

## CARELINE AND INTAKE

### Child Protective Investigations

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#### Policy

Following completion of the SDM Careline Assessment Tools, the Careline shall review all accepted child protective services reports for assignment to the appropriate response track.

Child protective services reports which do not meet criteria for the Family Assessment track shall be assigned to the child protective investigations track.

**Cross Reference:** DCF Policy 22-2, "Intake"

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#### Commencement Date

**"Commencement"** of the investigation is defined as the initial face-to-face contact (or attempted face-to-face contact) with the family within the designated response time.

The telephone call prior to the home visit is made as a courtesy to the family and does not mark the commencement of the investigation.

Barriers or an inability to meet the commencement expectations within the designated time frame along with concerted efforts to meet the timeframes shall be documented in the Protocol.

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#### Face-to-Face Contact with Child Victim

The Investigation Social Worker (ISW) shall meet face-to-face with the child(ren) who is identified as the alleged victim in the report at the home or at another site as appropriate, e.g., school or hospital, within the designated response time.

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#### Interviewing the Child Victim

The ISW shall conduct an interview with the alleged victim as follows:

- obtain the consent of a parent, guardian or other caregiver, except when:
    - DCF has reason to believe that the parent or guardian or other person responsible is the perpetrator of the abuse or neglect
    - or
    - seeking such consent would place the child at imminent risk of physical harm
  - concerted efforts should be made to interview children alone and separate from the parent/guardian and/or alleged perpetrator and document when unable to interview child alone
  - coordinate interviews and share information with other professionals who may also need to interview the child in a manner that minimizes the number of interviews regarding the alleged abuse and neglect in which a child must participate to minimize re-traumatization.
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#### **Interviewing the Child Victim (continued)**

Note: If parental consent is not required to conduct an interview of a child, another disinterested adult shall be present unless immediate access is necessary to protect the child from imminent risk of physical harm and a disinterested adult is not available after a reasonable search.

Justification for using or not using a disinterested party, as well as their role/identity, should be documented in the DCF-2047.

Legal reference: Conn. Gen. Stat. §17a-101h.

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#### **Introductory Telephone Call**

Whenever possible and appropriate, the first contact with the parents or other primary caregiver shall be by telephone. The introductory phone call does not meet the commencement expectations. The initial face to face visit, whether announced or unannounced, is expected within the response time.

During the introductory phone call the ISW shall

- introduce him-or herself
  - provide the parent or caregiver with a summary of the report
  - explain the investigations process
  - schedule a home or site visit within the designated response time.
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#### **Timeline for Completion of Investigation**

The investigation shall be completed, as verified by the approval of the DCF-2074, "Investigation Protocol," within thirty-three business days of acceptance of the report at the Careline. Final disposition (transfer or closure) shall be completed within seven calendar days of the approval of the DCF-2074.

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#### **Who Conducts Investigations?**

Investigations of allegations of suspected child abuse or neglect shall be conducted by:

- Investigation Social Workers (ISWs) located in DCF Offices throughout the state when the Offices are open;
- Careline Primary Social Workers or Regional On-call Social Workers who are assigned to respond to reports of abuse and neglect when the Offices are not open; or
- the Special Investigations Unit, in cases outlined in DCF Policy 22-1-1 "Special Investigations Unit"

If an investigation is initiated by Careline or On-call staff, the investigation shall be transferred to the Area Office on the next business day and the commencement time, if met, shall be considered "met" by the Careline or On-call staff. The commencement shall be documented in the DCF-2074.

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**Documentation**

All activity by any DCF employee related to the investigation shall be documented in the computer system within five days of the occurrence.

All activities and information gathered by the ISW that leads to the disposition of the investigation shall be documented in the DCF-2074, "Investigation Protocol."

The DCF-2074 is a running, chronological document, inclusive of activity completed during the assessment. Concerted efforts should be documented in full, with barriers identified for any activity that was not in compliance with policy expectations.

Legal consults and results of MDT meetings should not be captured in the protocol, as these are protected conversations.

Following the narrative section of the protocol, the case decision process should be explained, with supporting evidence for conclusions, including Lovan C. rationale. The "substantiation decision" documentation should be supported by evidence gathered during the assessment including collateral information. The "closing/transfer decision" should be based upon results from the SDM tools, protective factors, and child vulnerability.

For all substantiated investigations, documentation should include the rationale for the Central Registry determination as to whether the identified person:

- poses a risk to the health, safety or well-being of children,
- meets the criteria for intent, severity and chronicity,
- if recommended for placement on the registry, should have this recommendation be disclosable pending the appeal period.

In any investigation, if the perpetrator has been previously placed on the Central Registry, the investigation protocol and computer system should reflect the individual's continued placement on the registry, regardless of the results of the current investigation.

