

Intake: Child Protective Investigations**22-2-2****Policy**

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) centralized call center, referred to as the Careline, will utilize Structured Decision Making (SDM) tools for all accepted reports alleging abuse or neglect.

All accepted CPS reports that have been designated as a 72-hour response time will be assigned to either a family assessment or investigations response.

Cross Reference: DCF Policy 22-2, DCF Policy 22-2PG

Commencement

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

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

Barriers or an inability to meet the commencement expectations within the designated response time must be discussed in supervision. All concerted efforts that were made to meet the commencement timeframe must be documented in CT-KIND.

Note: Concerted efforts must be made to conduct face-to-face initial interviews with all children in the home within five days of the accepted report to assess child safety and address risk factors. The Social Work Supervisor (SWS) must be consulted regarding any delays in interviewing the children and all concerted efforts shall be documented in CT-KIND.

If no contact can be made with the alleged victim, a legal consultation may be considered.

Continued on next page

Intake: Child Protective Investigations**22-2-2****Gathering Information**

The Child Safety Practice Model provides the foundation for how DCF conducts child welfare intakes, inclusive of an investigation or family assessment response. The collection of information through the framework of the ABCD Paradigm is designed to create a comprehensive assessment of the family that ensures and promotes child safety.

The following steps shall be taken prior to engagement and throughout the assessment period to gather information about the child, perpetrator and household members:

- review the report
- call the reporter to clarify and gather additional information
- review the family's current and prior DCF involvement (including prior legal intervention) and case participants, including non-accepted reports, noting potential trends and patterns and factors that may present risk or impact child safety and/or service delivery.

Following commencement, the ISW shall:

- obtain CPS history, including out of state if applicable
- obtain state criminal checks, including out of state if applicable
- determine if there is active DCF involvement with any case participants (if so, consult and coordinate commencement with the assigned social worker)
- make timely collateral contacts, with releases of information or as otherwise permitted by law, including but not limited to:
 - o law enforcement
 - o judicial
 - o school
 - o substitute caregiver or childcare provider
 - o primary care provider (i.e. pediatrician)
 - o dental provider
 - o mental health providers
 - o community service providers, past and present
 - o relatives, neighbors or other third parties when evidence indicates they may have information pertinent to the investigation

Continued on next page

Intake: Child Protective Investigations**22-2-2****Gathering
Information**
Continued

- seek consultation as needed with:
 - o the Regional Resource Group (RRG)
 - o the Area Office Attorney or Assistant Attorney General
- arrange for medical evaluation and/or forensic interviews of the child, if appropriate.

If the family declines to sign releases of information, strategies shall be developed in supervision to gather information to help inform the assessment.

All household members and individuals with caregiving responsibilities shall be assessed for substance use, mental health and intimate partner violence through interviews, observations and collective information.

The ISW will consult with the RRG as necessary and utilize guidance from the various practice guides, including the utilization of the Child Safety Practice Model Discussion Guides.

Cross Reference: DCF Policy 21-2, ABCD Child Safety Practice Model

**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.

Information gathered from these checks will be addressed with the family and documented in CT-KIND.

Continued on next page

Intake: Child Protective Investigations**22-2-2****Initial
Home Visit**

The ISW shall gather the 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, including asking for government or state issued photo identification.

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.

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.

If there is reasonable cause to suspect the children are at imminent risk of harm and no parent, legal guardian or other adult is present, the ISW shall contact the police for assistance.

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

If the parents refuse entry into the home, refuse to allow the ISW to interview the child who is identified as an alleged victim, or if the family is whereabouts unknown, the ISW shall consult with the Intake Social Work Supervisor (ISWS) for instruction on how to move forward with next steps, including consideration for a legal consult. Continued efforts should be made to engage the family and interview relevant parties to assess child safety.

The ISWS shall consult with the Program Supervisor (PS) if parents refuse to allow DCF access to the children.

No investigation shall be closed if the child who is the subject of the report is not seen unless approved by the area office director. The decision and rationale to close the case without seeing the child shall be documented in CT-KIND by the area office director.

Continued on next page

Intake: Child Protective Investigations**22-2-2****Interview-
ing 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:
 - o DCF has reason to believe that the parent or guardian or other person responsible is the alleged perpetrator of the abuse or neglect or
 - o 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 the child(ren) alone
- if DCF is made aware that any case-identified child may be in another state then contact shall be made with the child protection agency in the identified state to request a well child check
- coordinate interviews and share information with other professionals who may also need to interview the child.

