



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

DCYF Standard Operating Procedure

1172.4 INTERVIEWING PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Policy Directive: **22-52**

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Implements Policy: **1172**

Approved:

Joseph E. Ribsam, Jr., DCYF Director

This SOP defines how CPSWs conduct interviews of parents/guardians for the purpose of investigating allegations of child abuse or 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. CPSWs interview parents/guardians to address the reported concerns and determine the safety and well-being of all children in the home.
 - A. Consideration is given to the safety of all family members when structuring interviews.
 - B. Whenever possible, each parent/guardian should be interviewed separately.
 - C. Non-offending parents/guardians are interviewed to determine their ability to keep the child safe.
 1. Non-custodial parents are also interviewed whenever possible to assess their ability to help ensure their child's safety.
 - D. Parents/guardians alleged to have abused or neglected a child are interviewed to determine if they are responsible for the abuse or neglect and assess parenting strengths and needs.
 1. Parents/guardians alleged to have committed a crime against a child are interviewed in coordination with law enforcement.
- II. The CPSW should, to the best of their ability in the circumstances presented:
 - A. Introduce themselves, explain their reason for meeting with them, and provide Form 1172 Caregiver Guide to Child Protective Services (if not already provided);
 1. Parents/guardians are asked to sign the receipt, which is scanned into the DCYF electronic information system and attached to the inside cover of the Assessment file;
 - B. Conduct interviews in a private space where interruptions are unlikely or minimal;

- C. Interview each parent/guardian alone (unless law enforcement needs to be present);
 - D. Allow the parents/guardians the opportunity to ask questions; and
 - E. Provide the parents/guardians with a sense of what will occur next to the degree it will not place the child(ren) in danger.
 - 1. CPSWs should be careful not to make any promises to the parents/guardians.
- III. If there are concerns for domestic violence (DV):
- A. The optimal interview sequence is:
 - 1. Survivors;
 - 2. Children;
 - 3. Other household members; and then
 - 4. Alleged perpetrators;
 - B. The survivor and abuser should be interviewed separately;
 - 1. If separate interviews cannot be conducted, domestic violence should not be discussed until the CPSW can meet with the survivor separately; and
 - C. DV survivors are provided with information about the DV crisis center, including the telephone number, but not in the presence of the abuser.
- IV. If there is a disclosure of domestic violence, the CPSW asks (when it is safe to do so):
- A. What type(s) of abuse occurs;
 - B. How often the abuse occurs;
 - C. The severity of the abuse; and
 - D. Changes in patterns or abuse.
- V. Interviews with parents/guardians should focus on gathering the following information:
- A. The composition of the household;
 - 1. Names, dates of birth (DOB), race, ethnicity, and any tribal affiliation for all household members;

2. Names and dates of birth of any children who frequently visit the home or reside in the home part-time, including the name and contact information of their caregiver;
 3. Sleeping arrangements for all children in the home, including children who reside in the home on a part-time basis;
- B. Household relationships, including:
1. Parent/child relationships;
 2. Adult relationships; and
 3. Their perception of the child's strengths, needs, behaviors, and role in the family;
- C. Who is responsible for what in the household, including:
1. Discipline (including how children are disciplined);
 2. Care of the children;
 3. Maintaining the household; and
 4. Finances;
- D. The family's daily routine;
- E. Their understanding of why a report was made and the circumstances leading to the report;
- F. The family's strengths;
- G. The family's access to resources and supports;
- H. Stresses affecting the family;
- I. Their account of how the child was injured (as applicable); and
- J. The parent's attitude and willingness to be involved, as well as their ability to protect the child.
- VI. When a CPSW conducts an interview with an alleged perpetrator they should focus on their:
- A. Account of how the child was injured (as applicable);
 - B. Relationship with the child;

- C. Daily routine (and the child's daily routine);
 - D. Perception of the child, the child's behavior, and the child's role in the family;
 - E. Responsibilities for the child (bath time, getting dressed, bedtime routine, etc.); and
 - F. Role in disciplining the child and methods of discipline used.
- VII. CPSWs observe household members to determine their overall physical condition (general appearance, indicators of substance abuse, observable injuries or conditions).
- VIII. Unless otherwise approved by a Supervisor, CPSWs are expected to visit the home to observe the child's overall living conditions, including:
- A. Cleanliness/adequate sanitation (as it pertains to child safety);
 - B. Adequate heat, privacy, and bathroom facilities;
 - C. Observable safety issues such as animal or human waste, exposed wiring, pests, broken glass, etc.;
 - D. Appropriate sleeping arrangements for all children;
 - E. Sufficient access to food and drinkable water;
 - F. The presence of unsecured weapons;
 - G. Indicators of violence in the home (e.g. broken pictures, mirrors, or furniture; or holes in walls);
 - H. Visual signs of substance misuse or dependency, including the presence of any drugs or drug paraphernalia; and
 - I. Interactions between household members (non-verbal communication, body language, equal ability to talk or answer questions, etc.).
- IX. All interviews of parents/guardians are documented in the DCYF electronic information system under the individual's name and the type of contact by the end of the next business day. The contact should include a description of:
- A. Where the interview occurred;
 - B. The parent/guardian's overall presentation (calm, responsive, flat, agitated, etc.);
 - C. Anyone else present during the interview (name, relationship to the child/family, their demeanor during the interview, etc.);
 - D. The salient points of the interview (to create a picture of the information gathered); and

- E. Any follow-up steps planned with the family, including:
 1. Any Safety Plans or Action Plans developed with the family; and
 2. Any scheduled follow-up appointments.

- X. CPSWs continue to engage with parents/guardians throughout the duration of the Assessment in accordance with policy [1173 Engaging Families During An Assessment](#).

Applicable Forms	
Form	Title
1172	Caregiver Guide to Child Protective Services

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