



Iowa Department of DHS Human Services

How-Do-I? Guide CPS Assessment

OUTCOMES:

- Child safety, child and family well-being
- Accurate finding regarding the allegation of abuse or neglect
- Appropriate type, level, and intensity of DHS intervention and services

DECISIONS:

- Child safe or unsafe
- Risk level
- Allegation finding
- Court involvement

CRITERIA:

- Safety factors
- Risk factors
- Age of the child
- Environment
- Circumstances and impact of alleged abuse or neglect incident
- Parent and child capacity

PREPARE FOR CPS ASSESSMENT

Policy	Procedure	Practice Guidance
Review Intake Information Iowa Code section 232.71B	Review intake information and history: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Review the <i>Child Protective Services Intake</i>, form 470-0607. ■ Review information from systems checks (STAR, FACS, IABC, ACAN). ■ Recontact reporter if appropriate. 	Plan when, where, and how the observation of the child will take place. Prior behavior is an indicator of future behavior; therefore, historical information should be reviewed to allow the CPW to complete a thorough assessment.
Case Responsibility Iowa Code section 232.71B	Upon being assigned a case for CPS assessment, consider the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Are there collateral contacts that should be made before you observe and interview the subjects of the report? ■ Is the child named in the report, or any other children under the care of the alleged perpetrator under immediate threat? 	Confidential access to the child victim is sometimes needed when the child's safety or immediate needs warrant it.

WORKER SAFETY

Policy	Procedure	Practice Guidance
CPS Worker Safety	Consider the risk of the situation before making the initial contact with the family: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ History of domestic violence? ■ Location extremely isolated or dangerous? ■ Indication of mental illness, drug abuse or volatile behavior? ■ Firearms or other weapons in the home? ■ Indications to suggest the manufacturing of illegal drugs in the home? 	Careful evaluation of the allegations should be made to address the immediate safety needs of all children and the CPW. Consult with your supervisor on the involvement of law enforcement when any element of risk to worker safety is identified.

CHILD SAFETY

Policy	Procedure	Practice Guidance
<p>Initiate the Assessment</p> <p>Iowa Code section 232.71B</p>	<p>Begin the assessment within the response time frame for observation of the child established during the intake process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ One hour ■ 24 hours ■ 96 hours 	<p>One hour: Immediate threat or high risk to the child's safety.</p> <p>24 hours: Report doesn't involve immediate threat or high risk to the child but person alleged responsible has access to child.</p> <p>96 hours: Report doesn't involve immediate threat or high risk to the child and person alleged responsible does not have access to child.</p>

OBSERVING THE CHILD VICTIM

Policy	Procedure	Practice Guidance
<p>Observing the Child Victim Without Parental Consent</p> <p>Iowa Code sections 232.68, subsection 3, and 232.71B, subsection 6</p>	<p>Determine if confidential access is required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Request the juvenile court to order access to the child if the child's safety is in question at your option. ■ If the court refuses to issue an order, consult with supervisory staff. Supervisory staff may contact program staff or legal staff to determine a course of action. ■ Obtain prior supervisory approval. If no prior supervisory approval, notify supervisor ASAP following access. ■ Make reasonable effort to contact the parent or guardian on the same day that you see the child, except when doing so would endanger the child or others. ■ Document reason for confidential access in the <i>Child Protective Services Assessment Summary</i>, form 470-3240. 	<p>Every child protective assessment case has the potential for unexpected confrontation. A thorough intake and preparation reduces the likelihood of danger, but the child protective worker should always remain alert to possible danger.</p> <p>There are situations when it is necessary to observe or interview children without prior parental consent. Confidential access to the child victim is sometimes needed when the child's safety or immediate needs warrant it.</p>
<p>Observe the Child and the Child's Environment</p>	<p>When you observe a child victim:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Have a witness present. ■ Describe and document all physical injuries. ■ Observe other children who are in the care of the person alleged responsible for the abuse when concerns regarding the protection of these children are identified. 	<p>When observing a child over age four, do not touch the child, remove the child's clothing or convince the child to remove clothing.</p> <p>When observing a child under age four, you may view the child's unclothed body other than genitalia or pubes with the parent's permission.</p>
<p>Observe Other Children in the Home</p>	<p>Observe other children who are in the care of the person alleged responsible for the abuse when concerns regarding the protection of these children are identified.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Other children who are in the same home as the parents when the parents are alleged to be responsible for the abuse ■ Other children in the same facility when the person alleged to be responsible for the abuse works or lives at the facility 	<p>When observing the other children, follow the same timeframes and guidelines used for observing the child named in the report.</p> <p>When the child and parent are at a domestic violence shelter, shelter staff may decline to confirm their presence to you.</p>

