

INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES		
Policy Number: HR-3-8	Effective Date: November 1, 2021	Version: 4.0
POLICY TITLE: WORKER SAFETY		
<b>OVERVIEW:</b> The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) is committed to providing a safe and healthy work environment (including physical, emotional, and psychological safety and well-being) for all employees, clients, and visitors.		

## I. DEFINITIONS

- A. Credible, immediate threat: A verbal or written threat, including that communicated by means of an electronic communication device, a threat implied by a pattern of conduct, or a combination of verbal, written, or electronically communicated statements and conduct. These threats are made with the intent and apparent ability to carry out the threat so as to cause those who are the target of the threat to reasonably fear for their immediate safety.
- B. Psychological safety: A shared belief held by members of a team that the team will not embarrass, reject, or punish an individual for speaking up. The four (4) stages of psychological safety are:
  1. Inclusion safety: The stage of psychological safety that satisfies the basic human need to connect and belong. A person feels safe to be and is accepted for being oneself, including the person's unique attributes and defining characteristics.
  2. Learner safety: The stage of psychological safety that satisfies the need to learn and grow. A person feels safe to exchange in the learning process by asking questions, giving and receiving feedback, experimenting, and making mistakes.
  3. Contributor Safety: The stage of psychological safety that satisfies the need to make a difference. A person feels safe to use one's skills and abilities to make a meaningful contribution.
  4. Challenger Safety: The stage of psychological safety that satisfies the need to make things better. A person feels safe to speak up and challenge the status quo when there's an opportunity for change or improvement.
- C. Work environment: Includes all locations where DCS job-related duties are performed. This includes, but is not limited to, DCS offices, courts, and in-home visits.

## II. REFERENCES

- A. [IC 34-26-6: Workplace Violence Restraining Orders](#)
- B. [GA-17 Critical Incident Response](#)
- C. [Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\)](#)
- D. [Indiana State Personnel Department \(SPD\) Workplace Violence Prevention Policy](#)
- E. [SafeSignal Instruction Video](#)
- F. [State of Indiana Employee Handbook](#)

## III. STATEMENTS OF PURPOSE

- A. DCS is committed to providing safe, dependable working conditions and services to employees, clients, and visitors. DCS will maintain a "zero-tolerance" policy for

workplace violence. Violations of this policy may lead to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

- B. DCS believes that DCS employees should practice good risk management, because ultimately employees are responsible for their overall safety.
1. All DCS employees are responsible for adhering to safety measures, practices, and rules, and they will conduct themselves in a manner which minimizes risk to themselves and others; and
  2. DCS employees shall strive to be aware of their surroundings and safety needs to the best of their ability. Should staff members feel unsafe, they should get to an area of safety and immediately consult with a member of their management team.

**Note:** DCS recognizes that risk management practices may vary based on the employee's work setting (e.g., urban area vs. rural area; field staff vs. administrative staff). See "Safety and Accidents" in the State of Indiana Employee Handbook for more information.

- C. DCS will not tolerate violence, threats, harassment, intimidation, or other disruptive behavior within the work environment, with clients, associates of DCS employees (e.g., family and friends), or other stakeholders with whom the agency partners or interacts. DCS employees are required to notify their supervisor of any such behavior they have witnessed or experienced. If an employee's immediate supervisor is unavailable or is party to the incident, the report should be made to an alternative supervisor or management level (e.g., Local Office Director [LOD], Division Manager [DM], Regional Manager [RM], or Deputy Director [for Central Office employees]). The person receiving the report will document all reported behaviors in the Workplace Incident Report form and report the incident to DCS Human Resources.
- D. In the event of a credible, immediate threat to an individual's safety, either the employee or the employee's supervisor should immediately notify the appropriate Law Enforcement Agency (LEA). The employee's supervisor will also discuss with the DCS Chief Counsel for the region or, for non-field staff, the Chief Counsel of Legal Affairs that a request for a Workplace Protection Order be filed, as outlined in IC 34-26-6. If the DCS Child Abuse Hotline (Hotline) receives a report of a threat, the Hotline will contact the local office emergency contact. See [SPD Workplace Violence Prevention Policy](#) for more information.

**Note:** Field Staff will use the SafeSignal app for all in-person interactions with clients. In addition, the SafeSignal app is available for Legal Staff. In case of an immediate threat, once activated the SafeSignal alert will notify LEA that the alarm has been activated. An employee may press the "Panic Button" on the SafeSignal app to signal for LEA when not in a session.

- E. DCS recognizes that the nature of its mandate requires daily activities that may expose employees to risk; however, employees are not expected to place their own safety in jeopardy. It is essential that all employees use their training and personal skills to

minimize potential safety threats that may be involved when interacting with families to ensure both their own safety and the safety of any child present in the home. Although risks to employees cannot be completely eliminated, they can be dramatically reduced by increasing awareness. See the [Worker Safety Protocol](#) for more information.

- F. DCS recognizes that working closely with children who experience child abuse and/or neglect is often very stressful and traumatic. In order to promote the emotional and psychological well-being of its employees, DCS offers and encourages its staff to utilize the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), Critical Incident Response, and the Emergency Operation Plan- Local Office as necessary.

#### IV. PROCEDURE

- A. All Field Staff will follow all established local office reporting and check-in procedures.

**Note:** Working closely with children who experience child abuse and/or neglect is often very stressful and traumatic. In order to promote the emotional and psychological well-being of its employees, DCS offers and encourages staff to utilize the EAP, Critical Incident Response, and the Emergency Operation Plan- Local Office as necessary.

