

	INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE MANUAL	
	Chapter 4: Assessment	Effective Date: July 1, 2010
	Section 10: Interviewing the Parent, Guardian, or Custodian	Version: 3

POLICY

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) will conduct a face-to-face interview with the parent(s), guardian, or custodian(s) of an alleged victim of Child abuse and/or Neglect (CA/N), unless one (1) or both cannot be located or refuse an interview.

DCS will provide information about available community resources to all families experiencing domestic violence. See Practice Guidance for a list of possible indicators of domestic violence.

The interview will take place on the same day as the interview with the alleged child victim, unless not possible.

[NEW] DCS will introduce the Child and Family Team (CFT) Meeting process to every parent, guardian, or custodian, during the initial interview, if appropriate. See separate policy, [5.7 Child and Family Team \(CFT\) Meetings](#).

Code References

1. [IC 31-33-8-7: Scope of investigation by department of child services; order for access to home, school, or other place, or for mental or physical examinations](#)
2. [IC 31-33-18-4: Notice to parent, guardian, or custodian of availability of reports, information, and juvenile court records; release form; copying costs](#)
3. [IC 34-6-2-34.5: Domestic or family violence](#)

PROCEDURE

If the parent, guardian, or custodian is the alleged perpetrator, the Family Case Manager (FCM) will follow all procedures contained in separate policy, [4.11 Interviewing the Alleged Perpetrator](#).

If the parent, guardian, or custodian is **not** the alleged perpetrator, the FCM will:

1. Secure identifying information and request (not require) the individual's social security number (SSN);
2. State the reason for the interview;
3. Allow the parent, guardian, or custodian to respond to each allegation;
4. Allow the parent, guardian, or custodian to "tell his or her side of the story";
5. Focus the interview on the safety of the child;
6. Look for any indications of CA/N and ask questions related to any indications that are present;
7. Observe the interactions between the parent, guardian, or custodian and other family members, including the child;
8. Assess whether the parent, guardian, or custodian may be a victim of domestic violence and provide information about available community resources;

9. Obtain the names of other family members and/or collateral contacts who may be able to provide additional information relating to the alleged CA/N;
10. Discuss any stress factors that may be present;
11. Review with the parent, guardian, or custodian what has been discussed during the interview to verify comprehension;
12. Explain that the assessment is not complete, and explain what will happen next and how he or she will be informed of results of the assessment;
13. **[NEW]** Introduce the CFT meeting process and encourage the parent, guardian, or custodian to utilize this method of practice to assess the child's safety, develop plans to address child safety, and problem solve concerns or issues as they are identified. Explain that the process can serve to reinforce their strengths, assist in identifying informal supports and develop plans to address their needs; and
14. **[REVISED]** Provide each parent, guardian, or custodian, including an alleged father or any known non-custodial parent with a copy of the form, [Notice of Availability of Completed Reports and Information \(SF 48201/CW0024\)](#). See Related Information for a definition of alleged father.

Note: In assessments that involve alleged domestic violence, the non-offending parent should never be given the responsibility of providing the [Notice of Availability of Completed Reports and Information \(SF 48201/CW0024\)](#) to the alleged domestic violence offender; this includes sending the [Notice of Availability of Completed Reports and Information \(SF 48201/CW0024\)](#) in the mail or leaving it at the house with the non-offending parent; rather, the FCM should deliver this notice to the alleged domestic violence offender in person.

For interviews conducted with the non-offending parent in a relationship where domestic violence is alleged the FCM will follow all procedures above and will:

1. Never ask the non-offending parent about domestic violence in the presence of the alleged domestic violence offender;
2. Assure the non-offending parent that they are concerned about his or her safety and the safety of the child(ren). DCS will not confront the alleged domestic violence offender with information shared regarding abuse without first discussing it with the non-offending parent;
3. Not attempt to force the non-offending parent to disclose about the abuse. Use of good engagement and questioning skills by the FCM will ease the non-offending parent during the interview process and may help them to share more information about the domestic violence;
4. Explain that child(ren) may experience immediate and long-term harm from exposure to domestic violence. Document this discussion in ICWIS;
5. Not assume that resistant or uncooperative non-offending parents want or choose to be in violent relationships. Recognizing and attending to the fears and issues faced by the non-offending parent will increase the FCM's ability to engage the non-offending parent's participation in pursuing safety;
6. Provide information about community resources;
7. Discuss what will happen with the information gathered; and
8. Ask about safe times to make future contact.