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**Review and Assignment by ISWS**

Upon receipt of a report from Careline, ISWS shall:

- review the report and any information, including case history, that is necessary to begin the investigation
  - assign the report to an ISW in a timeframe that allows for the Social Worker to complete commencement and ensure face to face contact with alleged victims within the designated response time
  - document a case specific SWS assignment note that is informed by any previous contact with the Department, including non-accepted reports. Supervisory notes should also include, as needed, but not be limited to:
    - whether the initial home visit should be announced or unannounced
    - how and when to notify the parents
    - whether to interview the child without the parents' permission
    - how to conduct the interviews.
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#### **Review and Assignment by ISWS (continued)**

**Note:** Response times are assigned by Careline as designated by the Careline Assessment Tool. If the ISWS believes that the response time should be changed based on additional information available in the Area Office, the ISWS shall obtain the approval of a Program Supervisor prior to downgrading the response time. The rationale for the change in response time shall be documented in the computer system.

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#### **Reassignment to Another Area Office or SIU**

If, after the reviewing the report, the ISWS determines that the case is more appropriately investigated by another Area Office or by the DCF Special Investigations Unit, the ISWS shall immediately notify the Program Supervisor.

The Program Supervisor shall immediately contact his or her counterpart in the receiving unit to make arrangements for the case transfer. The Program Supervisor shall ensure that the case is transferred as soon as possible and, ideally, by the end of the day so that the receiving unit can meet the designated response time.

If response time has lapsed or will lapse prior to reassignment, the original office is responsible for commencement within the designated response time.

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#### **Coordination with Law Enforcement**

If not already completed by Careline, the ISW shall notify the appropriate law enforcement agency (using the DCF-737, "Notification to State or Local Police of Suspected Child Sexual Abuse, Severe Physical Abuse or Severe Neglect") within 12 hours of receipt of a report alleging sexual abuse or serious physical abuse including, but not limited to, a report that a child:

- has died
- has been sexually assaulted
- has suffered brain damage or loss or serious impairment of a bodily function or organ
- has been sexually exploited
- has suffered serious non-accidental physical injuries.

**Legal reference:** Conn. Gen. Stat. §17a-101b.

In addition to notifications mandated above, DCF staff shall also notify law enforcement in cases involving, but not limited to:

- assault on a child by a person who is not the child's caregiver
- a child under the age of 12 left unsupervised in a place of public accommodation or in a motor vehicle for a period of time that presents a substantial risk to the child's health or safety (*e.g.*, stores, restaurants, parks, malls)
- serious domestic and intimate partner violence
- human trafficking.

**Cross reference:** DCF Policy 22-1, "Careline."

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**Coordination with Law Enforcement (continued)**

In a case with a companion criminal investigation, interviews of children shall be conducted jointly with law enforcement whenever possible, but the DCF interviews with all parties shall take place within the time frames designated in this policy.

**Legal reference:** Conn. Gen. Stat. 17a-101h.

Law enforcement may also be contacted in cases in which the safety of a person, including the ISW, may be at risk during the field response, including children found to be at imminent risk of harm.

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**Notification to Schools and Child Caring Facilities**

Whenever a report has been received (including non-accepts) alleging abuse or neglect by an **employee of a public or private school** the ISW shall notify the principal or headmaster or other person in charge of such school or the person's designee of the report and the commencement of the investigation, unless such person is the alleged perpetrator of the abuse or neglect, in which case, the ISW shall consult with DCF legal staff to determine to whom the notification should be made.

Whenever a report has been received (including non-accepts) alleging abuse or neglect by an **employee of a facility or institution caring for children** the ISW shall notify the executive director or other person in charge of such institution or facility or the person's designee of the report and the commencement of the investigation, unless such person is the alleged perpetrator of the abuse or neglect, in which case, the ISW shall consult with DCF legal staff to determine to whom the notification should be made.

In the case of a public school, the ISW shall also notify the alleged perpetrator's employing superintendent or their designee.

In the case of a report concerning a school employee, or a person employed by an institution or facility licensed or approved by the State of Connecticut to provide care for children, DCF shall notify the Department of Education or the state agency that issued the license or approval to the institution or facility of the report and the commencement of an investigation.

**Note:** These notifications shall be made regardless of whether the alleged perpetrator committed the acts in his or her professional capacity or personal capacity.

**Legal references:** Conn. Gen. Stat. §§17a-101b(d), 17a-101g(a)

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**Investigations of Child Care Providers**

If not already completed by the Careline staff, the ISW shall notify the Office of Early Childhood if the investigation involves a licensed or unlicensed childcare provider.

The investigation shall be conducted in collaboration with OEC in accordance with the terms of the "Memorandum of Understanding between the Office of Early Childhood and the Department of Children and Families".

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**Gathering Information**

The following steps should be taken prior to engagement (when information is available) and throughout the assessment period to gather information about the child, perpetrator and household members:

- review the report
- call the reporter to discuss additional information
- review current and prior DCF involvement with the family or case participants noting potential trends or patterns in the CPS history and factors that may present risk or impact child safety
- make concerted efforts to obtain CPS and legal history and/or out of state criminal checks when applicable
- determine if there is active DCF involvement with any case participants and, if so, consult and coordinate commencement with the assigned Social Worker.

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**When a new report should be made**

During the course of DCF involvement with a family, new concerns or incidents of abuse and/or neglect may arise, or a disclosure of a prior incident may be made. As mandated reporters, and in consultation with the SWS, the following guidance should be used to determine when a DCF ISW should make a report to Careline

- all new incidents of physical or sexual abuse
- neglect concerns, that demonstrate the intent to harm a child or are of a serious disregard for a child's welfare.

