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I. STATEMENT OF POLICY

It is the policy of the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) that Child Protective Services (CPS) Centralized Intake (CI) is responsible for the intake of all types of reports of child abuse and /or neglect as well as notifications related to substance exposed newborns with no prenatal neglect suspected.

II. PROCEDURES

During the CPS Intake process, most reports will be received by DCFS Centralized Intake. The local office may receive a report when the reporter is unwilling to be referred to centralized Intake.

A. CPS INTAKE PROCESS

1. Centralized Intake Receipt of Reports


Reports of child abuse and neglect are received orally and via the Mandated Reporter Portal by the Centralized Intake Unit per the LA Children's Code, [Article 610](#). Reports involve children:

- living with their families,
- in foster/adoptive homes,
- in restrictive care facilities,
- receiving day care in child day care centers, and
- receiving day care in registered family child day care homes.

[Article 610](#) mandates DCFS to receive reports involving all alleged perpetrators. When DCFS is not responsible to respond to the report, it is referred to the appropriate law enforcement agency. Refer to Child Welfare (CW) Policy [4-400 G](#), Referral of a Reporter, and CW Policy [4-403 C.](#), Caretaker.

2. Local Office Receipt of Reports

Although it is expected that reports be received by Centralized Intake, a local parish office may receive a report when the reporter is unwilling to be routed to Centralized Intake. The local office staff is responsible for conducting the required department data clearances when the report is received in the local office. The intake case is created as soon as possible, but within 24 hours, and must include the data clearance information. Intake reports that are received from medical professionals and law enforcement shall be created in ACESS immediately upon receipt. Refer to CW Policy [4-405 B](#) and CW Policy [4-407 A](#) for Department Data checks. The report is immediately forwarded to the Centralized Intake queue for the intake decisions. When the situation may require an

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immediate response, the CW Form [CPS-3](#) is emailed to the DCFS Centralized Intake Unit Mailbox which is monitored 24 hours.

3. Receipt of Physicians Notification of Substance Exposed Newborn - No Prenatal Neglect Suspected

If a newborn exhibits symptoms of withdrawal or other observable and harmful effects in his physical appearance or functioning that a physician believes is due to the use of a controlled dangerous substance in a lawfully prescribed manner by the mother during pregnancy, it shall be documented on the Physician Notification of Substance Exposed Newborns – No Prenatal Neglect Suspected, CW Form 102. The form shall be completed by the physician and faxed to the Centralized Intake Hotline fax number which is provided on the form.

Upon receipt by CI, the information is entered into the Quality Assurance and Tracking System. The information is used for data reporting purposes only.

If at the time of the report, it is unknown if the newborn's symptoms are related to a legally prescribed drug, the intake would be accepted for investigation. If a call is received and it is identified as a notification, instructions will be given to direct the caller to complete a Physician Notification Form that may be obtained from the DCFS website (www.dcfslouisiana.gov).

B. ACCESS INTAKE CASE


The information from the reporter is documented with notes on the CW Form [CPS-3](#) Intake Notes, or in the ACCESS intake case. When notes or the CW Form CPS-3 are used, they may be destroyed once the information is included in the ACCESS intake case. Reports received in-writing are attached to the intake case.

C. INTERVIEW WITH THE REPORTER

Refer to the CPS DECISION MAKING HANDBOOK, [Section 2, Report Acceptance](#). It includes guidance for intake interviewing skills and eliciting basic report information.


1. Information to Obtain from Reporter

The worker shall obtain as much pertinent information as possible from the reporter. This includes information about the alleged child victim, his condition, his caretaker, his location, when the incident occurred, any immediate safety concern and the reporter's reason to believe the child is abused and/or neglected.

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Children's Code, [Article 610](#), states the report shall contain specific information, if it is known. It includes the following:

- a. The name, address, age, sex, and race of the child and if the child has special needs
- b. The nature, extent, and cause of the child's injuries or endangered condition, including any previous known or suspected abuse or neglect to the victim or his siblings. This includes screening for child sex trafficking as appropriate to the information from the reporter. ASAP – update intake with the gathering of information about child sex trafficking and appropriate notification.
- c. The name and address of the child's parent(s) or other caretaker
 - If the reporter does not know the name and address of the child or the caretaker, he must be able to provide sufficient information to reasonably expect a worker to locate the child victim and the caretaker. If there is a current emergency and the reporter only has an automobile license plate number or a description of an act of abuse/neglect in a public place without additional identifying information, the reporter shall be advised that the information will be referred to law enforcement who have the capacity to respond immediately. The reporter should also be advised that they may also contact law enforcement.
- d. The names and ages of all other members of the child's household
- e. An account of how the child and his situation came to the reporter's attention
- f. Any explanation of the cause of the child's injury or condition given by the child, the caretaker, or any other person
- g. The name of the person or persons who are thought to be the perpetrator or have contributed to the harm or injury to the child
- h. Any additional relevant information about the child, his condition or the situation. This should also include the following:
 - Any safety concerns, what the reporter thinks is necessary to assure the child's safety, any family members and/or others who may be available to protect the child, if necessary, and any mitigating factors currently contributing to the alleged victim's safety (including consideration given to issues of sexual orientation or gender identity expression)
 - Family's attempts to resolve their problems and/or to protect the child from harm
 - Cause of the abuse/neglect, and

