



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

## DCYF Standard Operating Procedure

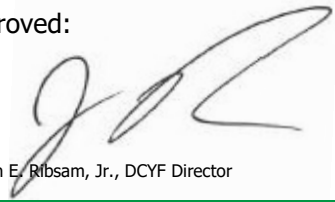
### 1172.5 PROFESSIONAL REPORTERS AND COLLATERALS

Policy Directive: **22-52**

Approved:

Effective Date: **August 2022**

Implements Policy: **1172**

  
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This SOP defines how CPSWs engage Professional Reporters and other collateral sources while 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 engage collaterals in an Assessment who can provide meaningful information to help the CPSW better understand:
  - A. Any concerns for the child's immediate safety:
    1. First-hand observations (e.g. injuries, unsafe or unhealthy behaviors);
    2. Disclosures by the child or others; and
    3. The availability of a protective parent or other protective factors;
  - B. The composition of the household:
    1. Who resides in the home;
    2. Family dynamics/relationships;
    3. How family members interact with each other; and
    4. Parents not residing in the home;
  - C. Family functioning:
    1. The family's strengths and supports;
    2. The family's coping strategies and resiliency factors;
    3. Family and community supports;
    4. Family resources or access to resources; and

5. Patterns of behavior;
- D. The family's needs:
1. Parenting skills (including supervision and discipline);
  2. Substance use;
  3. Mental health needs;
  4. Household relationships (including the presence of domestic violence);
  5. Housing; or
  6. Finances;
- E. The child's overall well-being, including:
1. Physical and mental health (or dental health as applicable);
  2. Education;
  3. Development; and
  4. Connections;
- F. How best to engage the family;
- G. Information about the home environment (cleanliness, sleeping arrangements, and other risk factors); and
- H. Presence of weapons, harmful substances, aggressive animals, or other situations that may be a danger to the CPSW if visiting the home.
- II. Collateral sources may include, but are not limited to:
- A. The reporter;
1. CPSWs are expected to contact all reporters prior to meeting with the family;
  2. If the CPSW is unable to contact the reporter prior to meeting with the family, the CPSW's efforts to do so and the reason contact was not made is documented in the DCYF electronic information system;
- B. Law enforcement;
1. Law enforcement must be contacted immediately/prior to contacting the family whenever there is a possible crime against a child (see [SOP 1172.2](#))

[Report to Law Enforcement](#)) and should be contacted before making face-to-face contact with the family in all other situations;

2. Law enforcement should be asked about any prior service calls to the residence, involvement with the family, criminal convictions, and concerns for substance use, violence, or weapons in the home;
  - C. Community-based services involved with the family;
  - D. School staff (public schools or other public institutions must provide assistance and information to DCYF in accordance with RSA 169-C:34, III);
  - E. Medical, dental, and mental health providers;
  - F. Relatives;
  - G. Friends;
  - H. Neighbors; or
  - I. Landlords (when relevant to the concerns).
- III. CPSWs include parents/guardians in identifying appropriate collaterals when possible and obtain a signed Authorization for Release and Exchange of Confidential Information (Form 1541) and any other releases required (e.g. agency-specific releases).
- A. A release is not required to speak with law enforcement, the reporter, or the child's school.
  - B. When requesting any protected health information, an Authorization for Release of Protected Health Information (Form 1539) must be used.
- IV. CPSWs protect the confidentiality of families while interviewing collaterals and only share information that is necessary for determining the safety of the child.
- V. Upon closing the Assessment, CPSWs notify professional reporters in writing:
- A. That the Assessment is closing;
  - B. Whether or not DCYF will continue to be involved with the family; and
  - C. To contact Central Intake if there are future concerns.
  - D. The date the professional reporter was notified of the closing is documented in the contact log and in the closing screen of the DCYF electronic information system.
- VI. Collateral contacts, and attempts to contact collaterals, are documented in the DCYF electronic information system.

## Applicable Forms

Form	Title
1539	Authorization for Release of Protected Health Information
1541	Authorization for Release and Exchange of Confidential Information

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Q1. Do I need a release to speak with all collaterals?

- A** A release is not needed to inquire about possible abuse or neglect of a child, but many agencies (excluding law enforcement and the child's school) may require one to share information with DCYF.
- A** With the exception of law enforcement investigating allegations of abuse against a child or an attorney representing the child or parents/guardians, a release is needed for DCYF to share information about the child or family beyond the most basic information necessary to assess or ensure the safety of the child.

## 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
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