**Note:** Incidents that represent ongoing neglect concerns should be addressed through the active case involvement and communicated to the assigned chain of command.

**Cross Reference:** Mandated Reporter/Failure to Report Policy 22-1-3.

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**Response to Non-Accept Referral**

During an investigation, the Department may be in receipt of a non-accepted referral on the party being investigated. A timely triage meeting shall occur between SWS and ISW to determine the appropriate response to the new information, with consideration of the current engagement and assessment of the family/entity.

The non-accepted referral, triage meeting, and response should be documented within the DCF-2074.

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**Supervision**

The ISWS shall conduct consultation with the ISW and provide guidance regarding the following:

- safety concerns for the child, parents and ISW
- results of the SDM Safety Assessment, including identification of safety factors and interventions, and plan for monitoring
- the generation of a DCF-823, "Notification of Exceptional Circumstances," if applicable

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**Supervision  
(continued)**

- presenting risk factors
- family’s protective factors, capacity and strengths
- child’s vulnerability
- collaterals to be contacted, with releases of information or as otherwise permitted by law, including but not limited to:
  - law enforcement
  - school
  - substitute caregiver or childcare provider
  - pediatrician or other primary care provider
  - mental health providers
  - community service providers, past and present
  - relatives, neighbors or other third parties when evidence indicates they may have information pertinent to the investigation
- whether to seek a consult with an RRG representative or legal staff
- racial, ethnic and/or cultural consideration, immigration status and linguistic needs, including arranging for an interpreter if needed
- non-custodial parent and/or fatherhood engagement
- case disposition.

The ISWS shall:

- document the assignment of the report to an ISW along with supervisory expectations
- conduct and document a minimum of two supervisory conferences during the duration of the investigation
- provide guidance and direction for investigation activities
- document case consultations, assessments, rationale for decisions, response determination, guidance and direction, reviews and assignments in case narratives in the computer system.

**Cross references:** DCF Policy 2-3-2, “Supervision”; 22-1-2 “Notification of Exceptional Circumstances”; 21-3 “Delivery of Services Using a Client’s Preferred Method of Communication”; and 21-6 “Regional Resource Group”.

**Initial Home  
Visit**

When making a home visit, unless a child is at imminent risk of physical harm, the ISW shall enter the home only if:

- a parent or legal guardian is present
- or
- a parent or legal guardian has granted permission **and** another adult is present in the home.

**Note:** If the children are at imminent risk of harm, the ISW shall contact the police for assistance.

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**Initial Home Visit  
(continued)**

During the initial visit, the ISW shall:

- provide the parent or other caregiver with the Parent's Right to Know (PRTK) brochure and request that they sign the acknowledgement as indicated on the PRTK brochure
- provide the parent or other caregiver with the DCF-2236, "Notice of Privacy Practices," and request that they sign a copy as an acknowledgement of receipt
- observe and conduct interviews with the following persons in and out of the home:
  - the parents, including non-custodial parents
  - the legal guardian of the child, if not the parent
  - other household members or other persons that have significant information regarding the allegations and/or wellbeing of the child
  - the child identified in the report
  - any other children in the home

**Note:** Concerted efforts will be made to conduct interviews within 5 days with all children in the home who are not identified as alleged victims in order to assess the children's safety in the home and to address risk factors. The SWS should be consulted regarding any delays in interviewing the children and the concerted efforts should be documented in the DCF-2047.

- inquire about any past or present family or probate court involvement with the family
- assess the safety of the child(ren) using the SDM Safety Assessment tool
- assess for potential risk factors within the family including intimate partner violence, substance use and mental health concerns
- consider the family's race, ethnicity, and/or culture
- consider the family's linguistic preferences/needs
- consider the family's immigration status
- assess the safety and well-being of the children in the home
- assess the physical environment.

The ISW shall discuss the following with the parent(s), non-custodial parent or other caregiver as needed:

- DCF's protective services mandate and the need to assess the safety of the child
- the allegations in the report
- the family's response and feedback to the allegations
- the family's strengths, needs and current supports
- the importance of identifying additional formal and informal supports and resources
- medical and dental care
- referrals to service providers
- the purpose of child and family team meetings
- follow-up appointments and activities
- assessment of protective factors and child vulnerabilities
- other topics relevant to the specific case such as safe sleep and early childhood information.

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**Initial Home Visit**

(Continued)

The ISW shall make concerted efforts to gather the following information:

- name, age and physical and emotional well-being of all children residing in the household
- demographic information necessary to conduct mandatory criminal history and CPS record background checks of the alleged perpetrator, parents, guardians and household members who are age 18 years and older
- necessary releases of information.

If the actions listed above cannot be completed during the initial visit, the ISW shall ensure they are addressed as soon as possible but before the close of the investigation. Any delay or barrier in completing the above should be conferenced with the SWS timely with concerted efforts and plan for resolution documented.

**If Parents Refuse Entry / or Inability to Interview Child**

If the parents refuse entry into the home or refuse to allow the ISW to interview the child who is identified as an alleged victim and there is reasonable cause to suspect that the child is at imminent risk of harm, the ISW shall contact the police and request assistance.

