

14.1 Child Abuse Hotline	
Application: All Department of Children's Services (DCS) Child Protective Services (CPS), Child Abuse Hotline (CAH), and Special Investigations Unit (SIU) Employees	
Authority: TCA 37-1-102; 37-1-401 et Seq; 37-1-601 et. Seq; 37-5-105 (3); 37-5-106; 37-5-107; 37-1-406	Standards: COA: PS-CFS 4.01-4.03; PA-CFS 4.06
Commissioner:	Date:
Original Effective Date: 04/01/01 Current Effective Date: 12/01/23	Supersedes: DCS 14.1 07/11/16 Last Review Date: 12/01/23

Glossary:

- ◆ Caregiver:
 - Any relative or any other person living, visiting or working in the child's home or an employee or volunteer at an educational, recreational, medical, religious, therapeutic or other such setting where children are present, or any person in any caretaking role with children, such as a babysitter. A caregiver may also include any person regardless of familial relationship or household membership who has allegedly used the child directly or indirectly for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation of a minor, such as a trafficker.
- ◆ Report:
 - A report of child abuse or neglect requiring a decision whether or not to initiate a CPS case.
- ◆ Screened-in reports:
 - Alleged child abuse/neglect reports received from the community that meets the established criteria for a CPS case.
- ◆ Screened-out reports:
 - Alleged child abuse/neglect reports received from the community that does not meet the stated criteria for CPS involvement. These reports are maintained by DCS and subsequent CPS intakes include a search of the screened out intakes and reports that were accepted for CPS case assignment.
- ◆ Information Only Calls:
 - Calls received to the CAH to gather information which could include; phone numbers, questions about the reporting process, or general questions.
- ◆ Courtesy Requests:
 - Requests made by other states for interviews of children or adults, home visits, investigative or assessment tasks, or other tasks outlined by a signed border agreement.
- ◆ Commercial Sexual Exploitation of a Minor (CSEM):
 - The use of any person under the age of eighteen (18) as defined in Work Aid 1, Section C: numbers one (1) and two (2)-Child Sexual Abuse- in exchange for anything of value either directly or indirectly.

Policy Statement:

DCS maintains and operates a CAH, available twenty-four (24) hours per day, seven (7) days per week to receive reports of alleged child abuse or neglect.

Purpose:

To operate a statewide CAH to manage information regarding reports of abuse and/or neglect by entering this information on the appropriate screens in TFACTS; screening reports to ensure that concerns of child safety are effectively identified and assigned a priority response and sending the information to the appropriate jurisdiction for investigation or assessment.

Procedures:**A. Receiving Reports at the CAH**

1. Reports of harm may be received by email, mail, web, in person and/or by telephone.
2. CAH staff is scheduled and available to receive such reports and have access to a supervisor at all times.

B. Other Calls/Reports Made to the CAH

CAH staff accepts, documents, and/or redirects calls/reports not related to allegations of child abuse and neglect in Tennessee to the appropriate entity. Calls/reports may include:

- a) Reports of out-of-state abuse and neglect;
- b) Courtesy requests from other states;
- c) Information only calls;
- d) Requests for background checks through the Tennessee Information Enforcement System (TIES) between 8:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. Central Standard Time., weekends and holidays, via email; or
[EI DCS Hotline Supervisor Notification@tn.gov](mailto:EI_DCS_Hotline_Supervisor_Notification@tn.gov)

C. Receiving the Report: Engaging the Reporter

CAH staff engage the reporter in efforts to obtain pertinent information on child safety and well-being (refer to [Work Aid 2: Child Abuse Hotline](#) for more information). CAH staff:

- a) Provide general information to reporters about how the report process operates;
- b) Provide information to the reporter regarding the screening notification process. The reporter may be notified whether the report is screened out or assigned by e-mail, or the Child Abuse Reporting and Tracking (CARAT) website;
- c) Provide information regarding confidentiality; and
- d) Treat callers in a respectful and professional manner.

D. Research of DCS Information and Family History

CAH staff initiates gathering information regarding history of the persons involved to ensure that a comprehensive decision can be made regarding child safety and priority response. Hotline Intake Analyst continue researching history regarding the persons in the intake (Refer to DCS Policy [14.3. Child Protective Services Intake Analyst Responsibilities](#)). Research activities include querying **TFACTS** for the following:

- a) Every known member of the alleged child victim's (ACV's) immediate family/household;
- b) All siblings identified in the report;
- c) The alleged perpetrator; and
- d) Historical information which may include case ID numbers, screen outs, classifications, and dates of incidents.
- e) History searches on death/near death only list information for the last five (5) years on the household members only.

