



**Administrative Policies and Procedures: 14.1**

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Central Intake</b>
<b>Authority:</b>	TCA 37-1-102; 37-1-401 et Seq; 37-1-601 et. Seq; 37-5-105; 37-5-106; 37-5-107
<b>Standards:</b>	<b>DCS Practice Model Standards:</b> 5-100; 5-101; 11-100; 11-101; 11-102; 11-103; 11-200; 11-300A; 11-301A; 11-302A; 11-309A; <b>COA:</b> CPS 4.03; 5.02
<b>Application:</b>	All Department of Children's Services Child Protective Services, Central Intake, and Including Special Investigations Unit Employees

**Policy Statement:**

DCS will maintain and operate a Central Intake Call Center, available twenty-four (24) hours per day, seven (7) days per week to receive reports alleging child abuse or neglect that meet established criteria and definitions of abuse and neglect.

**Purpose:**

To operate a centrally located call center to manage information regarding reports of abuse and/or neglect and enter this information on the appropriate screens in the *current child welfare information system*<sup>1</sup>; screen reports to ensure that threats to child safety are effectively identified and assigned a response priority, and forwarded to the appropriate jurisdiction for investigation and assessment.

**Procedures:**

**A. Availability to receive the report - the role of Central Intake**

1. Central Intake Supervisors must ensure that:
  - a) Staff is scheduled and available to receive reports alleging child abuse/neglect or suspicion of child abuse/neglect twenty-four (24) hours per day, seven (7) days per week.
  - b) Central Intake staff has access to a Central Intake Supervisor at all times.
  - c) Reports of harm can be received by e-mail, telephone, fax, in writing or in person. Reporters will be treated in a courteous and professional manner and assured that their reports will be handled confidentially and competently<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> **NOTE:** TNKids is the current DCS child welfare information system and will be replaced by the new system "TFACTS" in the near future. When TFACTS is fully implemented, all references to TNKids or "*current child welfare information system*" will mean TFACTS.

<sup>2</sup> Any regional CPS staff can receive reports alleging child abuse or neglect and enter reports into *current child welfare information system* and submit to Central Intake for screening purposes.

<p><b>B. Other calls made to Central Intake’s Child Abuse Hotline</b></p>	<p>Central Intake staff will accept, document and redirect calls to the appropriate entity that are not related to allegations of child abuse and neglect such as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reports of out of state abuse and neglect;</li> <li>2. Courtesy requests from other states; and</li> <li>3. “Information only” calls.</li> <li>4. Central Intake staff will accept <u>anonymous</u> reports, but will encourage the reporter to disclose their identity to DCS without coercion or exertion of pressure for disclosure.</li> </ol>
<p><b>C. Receiving the report: engaging the reporter</b></p>	<p>Central Intake staff will engage the reporter in efforts to obtain pertinent information on child safety and well-being. Central Intake staff will provide general information to reporters about how the report process operates.</p>
<p><b>D. Information to be obtained from the reporter</b></p>	<p>Central Intake staff must communicate with each reporter that the information conveyed is important and that certain information must be obtained before a decision can be made concerning an alleged victim’s safety. Information at a <u>minimum</u> should include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A narrative description of a specific occurrence regarding an allegation of abuse/neglect or substantial risk of harm to a child without DCS involvement shall meet at least one (1) of the established defined categories in <b><u>Work Aid – 1 -Categories and Definitions of Child Abuse and Neglect</u></b>.</li> <li>2. A means of identifying the alleged victim under the age of 18 years for each allegation:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Name;</li> <li>b) Date of birth or age (actual or approximate);</li> <li>c) Race; and</li> <li>d) Address or demographic characteristics</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. A means of locating the alleged victim;</li> <li>4. How the reporter obtained information regarding the allegation; and</li> <li>5. In addition to the <u>minimum</u> required information above, the <u>following information</u> will also be documented <sup>3</sup>:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Where the abuse or neglect occurred, or describe the risk factors to the child or others that are not being adequately addressed;</li> <li>b) When the incident occurred;</li> <li>c) Any witness to the incident;</li> </ol> </li> </ol>

<sup>3</sup> Refer to the *SDM Response Priority Decision Tree* for determining the need for any other information.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>d) Physical evidence;</li> <li>e) Parent/caretaker name, address, phone number, birth date and demographic characteristics;</li> <li>f) Alleged perpetrator name, address, phone number, birth date, demographic characteristics and criminal history;</li> <li>g) Members of the household where the alleged victim resides;</li> <li>h) Identification of American Indian ancestry; (The Central Intake staff must inquire if child or other family members are of American Indian heritage and must ascertain if the child falls under the jurisdiction of the Indian Child Welfare Act and if so, the procedures as outlined in DCS policy <b><u>14.3 Screening, Priority Response and Assignment</u></b> and/or <b><u>16.24, Children of Native American Heritage</u></b> must be followed after assignment of the case.</li> <li>i) Accessibility of the alleged perpetrator to the alleged victim;</li> <li>j) School/childcare information for the alleged victim;</li> <li>k) Employment information for the parents;</li> <li>l) Military information for the parents and the alleged perpetrator</li> <li>m) Willingness of the reporter to testify;</li> <li>n) Special circumstances/precautions recommended for investigator;</li> <li>o) Third party/collateral contacts;</li> <li>p) History or occurrence of domestic violence;</li> <li>q) Any other immediate protection needs;</li> <li>r) Any evidence of drug/alcohol involved in the incident;</li> <li>s) Reporter's current or past ability to be a resource to the family; and</li> <li>t) Past or current involvement with DCS (in state or out), mental health providers, law enforcement.</li> </ul>
<p><b>E. Information given to the reporter</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Central Intake staff will explain to reporting individuals the following statutory responsibilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Their right to remain confidential;</li> <li>b) They are free from detrimental change in employment status for reports of suspected child abuse or neglect made in good faith;</li> <li>c) They are free from civil and criminal liability for reports of suspected child abuse or neglect made in good faith;</li> <li>d) They are Informed about the screening and investigation process;</li> <li>e) They may be contacted for clarification of information and to gather additional information; and</li> <li>f) Their right to be informed as to whether a case has been <u>assigned</u>.</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Notification of screening decision:</li> </ul>