In cases in which imminent risk of harm is not obvious but the parent will not allow the ISW to access the home or refuses to allow the ISW to interview the child who is subject of the report, a legal and/or RRG consultation may be sought at the discretion of the ISWS.

If the alleged victim is whereabouts unknown or not made available by the guardian, for allegations that do not suggest immanency, the ISW shall:

- notify the ISWS and Program Supervisor
- make concerted efforts to schedule such contact as determined in consultation with the ISWS and PS
- document all attempts in the computer system.

If no contact can be made with the alleged victim within five days, a legal and/or RRG consultation may be sought at the discretion of the ISWS.

**Note:** No investigation shall be closed if the child who is the subject of the report has not been seen, unless approved by the Area Office Director. The decision and rationale to close without seeing the child shall be documented in the computer system.

**Frequency of Home Visits**

The frequency of home visits and the required case contacts during the pendency of the investigation shall be determined in supervision taking into consideration:

- case circumstances, including SDM results
- presenting risk factors and safety concerns
- protective capacities
- age and vulnerability of the child
- the child's visibility in the community.

At a minimum, following the initial contact with the family, follow-up visits shall occur at the midpoint of the investigation and prior to the case closing.

**Note:** For cases that remain active beyond 45 days, the frequency of visitation shall be determined in supervision.

The ISWS shall document the visitation expectations and the rationale for the decision in the case narratives.

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**Interviewing the Alleged Perpetrator**

Reasonable efforts shall be made to locate the alleged perpetrator.

The ISW shall interview the alleged perpetrator of the abuse or neglect. While the perpetrator has the right to refuse to participate in the investigation, best efforts shall be made to gain his or her perspective on the allegations.

Should the alleged perpetrator refuse to engage with the Department within the timeframe of the case, the disposition will be based on the information that was obtained during the assessment.

In joint investigations with police, best efforts should be made to coordinate the interview with the alleged perpetrator, however, DCF is required to pursue an interview with the alleged perpetrator prior to case closing.

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**Structured Decision Making (SDM) Safety Assessment**

The ISW shall assess the safety of all the children in the home during the initial and ongoing face-to-face contact with the child(ren) and family, utilizing the SDM Safety Assessment.

The SDM Safety Assessment results shall be documented in the computer system within 5 days of the initial face-to-face contact with the family. The ISWS shall approve the SDM Safety Assessment no later than 5 days after its completion. Program Supervisors are required to approve all unsafe Safety Assessments in the computer system.

**Note:** A new SDM Safety Assessment shall be completed whenever new information becomes available that suggests a change in the child(ren)'s safety status.

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**Structured  
Decision  
Making (SDM)  
Risk  
Assessment**

The ISW shall complete the SDM Risk Assessment tool prior to the end of the investigation to identify potential risk factors that influence future risk of harm. In doing so, supportive services shall be identified and secured to:

- minimize risk factors
- address the needs of the family
- improve family functioning and well-being.

The ISW shall take action as indicated by the assessment.

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**Safety  
Planning**

If safety factors are identified in the SDM Safety Assessment, the ISW shall engage the family and its providers and other resources to help identify strategies and interventions that can be implemented immediately to safeguard the children and mitigate the safety factor(s). The interventions shall be documented in the DCF-2180, "Safety Plan."

Prior to the completion of the Safety Plan, the ISW shall contact the ISWS to review the results of the Safety Assessment and discuss the proposed interventions to ensure the children are safe and protected. When appropriate, the ISWS shall consult with the Program Supervisor prior to the approval of the Safety Plan.

Program Supervisors must be consulted when:

- a CR-CFTM is being held
- children are determined to be unsafe
- Family Arrangements are being considered.

If no interventions are available that can provide appropriate protection for the children, removal shall be actively pursued.

All Safety Plans shall be reviewed and monitored closely to ensure that the planned interventions are effective in mitigating the safety factors and that the parties are following through and cooperating.

Interventions may be modified as necessary to ensure the child's continued safety. Modifications require the development of a new Safety Plan. If the Safety Plan is not effective in mitigating the safety factors, the child shall be considered "unsafe" and a legal consult must be held and the child may be removed from the home.

The rationale for the elements of the Safety Plan and any modifications shall be documented in the computer system.

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#### **Out-of-Home Placement**

If, at any time during the course of the investigation, it is determined that a child is at imminent risk of physical harm from the child's surroundings and that immediate removal from such surroundings is necessary to ensure the child's safety, the Investigations staff (or Ongoing Services staff if the case is already opened for child protective services) shall initiate appropriate legal proceedings.

**Legal reference:** Conn. Gen. Stat. §17a-101g(e).

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#### **Considered Removal Child and Family Team Meeting**

A Considered Removal Child and Family Team Meeting (CR-CFTM) shall be required for all cases in which a child is being considered for immediate removal from his or her home based on the identification of a safety factor (as indicated by the SDM Safety Assessment).

Except in cases of emergency, the CR-CFTM shall be held prior to the child's removal.

If the child is represented by an attorney or guardian ad litem, the child's attorney or guardian ad litem shall be notified in writing not less than five days prior to the date of any meeting in which the department is considering removing the child from the household, except, if immediate removal of a child from his or her household has been authorized.

