



INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES
CHILD WELFARE POLICY

Chapter 4: Assessment
Section 12: Courtesy Interviews Between DCS Local Offices

Effective Date: April 1, 2024
Version:4

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POLICY OVERVIEW

Information regarding out-of-state courtesy interviews may be found in policy 4.48 Professional Service Request (PSR).

Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) local offices are responsible for communicating with one another to request courtesy interviews between local offices to assess child safety.

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PROCEDURE

A courtesy interview may occur between the DCS local offices when:

- 1. The best interest of the child is not compromised;
2. There is excessive distance between the DCS local office and the family's home (i.e., travel of more than two [2] hours); and/or
3. There is a conflict of interest.

The DCS local office with jurisdiction over an Assessment of Alleged Child Abuse and/or Neglect (CA/N) (311) is responsible for conducting the required interviews. Upon approval by the Local Office Director (LOD), it may be determined a DCS local office without jurisdiction would be more appropriate to conduct the required interviews.

Note: Courtesy interviews assessing home conditions should be handled on a case-by-case basis. It is beneficial for the assigned Family Case Manager (FCM) in the DCS local office that has jurisdiction over the assessment to observe the home conditions in order to have first-hand knowledge about the conditions of the home. This is especially important if the FCM must later make recommendations to the court (see policy 4.13 Assessing and Documenting the Home and Living Conditions).

A courtesy interview may be requested regarding a Homeless Unaccompanied Minor in a shelter where the alleged victim's permanent residence with the alleged victim's parent, guardian, or custodian is in County A, but a report is made by a homeless shelter in County B (more than an hour away from County A). The assessment will be conducted by County B, and the DCS local office in County A will be responsible for completing the 311 and arriving at a finding.

To request a courtesy interview, the assessing FCM in the DCS local office that has jurisdiction over the assessment will:

1. Contact the FCM Supervisor if the FCM believes a courtesy interview is appropriate, explaining why a courtesy interview is the most efficient and effective method for conducting the interview; and
2. Document the decision in the case management system, upon determination by the LOD.

The assessing FCM Supervisor in the DCS local office that has jurisdiction over the assessment will:

1. Consult with the LOD to obtain approval to request the courtesy interview; and
2. Notify the FCM of the LOD's decision.

The LOD that has jurisdiction over the assessment will:

1. Approve or deny the FCM Supervisor's request for a courtesy interview;
2. Contact the LOD in the receiving county where the interview will take place and discuss the specific circumstances that make a courtesy interview necessary, and collectively make a determination.

If the request for a courtesy interview is approved, the LOD in the receiving county where the interview will take place will:

1. Approve or deny the courtesy interview request from the county of jurisdiction;

**Note:** If the request for the courtesy interview is denied, the FCM that has jurisdiction over the assessment is responsible for completing the interview.

2. Include the receiving FCM Supervisor in the discussion to relay and document the details of the assessment in the case management system, including the allegations and information that is pertinent to the safety of the FCM who will conduct the courtesy interview; and
3. Discuss and agree upon a completion date for any requested interviews to be conducted and for the information obtained from the interview to be documented into the case management system.

The FCM Supervisor in the receiving county where the interview will take place will:

1. Assign the courtesy interview to an FCM;
2. Ensure all requested interviews are completed by the agreed upon deadline; and
3. Ensure all notes and any audio and/or video recordings from the interview are provided to the requesting DCS local office within the agreed upon deadline and are also documented in the case management system.

The FCM conducting the courtesy interview will:

1. Review policies 4.09 Interviewing Child, 4.10 Interviewing the Parent, Guardian, or Custodian, and 4.11 Interviewing the Alleged Perpetrator for additional guidance prior to conducting the interview;
2. Explain to each person interviewed the county for which the interview is being completed and the FCM assigned to the assessment; and
3. Document all information in the case management system.

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## RELEVANT INFORMATION

### Definitions

#### Homeless Unaccompanied Minor

A Homeless Unaccompanied Minor is an individual who is under 18 years of age and is receiving shelter without a parent, guardian, or custodian present.

### Forms and Tools

- Assessment of Alleged Child Abuse and/or Neglect (CA/N) (311) (SF 113)- Available in the case management system

### Related Policies

- [4.09 Interviewing Children](#)
- [4.10 Interviewing the Parent, Guardian, or Custodian](#)
- [4.11 Interviewing the Alleged Perpetrator](#)
- [4.13 Assessing and Documenting the Home and Living Conditions](#)
- [4.48 Professional Service Request \(PSR\)](#)

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## LEGAL REFERENCES

N/A

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## PRACTICE GUIDANCE- DCS POLICY 4.12

*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.*

### **Logistics Example**

The alleged victim lives in County A and is transported more than an hour to a hospital in County B for medical care. County A has jurisdiction over the assessment but may ask County B to conduct the courtesy interview at the hospital to prevent extensive travel.

### **Video/Audio Recorded Interviews**

Video/audio recordings should be utilized in situations when allegations of sexual abuse, severe physical abuse, human trafficking, or other unique cases could lead to criminal charges being filed. Recording interviews may reduce the number of times an alleged child victim must be interviewed. It may also reduce the necessity for the alleged victim to provide further testimony if the case goes to court.

Decisions regarding how to record an interview should be made based on the circumstances of the report and the location of the interview. Written notes should always be taken during the interview (preferably by someone other than the assigned FCM when possible, such as LEA or another FCM). All information should be reviewed and clarified with the child to ensure the interviewer has an accurate understanding of what the child said.

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