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- Family strengths and support systems
- i. The name and address of the reporter
- j. If they have made a previous report involving the alleged child victim or his siblings. If so, ask
 - Number of times they have reported
 - Approximate dates of their reports
 - Person reported
 - Office or Centralized Intake they reported
 - Any outcome of the report of which they are aware, and
 - Any additional relevant information they recall about the report

When it is a report of abuse/neglect in a **residential facility**, the intake worker should ask if the facility is a licensed DCFS, DHH, or Department of Corrections facility. Also ask the type of license (child caring facility, group home, emergency shelter, etc.).

In accordance with the Indian Child Welfare Act, the worker shall ask the reporter the following question: “Do you know if the child or anyone in the family is a member of a tribe or eligible for membership of an Indian Tribe?” The aforementioned question shall be asked at the receipt of every report. The Reporter’s response shall be documented in the comments section of the Intake Client Page in ACESS, respective to each member of the case.

2. Information Collection in * Three ** Areas of Assessment


The intake worker is responsible for an initial assessment of safety in the following areas:

- Extent *** * and Circumstances (Threats of Danger) **
- ***
- Child Functioning * and Vulnerability
- Adult Functioning/Parenting Practices (Caretaker Protective Capacities) **
- ***
- ***

Refer to [Appendix 4-I](#), * Three ** Areas of Assessment for an explanation of each area.

3. Danger to the Worker

The intake worker shall ask about any possible danger to the CPS worker. Inquire about any danger from a person, any animals or the location of the victim. Any information about actual or possible dangers to the worker from a person in the report, the neighborhood, or the home shall be documented in the ACESS intake case.

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4. Special Needs Children

If the alleged victim is reported to be a special needs child, Centralized Intake Staff shall specifically capture and document information obtained from the reporter regarding facts as it relates to the special needs (cerebral palsy, cancer, heart defects, muscular dystrophy, autism, Down syndrome, etc.) of children and those children who are non-verbal. Centralized Intake shall also inquire about resources in the home. This information is to be documented in the reporter section of the intake narrative and the child functioning. If the family has a prior history with the department, this also shall be noted by providing TIPS history on the reporter page.

5. Child Fatality Reports and Possible SIDS


When the report includes information of an unexpected child death, a suspicion of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) or the child was co-sleeping at the time of death, probing questions should be asked. The following are examples:

- What was the condition of the home?
- Who was caring for the child?
- What was the condition of the caretaker(s)?
- Was there any substance use or abuse by the caretaker(s)?
- What was the sleeping arrangement? Was there a baby bed or crib?
- Were there any indications of abuse/neglect?
- Have there been any other child deaths classified as “SIDS” with the parent/caretaker?

Information about a child’s death is not accepted as a report of abuse/neglect unless there are suspicious circumstances and/or an abuse/neglect allegation. When there are no suspicious circumstances at the time of the initial report, the reporter is advised to contact the department if any later evidence indicates abuse/neglect.

6. Possible Animal Abuse or Neglect

If the reporter volunteers there are animals living at the residence, the worker should request information about their care and treatment. Information about abuse/neglect of animals (animal cruelty) is documented in the intake case narrative. It shall be referred to law enforcement or animal control in order to comply with [LA R.S. 14:403.6](#), Reporting of neglect or abuse of animals.

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7. Reports from Elementary Schools as Result of Denial of School Lunches

An elementary school governing authority that adopts a policy of denying a scheduled meal to a child as a result of nonpayment of school lunches is required by [LA R.S. 17:192.1](#) to report the parent's/guardian's failure to pay for lunches to DCFS.

When receiving such reports, the reporter shall be interviewed to determine if there is sufficient information in the child's circumstances and/or current condition that meets the legal definition of child abuse and/or neglect. Specifically the reporter should be asked whether the child is receiving sufficient food while with the parents/caretakers in addition to the information requested from the reporter with all reports.

8. Information to Give All Reporters

The intake worker/supervisor is expected to provide information as needed and answer any questions. They should be thanked for their concern about the child and advised that their call is important in seeking help for the child and his family.

When asked, the worker is expected to explain the intake decision making process. If the reporter asks questions or appears to be confused about the department legal limitations and/or mission, the worker should provide information to assist the reporter to better understand the department's role with families without disclosing specific investigative plans or actions.


It is important that the worker convey to the reporter that it is the department's role to investigate the report and they should not investigate on their own.

9. Information to Mandated Reporters

Mandated reporters shall be advised of their legal responsibility to follow-up their oral report with a written report within five days. The CW Form [CPS-3](#) is a form to assist them with this responsibility and is available on the DCFS website, www.dcfs.louisiana.gov. If they do not have access to the Internet, the form may be sent to them. They may use their own format to send a written report or letter. Refer to CW Policy [4-105](#) C. for the professions that are mandated reporters.