Cross references: DCF Policy 21-2-1, "Considered Removal: Child and Family Team Meetings;" "Considered Removal (CR-CFTM) Practice Guide."

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#### **Collateral Contacts and Consultation**

The ISW shall:

- make the following collateral contacts, when a release of information is signed or as otherwise permitted by law, as appropriate to the child:
  - school, substitute caregiver or childcare provider
  - pediatrician or other primary care provider
  - mental health provider
  - current and past community service providers
  - relatives, neighbors and other third parties when evidence indicates they may have information pertinent to the investigation
- seek consultation as needed with:
  - the Regional Resource Group
  - the Area Office attorney or Assistant Attorney General
- arrange for a medical evaluation of the child, if appropriate.

If the family declines to sign releases of information, the ISW shall inform the ISWS of the status of the collateral contacts and develop strategies to gather information to help inform the assessment.

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**Child Protective Investigations**

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**Mandatory Background Checks**

The ISW shall conduct a Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP) criminal history records check and a child protective services check on the parents, legal guardians or other caregivers, the alleged perpetrator, and all household members age 18 years and over.

The ISW shall conduct a Protective Order Registry check of the parents and all other persons for whom intimate partner violence is a concern.

The ISW shall include criminal, child protective services and protective order histories as part of the overall assessment of the family.

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**Out-of-State Child Protection Agencies**

If the reported incident of child abuse or neglect occurred out of state, the ISW shall make contact with the out-of-state child protection agency within one working day to make a referral.

If, during the course of the investigation, the family moves out of state, a report shall be made to the appropriate out-of-state child protection agency, if there are any remaining child protection concerns.

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**Substance Use Concerns**

During an investigation, if there are indications of drug or alcohol use or dependency by a:

- household member
- person with caregiving responsibilities
- person who has access to the children in the home

the ISW may request that such adult person(s) undergo a Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) in order to determine if such person(s) is in need of a substance use evaluation or the ISW may make a direct referral to a substance use provider if treatment is indicated.

For youth under 18, the ISW may refer the child to an appropriate substance use treatment program.

In determining whether to refer a person for substance use evaluation and testing, the ISW shall discuss any concerns or questions with the ISWS and, if necessary, with the Regional Resource Group (RRG) Substance Use Specialist.

If the person refuses to participate in voluntary substance use testing and evaluation or does not keep appointments, a legal and/or RRG consultation may be sought at the discretion of the ISWS.

Cross Reference: DCF Policy 21-7, "Substance Use Disorder and Testing" and "Substance Use Practice Guide"

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**Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence**

During an investigation, the ISW shall screen and assess to determine:

- if there are indications that Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) has occurred
- the extent and severity of the violence
- the physical and psychological impact of the IPV on the children, non-offending parent and the alleged offender.

The ISW shall utilize the guidance from the IPV practice guide to assess for safety and risk.

Interviews of non-offending parents and children shall be conducted outside the presence of the alleged offender and shall be arranged in a manner that addresses safety.

The Regional Resource Group (RRG) IPV Specialists (IPVS) shall provide consultation and coordination to improve outcomes for children and families impacted by IPV, in accordance with the RRG Practice Guide.

A legal consult shall be sought at the discretion of the ISW Supervisor if the ISW is unable to assess or the risk to the child cannot be mitigated.

Cross Reference: DCF Policy 21-8, "Intimate Partner Violence" and "Intimate Partner Violence Practice Guide".

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**Screening for Developmental Delays**

In any case in which there is a child age three years or younger who has been substantiated as a victim of abuse or neglect in the household, prior to the completion of the investigation, the ISW shall assist the parent or other caregiver with contacting the Child Development Infoline (CDI) to complete the Ages and Stages Questionnaire for each child age three years or younger.

If a developmental concern has been noted for a child by a parent, pediatrician, childcare providers or the Department through interviews, observation or collateral contacts, CDI will need to be contacted to initiate a Birth to Three referral.

If no developmental concerns have been noted by the parent, child's pediatrician, childcare provider or the Department through interviews, observation or collateral contacts, the Department can assist in connecting the family to CDI to enroll in Help Me Grow, Ages and Stages (ASQ) program for ongoing developmental monitoring.

**Legal reference:** Conn. Gen. Stat. §17a-106(e).

**Cross reference:** Early Childhood Practice Guide for Children Aged Zero to Five".

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#### **Completing the Investigation**

Upon completion of the field response, the ISW shall take the following actions to complete the investigation:

- in consultation with SWS, make a determination as to whether child abuse or neglect, as defined by the Operational Definitions, is substantiated or unsubstantiated
  - if child abuse or neglect is substantiated, identify the person responsible
  - make a preliminary determination as to whether the identified person poses a risk to the health, safety or well-being of children and should be recommended for placement on the Central Registry, and whether the information should be immediately disclosable or non-disclosable pending the appeal period
  - connect the family to needed resources and supports
  - complete the DCF-2074, "Investigation Protocol."
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#### **Completion of an Already Active In Treatment (AAT) Investigation**

If the investigation is on a case that is already open in Ongoing Services, the ISWS and ISW shall collaborate with the Ongoing Services staff; however, the Intake staff shall remain responsible for determining whether the allegation should be substantiated or unsubstantiated.