	<p>a) Central Intake staff or designee will send a <b>Confidential Notification Letter for Reporter</b> (standard form letter) to the reporter when a report is “screened out”.</p> <p>b) Regional staff or designee will send a <b>Confidential Notification Letter for Reporter</b> (automatically generated by the <i>current child welfare information system</i>) when a report is “screened in” and will document on the appropriate screens in the <i>current child welfare information system</i> that a letter was sent.</p> <p><b>Exception:</b> If a reporting agency also has investigative responsibilities, regional staff must inform the agency of the screening decision on the <u>same day</u>. Such agencies include Law Enforcement, Education, Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities, Department of Human Services and the DCS Licensing section.</p>
<p><b>F. Research of DCS Information and family history</b></p>	<p>Information will be gathered regarding past history of the persons involved to ensure that a comprehensive decision can be made regarding child safety and response priority. Research activities includes querying the <i>current child welfare information system</i> for the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Every known member of the alleged victim's immediate family/household;</li> <li>2. All siblings identified in the report;</li> <li>3. The alleged perpetrator; and</li> <li>4. Historical information</li> </ol>
<p><b>G. Criteria for CPS Involvement</b></p>	<p>Central Intake staff will gather sufficient information to determine whether the report meets minimal criteria. To be accepted for a CPS investigation, information from the reporter must meet the following <b><u>four (4) criteria</u></b> as listed below:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b><u>Age of Child:</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The report pertains to allegations of abuse/neglect of a child from birth up to age of 18 years, at the time of the report (even youth that have been married prior to their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday), or</li> <li>b) The report pertains to allegations of sexual abuse of a child under the age of 13, or</li> <li>c) The alleged sexual abuse occurred prior to the child turning 13. (This would only apply to children still under the age of 18.)</li> <li>d) The report pertains to allegations of sexual abuse of a child between 13 and 18 years old whose alleged perpetrator meets <b><u>relationship</u></b> criteria below<sup>4</sup>:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ A parent, caretaker, relative, or other person living in the home; or</li> <li>◆ An educator, volunteer or employee of an educational/recreational/organizational setting who is responsible for the alleged victim; or any</li> </ul> </li> </ol> </li> </ol>

<sup>4</sup> Physical abuse/neglect or sexual abuse allegation reports on children 13-18 years old (not in DCS custody) where the alleged perpetrator does not meet relationship criteria will be referred to law enforcement by Central Intake.

individual providing treatment, care, or supervision for the alleged victim.

**2. Relationship of alleged victim/alleged perpetrator**

- a) A parent, caretaker, relative, or other person living in the home; or
- b) An educator, volunteer or employee of an educational/recreational/organizational setting who is responsible for the alleged victim; or
- c) Any individual providing treatment, care or supervision for the alleged victim.
- d) **Exception:** The relationship criteria does not apply in the following circumstances:
  - ◆ DCS will accept all reports alleging sexual abuse of children under thirteen (13);
  - ◆ DCS will accept reports alleging that the sexual abuse happened prior to the child turning 13 (and the child victim is still under the age of 18);
  - ◆ DCS will accept reports alleging sexual abuse when the reporter is unsure about the identity and relationship of an alleged perpetrator.
  - ◆ Physical Abuse or neglect where the alleged perpetrator is NOT a parent, caregiver, relative or person living in the victim's home will be reported directly to law enforcement for investigation.

**3. Locating the alleged victim**

The accepted report must contain information as to where to locate and identify the alleged victim, such as:

- a) Name and caretaker's complete address, including street and apartment number and City and State;
- b) Telephone number;
- c) School name;
- d) Daycare name and address;
- e) Hospital name and contact person; and
- f) Collateral name and contact information

**4. Allegation of harm**

The allegation of harm falls into one of the five (5) categories for abuse and neglect in Tennessee as outlined in ***Work Aid – 1 - Categories and Definitions of Child Abuse and Neglect.***

- 5. Central Intake will screen out reports if the alleged victim cannot be identified and/or located through the information gathered from the reporter.

**Forms:**

None

<b>Collateral Documents:</b>	<p><a href="#"><u>CPS Confidential Notification Letter for Reporter</u></a> – (Automatically generated by the <i>current child welfare information system</i>)</p> <p><a href="#"><u>Work Aid – 1 - Categories and Definitions of Child Abuse and Neglect</u></a></p>
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<b>Glossary:</b>	
<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>Caretaker:</b>	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 care taking role with children, such as a babysitter.
<b>Report:</b>	A report of child abuse or neglect requiring a decision whether or not to initiate a CPS investigation.
<b>Screened-in reports:</b>	Alleged child abuse/neglect reports received from the community that meets the established criteria for investigation.
<b>Screened-out reports:</b>	Alleged child abuse/neglect reports received from the community that does not meet the stated criteria for investigation. These reports are maintained by DCS and subsequent CPS intakes shall include a search of the screened out intakes as well as reports that were accepted for investigation.