Note: If the non-offending parent is also believed to be a perpetrator of CA/N, see separate policy, [4.11 Interviewing the Alleged Perpetrator](#).

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

Indicators of Domestic Violence

If any of the following indicators of domestic violence are observed during the course of an assessment, carefully consider how to proceed with the interview (i.e., if the alleged domestic violence offender is present, the interview may need to be handled differently than if the parent, guardian, or custodian were alone).

Adult Indicators:

1. Evidence of physical injuries;
2. Feelings of depression, anger, and emotional distress;
3. Low self-esteem and suicidal thoughts;
4. Frequent medical problems;
5. Violence in family of origin;
6. Requests for financial assistance;
7. Isolation from friends and family;
8. Damaged property (holes in the wall, etc.);
9. Minimizing abuse;
10. Offender's accusations of infidelity;
11. Abuse of family pets;
12. Limited access to financial resources;
13. Child(ren) overly protective of one parent;
14. Reluctance of adults to be interviewed separately; and/or
15. One parent or adult answers all of the questions.

FORMS AND TOOLS

1. [Notice of Availability of Completed Reports and Information \(SF 48201/CW0024\)](#) – Available in ICWIS
2. [Notice of Availability of Completed Reports and Information \(SF 51886/CW0024S\) \(Spanish\)](#) – Available in ICWIS

RELATED INFORMATION

Successful Interviews

Plan to interview the person in a place that is private and where there will be no interruptions. This may help to reduce the person's anxiety. The FCM should explain the allegations and the potential outcomes. Although the assessment is incomplete, the parent, guardian, or custodian has a right to know, within the limits of confidentiality, what has happened and what has been determined thus far. If the parent signs a release of information form, other non-offending adults in the household may be informed of the outcome in order to assist with protecting the child. **If the parent utilizes this option, the FCM must document thoroughly in the assessment notes.** Full disclosure will also help develop a beginning level of trust and enhance the likelihood that the person will cooperate with the agency.

Social Security Numbers (SSNs)

The FCM should request the SSN, but he or she cannot legally demand and/or require the disclosure of this information.

Domestic Violence

If at any point during the assessment the FCM learns that a parent, guardian, or custodian may be a victim of domestic violence, the FCM should provide that person with information about community services that are available to domestic violence victims. Questions about domestic violence should be asked only in one-on-one interviews.

Resources for Domestic Violence:

Indiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Crisis Line: 1-800-332-7385, www.violenceresource.org

Indiana Coalition Against Sexual Assault
1-800-691-2272, www.incasa.org

National Coalition Against Domestic Violence
1-800-799-SAFE (7233) or TTY 1-800-787-3224, www.ncadv.org

Parent, Guardian, or Custodian is Alleged CA/N Perpetrator

If the parent, guardian, or custodian is the alleged perpetrator, that person should be interviewed in accordance with the policy, [4.11 Interviewing the Alleged Perpetrator](#). Additionally, if more than one parent, guardian, or custodian is being interviewed and one is identified as the alleged perpetrator, the interviews should be conducted separately.

Interviewing Non-custodial Parents

FCMs should attempt to locate and interview non-custodial parents. See separate policy, [5.4 Noncustodial Parents](#).

[NEW] Alleged Father

A person who has asserted to be the father of a child, or who claims to be the father of a child, and a paternity action has been filed in court.

[NEW] Noncustodial Parent

A person who does not have legal or primary physical custody of the child.