

CARELINE AND INTAKE

Special Investigations Unit

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Policy

The Department of Children and Families' Special Investigations Unit (SIU) shall investigate all accepted Careline reports regarding allegations of child abuse or neglect in which the alleged perpetrator is:

- a licensed or approved foster parent;
- acting in a professional capacity as an employee of DCF or other Connecticut state agency-licensed or -operated facility; or
- a DCF employee in the role of parent, guardian or person entrusted with the care of a child.

Reports Assigned to the SIU

The following types of cases shall be assigned to SIU:

- all foster home reports (DCF or child placing agency) that include allegations of suspected abuse or neglect of a foster, adopted or biological child in the home, if the foster home has an active placement or had an active placement at the time of the allegations;
- all reports identifying a DCF employee as an alleged perpetrator of suspected abuse or neglect when the employee is:
 - acting in his or her professional capacity, including as a DCF Social Worker or as DCF facility staff;
 - a parent of an alleged victim;
 - a legal guardian of an alleged victim;
 - a household member in the home in which the alleged victim resides; or
 - a person entrusted with the care of a child;
- all reports identifying a relative of a DCF employee as an alleged perpetrator of abuse or neglect when the DCF employee resides in the household or is in a caregiving role to the child;
- all reports from a residential facility (including, but not limited to, group homes, detention centers, SFIT homes, STAR homes, in- state residential treatment centers, DCF-operated facilities); and
- any case assigned directly to SIU by the Commissioner.

Note: The victim in an SIU investigation report may include young adults between the ages of 18 and 21 years for whom DCF is providing services.

SIU Coordination with Other Social Workers

SIU shall make best efforts, upon assignment, to contact the Area Office Social Worker assigned to the child victim(s) as well as the Regional Foster and Adoption Services Unit (FASU) Support Worker.

When appropriate, SIU shall arrange to conduct a joint visit with the Area Office Social Worker and/or the FASU or child placing agency support worker.

SIU will assess the safety of the child(ren) and develop a safety plan, if warranted, with the Area Office Social Worker. If the SIU Investigator believes that a child should be removed from the home, he or she shall make that recommendation to the Area Office Social Worker.

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DCF Investigations Policy

DCF Policy 22-2-2, "Child Protective Investigations" applies to the Special Investigations Unit, unless exceptions are noted in the sections below.

Who is Notified of Special Investigation Reports

When a report is accepted at the Careline, an e-mail notification shall be automatically generated through the computer system to the appropriate parties:

Type of Report	Report Goes To
Foster home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Area Office assigned staff of child(ren) in the home • Foster and Adoption Services Unit (FASU) assigned staff or the director of the child placing agency
Employee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DCF Human Resources • Special Investigations Unit Director • Agency Legal Director
Employee who is also in the role of foster parent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DCF Human Resources • Special Investigations Unit Director • Agency Legal Director • the Area Office assigned staff of child(ren)in the home • Foster and Adoption Services Unit (FASU) • assigned staff or the director of the child placing agency
Facility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Area Office assigned staff of child(ren)in the facility • facility superintendent or director • DCF Risk Management • DCF Licensing Unit • DCF Congregate Care Unit
DCF-Operated facility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Area Office assigned staff of child(ren)in the facility • Superintendent • DCF Risk Management • Special Investigations Unit Director • Human Resources • Agency Legal Director

Where appropriate, SIU shall also send e-mail notifications to the DCF Office of Children and Youth in Placement (OChYP).

When the alleged victim is in the care and custody of DCF as a neglected, abused, or uncared for, Careline or SIU, as assigned, shall also notify the child's attorney.

SIU shall make contact with the appropriate partner agencies, such as the Departments of Developmental Services (DDS) and Corrections (DOC), Office of Early Childhood (OEC), Court Support Services Division (CSSD), and the State Department of Education (SDE), if applicable.

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SIU Joint Investigations

Parties to joint investigations may include but are not limited to:

- Area or Regional Office staff;
- DCF Development and Oversight Coordinators (PDOCs);
- DCF Licensing;
- DCF Human Resources;
- DCF Office of Legal Affairs;
- DCF Office of Diversity and Equity;
- Department of Public Health;
- Department of Developmental Services
- Office of Early Childhood;
- Department of Corrections;
- state or local police; and
- child placing agency staff.

In all joint investigations, the SIU Investigator shall maintain the lead role in conducting the investigation and interviews on behalf of DCF.

Investigations in DCF and Child Placing Agency Foster Homes

The FASU Program Supervisor and the child placing agency director, if applicable, shall place the licensed foster home on hold and support the family during the investigation process.

When time permits and the safety of the child(ren) is not compromised, the Area Office Social Worker(s) assigned to the child(ren) shall participate with SIU in the initial home visit to help determine whether the child(ren) must be removed from the foster home.

