STATEMENTS OF PURPOSE

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) will conduct the following required interviews during all Child Abuse and/or Neglect (CA/N) assessments (see Related Information):

1. The alleged child victim;
2. All other children living in the home and any child not living in the home who were present at the time of the alleged incident;
3. The parent, guardian, or custodian;
4. The report source (unless the report source is anonymous);
5. Identified witnesses;
6. Professionals who are believed to have first-hand knowledge relating to the allegation, if such professionals are accessible; and
7. The alleged perpetrator.

**Exception:** DCS will not interview the alleged perpetrator when certain conditions apply. See separate policy, 4.11 Interviewing the Alleged Perpetrator.

DCS will interview the non-custodial parent regarding the CA/N assessment or document in the Management Gateway for Indiana’s Kids (MaGIK) why the interview could not be completed.

DCS will conduct or arrange an individual face-to-face interview with the alleged child victim, all other children living in the home, and any child not living in the home who were present at the time of the alleged incident regardless of the allegation. For children who are too young or unable to communicate, an interview will consist of face-to-face interaction with the child at a level that is appropriate given the child’s developmental status.

DCS will conduct any additional interviews necessary to gain adequate information from which to draw conclusions about the validity of the allegation.

**Note:** Legitimate exceptions to this policy are discussed in the individual policies for each interview type (i.e., 4.9 Interviewing Children, 4.10 Interviewing the Parent, Guardian or Custodian and 4.11 Interviewing the Alleged Perpetrator.

Code References

N/A

PROCEDURE

The Family Case Manager (FCM) will conduct the following interviews in the manner indicated below for all assessments:

1. An in-person interview with the alleged child victim. See separate policy, 4.9 Interviewing Children;
2. An in-person interview with all other children living in the home and any other child present in the home at the time of the alleged incident;

3. An in-person interview with one (1) or both of the parents, guardians, or custodians. The interview will take place on the same day as the interview with the alleged child victim takes place unless it is not possible to have the interview on the same day. See separate policy, 4.10 Interviewing the Parent, Guardian or Custodian;

4. An in-person or phone interview with the report source (unless the report source is anonymous);

5. An in-person or phone interview with every person who is known to have witnessed the incident. The FCM will document in MaGIK if no witnesses exist;

6. An in-person or phone interview with at least two (2) professionals who did not make the report, but they are believed to have first-hand knowledge that relates to the allegation, results of the incident, injury to the child victim, or circumstances of the family being assessed, if such professionals are available. The FCM will document in MaGIK if no such professionals exist; and

7. An in-person interview with the alleged perpetrator. See separate policy, 4.11 Interviewing the Alleged Perpetrator.

**Interviews Involving Domestic Violence**

All interviews should be performed separately. Consider completing interviews outside of the home when possible. All interviews must be performed without the alleged domestic violence offender present. Consider the safety of all family members and DCS staff when structuring interviews.

[REVISED] Interviews should be completed in the following order:

1. Non-offending parent;
2. Alleged child victim;
3. All other children in the home; and
4. Alleged domestic violence offender.

**Exception:** If the interview with the child may cause additional safety risks for the non-offending parent and/or child, the interview with the child may be postponed (e.g., the child may identify with the alleged domestic violence offender and may disclose the contents of the interview). This will occur only in very rare instances, and the FCM Supervisor must be notified immediately and approve the decision.

### PRACTICE GUIDANCE

**Witnesses**

Based on the information uncovered during the assessment, the FCM may become aware of one (1) or more persons who witnessed the alleged CA/N. The FCM should seek to locate and interview those persons.

**Interviews with Witnesses to a Domestic Violence Incident**

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

### FORMS AND TOOLS
# RELATED INFORMATION

**Professionals**
Examples of professionals include, but are not limited to; therapists, social workers, school personnel, medical professionals, and religious leaders (e.g., priests, rabbis, and ministers). Professionals in this context do not include DCS employees (i.e., Regional Managers [RMs], Local Office Directors [LODs], FCM Supervisors, etc.).

**Contact vs. Interview**
A contact may be any communication (e.g., telephone, text, and/or email) or an in-person observation. An interview occurs when a person is individually questioned about the allegations of a CA/N report not in the presence of family members or witnesses. A contact is not always considered an interview.