

# Child Protective Services: Investigation

---

[⇐⇐BACK](#)

[CONTENTS](#)

[FORWARD⇒⇒](#)

## 2104.16 Initial Interview with the Parent

### Requirement

Have a face-to-face interview with parents and with any other alleged maltreater. This includes all persons (mother, father, step-parent, boyfriend\* or girlfriend,\* etc.) who have primary and secondary caretaking responsibilities in the home.

Summarize the interview with the family and explain what will happen next. Provide the family with the case managers name and telephone number.

\*Any boyfriend or girlfriend (whether living in the home full time or only in the home part time) who was in the home at the time of the alleged maltreatment and/or who has any care taking responsibilities for the child.

### Procedures/Practice Issues

Caretakers include parents living in the home and any other person (secondary caretaker) having major responsibility for the care of a child. Based on available information, decide whether to notify the family in advance of the initial visit.

It is sometimes beneficial to extend parents the courtesy of advance notification of the first visit in situations where:

- The child is already in a protective environment and no other child is likely to be endangered by announcing the visit in advance;
- The parent made the report and requests assistance; or,
- The allegation involves a child care facility or institution.

**Do not** notify the family prior to the initial visit when:

- A child is in imminent danger, or announcement of a visit might place the child in imminent danger;
- There are indications that the family will refuse to cooperate or will take steps to avoid contact with the case manager;
- There are indications that the family might make efforts to distort the facts concerning the allegations and/or exert pressure on the child to recant an original disclosure;

# Child Protective Services: Investigation

---

- The intake data provides insufficient information of the possible effects of an announced visit; or,
- There is neither sufficient time nor means.

Be aware of personal feelings and how they impact the investigation. Feelings must not interfere with:

- Sharing and discussing the reported allegations with the parent;
- Helping the parent to express feelings and to establish a relationship based on mutual trust;
- Offering a direct and non-defensive response to a parent's hostility; and,
- Conveying the departments responsibility in a way that offers a firm response to denial or belligerence.

The initial interview and contacts, which begin the investigation process, are not solely for the purpose of substantiating an incident of maltreatment. **They also help to determine whether children are safe and protected**, to learn the family's perception of the situation, to identify other factors having impact on risk and safety and to determine the need for and timing of services.

Upon arrival at the interview location:

- Identify self by name to the parent and present any official identification;
- Explain the purpose of the visit and describe the investigation process. This includes clarifying to parents their legal rights and responsibilities, the rights of the children and the responsibility of the department to assess reports of alleged maltreatment;
- Describe the nature of the reported maltreatment in a frank, factual and concise manner. **Every allegation** is discussed, and parents are asked to respond to each. If the child has already been seen, the results of this visit are shared;
- Discuss previous history, including any history found from other counties or states;
- Respond to questions about protective services and simply and clearly describe the protective services program, its potential to help, its time limitation and how it may be terminated. Respond to parents in a way that clearly conveys concern for them, for the children and a desire to offer help;

# Child Protective Services: Investigation

---

- Interview all adults separately;
- Interview all children living in the home. Observe children too young to be interviewed; and,
- Encourage family members to react to and express their perceptions of the situation.

Be aware of possible reactions from a parent. These may include:

- An initial attitude of hopelessness, discouragement, bewilderment and/or relief; or,
- An initial response combining cooperation, anxiety, anger, resentment, fear, denial and manipulation.

Complete [Form 455A \(Safety Assessment\)](#) and [Form 455B \(Safety Plan\)](#) at this visit if obvious safety issues are identified (e.g., the need to put dangerous objects out of a child's reach, the need to have the offending parent or caretaker move from the home). This is to make the child conditionally safe while the investigation continues.

Advise the family that all case decisions are jointly made with the immediate supervisor. Arrange additional appointments with the family at this time.