If immediate safety concerns are identified and a removal is necessary, the Area Office Social Worker or child placing agency shall secure a placement and arrange for transportation as needed.

Joint Investigations When Immediate Safety Concerns are Reported

Joint SIU and Area Office investigations occur when:

- there are immediate safety concerns; and
- there is a potential need for removal of foster children or the biological or adopted children of the foster parents.

If immediate safety concerns are identified and a removal is necessary regarding a biological or adopted child of the foster parent, the SIU Program Supervisor shall:

- issue an administrative 96 hour hold (96HH);
- contact the Area Office Investigations Program Supervisor for the immediate assignment of an Investigator; and
- coordinate a course of action.

If there is no imminent danger, the family shall have the opportunity to participate in a Considered Removal Teaming before a decision to remove is made.

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**Joint
Investigations
When
Immediate
Safety
Concerns are
Reported
(Continued)**

The SIU and Area Office Investigators shall work jointly to:

- complete all necessary interviews;
- secure a placement;
- complete any necessary court work (including the Motion for Order of Temporary Custody); and
- complete the DCF-2074, "Investigation Protocol" (computer generated).

The SIU Investigator shall:

- provide the Area Office Investigator with all key information necessary for the investigation and placement; and
- assist as needed, *e.g.*, provide an affidavit to support the filing of a Motion for OTC, attend the 10-day court hearing and any additional court dates if needed, document all case activity notes leading to the removal on the DCF-2074, "Investigation Protocol."

Note: If the SIU and the Area Office Social Workers cannot agree on the appropriateness of removal from a foster home, the SIU Program Director and the Area Office Director shall discuss and reach a decision. If the Directors cannot agree, the Regional Administrator shall make the final decision.

**Investigation
Requirements:
Foster Homes**

The SIU Social Work Supervisor (SWS) shall:

- upon receipt from Careline, review the report, assign an Investigator and develop a course of action plan; and
- facilitate a Multiple Reports Protocol Conference with the assigned Area Office staff or child placing agency when a third report has been accepted for investigation involving the same foster family.

The SIU Investigator shall:

- review foster home provider narratives and the licensing study;
- commence the investigation with an announced home visit and within the specified time frame unless there are presenting safety concerns;
- continually assess the safety factors present and complete the SDM Safety Assessment when the investigation involves allegations related to the foster parent's birth or adopted children;
- use intimate partner violence and substance use assessment tools as applicable;
- consult with the appropriate RRG or intimate partner violence consultant if there are issues of mental or medical health, intimate partner violence or substance use;
- complete the investigation within 45 calendar days of acceptance of the report by Careline;
- notify the foster family, FASU and child placing agency of the outcome of the investigation;

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Investigation Requirements: Foster Homes (Continued)

- include, in the DCF-2074, "Investigation Protocol," a section describing any regulatory or program concerns (**Note:** If significant regulatory concerns are present, the SIU Investigator shall notify the FASU or child placing agency prior to disposition); and
- use a trauma-informed approach by taking into consideration any trauma history for the child and family that would inform engaging them and assessing their needs.

FASU staff shall be responsible for notifying all Social Workers with children in the home of the investigation outcome.

Upon completion of the investigation, SIU shall forward a copy of the entire investigation file to the FASU Program Supervisor and child placing agency director.

Investigation Requirements: DCF Employee in His or Her Professional Capacity

For investigations involving a DCF employee as a foster parent or in his or her professional capacity at DCF:

- upon receipt of a report from Careline, the SIU Social Work Supervisor (SWS) shall review the report, assign an investigator and develop a course of action plan;
- the SIU SWS shall notify Human Resources (HR) and offer a representative the opportunity to be present for the alleged victim's interview (if this is not possible within the response time requirements, the SIU Investigator shall provide HR with the results of the interview); and
- in all interviews, the SIU Investigator shall take the lead in asking the questions to minimize any confusion or trauma to a child.

For investigations involving an employee in a DCF facility, the following additional steps shall be taken:

- Careline shall notify the Facility Superintendent; and
 - the Facility Superintendent and Human Resources shall determine whether immediate action should be taken regarding the employee's status during the investigation (*e.g.* administrative leave, desk duty, etc.).
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Investigation Requirements: DCF Employees as Parent, Guardian or Person Entrusted

Upon receipt of a report, Careline shall notify the Director of Human Resources and the Director of the SIU. Human Resources shall contact the Regional Administrator and Area Director to determine whether immediate action should be taken regarding the employee's status during the investigation (*e.g.* administrative leave, desk duty, etc.).

