

## How-Do-I? Guide: CPS Assessment

Outcomes	Decisions	Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child safety, child and family well-being</li> <li>Accurate finding regarding the allegation of abuse or neglect</li> <li>Appropriate type, level, and intensity of intervention and services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child safe or unsafe</li> <li>Risk level</li> <li>Allegation finding</li> <li>Court involvement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Safety factors</li> <li>Risk factors</li> <li>Age of the child</li> <li>Environment</li> <li>Circumstances and impact of alleged abuse or neglect incident</li> <li>Parent and child capacity</li> </ul>

### Prepare for CPS Assessment

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

## Worker Safety

Policy	Procedure	Practice Guidance
<b>CPS Worker Safety</b>	Consider the risk of the situation before making the initial contact with the family: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ History of domestic violence?</li> <li>■ Location extremely isolated or dangerous?</li> <li>■ Indication of mental illness, drug abuse or volatile behavior?</li> <li>■ Firearms or other weapons in the home?</li> <li>■ Indications to suggest the manufacturing of illegal drugs in the home?</li> </ul>	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
<b>Initiate the Assessment</b>  Iowa Code section 232.71B	Begin the assessment within the response time frame for observation of the child established during the intake process: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ One hour</li> <li>■ 24 hours</li> <li>■ 96 hours</li> <li>■ 72 hours</li> </ul>	One hour: Immediate threat to the child's safety.  24 hours: No immediate threat to the child's safety, but person alleged responsible has access to child.  96 hours: No immediate threat to the child's safety and person alleged responsible does not have access to child.  72 hours: All family assessments.

## Observing the Child Victim

Policy	Procedure	Practice Guidance
<p><b>Observing the Child Victim Without Parental Consent</b></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"> <li>■ Request the juvenile court to order access to the child if the child’s safety is in question at your option.</li> <li>■ 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.</li> <li>■ Obtain prior supervisory approval. If no prior supervisory approval, notify supervisor ASAP following access.</li> <li>■ 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.</li> <li>■ Document reason for confidential access in the <i>Child Protective Services Assessment Summary</i>, form 470-3240.</li> </ul>	<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><b>Observe the Child and the Child’s Environment</b></p>	<p>When you observe a child victim:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Have a witness present.</li> <li>■ Describe and document all physical injuries.</li> <li>■ 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.</li> </ul>	<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><b>Observe Other Children in the Home</b></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"> <li>■ Other children who are in the same home as the parents when the parents are alleged to be responsible for the abuse.</li> <li>■ Other children in the same facility when the person alleged to be responsible for the abuse works or lives at the facility.</li> </ul>	<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>

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<b>Observe Children in Domestic Violence Shelter</b>	<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"> <li>■ Leave a message for the parent with the shelter care staff.</li> <li>■ If the parent has not contacted you within one working day, consult your supervisor regarding the need for juvenile court intervention.</li> </ul>	

## Initial Safety Assessment

Policy	Procedure	Practice Guidance
<b>Safety Assessment</b>	<p>Complete a safety assessment within five business days of intake:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ On the <i>Safety Assessment/Plan</i>, form 470-4132, document: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Factors influencing child vulnerability.</li> <li>• Current danger indicators.</li> <li>• Protective capacities and safety interventions.</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ On the <i>Child Protective Services Child Abuse Assessment Summary</i>, form 470-3240 or <i>Child Protective Services Family Assessment Summary</i>, form 470-5371, document: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific individuals, behaviors, conditions, and circumstances associated with each identified safety concern.</li> <li>• Brief description of the abuse allegations.</li> <li>• A narrative summary of your observations, findings, and determination.</li> <li>• Obtain supervisory approval of the safety assessment.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<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>The CPW should be aware of the elements of evaluating safety and continuously assess the safety of each child at every contact.</p> <p>Use RC-0104, <i>Safety Assessment Guidance</i> for assistance in completing the safety assessment.</p> <p>The information gathered during the safety assessment process will become the foundation for the <i>Child Protective Services Assessment Summary</i>.</p>

