



INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY	
Chapter 4: Assessment Section 34: Abandoned Infants	
Effective Date: September 1, 2024	Version: 8

- [Procedure](#)
- [Definitions](#)
- [Forms and Tools](#)
- [Related Policies](#)
- [Legal References](#)
- [Practice Guidance](#)

POLICY OVERVIEW

This policy does not address safe haven infants. See policy 4.49 Safe Haven Infants.

Indiana law requires the Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) to assume the care, control, and custody of an infant who is designated as abandoned.

[Back to Top](#)

PROCEDURE

DCS will assume the care, control, and custody of an infant who is less than 12 months of age whose parent, guardian, or custodian has knowingly or intentionally left an infant in:

1. An environment that endangers the infant's life or health; or
2. A hospital or medical facility, and has no reasonable plan to assume the care, custody, and control of the infant.

Note: DCS will conduct an assessment regarding allegations of abandonment.

For abandoned infants (see Definition), the Family Case Manager (FCM) will:

1. Arrange for emergency placement of the infant;
2. Complete the Taking Custody of a Child without Verbal Consent or Written Court Order: Description of Circumstances form;
3. Call the following within 48 hours of assuming care, control, and custody of the abandoned infant to determine if the abandoned infant has been reported missing:
 - a. The Indiana Clearinghouse at 1-800-831-8953, and
 - b. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) at 1-800-843-5678 (1-800-THE-LOST).
4. Conduct a diligent search and complete the Affidavit of Diligent Inquiry (ADI) form to locate either of the infant's parents or other family members (see policies 5.06 Locating Absent Parents and 5.23 Diligent Search for Relatives/Kin and Case Participants);
5. Ensure the DCS Staff Attorney is aware of the abandoned infant and work with DCS legal to complete and file all documents necessary for court proceedings (see policy 6.02 Filing a Child in Need of Services (CHINS) Petition);
6. Be prepared to submit an ADI form or an update as to the progress toward completion of the ADI form to the court at the time of the Detention/Initial Hearing;
7. Forward a copy of the Preliminary Inquiry (PI) to the FCM Supervisor for review and approval;

8. Attend the scheduled Detention/Initial Hearing; and
9. Document the infant's placement and all information gathered during the assessment in the case management system.

The FCM Supervisor will:

1. Assist the FCM with completing the required court documents, as necessary;
2. Confirm the Indiana Clearinghouse has been contacted within 48 hours for the abandon infant; and
3. Ensure all actions taken and any deviation from best practice is documented in the case management system.

The DCS Staff Attorney will:

1. Ensure the DCS Chief Counsel is aware of the abandoned infant;
2. File a petition alleging that the abandoned infant is a CHINS and ask the court to hold a Detention/Initial Hearing no later than 48 hours (excluding weekends and holidays) after the child is taken into custody;

Note: The CHINS petition must include a request for the court to make findings of Best Interests/Contrary to the Welfare (BI/CW), Reasonable Efforts to Prevent Removal (RE), and Placement and Care (PC) responsibility to DCS.

3. Request that a CASA/GAL be appointed for the abandoned infant;
4. At a hearing following the written report and recommendation of CASA/GAL being filed, request a finding of No Reasonable Efforts to Reunify regarding the abandoned infant;

Note: Once a finding of No Reasonable Efforts has been made, a permanency hearing must be held within 30 days.

5. File for publication in the Child in Need of Services proceeding and publish in the county where the child was abandoned.

[Back to Top](#)

RELEVANT INFORMATION

Definitions

Abandoned Infant

An abandoned infant is a child who is less than 12 months of age and whose parent, guardian, or custodian has knowingly or intentionally left the child in an environment that endangers the child's life or health or at a hospital or medical facility and has no reasonable plan to assume the care, custody, and control of the child.

Forms and Tools

- [Affidavit of Diligent Inquiry \(ADI\) \(SF 54778\)](#)
- Assessment of Alleged Child Abuse or Neglect (SF 113) (311) – available in the case management system
- [Indiana Clearinghouse for Information on Missing Children and Missing Endangered Adults \(Indiana Clearinghouse\) website](#)
- Indiana Clearinghouse phone number: 1- 800-831-8953
- [National Center for Missing and Exploited Children \(NCMEC\) website](#)
- NCMEC phone number: 1-800-843-5678 (1-800-THE-LOST)

- Preliminary Report of Alleged Child Abuse or Neglect (SF 114) (310) – available in the case management system
- [Taking Custody of a Child Without Verbal Consent or Written Court Order: Description of Circumstances \(SF 49584\)](#)

Related Policies

- [4.49 Safe Haven Infants](#)
- [5.06 Locating Absent Parents](#)
- [5.23 Diligent Search for Relatives/Kin and Case Participants](#)
- [6.02 Filing a CHINS Petition](#)

[Back to Top](#)

LEGAL REFERENCES

- [IC 10-13-5: Indiana Clearinghouse for Information on Missing Children and Missing Endangered Adults](#)
- [IC 31-14-7-1: Presumptions: child's biological father](#)
- [IC 31-9-2-0.5: "Abandoned infant"](#)
- [IC 31-21-2-2: "Abandoned"](#)
- [IC 31-25-3-2: Duties of bureau; access to information](#)
- [IC 31-34-21-5.6\(b\)\(5\): Exceptions to requirement to make reasonable efforts to preserve and reunify families](#)
- [45 CFR 1356.21 Foster care maintenance payments program implementation requirements](#)

[Back to Top](#)

PRACTICE GUIDANCE- DCS POLICY 4.34

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

[Back to Top](#)