Note: If parental consent is not required to conduct an interview of a child, a 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.

Legal reference: C.G.S. section 17a-101h

**Interview-
ing the
Alleged
Perpetrator**

Reasonable efforts shall be made to locate and interview the alleged perpetrator. Should the alleged perpetrator refuse to engage with DCF within the timeframe of the intake, 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 when possible. DCF is required to pursue an interview with the alleged perpetrator prior to the case closing.

Continued on next page

Intake: Child Protective Investigations**22-2-2****Supervision** The ISWS shall:

- document the assignment of the report to an ISW along with case specific supervisory expectations, taking into consideration the family's prior CPS history
- provide guidance and direction of investigation activities, including prioritization of activities and establishing timeframes for completion
- provide guidance around visitation requirements (frequency and use of announced/unannounced visitation)
- provide safety plan oversight and review
- document case consultations, ABCD Paradigm assessment, rationale for decisions, response time determination, case specific guidance and direction, and safety plan reviews in CT-KIND.
- presenting safety and risk factors through the application of the ABCD Paradigm:
 - adult protective capacities for all household members
 - identifying behaviors that are harmful
 - child vulnerabilities
 - dangerous conditions
- status of intake activities to inform next steps
- ensure all household members and identified victims are seen/interviewed
- feedback from collateral contacts involved with the family
- consultation as appropriate with an RRG representative (regarding educational, mental health, substance use or intimate partner violence) to assess impact on child safety and identify possible treatment interventions
- consultation as needed with legal staff
- racial, ethnic and/or cultural consideration, immigration status and linguistic needs, including arranging for an interpreter if needed
- ensure non-custodial parent is contacted and their household is assessed when appropriate
- service needs/community resources for the family (birth parents/children)
- ensure SDM Assessment Tools (Safety/Risk) are completed timely and accurately
- case disposition.

Continued on next page

Intake: Child Protective Investigations**22-2-2****Supervision**
, 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 PS. The rationale for the change in response time shall be documented in CT-KIND.

Note: A track change to investigations shall occur for all FAR cases with an SDM Safety Assessment decision as conditionally safe or unsafe.

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;
21-6, Regional Resource Group;
21-2, ABCD Child Safety Practice Model

**Frequency
of Home
Visits**

The frequency and nature (announced/unannounced) of home visits and meeting with the required case participants during the active investigation shall be determined in supervision, in consideration of safety concerns, presenting risk, age of children, and the family's prior Child Protective Services (CPS) history.

At a minimum, following the initial contact with the family, follow-up visits shall occur at the midpoint of the investigation and within 14 calendar days of the supervisory approval of the investigation outcome.

Note: Cases in which a safety plan is in effect, including Alternative Caregiver Arrangement (ACA), require increased visitation and attention to ensure the terms of the safety plan are being followed and are appropriate in addressing safety concerns. In these cases, unannounced visitation will be considered.

Note: For cases that remain active beyond 33 business days, the frequency of visitation shall be determined in supervision.

The ISWS shall document the visitation expectations and the rationale for the decision in CT-KIND.

Continued on next page

Intake: Child Protective Investigations**22-2-2****Already
Active
Cases
(AAC)**

All reports that meet the statutory criteria for acceptance on an active case in ongoing services shall be assigned to an intake worker.

Following receipt of the report, a meeting shall be held between intake and ongoing services to discuss the report and coordinate a joint home visit. If a joint visit is not possible, the intake worker will conduct the visit alone to meet the designated response time.

The ISW will conduct the following activities:

- contact the reporter
- conduct interviews of all household members, ensuring that all parents/caregivers, identified victims and alleged perpetrators are interviewed conduct interview with non-custodial parent of victim child(ren)
- conduct new criminal background checks (including out of state if applicable)
- make collateral contacts specific to the allegations in the report
- assess and discuss safe sleep practices with household members and caregivers

All other case responsibilities will be addressed by ongoing services.

The SWS shall document in a supervisory conference note all case directives relative to the intake. The ISW will be responsible for completing the SDM Safety Assessment, ABCD Paradigm Assessment, and document all case activity specific to this report.