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<p><b>Safety Decision</b></p>	<p>Choose one of the following three safety decisions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Safe:</b> No danger indicators were identified.</li> <li>■ <b>Safe with a plan:</b> One or more danger indicators were identified and the child can be protected by a voluntary safety plan with the parents.</li> <li>■ <b>Unsafe:</b> One or more dangers indicators were identified and the child cannot be protected by a voluntary safety plan with the parents.</li> </ul>	<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"> <li>■ Non-custodial parent/relatives support</li> <li>■ Family resources, neighbors, the tribe, or individuals in the community.</li> <li>■ Community agencies or services.</li> <li>■ Have the alleged perpetrator leave the home.</li> <li>■ Have the non-abusing caregiver move to a safe environment with the child.</li> <li>■ Families’ participation in Family Preservation Services.</li> </ul> <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><b>Child is Safe with a plan</b></p>	<p>Complete a safety plan with the primary caretaker responsible for the safety of the child:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 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.</li> <li>■ Indicate how the plan will be monitored.</li> <li>■ Obtain supervisory approval of safety plan.</li> <li>■ Obtain family agreement with the safety plan.</li> </ul> <p>All children must be determined “safe” by the close of the family assessment or the assessment must be reassigned as a child abuse assessment.</p>	<p>When a child is determined to be safe with a plan, 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><b>Child is Unsafe</b></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"> <li>■ Voluntary placement with relative or family friend</li> <li>■ Emergency protective custody actions through law enforcement, physician, or court order</li> </ul> <p>If the case was originally assigned as a family assessment, the incident must be reassigned as a child abuse assessment.</p>	<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>

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<p><b>Juvenile Court Action</b></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"> <li>■ <i>Child Protective Services Child Abuse Assessment Summary.</i></li> <li>■ CINA petition within 72 hours if emergency protective custody required.</li> <li>■ CINA petition if family will not voluntarily accept services and there is a founded assessment and the child is under six.</li> <li>■ There is a founded assessment and the child is at moderate to high risk.</li> </ul>	<p>The juvenile court is used to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Grant a court order for the emergency protective removal of a child.</li> <li>■ Grant a court order mandating services when the caregivers do not voluntarily agree to participate in services.</li> </ul>

## Conducting Interviews

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<p><b>Make Family Contacts</b></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"> <li>■ Alleged victim</li> <li>■ 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</li> <li>■ Parents or caregivers alleged to be responsible</li> <li>■ Parents or caregivers not alleged to be responsible</li> <li>■ The child's environment</li> </ul> <p>Document contacts in the summary of contacts section of the <i>Child Protective Services Child Abuse Assessment Summary</i>, form 470-3240 or <i>Child Protective Services Family Assessment Summary</i>, form 470-5371.</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

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<p><b>Make Collateral Contacts</b></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"> <li>■ Collateral contacts identified by the family</li> <li>■ Neighbors</li> <li>■ Teachers and day care staff</li> <li>■ Physicians and other medical professionals</li> <li>■ Other service providers</li> </ul> <p>Document contacts in the summary of contacts section of the <i>Child Protective Services Child Abuse Assessment Summary</i> form 470-3240 or <i>Child Protective Services Family Assessment Summary</i>, form 470-5371.</p>	<p>Effective selection and interviewing of collateral contacts are 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

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<p><b>Gather Physical and Documentary Evidence</b></p> <p>Iowa Code section 232.71B</p>	<p>For all child abuse assessments, gather physical and documentary evidence relevant to all of the allegations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Talk with caregivers about how their behavior could have caused the abuse. When possible, obtain an admission by the person responsible.</li> <li>■ Determine if medical evidence exists and obtain medical reports.</li> <li>■ Determine if there is a criminal history or criminal charges pending.</li> <li>■ Determine if the child victim was placed in danger of injury or death.</li> </ul>	<p>Documentation of all evidence should be relevant to the allegations in the report. The findings of the assessment will determine continued HHS 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> <p>There are no findings for family assessments.</p>



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<p><b>Physical Abuse</b></p> <p><b>Iowa Code section 232.68(2a)</b></p> <p>441 IAC 175.21(232,235A)</p>	<p>Make a finding of physical abuse:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Determine if physical injury has occurred</li> <li>■ Observe or determine symptoms of abuse</li> <li>■ Describe injury</li> <li>■ Obtain photographs of injury</li> <li>■ Determine if injury was accidental</li> <li>■ Determine if the injury was the result of discipline</li> </ul>	<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"> <li>■ Child four or older: Removal or adjustment of clothing must be voluntary on the child's part. <b>Do not touch the child.</b></li> <li>■ Child under four: Removal of clothing permitted except genitalia and pubes. If alleged injury in this area, do not observe without parental consent.</li> <li>■ Determine developmental age when inspecting children with intellectual disabilities.</li> <li>■ Child 10 or older may terminate the interview.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Mental Injury</b></p> <p>Iowa Code section 232.68(2a)</p>	<p>Make a finding of mental injury:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Gather evidence from a physician or mental health professional</li> <li>■ Describe observable child behavior that constitutes a substantial impairment</li> </ul>	<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>