The Intake and Ongoing Services SWS and Social Workers shall discuss case findings at the conclusion of the investigation.

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#### **Decision to Substantiate or Unsubstantiate**

The ISWS shall approve the determination (final decisions are subject to review and approval of the Commissioner or designee) regarding whether each separate allegation should be substantiated or unsubstantiated and identify each victim and perpetrator for each allegation.

The legal standard for a substantiation is "reasonable cause to believe that abuse or neglect has occurred."

If any allegation is substantiated, the ISWS shall also determine:

- whether the identified person responsible poses a risk to the health, safety or well-being of children and should be recommended for placement on the Central Registry (the determination for registry should be based on the totality of the case history and present circumstances)
  - if the person is recommended for placement on the Central Registry, whether DCF may disclose that the person is on the Central Registry pending exhaustion or waiver of all administrative appeals.
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**Decision to Substantiate or Unsubstantiate (continued)**

**Note:** If a person is recommended for placement on the Central Registry, this should be indicated by selecting "Non-disclosable" in the computer system. Selecting "Disclosable" means the information will be disclosed during the appeal period. "Disclosable" should only be selected for persons recommended for placement on the Central Registry when the abuse or neglect resulted in or involves:

- the death of a child;
- the risk of serious physical injury or emotional harm of a child;
- the serious physical harm of a child;
- the arrest of a person due to abuse or neglect of a child;
- a neglect or termination of parental rights petition filed by DCF, or
- sexual abuse of a child.

**Legal reference:** Conn. Gen. Stat. §17a-101k.

**Cross references:** DCF Policy 22-3 "Operational Definitions of Abuse and Neglect" and 22-4, "Central Registry Placements."

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**Disposition of Investigation**

Cases should be transferred to ongoing services if the SDM Safety Decision indicates "unsafe" or "conditionally safe" regardless of risk level or finding.

The possible dispositions of an investigation as guided by the SDM Risk Assessment are:

**Substantiated**

- transfer the case to a DCF Ongoing Services unit for provision of services; or
- close the case, with or without referral for services to be provided by another state agency or a community service provider.

**Unsubstantiated**

- close the case, with or without a referral for services to be provided by another state agency or a community service provider; or
  - close the case and refer the family to Integrated Family Care and Support (IFCS).
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**Program Supervisor Review Expectations**

Closing-Case Type	SDM Risk Level	Reviewed and Documented By
Unsubstantiated/FAR	Low/Moderate	None
Unsubstantiated/FAR <small>*w/ children 0-5 or developmental disabilities OR 3 accepted referrals in last year/ 5 in total</small>	Moderate*	Intake PS
Unsubstantiated/FAR	High	Intake PS
Substantiated Investigations	All	Intake PS
<b>TRANSFER- CASE TYPE</b>		
<b>TRANSFER TO</b>		<b>REVIEWED AND DOCUMENTED BY</b>
Substantiated Investigations	Ongoing DCF Services	Receiving PS
Unsubstantiated Investigations	ICFS	Intake PS
Unsubstantiated Investigations <small>*Intake PS review/documentation justifying DCF internal transfer rather than ICFS, Approved by OD</small>	Ongoing Services*	Receiving PS

**Integrated Family Care and Support**

Once a decision has been made to not substantiate the allegations, the SWS will consider whether a referral to the Integrated Family Care and Support (IFCS) Program should be initiated.

This service is designed to engage families and connect them to concrete, traditional and non-traditional resources and services in the community, utilizing a Wraparound Family Team Model approach.

**Integrated Family Care and Support: Referral Criteria**

The following referral criteria has been established for the program:

- active investigation with an unsubstantiated finding
- family is willing to accept services through IFCS
- children have been identified as "Safe" according to the most recent SDM Safety Assessment
- all SDM Risk Levels are accepted
- family presents with needs and requires family care coordination to address their needs
- based on the family's level of need and presenting risk factors, they would typically have been transferred to DCF ongoing services if this program was not available
- a Family Arrangement is in effect with no SDM Safety Factors present; in these circumstances, the Area Office Director must approve referral to the program.

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#### **Integrated Family Care and Support: Exclusionary Criteria**

The family is ineligible for this program under the following conditions:

- active Family Assessment Response
- neglect petitions are recommended or have been filed
- SDM Safety Factors have been identified
- family refuses to engage in the program
- case involving a substantiation from this current investigation
- DCF has had no contact with the family and has been unable to investigate the allegations
- a Family Arrangement is being used as part of a Safety Plan.

Note: The Program Supervisor must approve all unsubstantiated cases being transferred to ongoing services.

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#### **Integrated Family Care and Support: Referral Process**

Referrals can be initiated at any time during the investigation as long as a decision has been made regarding the finding and enough information has been gathered to formulate an assessment.

The Universal Referral Form (URF) is completed, including a summary of the investigation, and is forwarded to the Contractor, accompanied by a Release of Information signed by the parents/guardians.

If the family is reluctant to engage in the program, a joint visit can be conducted between IFCS staff and the DCF Investigator to explain the program and encourage the family's participation.

