



INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES

CHILD WELFARE POLICY

Chapter 4: Assessment

Section 08: Entry into Home or Facility

Effective Date: September 1, 2022

Version: 4

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POLICY OVERVIEW

During an assessment of Child Abuse and/or Neglect (CA/N), in which in-person contact with a child in their home or a facility is needed, the Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) will take procedural steps to ensure the child's safety and well-being.

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PROCEDURE

DCS must obtain permission prior to entering a home or facility for any purpose, including making in-person contact with a child.

Prior to entering a home or facility, the Family Case Manager (FCM) will:

1. Follow all procedural steps outlined in policies 4.05 Consent to Interview Child and 4.06 Exigent Circumstances for Interviewing Alleged Child Victims;

Note: Permission to enter a home or facility does not constitute as consent to interview the child.

2. Introduce themselves and show official DCS identification;
3. Ask to speak to an adult in the house (or facility personnel);
4. Immediately contact law enforcement agency (LEA) and request emergency assistance if a child is believed to be home alone and it is believed the child's safety and well-being is in danger;
5. Explain the purpose of the visit without revealing any confidential information about the assessment; and
6. Seek permission to enter the home or follow visitor check-in procedures if entering a facility.

Note: Permission to enter a home must be given by an adult living in the home. Children under the age of 18 years cannot give permission to enter the home. The FCM should seek guidance from the FCM Supervisor if an adult is not present. If one (1) adult who lives in the home gives permission to enter, and an adult who lives in the home objects, DCS will not enter the home and will staff with legal regarding seeking a court order.

Upon entering a home or facility, the FCM will:

1. Check in to the facility, present DCS issued identification, request permission from an administrator (e.g., director and/or program coordinator, principal, etc.), and/or follow all written protocols when entering a facility;

Note: In order to interview the child at the child's school, except a non-accredited nonpublic school that has less than one (1) employee, the FCM must present the following, upon arrival at the school (per Indiana code, this also allows for the FCM to interview the child alone):

- a. The FCM's credentials as a DCS employee (i.e., DCS badge), and
- b. A written statement (this could be an email or a handwritten statement which the FCM sends or writes while in the school) that states: "**DCS has parental consent or a court order, or exigent circumstances exist as defined by IC 31-9-2-44.1 to interview {insert child's name}.**"

Note: The written statement shall not disclose any allegations or evidence and must protect the confidentiality of the child and the child's family (see School Letter Interview).

2. Exit immediately and without alarming the persons inside if at any time there is suspicion there may be contaminating controlled substances and/or if at any point the FCM becomes concerned for their safety (e.g., persons in the home become hostile or threatening or there are other dangerous conditions in the home); and

Note: The FCM must seek supervisory input to make alternate arrangements to complete the necessary interview(s) and/or home conditions assessment.

3. Document permission given to enter the home or facility and by whom in the case management system.

If access to a home or facility is denied, the FCM will:

1. Staff the assessment with the DCS Staff Attorney to determine if a court order should be pursued from the juvenile court to gain admission to the home or facility;
2. If a court order is formally granted and transmitted in writing to DCS, return to the home or facility with LEA, who will execute the court order and gain admission;
3. Notify the entity responsible for licensing the home (i.e., DCS local office or licensed child placing agency [LCPA]) if denied entry to a licensed foster home or facility; and

Note: DCS reserves the right to revoke a foster family home (FFH) license if denied access to a foster home.

4. Document the request was denied and who denied the request in the case management system.

The FCM Supervisor will discuss case specifics and provide guidance, as necessary.

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RELEVANT INFORMATION

Definitions

Facility

For the purpose of this policy, “facility” refers to a facility or institution, including, but not limited to a:

1. School;
2. Child care center;
3. Registered child care ministry;
4. Group home;
5. Inpatient (residential) treatment center;
6. Hospital;
7. Emergency shelter;
8. Shelter care facility;
9. Juvenile detention center; and
10. Indiana Department of Corrections (DOC) facility.

Home

For the purpose of this policy, “home” refers to a home, foster home, relative/kinship home, or licensed childcare home.

Forms and Tools

- School Letter Interview – available on Field Information SharePoint

Related Policies

- [4.05 Consent to Interview Child](#)
- [4.06 Exigent Circumstances for Interviewing Alleged Child Victims](#)

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LEGAL REFERENCES

- [IC 31-9-2-44.1: “Exigent circumstances”](#)
- [IC 31-33-8-7: Scope of assessment by department of child services; order for access to home, school, or other place, or for mental or physical examinations; petition to interview child; order; requirements](#)

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PRACTICE GUIDANCE- DCS POLICY 4.08

Practice Guidance is designed to assist DCS staff with thoughtful and practical direction on how to effectively integrate tools and social work practice into daily case management in an effort to achieve positive family and child outcomes. Practice Guidance is separate from Policy.

N/A

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