D. ANONYMOUS REPORTERS

The worker shall explain to persons who want to report anonymously the possible need for future department contact to clarify or obtain additional information. He shall also be advised that there are only limited disclosures of the CPS record and DCFS will not identify them to the client as the reporter. The worker shall advise him that state law provides protection from civil or criminal liability for those who report in "good faith."

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If the reporter still cannot be persuaded to give his identity, the intake worker shall carefully review all the information given by the reporter to assure its completeness and accuracy before ending the interview.

E. BAD FAITH OR INTENTIONAL FALSE REPORTS

Some reports of child abuse and/or neglect may be made for reasons other than concern for the welfare or protection of children. Reports of a suspicious nature include in some cases:

1. complaints by estranged or separated spouses who are involved in a custody dispute;
2. reports which contain little factual information;
3. reports in which allegations are worded in a way that cast doubt as to their accuracy, and
4. some anonymous complaints.

If the worker has reason to suspect that a report is for harassment purposes, and is an intentional false report, he should explore the motive of the reporter. If appropriate, he should advise the reporter that any person who makes a report of child abuse, neglect, or sexual abuse knowing that such information is false, may be subject to prosecution and a fine, if convicted. If the reporter indicates that he is reporting what he believes is child abuse and/or neglect, the worker shall complete the intake call. However, if the intake worker continues to suspect the motives of the reporter, he should document on the narrative of the ACCESS intake case that he is concerned that this is possibly an intentional false report and give the reason(s) for the concern.


F. NOTIFICATION OF THE DISPOSITION OF THE REPORT

Reporters shall also be advised that it is the department's policy to provide them with a written notification advising them of one of the following: the information did not meet report acceptance criteria and, therefore, the department will not conduct an investigation, the report was forwarded to law enforcement for their follow-up, or, the report was accepted for an investigation.

Reporters should be advised the following situations are forwarded to law enforcement for follow-up:

1. The child may have been abused or neglected, but there is no involvement of a caretaker either as a perpetrator or as the person allegedly culpable in the abuse/neglect meeting the criteria for which DCFS must respond.

Care should be exercised in assuming that a parent is not involved in the injury or harm in a reported situation when a reporter states that the parent is denying responsibility/culpability. In many situations, the perpetrator will deny any

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responsibility for the child's injuries. It is not the responsibility of the reporter to determine the caretaker's role in the abuse or neglect.

Therefore, staff shall obtain as much information as possible about the possible involvement of the parent. This is particularly important when the alleged perpetrator has a close relationship with the parent.

It is important to obtain the identity of the reporter and a method to contact them when the report is expected to be referred to law enforcement. The reporter should be urged to contact law enforcement directly and advised that DCFS will also be forwarding the report to law enforcement.

2. A child is missing and there is no allegation of abuse or neglect by a caretaker.
3. Reports that do not contain sufficient information to locate the child or the caretaker and the allegation of the report are not abandonment or a safe haven relinquishment.
4. Reports of abuse/neglect in detention facilities.

Reporters should be advised they may also report the situation to law enforcement.


If a reporter does not want to receive a notification regarding the report, the worker shall document his request in the ACESS intake case.

G. REFERRAL OF A REPORTER

If one or more of the elements of a report of child abuse or neglect as per CW Policy [4-403](#), Elements of a Report of Child Abuse and/or Neglect, are obviously not present, the intake worker shall attempt to refer the reporter to an appropriate resource, unless the report involves a crime against a child that DCFS is required by law to receive and forward to law enforcement. The intake information shall be entered into ACESS. Appropriate resources for referral when the situation clearly does not meet the criteria for a report of child abuse/neglect are:

1. Community Resources or Services, ACESS 211 Search

Whenever possible, reporters shall be referred to other DCFS or community resources or services that might be available to assist the child or the family. The Centralized Intake worker will use the ACESS Request for Services tool (211) as needed to refer the reporter to the most appropriate local community resources. Refer to CW Policy [1-1130](#), ACESS Request for Services.

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2. Families In Need of Services (FINS)

Workers shall refer situations that may meet the criteria for a FINS case (truancy, ungovernable and unruly behavior of children) as specified in Children's Code [Article 730](#), but do not include the elements of a report of child abuse/neglect using local office procedures.

3. Local School Boards for Educational Neglect

When educational neglect is the only allegation the intake decision shall be Not Accepted/Referral to Other Agency. Reporters of educational neglect shall be referred to the appropriate local school board. They are charged under Louisiana law with the responsibility through their visiting teachers and supervisors of child welfare and attendance for enforcing the compulsory school attendance laws.

III. FORMS AND INSTRUCTIONS

[CW CPS-2 Form](#)

[CW CPS-3 Form](#) / [Instructions](#)

IV. REFERENCES

La. Children's Code [Article 610](#) and [Article 730](#)

La. Children's Code [Articles 1149-1160](#)

La R.S. [14:403-6](#) and [17:192.1](#)