

14.2, Screening, Priority Response, and Assignment of Child Protective Services Cases	
Application: All Department of Children's Services (DCS) Child Protective Services (CPS), Child Abuse Hotline (CAH), and Special Investigation Unit (SIU) Employees	
Authority: TCA 37-1-401 et seq.; 37-5-105 (3); 37-5-106; 37-5-107; 37-1-601 et seq	Standards: COA: CFS 3.01, 3.02, 3.04, 3.05 & 4.01 ACF-IM-16-05
Original Effective Date: DCS 14.3 10/29/18 Current Effective Date: 10/1/2025	Supersedes: 12/1/2023 Last Review Date: 6/1/25
Glossary: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ <u>Initiated</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The act of contacting or meeting with the victim or family for a face-to-face interview (CPS). ◆ <u>Priority Response</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Priority response is assigned to reports of alleged abuse/neglect to determine the timeframe in which an investigation or assessment is initiated. 	

Policy Statement:

The Child Abuse Hotline (CAH) receives reports of suspected abuse and neglect. These reports are screened to determine the need for a timely investigation, assessment, or resource linkage case within the appropriate jurisdiction.

Purpose:

To ensure reports of abuse and/or neglect are consistently processed for accurate screening decisions, track assignment, and timely response.

Procedures:

A. Screening, Assignment, and Priority Response Timeframes

1. Child Abuse Hotline (CAH) staff will determine if the information reported meets the criteria for abuse and/or neglect, as per [Tenn. Code Ann. § 37-1-403](#), within 24 (twenty-four) hours.
 - a) Review the [Protocol for CPS Categories and Definitions of Abuse/Neglect](#) for information regarding specific allegation types.

2. Reports which meet the criteria for abuse and/or neglect, and the Alleged Child Victim (ACV) resides in Tennessee, are screened-in and assigned to the appropriate program area and county.
3. Reports which do not meet the criteria for abuse and/or neglect are screened out and documented in the Electronic Record System.
4. For reports that involve a child death or preliminary near death, CAH staff will utilize DCS policy [20.28 Child Death and Near-Death Response and Review](#).
5. All screened-in child abuse and/or neglect reports will be assigned a priority response timeframe, which will begin at the intake creation date and time.
6. Priority response timeframes determine the timeframe in which DCS Child Protective Services (CPS) and Special Investigation Unit (SIU) staff **must** complete the first face-to-face contact with all Alleged Child Victims (ACVs) on assigned abuse and/or neglect reports. Priority response timeframes are as follows: Priority-1 (P1) and Priority-2 (P2).
 - a) **Priority-1 (P1):** Face-to-face contact with the ACV will occur within eight (8) hours from the time of intake, or immediately if the CPS supervisor deems it necessary.
 - ◆ The CAH will notify the CPS supervisor of the P1 report by e-mail or phone.
 - b) **Priority-2 (P2):** Face-to-face contact with the ACV will occur within 72 (seventy-two) hours from the time of intake, or sooner if the CPS supervisor deems it necessary.
7. For more information regarding requirements and tasks, review the [Protocol for Screening, Priority Response Timeframes, and Assignment of Child Protective Services Cases](#).

Forms: None

Collateral Documents:

[*Protocol for Screening, Priority Response, and Assignment of Child Protective Services Cases*](#)

[*20.28 Child Death and Near-Death Response and Review*](#)

[*Protocol for CPS Categories and Definitions of Abuse/Neglect*](#)