Policy	Procedure	Practice Guidance
Observe Children in Domestic Violence Shelter	<p>If shelter care staff refuse to share information, indicate you have reason to believe the parent and child are living at the shelter.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Leave a message for the parent with the shelter care staff. ■ If the parent has not contacted you within one working day, consult your supervisor regarding the need for juvenile court intervention. 	

INITIAL SAFETY ASSESSMENT

Policy	Procedure	Practice Guidance
Safety Assessment	<p>Complete a safety assessment within five business days of intake:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ On the <i>Safety Assessment/Plan</i>, form 470-4132, document: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each safety factor associated with the allegation. • The family functioning domain most closely associated with each identified safety factor. • Actions taken or services initiated to address each identified safety factor. ■ On the <i>Child Protective Services Assessment Summary</i>, form 470-3240, document: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific individuals, behaviors, conditions, and circumstances associated with each identified safety concern. • Brief description of the abuse allegations. • A narrative summary of your observations findings, and determination. ■ Obtain supervisory approval of the safety assessment. 	<p>Immediate steps should be taken at the moment the CPW becomes aware of any safety factor that puts a child in danger of harm.</p> <p>While policy allows up to 5 days to complete the safety assessment, the CPW should always be aware of the 17 safety factors and carefully assess the safety of each child at every contact.</p> <p>The information gathered during the safety assessment process will become the foundation for the <i>Child Protective Services Assessment Summary</i>.</p>
Safety Decision	<p>Choose one of the following three safety decisions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Safe: No safety factors were identified. ■ Conditionally safe: One or more safety factors were identified and the child can be protected by a voluntary safety plan with the parents. ■ Unsafe: One or more safety factors were identified and the child cannot be protected by a voluntary safety plan with the parents. 	<p>Before a decision of “unsafe” is reached, evaluate reasonable efforts to prevent placement. Such consideration should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Family resources, neighbors or individuals in the community. ■ Community agencies or services. ■ Have the alleged perpetrator leave the home. ■ Have the nonabusing caregiver move to a safe environment with the child. <p>When any of the above reasonable efforts are utilized to protect the child, a safety plan must be completed reflecting the conditions and caregiver’s agreement.</p>

