

**INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES
ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

Policy Number: EA-5

Effective Date: May 1, 2016

Version: 4.0

POLICY TITLE: CONSTITUENT CORRESPONDENCE

OVERVIEW: The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) shall respond to all correspondence it receives with a professional and timely response that addresses the specific needs outlined in the original communication. All requests will be handled in accordance with [IC 5-14-3](#) and [IC 31-33-18](#). Any constituent correspondence addressing issues that are technical in nature, including but not limited to, DCS policy, Indiana Code, Federal law and/or legislation, must be forwarded to the Constituent Services Liaisons for processing.

I. DEFINITIONS

- A. **Constituent:** Any individual who is not an employee of DCS who communicates an inquiry or concern to the DCS Director, Central Office Constituent Services Liaison, Child Support Bureau (CSB) Constituent Services Liaison, other government agency, or the Governor's Office.
- B. **Correspondence:** Any non-routine business communication addressed to or received by DCS. Correspondence may come from the Governor's Office, a Legislator, another State or non-governmental agency, or a constituent. Correspondence may be in the form of a letter, fax, telephone call, or an email.
- C. **Constituent Services Liaison:** The liaisons are DCS employees who oversee the process of responding to constituent correspondence to DCS. Constituent Services Liaisons are located in the DCS Central Office and the CSB.
- D. **Subject Matter Expert:** A staff person identified as being knowledgeable of a specific DCS program and/or procedure.
- E. **Division:** An organizational unit within DCS (e.g., Permanency and Practice Support is a division within DCS).
- F. **Program:** A specialty unit within a division (e.g., Clinical Consultants is a program within the Permanency and Practice Support division).

II. REFERENCES

- A. [EA-2 Communication with Legislators Policy](#)
- B. [EA-3 Media Contact Policy](#)
- C. [IC 5-14-3: Access to Public Records](#)
- D. [IC 31-33-18: Disclosure of Reports; Confidentiality Requirements](#)

III. STATEMENTS OF PURPOSE

- A. All DCS constituent correspondence will be tracked by the Constituent Services Liaisons. All correspondence from the media shall be addressed in accordance with the [DCS Media Contact Policy](#).
- B. Correspondence received at the program or DCS local office level or at CSB that is general in nature may be answered by the Program Manager, DCS Local Office Director (LOD), or appropriate CSB staff. Examples include, but are not limited to, local service overviews and programmatic questions from local service providers. Correspondence of this nature is considered routine business communication and does not need to be reported to the Constituent Services Liaisons. The only exception to

this reporting requirement is communication with Legislators and media, which should be handled in accordance with the [DCS Communication with Legislators Policy](#) and [DCS Media Contact Policy](#).

- C. All constituent correspondence addressing issues that are technical in nature, including but not limited to, DCS policy, Indiana Code, Federal law and/or legislation, must be forwarded within three (3) business days to the Constituent Services Liaisons for processing.
- D. All requests will be handled in accordance with [IC 5-14-3](#) and [IC 31-33-18](#).
- E. All responses to correspondence shall be in the same format as the original communication, when practical (e.g., an inquiry sent by email will receive an emailed response). All individuals copied on the original communication should be included on the response.
- F. All written responses must be developed in a manner consistent with the guidelines provided by the Office of the Governor.
- G. All responses are reviewed, approved, and signed by the Agency Director.

IV. PROCEDURE

- A. Upon receipt of correspondence regarding Field Operations (Field Ops), the DCS Central Office Constituent Services Liaison will determine the county and region of origin of the issue discussed in the correspondence. The DCS Central Office Constituent Services Liaison will forward the correspondence to the appropriate DCS LOD. The Regional Manager (RM), Assistant Deputy Director of Field Operations, and Deputy Director of Field Operations will be copied on all correspondence.

Note: The DCS Central Office Constituent Services Liaison will direct the constituent to contact the DCS Local Office if he or she has not previously attempted to make contact. If the constituent has contacted the DCS Local Office and continues to have concerns, the Constituent Services Liaison will assist the constituent in making contact with the RM and continue up the chain of command as needed.

- B. The DCS LOD will review the correspondence and discuss with his or her Regional Manager (RM) how to address any outlying issues and provide an update to the DCS Central Office Constituent Services Liaison for their response within five (5) business days.
- C. Upon receipt of correspondence regarding the Title IV-D child support operations of a county office, the CSB Constituent Services Liaison will determine the county and office of origin of the issue, examine the ISETS case record and, if necessary, contact the appropriate county office for further information needed to facilitate a response.

Note: The CSB Constituent Services Liaison will direct the constituent to contact the appropriate county office, if he or she has not previously attempted to make contact. If the constituent has contacted the appropriate county office and continues to have concerns, the CSB Constituent Services Liaison will assist the constituent in working with the county office to address and resolve those concerns.

- D. The Constituent Services Liaisons will work with the DCS Local Office or county

- office to craft an appropriate response to case-specific inquiries.
- E. All responses are reviewed, approved, and signed by the Agency Director.
 - F. All inquiries directed to the Governor or DCS Director will be managed by the Constituent Services Liaisons.
 - G. The Constituent Services Liaisons will work with the appropriate subject matter expert to appropriately respond to constituent inquiries that are not related to a specific case.
 - H. The Constituent Services Liaisons will produce a monthly report summarizing all correspondence-related activities to provide to the DCS Legislative Director.
 - I. The Constituent Services Liaisons will maintain a record of all constituent correspondence.

DATE: March 30, 2016
Mary Beth Bonaventura, Director
Department of Child Services

A signed copy is on file.