Upon receipt of the referral, the Contractor will notify DCF of the acceptance to the program and availability for the Transition Meeting.

If the Contractor is at capacity, the Contractor will notify the DCF worker of the delay and anticipated timeframe when the Contractor will be able to respond to the referral.

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#### **Integrated Family Care and Support: Transition Meeting**

In order to ensure a smooth transition to the program and prior to DCF closing its case, the Contractor will facilitate a Transition meeting with the family, their supports, and the current DCF Social Worker or Supervisor to exchange information, review the contents of the Investigations Summary, the activities/services underway, and areas in which the family needs further assistance and support.

**Note:** If the current DCF Social Worker or Social Work Supervisor are not available to attend the Transition Meeting, another DCF staff person can attend only if they have worked with the family during the most recent investigation.

If a Transition Meeting has not occurred within two weeks of the referral, the Contractor will conduct the Transition Meeting independently.

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**Integrated Family Care**

The DCF case will remain open until the Transition Meeting occurs.

**and Support: Transition Meeting (continued)**

The Intake Protocol can be approved upon completion of the investigation, but the case assignment should remain open. The DCF Social Worker is responsible for visiting the family, in accordance with policy, until the case is closed.

Efforts will be made to schedule the Transition Meeting within 5 business days of the initial contact with the family by the Contractor.

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**Integrated Family Care**

If a subsequent report is received after the family has transitioned to the IFCS program, the DCF Social Worker will obtain a Release of Information from the parents/guardian to share information, provide updates, and avoid duplication of services.

**and Support: Subsequent Reports**

The outcome of the intake will determine if IFCS will remain involved with the family.

If the investigation is substantiated and/or Neglect petitions are filed or recommended, IFCS will transition the family back to DCF and IFCS will close their case.

Community services that are involved with the family at time of disposition can continue, if appropriate.

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**Transfer to Ongoing Services**

The case transfer process from investigations to ongoing services should be

- completed within 7 calendar days
- coordinated by the sending and receiving Program Supervisors.

During that transition period, visitation, as established per the documented directive of the Investigations Supervisor, shall continue commensurate with the safety/risk concerns of the case. At a minimum, visitation with the children should occur no less than every two weeks and should be documented in the computer system.

Until assignment to a new primary ongoing services worker in the computer system, case management and visitation is the responsibility of the investigator.

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**Case Transfer Process: Case**

A case transfer conference shall be held within five working days for all high-risk cases, as determined by SDM and may be held in any other case when requested by the ISW and ISWS.

**Transfer Conference**

The case transfer conference shall be attended by the:

- ISW
  - ISWS
  - Regional Resource Group (RRG)
  - Ongoing Services SWS
  - Ongoing Services Social Worker, if assigned.
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**Case Transfer Process:** The ISW and newly assigned OGSW shall make concerted efforts to complete a Family Team meeting, inclusive of appropriate DCF resources (RRG), at time of transfer.

**Permanency Teaming:** Family participants shall include but not be limited to the parents and children (as age- and developmentally-appropriate).

Topic to be discussed shall include:

- family strengths and needs
- family composition
- family supports
- racial, ethnic, and/or cultural considerations, immigration status and language preference
- goals and objectives to initiate the Case Plan
- the timing and purpose of first Large Team and future planned meetings.

The ISW shall also invite:

- the family's and child's service providers
- any professional involved in the investigation
- a Regional Resource Group representative, if applicable

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**Joint Home Visits** All cases being transferred to ongoing services shall have a joint home visit with the family, the DCF investigator and the receiving Ongoing Services Social Worker. The purpose of this visit is to ensure the family has a good understanding of the Department's concerns and is fully engaged in the case planning process.

Topics for discussion include the following:

- summary of CPS assessment, including presenting risk and safety concerns
- reason for case transfer
- family supports (formal/informal supports)
- connection to services and status of referrals
- the Family Team Meeting process
- identification and engagement of team members.

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**Case Transfers Between Offices** The Program Supervisor for Intake shall communicate with the appropriate Program Supervisor in another DCF Office when a case must be transferred to the other office. Case transfers between DCF Offices can be effected by the Program Supervisors of the sending and receiving offices upon the completion of the DCF-2074, "Investigation Protocol".

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#### Case Transfers Between Offices (Continued)

The decision to transfer a case to another office shall be based primarily on where the family resides, but transfers may occasionally occur for other reasons approved by the respective Office Directors.

Step	Procedure
1.	The completed and approved DCF-2074, "Investigation Protocol" shall serve as the transfer document.
2.	All case plans due within 30 days shall be completed by the sending office.
3.	All legal requirements, including court work and court social studies, shall be completed by the sending office and all materials shall be immediately filed in the case record.
4.	The Program Supervisor in the sending office shall speak directly with the receiving Program Supervisor prior to transfer to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• alert the receiving Program Supervisor of any potential concerns</li><li>• negotiate any special considerations concerning the case</li><li>• arrange for the transfer of the case within five working days</li></ul>
5.	The sending office shall be responsible for all case activity, including visits, until the transfer process is complete.

#### Notification to Child's Parents/Guardians of Investigation Results

The ISW shall meet with the family face-to-face to inform them of the results of the investigation.