- B. Field Staff will and Legal Staff may:

- 1. Activate the SafeSignal app prior to face-to-face interactions with clients by entering the location of the meeting and selecting the timer option or inserting the tether (or headphones if the tether is not compatible with the employee's phone) (see SafeSignal Instruction Video for further guidance); and

**Note:** If using the timer, change the time if the visit extends past the originally anticipated length of the visit. Also, end the session on SafeSignal, once the visit has ended, as the SafeSignal Monitoring Center will be notified if the session is not ended prior to the timer expiring.

- 2. Activate the alarm by pulling the tether (or headphones), allowing the timer to expire, or pushing panic button in case of an immediate threat. An employee may press the "Panic Button" on the SafeSignal app to signal for LEA when not in a session.

**Note:** After the SafeSignal Monitoring Center confirms officers are onsite, an Incident Summary will be sent via text and e-mail to the employee and the SafeSignal Notification Team (i.e., local management team and the chain of command).

- C. A management team member will be aware of the location of employees while in the field, particularly when visits extend after normal office hours. Ensure at least one (1) other employee is aware when an employee will be alone in the office.

- D. Each DCS LOD will:

- 1. Devise written procedures to maintain safety in and around the local office and ensure the RM is provided a copy of these procedures;

2. Act as the Safety Officer for the county and appoint a designee in case of absence. See the Emergency Operation Plan- Local Office for further information regarding the responsibilities of the Safety Officer;
3. Establish reporting and check-in procedures for all office employees;
4. Meet quarterly with Supervisors to discuss safety procedures and any safety concerns or incidents;
5. Report to their RM any safety concerns that may warrant a request to the Facilities & Real Estate Director regarding building security and employee safety; and
6. Develop a procedure for “flagging” case files of families and individuals with a history of/or suspected violent criminal activity, violence, or threats.

**Note:** Any potential worker safety concerns should be noted in the case management system if they are known during intake. The DCS Hotline will notify the local office emergency contact when they receive reports of a threat. The concerns that arise after intake should be noted using procedures established at the DCS local office.

E. All DCS employees will:

1. Complete Worker Safety training annually;
2. Practice safe working habits;
3. Wear state issued identification at all times while working;
4. Take reasonable safety precautions when working;
5. Refrain from activities that jeopardize workplace safety and/or create unsafe working conditions;
6. Immediately report to their direct Supervisor if they feel their work environment is unsafe. If the concern is regarding an employee’s direct Supervisor, the employee should report the concern to the Supervisor’s manager and/or DCS Human Resources. See the State of Indiana Employee Handbook and [SPD Workplace Violence Prevention Policy](#) for more information;
7. Report all safety incidents involving risk to safety to their Supervisor and DCS Human Resources (see the State of Indiana Employee Handbook for more information). Examples include, but are not limited to:
  - a. Threats of injury (intimidation, harassing mail or phone calls, stalking, display of weapons);
  - b. Physical assault (injured or not injured); hazardous field situations (high risk or unsafe housing conditions, gang or drug activities, threatening animals, vandalism, theft);
  - c. Sexual harassment;
  - d. Use of a weapon; and
  - e. Verbal aggression, which evokes a sense of danger.
8. Notify their Supervisor and/or DCS Human Resources of any workplace injuries/exposures within 24 hours (no matter how minor) and complete the [Indiana Worker's Compensation First Report of Employee Injury, Illness form](#), as employees are subject to Indiana Workers’ Compensation provisions. If an employee fails to report an injury, the employee may be held financially responsible for any or all medical costs;

**Note:** If an employee needs medical care after a work injury, DCS and the State's Workers' Compensation administrator will direct the care. Contact DCS Human Resources for additional information on obtaining medical care following a workplace injury/exposure. See the State of Indiana Employee Handbook for more information.

9. Take threats from parents, children, family members, employees, and all other individuals seriously. Employees will staff these concerns with their Supervisor and/or DCS Human Resources to determine how to proceed safely; and
10. Use the EAP, Critical Incident Response, and the Emergency Operation Plan- Local Office as necessary.

F. All Supervisors will:

1. Discuss safety procedures and recent incidents in unit meetings, at least quarterly. Discussion may include, but is not limited to, plans for fire, emergency weather, intruder, hostile clients, and medical emergencies (e.g., location of first aid kit),
2. Investigate and report all safety concerns to their LOD or Deputy Director or designee (for non-field staff employees) to discuss solutions to address safety concerns (e.g., security guard, building lock down, etc.) in a timely manner. When necessary, concerns should be reported to LEA and discussed with the DCS Chief Counsel of their region or, for non-field staff, the Chief Counsel of Legal Affairs that a request for a Workplace Protection Order be filed,
3. Report all injuries to DCS Human Resources whether medical care is required and complete the Indiana Worker's Compensation First Report of Employee Injury, Illness form if the employee is unable to complete the form, and
4. Consult with DCS Human Resources for assistance if an injury occurs to an employee.

G. All Deputy Directors or designees will contact the Facilities & Real Estate Director if the safety concerns warrant a request for building security or other assistance is needed to promote employee safety.

## V. FORMS, DOCUMENTS, AND TOOLS

- A. [Emergency Operation Plan- Local Office](#)
- B. [Indiana Worker's Compensation First Report of Employee Injury, Illness \(SF 34401\)](#)
- C. Facilities & Real Estate Director email- [dcs.facilities@dcs.in.gov](mailto:dcs.facilities@dcs.in.gov)
- D. [Workplace Incident Report \(SF 55863\)](#)
- E. [Tool HR-3-A- Worker Safety Protocol](#)

Approved: October 5, 2021

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