Policy	Procedure	Practice Guidance
<p>Child is Conditionally Safe</p>	<p>Complete a safety plan with the primary caretaker responsible for the safety of the child:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Describe what tasks will be done and services provided to address how behaviors, conditions, and circumstances associated with the safety concern will be “controlled.” Indicate what will be done, by whom, how often, and for how long. ■ Indicate how the plan will be monitored. ■ Obtain supervisory approval of safety plan. ■ Obtain family agreement with the safety plan. 	<p>When a child is determined to be conditionally safe, the CPW must create a safety plan to document the actions taken and services provided to ensure child safety.</p> <p>Family involvement in the development of the safety plan is imperative. Family-centered principles support the premise that the greater the family’s participation, the more ownership the family has in successful outcomes.</p> <p>The CPW should take into consideration the family strengths and resources that can be built upon to reach a mutual agreement that reflects the shared goal of keeping the child safe.</p>
<p>Child is Unsafe</p>	<p>If child removal is necessary, notify the supervisor and document the action in the <i>Child Protective Services Assessment Summary</i>, form 470-3240.</p> <p>Consider placement options in the following order:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Voluntary placement with relative or family friend ■ Emergency protective custody actions through law enforcement, physician or court order 	<p>The primary purpose of the assessment is to take action to protect and safeguard the child.</p> <p>A juvenile court order is required if child is placed in foster care.</p>
<p>Juvenile Court Action</p> <p>Iowa Code section 232.71C</p>	<p>When the safety decision indicates juvenile court action is indicated to remove the child or gain parental cooperation, complete forms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>Child Protective Services Assessment Summary</i>. ■ CINA petition within 72 hours if emergency protective custody required. ■ CINA petition if family will not voluntarily accept services and there is a founded assessment and the child is under six. ■ There is a founded assessment and the child is at moderate to high risk. 	<p>The juvenile court is used to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Grant a court order for the emergency protective removal of a child. ■ Grant a court order mandating services when the caregivers do not voluntarily agree to participate in services.

CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS

Policy	Procedure	Practice Guidance
<p>Make Family Contacts</p> <p>Iowa Code sections 232.68, subsection 3, and 232.71B</p>	<p>Complete observation and interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Alleged victim ■ Siblings of the alleged victim and other children under the care of the alleged perpetrator must be seen within the same time frames as the victim child ■ Parents or caregivers alleged to be responsible ■ Parents or caregivers not alleged to be responsible ■ The child's environment <p>Document contacts in the summary of contacts section of the <i>Child Protective Services Assessment Summary</i>, form 470-3240.</p>	<p>The siblings of the alleged victim, as well as other children under the care of the alleged perpetrator, must be interviewed to ensure their safety and to determine whether they have witnessed the alleged abuse.</p> <p>The purpose of interviewing the parent not responsible for the abuse is to determine what he or she knows about the alleged abuse, gather information regarding risk of abuse, and assess the parent's capacity to protect the child.</p> <p>The child's environment must be observed to determine whether it poses a safety risk, as well as, to provide valuable information regarding the allegation (i.e., evidence of drug use, adequacy of food).</p>

MAKING COLLATERAL CONTACTS

Policy	Procedure	Practice Guidance
<p>Make Collateral Contacts</p> <p>Iowa Code section 232.71B</p>	<p>Interview individuals and professionals who are familiar with the child and family and can provide additional information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Collateral contacts identified by the family ■ Neighbors ■ Teachers and day care staff ■ Physicians and other medical professionals ■ Other service providers <p>Document contacts in the summary of contacts section of the <i>Child Protective Services Assessment Summary</i>.</p>	<p>Effective selection and interviewing of collateral contacts is critical to accurate and timely decision-making.</p> <p>While family-identified collateral contacts must be made, the CPS worker should consider additional credible sources of information regarding family functioning, child well being, and historical events as they pertain to child safety.</p>

MAKING AN ALLEGATION FINDING

Policy	Procedure	Practice Guidance
<p>Gather Physical and Documentary Evidence</p> <p>Iowa Code section 232.71B</p>	<p>For all allegation types, gather physical and documentary evidence relevant to the allegations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Talk with caregivers about how their behavior could have caused the abuse. When possible, obtain an admission by the person responsible. ■ Determine if medical evidence exists and obtain medical reports. ■ Determine if there is a criminal history or criminal charges pending. ■ Determine if the child victim was placed in danger of injury or death. 	<p>Documentation of all evidence should be relevant to the allegations in the report. The findings of the assessment will determine continued DHS involvement with a family, voluntarily or involuntarily and, therefore, must be thorough and accurate.</p> <p>Among the many factors the CPW must consider in planning the initial observation of the child, the response time, nature of the allegations, location of the child, and confidential access are critical.</p>

