

June 27, 2025

**GENERAL LETTER NO. 18-B1-9**

ISSUED BY: Bureau of Child Protective Services  
Division of Family Well-Being and Protection

SUBJECT: Employees' Manual, Title 18, Chapter B(1), **Child Protective Services Assessment**, 2, 107 and 108, 229, revised.

**Summary**

This chapter is revised to reflect that Social Worker 6s in the Central Consult Unit may complete secondary reviews and approve assessment closures in addition to supervisory staff.

**Effective Date**

Immediately.

**Material Superseded**

Remove the following pages from Employees' Manual, Title 18, Chapter B(1), and destroy them:

<b>Page</b>	<b>Date</b>
2, 107 and 108, 229	August 9, 2024

**Additional Information**

Refer questions about this general letter to your service area administrator.

Assessment is an ongoing process and is solution-focused. The worker makes the process transparent to the family, openly sharing information about the process and tools used.

The Iowa Department of Health and Human Services has identified in its “Model of Practice” four critical guiding principles: customer focus, excellence, accountability, and teamwork. The application of these principles to the assessment phase can be seen as follows:

- **Customer focus** is achieved through the engagement of the family in the assessment, recognizing that the family is the most important influence on the child’s safety and healthy development.
- **Excellence** is evidenced by the consistent application of assessment criteria, using nonjudgmental and culturally competent interviewing methods.
- **Accountability** is accomplished through supervisory review required at key decision points, or when applicable, through the oversight of the Social Worker 6 in the Central Consult Unit to make assessment closing decisions. In all cases, family members, reporters, and the court receive notification of the finding of the assessment finding.
- **Teamwork** is evident through handoffs and coordination efforts from the child protection worker (CPW) to the social work case manager (SWCM), the contracted agencies, or other referral agencies. Teamwork is further accomplished by the implementation of family-centered practice principles in the assessment phase.

This chapter includes “high level” statements that summarize the essence of the associated law, rule, and Department-required practice for the assessment phase of a child welfare case. The administrative rule and state law references are linked to the actual state rule or law chapter. In addition, this chapter describes state procedures for carrying out the assessment process for child protective services.

This chapter also includes practice guidance, which provides background information to support the procedures or policy and the clinical or programmatic rationale for the actions that are required during the assessment phase.

Finally, this chapter provides the clinical or programmatic rationale for the actions that are required during the assessment phase of child welfare services.

### **Legal Basis**

- Federal laws related to child welfare services include: Public Law 93-247, the “Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act of 1974”
- Public Law 95-608, 92 Stat. 3069, the “Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978”
- Public Law 98-457, the “Child Abuse Amendments of 1984”
- Public Law 99-401, the “Children’s Justice and Assistance Act of 1986”

Determine if [Protective Disclosure](#) is necessary.

Interview the persons alleged responsible for the abuse. You must provide the person with the opportunity to explain or rebut the allegation of a child abuse report or other allegations made during the assessment.

- At first contact, inform the person alleged responsible of the nature of the allegations in a manner that protects the safety of the child and the confidentiality rights.

**NOTE:** Under no circumstances shall you reveal or insinuate the identity of the reporter to the person alleged responsible.

- The person allegedly responsible for the abuse of a child must be offered an interview. Make the offer of interview to the person's legal representative the Department has received notice of representation.
- The offer of interview or reasonable efforts to make the offer of interview must be documented before a finding can be made that the person is responsible for the abuse unless a court order has been issued that waives the interview requirement.
- The child protective assessment supervisor or designated secondary reviewer in the Central Consult Unit shall not approve the completed report unless all interview requirements has been met. If applicable, a copy of the court order must be uploaded to the File Manager within the STAR Assessment module of Jarvis.

Depending on the allegations, it may be necessary to conduct an interview with the assistance of law enforcement.

- If a person thought to be responsible for the abuse is in custody of law enforcement or corrections, consult with law enforcement and the county attorney before conducting any interviews of that person.
- Be aware of the local protocol with law enforcement for joint investigation roles and responsibilities.