No additional visits will be required by the ISW once all interviews are completed and sufficient information is gathered to determine the outcome of the investigation.

If a safety factor is identified, ongoing services will determine next steps, in collaboration with intake. If a safety plan is developed, ongoing services will assume full responsibility for monitoring and modifying the safety plan as needed.

The intake staff will make the determination around the allegation findings (substantiated/unsubstantiated) as well as placement on the central registry.

Continued on next page

ct.gov/dcf

Intake: Child Protective Investigations**22-2-2****Non-Accepted Reports**

For cases active in family services, upon receipt of the notification of a non-accepted report, the assigned SWS shall meet with the assigned social worker to review the report and develop a plan of action to address the issues outlined in the report.

The SW will complete the SDM Safety Assessment if the new information poses safety concerns and there is a need for protective interventions.

All case activity and findings related to the non-accepted report will be documented in the electronic computer system (CT-KIND).

Repeat Accepted Reports

Following the third accepted report of abuse or neglect within a 12 month period on:

- The same child, or
- The child's sibling or any other child residing in the same home;

The investigation shall be conducted by an intake social worker who did not conduct the previous investigations.

Legal reference: Public Act 26-26 section 22

Making a New Report

During DCF involvement, new concerns or incidents of abuse and/or neglect may arise, or a prior incident may be disclosed. As mandated reporters and in consultation with the SWS, the following guidance should be used to determine when a new report should be made to the 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 our current involvement and communicated to the assigned chain of command.

Cross Reference: DCF Policy 22-1-3, Mandated Reporter/Failure to Report

Continued on next page

Intake: Child Protective Investigations**22-2-2****Documentation**

All activities and information gathered that leads to the disposition of the intake shall be documented within 5 days of occurrence in CT-KIND, inclusive of activity completed during the assessment. Efforts shall be documented fully, with barriers identified for any activity that was not in compliance with policy expectations.

Documentation shall include information that supports the application of the ABCD Paradigm.

The closing or transfer decision should be based upon a complete assessment of child safety and risk through the application of the Child Safety Practice Model and SDM Tools.

Structured Decision Making 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 and reduce likelihood of repeat maltreatment
- promote prevention
- address the needs of the family
- improve family functioning and well-being.

Cases designated as high risk shall be recommended for transfer to ongoing services.

Timeline for Completion

The intake deadline for completion is 33 business days of acceptance of the report at the Careline. In extraordinary circumstances, if the 33 business day deadline cannot be met the supervisor shall notify the PS.

Final disposition (transfer or closure) shall be completed within seven calendar days of the supervisory approval and documented in the electronic system.

Continued on next page

Intake: Child Protective Investigations**22-2-2****Completing the Intake**

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

- connect the family to needed resources and supports in the community
- assess need for a Permanency Teaming meeting to ensure continued safety upon case closure
- complete all SDM Tools as required
- document all case activity in the computer system, ensuring all information gathered through the ABCD Paradigm is documented.

In consultation with the SWS the ISW shall:

- assess the need for continued DCF intervention based on safety and risk concerns
- 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, the ISW shall document the following in consultation with the SWS:

- the identity of the person deemed responsible
- a preliminary determination as to whether the identified person poses a risk to the health, safety or well-being of children
- determine whether the identified person should be recommended for placement on the central registry
- determine if the information should be immediately disclosable or non-disclosable pending the appeal period.

Finding Determination

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."

Continued on next page

Intake: Child Protective Investigations**22-2-2****Central Registry**

If any allegation is substantiated, the ISWS shall 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, DCF may disclose that the person is on the Central Registry, pending exhaustion or waiver of all administrative appeals.

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.

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

"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
- sexual abuse of a child.

Continued on next page

Intake: Child Protective Investigations**22-2-2****Central
Registry,
continued**

Documentation should also include supporting evidence/rationale for Lovan C. (physical abuse) and Merriam Factors (sexual abuse) substantiations.

Legal reference: C.G.S. section 17a-101k

Cross reference: DCF Policy 22-3, Operational Definitions of Abuse and Neglect and 22-4, Central Registry Placements, 21-2, ABCD Child Safety Practice Model

**Transfer to
Ongoing
Services**

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

The case transfer process from investigations to ongoing services should be:

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

During that transition period, visitation, as established per the documented directive of the ISW, 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.