E. Criteria for CPS Involvement

CAH staff gather sufficient information to determine whether the report meets minimal criteria for allegations of abuse or neglect (refer to [Structured Decision Making \(SDM\) Child Abuse/Neglect Intake Assessment Tool](#), [Work Aid 2: Child Abuse Hotline](#), [Work Aid 3: Child Abuse Hotline Tasks and Responsibilities for Referrals Concerning a Child Death and Preliminary Near Death](#) for more information). To be accepted for a CPS investigation or assessment, information from the reporter must meet the following criteria:

Allegation of harm

The allegation of harm must fall into one of the seven (7) categories for abuse and neglect in Tennessee as outlined in [Work Aid 1: CPS Categories and Definitions of Child Abuse/Neglect](#).

1. Locating and Identifying the ACV

- a) An accepted report must contain information as to where to locate and identify the alleged victim, for example:
 - ◆ Name and caregiver's complete address, including street and apartment number and city and state;
 - ◆ Telephone number;
 - ◆ School name;
 - ◆ Childcare center or babysitter's name and address;
 - ◆ Hospital name and contact person; or
 - ◆ Collateral name and contact information.

- b) If the alleged victim cannot be identified and/or located through the information gathered from the reporter the report cannot be assigned.

Relationship Criteria:

2. Sexual Abuse

- a) The report alleges sexual abuse of a child under the age of thirteen (13); or
- b) The report alleges Commercial Sexual Exploitation of a Minor (CSEM) of a child age thirteen (13) through seventeen (17) and meets the caregiver definition; or
- c) The report alleges sexual abuse that occurred prior to the child turning thirteen (13) [this applies only to children still under the age of eighteen (18)]; or
- d) The report alleges sexual abuse of a child age thirteen (13) through seventeen (17) years old whose alleged perpetrator is:
 - ◆ A parent, caregiver, or relative regardless of where the relative lives;
 - ◆ A person(s) living in the home of the child;
 - ◆ An educator, volunteer or employee of an educational/recreational/organizational setting who is responsible for the care of the alleged victim; or
 - ◆ May include an individual who is a household member of an unmarried relative.
 - ◆ An individual providing treatment, care, or supervision for the alleged victim.
- e) Reports alleging sexual abuse when the reporter is unsure about the identity and relationship of an alleged perpetrator are accepted.

3. Other Forms of Abuse and Neglect

- a) The report alleges abuse and/or neglect of a child from birth to under eighteen (18) years of age, at the time of the report (including youth married prior to their eighteenth (18th) birthday), and the alleged perpetrator is a parent, caregiver, relative (regardless of where the relative lives) or person living in the ACV's home; or
- b) The report alleges abuse or neglect to a youth under age nineteen (19) who has been adjudicated delinquent and is in DCS custody; or
- c) The report alleges abuse or neglect to an ACV born alive. DCS does not have authority to investigate allegations against victims who are stillborn. However, if the victim is born alive, DCS has authority to investigate allegations of abuse that occurred while the child was in utero.
- d) If the report alleges physical or sexual abuse or neglect on children ages thirteen (13) through seventeen (17) years old, not in DCS custody, and the alleged perpetrator does not meet the above relationship criteria, the report is referred to law enforcement by the CAH.
- e) All other allegations which do not meet the above criteria are reported to law enforcement. If no abuse or neglect is determined, but there is a service need noted, the case may be submitted to Resource Linkage. Note: For the purposes

of a child in the custody of DCS, a “person living in the child’s home” includes a person living in a residential setting with the child.

Forms: None

[*CS-0557, Detainer Notification*](#)

Collateral Documents:

[*Work Aid 1: CPS Categories and Definitions of Child Abuse/Neglect*](#)

[*Work Aid 2: Child Abuse Hotline*](#)

[*Work Aid 3: Child Abuse Hotline Tasks and Responsibilities for Referrals Concerning a Child Death and Preliminary Near Death*](#)

[*Structured Decision Making \(SDM\) Child Abuse/Neglect Intake Assessment Tool*](#)