones, bruises on parent, or other family members or stitches), and what do the children understand about the violence?
 - a. Have your children observed property damage?
 - b. Have your children ever overheard you demeaning or calling another person names?
17. Have any of the children ever been hurt, either accidentally or on purpose during an incident? Tell me about this.
18. How are you able to keep your children safe?
19. Have any of your children:
 - a. Overheard the yelling and/or violence?
 - b. Behaved in ways that remind you of you?
 - c. Physically hurt you or other family members?
 - d. Tried to protect your partner?
 - e. Tried to stop the violence?
 - f. Hurt themselves?
 - g. Hurt family pets?
 - h. Been fearful of you?
 - i. Exhibited emotional/behavioral problems at home or school?
20. Describe how the children respond to the violence. Have you noticed any effects (e.g. sleep, school, or behavior)?
21. What does safety mean for you and your children? On a scale of 1-10 (where 10 is very safe all the time and 1 is not safe at all), how safe do you feel? How safe do you think your partner feels? Your children or household members?

22. What do you believe would help keep you and/or your children safe? What can be done to make this happen?
23. How can you work to keep your children safe?
24. If we could offer you any services or information to help strengthen your family or assist in strengthening parent skills what would those be?
25. If we could offer your family or household members any services or information, what would they be?
26. How does DV affect your family, especially your children?
27. What were your parents' or caregivers' relationships like when you were a child?

Note: The FCM should also note observations of the alleged perpetrator's behavior during the interview.