Policy	Procedure	Practice Guidance
<p>Physical Abuse</p> <p>Iowa Code section 232.68(2a) 441 IAC 175.21(232,235A)</p>	<p>Make a finding of physical abuse:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Determine if physical injury has occurred ■ Observe or determine symptoms of abuse ■ Describe injury ■ Obtain photographs of injury ■ Determine if injury was accidental ■ Determine if the injury was the result of discipline 	<p>The rights of caregivers and children must be respected throughout the process of determining whether physical abuse has occurred.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Child four or older: Removal or adjustment of clothing must be voluntary on the child's part. Do not touch the child. ■ Child under four: Removal of clothing permitted except genitalia and pubes. If alleged injury in this area, do not observe without parental consent. ■ Determine developmental age when inspecting children with mental disabilities. ■ Child 10 or older may terminate the interview.
<p>Mental Injury</p> <p>Iowa Code section 232.68(2a)</p>	<p>Make a finding of mental injury:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Gather evidence from a physician or mental health professional ■ Describe observable child behavior that constitutes a substantial impairment 	<p>In order to establish that mental injury has occurred as a result of the actions of caretakers, there must be solid evidence in the form of a diagnosis by a licensed clinical professional as well as clear evidence of substantial impairment of child functioning.</p>
<p>Denial of Critical Care</p> <p>Iowa Code section 232.68(2d) 441 IAC 175.21(232,235A)</p>	<p>Make a finding of denial of critical care:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Determine if family is financially able to provide for child's needs ■ In the event of environmental hazards, obtain photographs 	<p>It is important to separate issues of poverty from neglect when assessing allegations of denial of critical care. When the caregiver is financially unable to provide for the child's needs, the provision of or referral to community resources and services may resolve the situation.</p>
<p>Sexual Abuse</p> <p>Iowa Code section 232.68(2c)</p>	<p>Make a finding of sexual abuse:</p> <p>Closely collaborate with all members of the interdisciplinary team, including law enforcement, and medical.</p>	<p>Sexual abuse is any sexual offense committed to or with a child. Sexual abuse may result from the actions of a caregiver or the omission (failure to protect the child) of a caregiver.</p> <p>If more than one sexual offense has occurred in a single incident, consider the most serious offense. It is not necessary to make multiple determinations from a single offense.</p>
<p>Presence of Illegal Drugs</p> <p>Iowa Code section 232.68(2f)</p>	<p>Make a finding of presence of illegal drugs in a child's body:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Obtain drug screen and medical laboratory reports ■ Talk with caretaker about how child ingested drugs ■ Document evidence (i.e., paraphernalia) and obtain photographs if possible 	<p>When an infant is born drug-exposed, medical laboratory reports are required to confirm this.</p> <p>When an older child has ingested drugs, the focus of the assessment is to determine whether the caregiver was directly or indirectly responsible.</p>