**Case
Transfer
Conference**

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.

Continued on next page

Intake: Child Protective Investigations**22-2-2****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, if possible. The purpose of this visit is to ensure the family has a good understanding of the DCF's concerns and is fully engaged in the case planning process.

Program Supervisor Review Expectations

Intake PS are expected to review cases that meet the following criteria:

Type	SDM Risk Level
Substantiated Closings	Moderate-High
Unsubstantiated Closings (including FARs) with a child 0-5 as the identified victim	Moderate - High
Unsubstantiated closings/FARs - 3 accepted reports within the past year or 5 in a lifetime	High

- all closings in which a safety plan was in effect during the investigation process.

When a Child Leaves the State for More than 14 Consecutive Days

When the parent or guardian of a child who is,

the subject of a DCF investigation under protective supervision, receiving protective services, or resides with such a child as described above

the parent or guardian shall provide notification to DCF if the child will be out of the state for a period exceeding 14 consecutive days.

The notification shall be provided to the SW not less than 48 hours prior to the child's departure and include the address of each location where the child will sleep while the child is out of state and the duration of the trip. If the duration of any such trip is extended, the parent or guardian is required to notify DCF as soon as is practicable.

Continued on next page

Intake: Child Protective Investigations**22-2-2****When a Child Leaves the State for More than 14 Consecutive Days,**
continued

If the parent or guardian does not provide notice to DCF, the SW shall attempt to contact the parent, guardian or other family member of the child for 3 consecutive days following the discovery of the child's absence to ascertain the child's location and evaluate the child's safety.

If the child's location is known, the SW shall contact the child welfare or law enforcement agency for the jurisdiction in which the child is located and request that the agency conduct an in-person visit to the child's location for the purpose of evaluating the child's safety. The SW shall then follow up with the child welfare or law enforcement agency for three consecutive days following such request to determine whether a visit was conducted and discuss any findings. If the out-of-state agency notifies the SW that the child is safe, no additional follow-up is necessary.

The SW may discontinue efforts to follow up with the out-of-state agency and meet with the SWS to determine if CT DCF shall conduct an in-person visit to evaluate such child's safety. If an in-person visit is not feasible, the SW may attempt to conduct a visit by means of a video conferencing platform for the purpose of evaluating the child's safety.

The SW shall document all attempts to contact and communicate with any child, parent, guardian, family member, child welfare agency or law enforcement agency in CT-KIND.

Legal reference: Public Act 26-26 section 13

Individuals on Probation or Parole who were Convicted of Certain Crimes Against Children

If a person is on parole or probation for a specific crime against a child pursuant to Public Act 26-26, the parole or probation authority must notify DCF within one week that the person is residing in a home with a minor child. "DCF Form 64, Probation/Parole Notification," shall be used by DOC and JB-CSSD to provide the notice to DCF

Once notified, DCF must check to see if any child living in the home is under protective supervision or receiving protective services. If not, DCF will inform DOC or JB-CSSD that the residents of the home do not have an ongoing services case with DCF.

Continued on next page

Intake: Child Protective Investigations**22-2-2****Individuals
on
Probation
or Parole
who were
Convicted
of Certain
Crimes
Against
Children,
continued**

If an ongoing services case does exist, the following steps shall be taken:

Step	Action
1	Upon receipt of a notification, the assigned SWS shall meet with the assigned SW to review the notification and develop a plan of action.
2	The notification and plan of action shall be documented in the computer system as a supervisory conference note.
3	The SWS and SW shall identify any additional concerns/information presented in the notification to be addressed and document them in the SWS conference note.
4	SW shall contact DOC or JB-CSSD (Parole or Probation) to obtain additional information; determine if there is a concern with the offender residing with minor children, and assess the need, in consultation with the SWS, to consult the PS, AAG, RRG, Nursing or staff attorney.
5	The assigned SW shall conduct a visit no later than one week (consider 7 calendar days) after notification.
6	SW shall meet and interview all household members and conduct a safety assessment. SW shall complete the SDM Safety Assessment if it is determined the new information poses safety concerns and the need for protective interventions. The outcome of the assessment shall be documented CT-KIND.
7	SW shall notify attorney for the child and GAL of notification.

Legal reference: Public Act 26-26 section 23