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<p><b>Denial of Critical Care</b></p> <p><b>Iowa Code section 232.68(2d)</b></p> <p>441 IAC 175.21(232,235A)</p>	<p>Make a finding of denial of critical care if the neglect occurred within 5 years of the intake date:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Determine if family is financially able to provide for child's needs</li> <li>■ In the event of environmental hazards, obtain photographs</li> </ul>	<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><b>Sexual Abuse</b></p> <p>Iowa Code section 232.68(2c)</p>	<p>Make a finding of sexual abuse:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Closely collaborate with all members of the interdisciplinary team, including law enforcement, and medical.</li> </ul>	<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><b>Presence of Illegal Drugs</b></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"> <li>■ Obtain drug screen and medical laboratory reports</li> <li>■ Talk with caretaker about how child ingested drugs</li> <li>■ Document evidence (i.e., paraphernalia) and obtain photographs if possible</li> </ul>	<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>

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<p><b>Bestiality in the Presence of a Minor</b></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> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Document a description of the sexual activity with an animal that the child engaged in or witnessed</li> </ul>	<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><b>Dangerous Substance</b></p> <p>Iowa Code section 232.2(6)(p), 2001 Supplement</p>	<p>Make a finding of dangerous substance.</p> <p>Determine whether the caregiver did any of the following within five years of the intake date:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ In the presence of a child: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ unlawfully used, possessed, manufactured, cultivated, or distributed a dangerous substance, or</li> <li>○ Knowingly allowed such use, possession, manufacture, cultivation, or distribution of a dangerous substance by another person, or</li> <li>○ Possessed a product with the intent to use the product as a precursor or an intermediary to a dangerous substance.</li> <li>○ Unlawfully uses, possesses, manufactures, cultivates, or distributes a dangerous substance in a child's home, on the premises, or in a motor vehicle located on the premises</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Dangerous substance includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Amphetamine</li> <li>■ Methamphetamine</li> <li>■ Any chemical/combination of chemical that poses a reasonable risk of explosion, fire, or other danger</li> <li>■ Cocaine</li> <li>■ Heroin</li> <li>■ Opium</li> </ul> <p>“In the presence of a child” means in the physical presence of a child or occurring under other circumstances in which a reasonably prudent person would know that the use, possession, manufacture, cultivation, or distribution of a dangerous substance may be seen, smelled, ingested, or heard by a child.</p>

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<p><b>Prostitution of a Child</b></p> <p>Iowa Code section 232.68(2e)</p>	<p>Make a finding of prostitution of a child:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Describe how the person responsible allowed, permitted or encouraged the child to engage in prostitution</li> <li>■ Describe how the person responsible enticed or engaged the child into prostitution</li> </ul>	<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><b>Allows Access by a Registered Sex Offender</b></p>	<p>Make a finding of allows access by a registered sex offender:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 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 allowed access a person registered or required to register on the Sex Offender Registry</li> </ul>	<p>Exceptions to this law are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The registered sex offender is a parent or guardian of the named victim child, or</li> <li>■ The registered sex offender is married to and living with the person responsible for the care of the named child victim, or</li> <li>■ The registered sex offender is a minor residing in the home of their parent, guardian, or foster parent.</li> </ul>

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<p><b>Allows Access to Obscene Material</b></p>	<p>Make a finding of allows access to obscene material:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Describe how the person responsible knowingly allowed child access to obscene material or knowingly exhibits or disseminates obscene material to the child</li> </ul>	<p>“Obscene material” means any material which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Depicts or describe the genitals, sex acts, masturbation, excretory functions or sadomasochistic abuse;</li> <li>■ The average person, taking the material as a whole and applying contemporary community standards with respect to what is suitable material for minors, would find appeals to the prurient interest and is patently offensive; and</li> <li>■ Taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, scientific, political or artistic value</li> </ul>
<p><b>Child Sex Trafficking</b></p>	<p>Make a finding of child sex trafficking:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>Determine whether any person engaged in the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting of a child for the purpose of commercial sexual activity.</i></li> </ul>	<p>Use RC-0141, <i>Child Trafficking Indicators</i> to identify trafficking victims or potential trafficking victims.</p> <p>Any person who engages in child sex trafficking is a person responsible for child abuse.</p>