Policy	Procedure	Practice Guidance
<p>Bestiality in the Presence of a Minor</p> <p>Iowa Code section 232.68(2)(h), 2001 Supplement</p>	<p>Make a finding of bestiality in the presence of a minor:</p> <p>Document a description of the sexual activity with an animal that the child engaged in or witnessed.</p>	<p>Bestiality in the presence of a minor may result from the actions of a caregiver or the omission (failure to protect the child) of a caregiver.</p>
<p>Dangerous Substance</p> <p>Iowa Code section 232.2(6)(p), 2001 Supplement</p>	<p>Make a finding of manufacturing or possession of a dangerous substance.</p> <p>Determine whether the caregiver did any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Unlawfully manufactured a dangerous substance, or ■ Knowingly allowed the manufacture of a dangerous substance by another person, or ■ Possessed a product used in the manufacturing of illegal drugs with the intent to manufacture 	<p>Recent years have seen an increase in the in-home production of methamphetamines. The production process is extremely dangerous.</p> <p>The manufacture or possession of the dangerous substance must have occurred in the presence of the child, under circumstances in which there is evidence that the child could see, smell or hear the manufacture or possession.</p>
<p>Child Prostitution</p> <p>Iowa Code section 232.68(2e)</p>	<p>Make a finding of child prostitution:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Describe how the person responsible allowed, permitted or encouraged the child to engage in prostitution ■ Describe how the person responsible enticed or engaged the child into prostitution 	<p>This finding does not require that the child engaged in a sexual act. The caregiver's offer or "allowing, permitting or encouraging" the child's exploitation is sufficient.</p> <p>This finding does not require the exchange of money for a sexual act.</p>
<p>Co-habits With a Registered Sex Offender</p>	<p>Make a finding of co-habits with a registered sex offender:</p> <p>Determine whether the person who is the parent, guardian or person having custody or control over a child or a person who is a member of the household in which a child resides, knowingly co-habits with a person registered or required to register on the Sex Offender Registry.</p>	<p>"Residence" is defined in the law to mean the place where a person sleeps, which may include more than one location, and may be mobile or transitory.</p> <p>Exceptions to this law are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The registered sex offender is a parent of the named victim child, or ■ The registered sex offender is married to the person responsible for the care of the named child victim, or ■ The registered sex offender is a minor residing in the home of their parent, guardian or a person having custody or control over the minor.

Policy	Procedure	Practice Guidance
<p>Placement on Registry</p> <p>Iowa Code section 232.71D</p>	<p>Determine placement on Registry and document on <i>Child Protective Services Assessment Summary</i>, form 470-3240:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Indicate confirmed abuse or neglect in the specific maltreatment area ■ Determine if the confirmed abuse or neglect is lack of supervision, clothing or physical abuse and if endangerment or injury was minor, isolated, and unlikely to reoccur ■ All confirmed abuse or neglect that do not meet an exception are placed on Registry ■ Document placement on Registry decision in the <i>Child Protective Services Assessment Summary</i> 	<p>Placing the name of a person responsible for the abuse on the Registry may affect employment and licensure opportunities for that person if the person wishes to pursue child-caring activities.</p> <p>Individuals whose names have been placed in the Registry have the right to appeal that decision.</p>

ANALYSIS OF SAFETY AND RISK FACTORS

Policy	Procedure	Practice Guidance
<p>Risk Assessment</p>	<p>In the <i>Child Protective Services Assessment Summary</i>, complete the family risk assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Review DHS records, criminal history, and summary of contacts ■ Determine risk score ■ Determine policy overrides ■ Assign risk level ■ Obtain supervisory review 	<p>Risk assessment follows safety assessment as it looks at the likelihood of future abuse. Risk level is used to make decisions about the provision of services to the family based upon the family's strengths, needs, and prior history.</p> <p>Consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Does the caretaker responsible for the abuse accept responsibility, demonstrate remorse, and accept suggested services? ■ Does a caretaker not responsible for the abuse demonstrate willingness and ability to protect the child?
<p>Assessment of Family Strengths and Needs</p>	<p>In the <i>Child Protective Services Assessment Summary</i>, document your assessment of the family's strengths using the family functioning domain criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Child well-being ■ Parental capabilities ■ Family safety ■ Family interactions ■ Home environment 	<p>It is not necessary that all assessments address every item listed in the family functioning domains. Address items that are relevant to the given situation.</p> <p>Where there are no identified concerns, summarize the strengths that support that conclusion.</p>