Within five days of the approval of the DCF-2074, the ISWS shall ensure that the child's parents or guardians are notified in writing (in the family's preferred language) of the outcome of the investigation utilizing the DCF-2210, "Notification of Investigation Results," or the DCF-2210C, "Notification of Investigation Results (Non-Perpetrator Parent or Guardian)."

#### Notification to Perpetrator of Investigation Results

Within five days of the approval of the DCF-2074, the ISWS shall ensure that the perpetrator, if one has been identified, is notified in writing (in the person's preferred language) of the investigation outcome by mailing the DCF-2210, "Notification of Investigation Results," to the person's last known address.

The notice shall include the DCF-2210B, "Request for Appeal of Substantiation Finding(s)/Recommendation for Placement on the Central Registry."

#### Notification to Mandated Reporter of Investigation Results

Within five days of the approval of the DCF-2074, the ISWS shall ensure that the mandated reporter, if any, is informed of the outcome by use of the DCF-2122, "Letter to Mandated Reporters."

**Notifications to State and Municipal Agencies**

The ISWS shall ensure that the following state or municipal agencies are notified of substantiated abuse or neglect.

**Sexual abuse or serious physical abuse:**

Notify and provide a copy of the DCF-2074, "Investigation Protocol" to:

- the Chief State's Attorney, or designee, or a state attorney for the Judicial District in which the child resides or in which the abuse or neglect occurred; and
- the appropriate local law enforcement authority.

**Legal reference:** Conn. Gen. Stat. §17a-101j(a).

**Abuse or neglect at an institution or facility that provides care for children and which is subject to licensure by the State of Connecticut:**

Notify the state agency responsible for such licensure of the institution or facility (e.g., Department of Developmental Services) and provide records, whether or not created by DCF, concerning the investigation.

**Legal reference:** Conn. Gen. Stat. §17a-101j(b).

**Abuse or neglect by a childcare provider licensed by the Office of Early Childhood (OEC):**

Notify and provide a copy of the DCF-2074, "Investigation Protocol" and related documents to the OEC Director of Child Care Licensing.

**Legal reference:** Conn. Gen. Stat. §19a-80f.

**School and Facility Notifications**

Within five days of the approval of the DCF-2074 regarding a report that a child has been abused or neglected by

**a public school employee**, DCF shall notify the employing superintendent and the Commissioner of the State Department of Education of the results of such investigation, whether substantiated or unsubstantiated, by providing a copy of the DCF-2074, regardless of whether or not the investigation was employment related. Other records, whether or not created by DCF, concerning the investigation may be provided to the Superintendent and the Commissioner of Education if requested.

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**School and Facility Notifications (continued)**

**School employee**, has the same meaning as provided in Conn. Gen. Stat. 53a-65 which states:

““School employee” means: (A) A teacher, substitute teacher, school administrator, school superintendent, guidance counselor, school counselor, psychologist, social worker, nurse, physician, school paraprofessional or coach employed by a local or regional board of education or a private elementary, middle or high school or working in a public or private elementary, middle or high school; or (B) any other person who, in the performance of his or her duties, has regular contact with students and who provides services to or on behalf of students enrolled in (i) a public elementary, middle or high school, pursuant to a contract with the local or regional board of education, or (ii) a private elementary, middle or high school, pursuant to a contract with the supervisory agent of such private school.”

**Note:** Employees under contract may include bus drivers, janitors, cafeteria workers or other individuals who have routine contact with children in the course of their duties.

- **a private school employee or an employee of a public or private institution or facility caring for children**, DCF shall notify the person’s employer of the results of the investigation, whether substantiated or unsubstantiated, by providing a copy of the DCF-2074, regardless of whether or not the investigation was employment related.
- **a school employee** as defined by Conn. Gen. Stat. 53a-65 **or an employee of a public or private institution or facility** caring for children who is **licensed or certified by a state agency or holds an authorization or permit issued by the State Board of Education**, DCF shall notify the state agency issuing the license or the certificate, including the Department of Motor Vehicles for those licensed to transport children, of the results of the investigation, whether substantiated or unsubstantiated, by providing a copy of the DCF-2074, regardless of whether or not the investigation was employment related.
- a staff member of a **school, facility or institution that provides care for a child that is licensed or approved by the state** DCF shall notify the state agency issuing the license, approval, certificate, authorization or permit, of the results of the investigation, whether substantiated or unsubstantiated, by providing a copy of the DCF-2074, regardless of whether or not the investigation was employment related.

**Legal reference:** Conn. Gen. Stat. §17a-101i.

**Notification  
to Probate  
Court**

The ISWS shall ensure that Probate Court Administration is notified, within five days of the approval of the DCF-2074, of

- any person appointed by the Probate Court as a legal guardian for a child who is substantiated for abuse or neglect of any child (not just the person's ward)
- any member of a legal guardian's (appointed through Probate Court) household who is substantiated for child abuse or neglect.

The DCF-2074 shall be faxed to the Office of the Probate Court Administrator, Attn: Law Department, at 860-231-1055, for distribution to the Probate Court of jurisdiction.

**Legal reference:** Conn Gen. Stat. § 17a-101j(c).

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