**NOTE:** Law enforcement must provide a "Miranda" warning before you interview a person in custody. Follow locally established procedures for providing the "Miranda" warning. Law enforcement personnel may wish to assist in the interview.

Gather information in order to determine if abuse occurred and determine the risk that this person may present to the alleged victim, other children, or others residing in the household.

Make reasonable efforts to contact the person allegedly responsible for the abuse of the child. Reasonable efforts require making more than one type of effort to identify, locate, and contact the person allegedly responsible for the abuse.

- Document all efforts to contact the person on form [470-3240, Child Protective Services Child Abuse Assessment Summary](#).
- If the person cannot be located or refuses to be interviewed, document this in the *Child Protective Services Child Abuse Assessment Summary*.
- If the person comes forward and requests an interview after the assessment is completed, grant the interview. Then complete an addendum to the assessment summary that contains the information provided and any effects this information has on your previous conclusions or recommendations. See [Abuse Assessment Summary Addendum](#).

If law enforcement requests that Department delay an offer of an interview with the alleged person responsible during a joint investigation (and a court order waiving the requirement is not appropriate), make a finding of whether the abuse has occurred based on the credible preponderance of evidence.

- The person responsible for the abuse must be listed as unknown until the person can be offered an interview. Allow 20 business days for law enforcement to retract or extend the request to delay the offer of interview, and then complete an addendum to the report.
- A court order to waive the interview requirement may be appropriate in some cases, upon consultation with law enforcement and the county attorney.

The supervisor or secondary reviewer in the Central Consult Unit shall not approve a founded or confirmed abuse report that determines a person responsible unless the child protection worker has offered the person alleged responsible an interview or has documented reasonable efforts to interview.

- The report finding must be “not confirmed,” and
- The child protection worker must continue to make reasonable efforts to offer the interview, and
- Issue an addendum within 20 business days documenting reasonable efforts to make an offer of an interview to the person allegedly responsible for the abuse and determining if a change in the finding on the abuse is warranted.

- The identity and interview of collateral contacts, and
- History of confirmed or founded abuse of all subjects)
- Determination regarding the allegations of child abuse
- Juvenile court recommendation
- Criminal court recommendation (including any specific recommendation to the county attorney regarding the initiation of any criminal prosecution, rationale to support that recommendation, reference to any joint assessment with law enforcement, and current status of the criminal investigation)
- Identification and documentation of the foster care prevention strategy for the family and the prevention services identified to meet the foster care prevention strategy

**NOTE:** When parental rights to the child have been terminated but there is child abuse information from before the termination, document this but refer to the parents as “biological parents” rather than referencing them by name.

Upon completion of the assessment all handwritten or unofficial notes must be destroyed. Any tools used in the process (genograms, Ecomaps, photos, collateral reports) must be uploaded to the File Manager within the STAR Assessment module in JARVIS. The assessment process is not considered complete until it has received supervisory review or secondary review by a Social Worker 6 in the Central Consult Unit and final sign-off has been documented.

### **Notification of Outcome of Assessment and Appeal Rights**

Legal reference: Iowa Code Sections 232.71B(12)“g”, 235A.19(1)“a”, 235A.19(2)“a”; 441 IAC Chapters 7 and 175.31(2)

**Policy Statement:** When the assessment report is completed, the subjects shall be notified of the findings of the assessment and their rights to request correction.

- Following a child abuse assessment, the Department shall notify each subject of the results of the child abuse assessment. Any person responsible for the abuse will also be notified of their right to request an appeal and the procedure to do so, if the Department does not correct the data or findings as requested. All subjects, other than the person responsible for the abuse, will be notified of the opportunity to file a motion to intervene in the appeal hearing if one is granted.

**NOTE:** The same notifications are required following the completion of an addendum to a child abuse report.

- Following a family assessment, the Department shall notify the parent or guardian of each child of the completion of the family assessment and any service recommendations. There is no right to a contested case hearing for a family assessment (pursuant to Iowa Code chapter 17A).