SERVICE ELIGIBILITY, REFERRALS, AND CASE TRANSFER

Policy	Procedure	Practice Guidance
<p>Service Referral</p> <p>Iowa Code section 232.71B(12) and (13)</p>	<p>Need for services identified by CPW:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Present justification and recommendation for services to supervisor ■ Obtain supervisory approval if required ■ Prepare service referral package for SWCM to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety assessment and safety plan, • <i>Family Risk Assessment</i>, form 470-4133, and • <i>Child Protective Services Assessment Summary</i>, form 470-3240 (if available) 	<p>At any point in the assessment process the CPW can identify and request services to support the child or family and support the safety plan.</p> <p>The justification for and utilization of the service should be reflected in the safety plan and the <i>Child Protective Services Assessment Summary</i>.</p>
<p>Supervisory Review</p>	<p>CPS supervisory review of findings and recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Consult with supervisor throughout the assessment process. ■ Discuss case decision and registry placement based on needs and strengths and service eligibility. ■ Discuss recommendations for services. 	<p>CPS supervisors provide the first level of quality assurance within the system. It is important that supervisors be apprised of case issues, progress, and decisions throughout the assessment process.</p>
<p>Case Disposition</p>	<p>Select the appropriate case disposition from the following choices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Removal from home – transfer to SWCM ■ Open for DHS services – transfer to SWCM ■ Refer to community care – close case ■ Provide information and referral – close case 	<p>The case disposition decision is based upon criteria including the level of risk, age of child, assessment findings, and family's need for services.</p> <p>The Life of the Case – Case History provides the ability to document and retrieve in a concise format the service history provided to the family. Readily available information of previous referrals guides the CPW in making current decisions.</p>
<p>Open DHS Case</p>	<p>Complete the transfer referral packet to be provided to the SWCM:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>Child Protective Services Assessment Summary</i> ■ <i>Safety Assessment/Plan</i>, form 470-4132 ■ <i>Family Risk Assessment</i> ■ <i>Application for All Social Services</i>, 470-0615 ■ Supervisory review ■ Other notes, forms, reports 	<p>Open case for DHS services when the following apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Child is 0 to 6 years old, the allegation is founded, and the risk is low, moderate or high. ■ Child six years old or older, the allegation is founded, and the risk is moderate or high. ■ Other supervisory override.

Policy	Procedure	Practice Guidance
<p>Community Care</p>	<p>When the case is not kept open for DHS services, consider whether the case meets the criteria for community care.</p> <p>Discuss with the family their need for services and describe providers that are able to provide those services.</p> <p>Determine whether the family meets the criteria for community care referral:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Any age child, the allegation is confirmed, and the risk is moderate or high. ■ Any age child, the allegation is unconfirmed, and the risk is moderate or high. ■ Children age six or older, the allegation is founded, and the risk is low. 	<p>If the family meets one of the criteria for community care, consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Does the family need assistance to prevent future incidents of abuse? ■ Does the family need support beyond formal or informal systems? ■ Are the parents willing to be referred to community care services? <p>If you can answer Yes to all three questions, refer to community care.</p>
<p>Information and Referral or Information Only</p>	<p>Confirmed and not confirmed cases may be provided “information only” or “information and referral.”</p> <p>Record “information and referrals” provided to the family as part of the service history section of the Life of Case – History.</p>	

CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

Policy	Procedure	Practice Guidance
<p>CPS Assessment Summary</p> <p>Iowa Code sections 232.71B and 232.71D</p>	<p>In the <i>Child Protective Services Assessment Summary</i>, form 470-3240:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Document your analysis of the safety and risk factors, family strengths and needs, and recommendations for future actions or strategies in working with this family. ■ Show the preponderance of credible evidence that the allegation is true or false. ■ Provide a rationale for the finding. ■ Obtain supervisory review and approval. ■ Indicate assessment finding of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not confirmed • Confirmed, placed on Registry • Founded ■ Note if it is an addendum to previous summary. 	<p>The CPW has 20 days in which to arrive at a finding regarding the allegation and to complete the full assessment.</p> <p>The CPW will determine whether the incident is confirmed, and whether the incident rises to the level of placement in the Registry.</p> <p>The family’s needs and strengths will be assessed and safety and risk factors will be addressed.</p>