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Investigation Requirements: Upon receipt of a report from Careline, the SIU Social Work Supervisor (SWS) shall:

DCF Employees as Parent, Guardian or Person Entrusted (continued)

- review the report;
- assign an investigator;
- develop a course of action plan; and
- notify Human Resources and offer a representative the opportunity to be present for the alleged victim's interview (if this is not possible within the response time requirements, the SIU Investigator shall provide HR with the results of the interviews).

The SIU Investigator shall:

- review any previous history and case narratives;
- commence the investigation with an announced home visit (unless there are presenting safety factors) within the specified time frame;
- continually assess the safety factors present and complete the SDM Safety Assessment and the intimate partner violence and substance use assessment tools;
- if there are issues pertaining to mental or medical health, intimate partner violence or substance use concerns, consult with the appropriate experts including but not limited to Regional Resource Group staff and the intimate partner violence consultant; and
- consult with the RRG about any trauma-related needs including trauma screening, assessment and treatment.

If there is no imminent danger, the family shall have the opportunity to participate in a Considered Removal Teaming before a decision to remove is made.

If the biological or adopted child of the employee must be removed from the home the SIU Supervisor shall issue an administrative 96 hour hold and notify the Area Office to assign an investigator. The SIU Investigator and the Area Office Investigator shall collaborate to understand the child's trauma-related needs, secure a placement, complete any necessary court work (including the Motion for Order of Temporary Custody) and complete the Investigation Protocol (DCF-2074).

The SIU Investigator shall provide the Area Office Investigator with all key documentation necessary for the investigation and placement and assist the Area Office staff, as needed, including but not limited to providing affidavits to support the filing of the Motion for OTC and attending court appearances. The SIU Investigator shall document all case activity notes leading to the removal on the DCF 274, "Investigation Protocol".

When the SIU Investigator and SWS determine that the case warrants ongoing services, SIU shall arrange for the transfer of the case to the designated Area Office within five working days.

SIU shall notify the Director of Human Resources of the disposition of its investigation, and HR staff shall follow up with the Regional Administrator or Facility Superintendent regarding the disposition of the HR matter, if any. If the allegations against the employee are substantiated, the full report shall be submitted to Human Resources.

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Licensed Facility Investigations

The SIU Investigator shall:

- contact the facility director or designee to notify him or her of the report and assignment and to make arrangements for the initial contact and interviews;
- notify DCF Risk Management and Office of Children and Youth in Placement (OChYP) staff assigned to the facility to share information about any immediate concerns;
- complete criminal and CPS background checks on the alleged perpetrator and review any history found;
- contact the ongoing Social Worker for the child;
- contact the child's parent or legal guardian;
- contact the child's attorney;
- complete all necessary interviews with victims, alleged perpetrator, witnesses and support staff;
- collect and review all incident reports, videos, individual crisis management plans, facility policy and other pertinent information regarding the child and the incident;
- if there are issues pertaining to mental or physical health, trauma history or reactions, intimate partner violence or substance abuse, consult with the appropriate DCF subject matter experts; and
- include a section in the DCF 2074, "Investigation" describing any program concerns ("program concerns" must be checked in the DCF-2074.)

If the report involves alleged sexual abuse in a confinement setting, SIU staff shall follow the DCF policy standards regarding the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) during the investigation.

For facility investigations, the SIU Investigator is not required to complete:

- the SDM, intimate partner violence or substance use assessment tools; or
- the housing, financial, additional information, risk assessment and safety checklist sections in the Investigation Protocol.

Upon completion of the investigation, SIU shall forward a summary report of the investigation findings to the facility superintendent, executive director or designee.

Disposition

Upon completion of an investigation, the Investigator, in consultation with his or her supervisor, shall make a final determination regarding whether each individual allegation is either:

- substantiated (reasonable cause exists to believe that child abuse or neglect has occurred); or
- unsubstantiated (lack of reasonable cause to believe that child abuse or neglect has occurred).

If the allegations are substantiated, the Investigator shall recommend whether or not to place the alleged perpetrator on the DCF Central Registry of Abuse or Neglect based on the sufficiency of the evidence that the person poses a threat to the health, safety and well-being of children.

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**Notification
of
Investigation
Results**

Upon completion of the investigation, SIU shall send the following notifications as they apply:

- DCF-2210-"Notification of Investigations Results"
- DCF-2210 B - "Request for Appeal of Substantiation Finding(s)/ Recommendation for Placement on the Central Registry;" and
- DCF-2210 C - "Notification of Investigation Results (Non- Perpetrator Parent or Guardian).

**Notification
to Other
State
Agencies**

SIU shall notify the Department of Developmental Services (DDS), the Department of Public Health (DPH), the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) or the State Department of Education (SDE) regarding a certified teacher/school employee of the outcome of any investigation which involves employees of, or facilities licensed by, these agencies.
