



NH Department of Health & Human Services
Division for Children, Youth & Families

DCYF Standard Operating Procedure

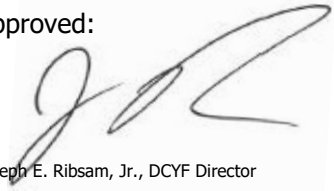
1172.1 PLANNING AND COMMENCING AN ASSESSMENT

Policy Directive: **22-29**

Approved:

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Implements Policy: **1172**


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This SOP defines how Child Protective Service Workers (CPSWs) plan for and commence Assessments of abuse and neglect.

Procedure

The following information is to support the implementation of the above referenced policy. This document shall not preclude staff from using their professional judgement based on individual circumstances, consistent with the requirements of the policy.

- I. Upon receiving an Assessment at the District Office, the assigning Supervisor (or designee) reviews the referral to confirm the response level and assigns a CPSW to conduct the Assessment.
- II. The CPSW reviews the referral and begins to gather information and plan the Assessment. This includes:
 - A. Determining when the Assessment must commence (within precisely 72 hours of the report being accepted for Assessment, including weekends and holidays);
 - B. Identifying the response priority and determining when face-to-face contact with alleged victims must occur (no later than the specified timeframe, precisely from the time the report has been assigned to the District Office In Box, excluding weekends and holidays):
 1. Level I: 24 hours;
 2. Level II: 48 hours; or
 3. Level III: 72 hours;
 - C. Checking Central Registry for all adult household members (of any primary and secondary residence of all alleged victims);
 1. Completion of the Central Registry check is confirmed in the DCYF electronic information system by noting "Central Registry check completed" in the closing screen;
 2. Findings in Central Registry are confidential and are not documented beyond noting they were completed;

- D. Reviewing the DCYF electronic information system for prior CPS and JJS involvement and reviewing all available information to determine its relevance to the current allegations, household composition, and possible safety concerns (for both the family and the CPSW);
 - 1. All available prior Founded, Unfounded, and Unfounded but with Reasonable Concerns reports on the child and family are reviewed as soon as possible to evaluate their significance to the current Assessment;
 - 2. If the need for a more immediate response does not allow for a full review of priors before making contact with the family, the CPSW should, at a minimum and to the best of their ability, review any priors closed as Founded or as Unfounded but with Reasonable Concerns;
- E. Contacting law enforcement where the family resides (or recently resided) to identify any safety concerns or recent involvement with the family relevant to the child's safety, including any recent history of:
 - 1. Domestic violence;
 - 2. Other violence in the home or acts of violence committed by household members;
 - 3. Substance abuse; and
 - 4. Any other contact with law enforcement that may be relevant to the concerns or the CPSW's safety when meeting with the family;
- F. Immediately making verbal notification to law enforcement (to be followed up in writing via Form 1174 within 48 hours) when the child is thought to be the victim of a crime;
- G. Determining if a multidisciplinary team (MDT) approach is warranted;
- H. Contacting the reporter to clarify the concerns and gather additional information as needed, such as the current whereabouts of the child, the immediacy of the concerns, and if the family is aware of the report; and
- I. Identifying circumstances that need to be considered, such as:
 - 1. Need for interpreter services;
 - 2. Individual or family culture/characteristics;
 - 3. Any unique circumstances, such as if a family has previously resided in other states;

4. Domestic violence indicators;
 5. The possibility of human trafficking; or
 6. A need for heightened safety precautions (e.g. weapons, aggressive persons, potentially harmful substances, or aggressive animals in the home) as outlined in policy 1105 Staff Field and Office Safety.
- III. CPSWs consider the information gathered and determine what meaningful action or series of actions (commencement) is necessary to ensure the child is safe and not in danger. This may include, but is not limited to:
- A. Reviewing the allegations to determine if an immediate response is required;
 - B. Contacting the protecting parent/guardian (when danger is indicated) to assess immediate needs and creating a short-term safety plan in accordance with policy 1508 Safety Planning (as necessary);
 - C. Enlisting the support of an objective and protective third-party such as the reporter, relatives, or other professionals who may be able to assist the family in ensuring the immediate safety of the alleged victim until the CPSW is able to meet with the family; or
 - D. Having face-to-face contact with the alleged victim and their caregiver to immediately assess safety.
- IV. If a child cannot be deemed safe for the duration of the timeframe indicated by the assigned priority level (consider weekends and holidays), CPSWs adjust their timeframe to better assess for the child's safety.
- V. In the event the child cannot be located or seen within the required timeframes, the CPSW consults with their Supervisor and creates a plan of action to ensure the child's safety.
- A. If a child reported to be in the home, or known to have previously resided in the home, cannot be located, a plan must include efforts to quickly locate and assess the safety of the child through:
 1. The parent or other caregiver the child is reported to be with; or
 2. Collateral sources such as the child's school, service providers known to be in the home, law enforcement, or the child welfare agency where the child is reported to be living.
 - B. All efforts to meet face-to-face timeframes are documented in the DCYF electronic information system before the end of the next business day.

1. If the attempt to see the child includes going to the place the child is thought to be or having a scheduled appointment, but the child is then not made available, the contact is entered as a "failed attempt."
2. Any other attempt to locate, such as phone calls or written correspondence, is entered under the name of the person communication was with and the type of contact (e.g. telephone).

VI. CPSWs will seek assistance from law enforcement when:

- A. Making a plan to meet with individuals alleged or known to:
 1. Have a history of violent or dangerous behavior;
 2. Be under the influence of drugs or alcohol; or
 3. Have previously threatened the CPSW or other DHHS employees;
- B. Executing a court order to enter a residence or compel a parent to have their child interviewed or seen by a medical professional; or
- C. Removal of the child appears likely.

VII. The CPSW should make the initial contact with the parents/guardians by phone unless an unannounced visit is warranted to ensure safety.

VIII. If a parent refuses access to the home or the child, the CPSW must consult with their Supervisor and staff Attorney to determine if it is appropriate to seek court intervention.

IX. All efforts to commence the Assessment (other than attempts to make face-to-face contact) must be documented in the DCYF electronic information system within the 72-hour timeframe.

Applicable Forms	
Form	Title
1174	Law Enforcement Notification Letter

Glossary and Document Specific Definitions

A - B C - D E - F G - I J - L M - N O - Q R - S T - V W - Z

Document Change Log			
PD	Modification Made	Approved	Date