

General Child Protection Services (CPS) Cases

INVESTIGATION TIMEFRAMES

CPSG.1 Did the investigating worker see all alleged child victims within the priority time frame?

DCFS Practice Guideline 202.4 (2025)

All alleged victims on the case need to be seen during the priority time frame that is associated with the specific allegation(s) of each victim.

➤ *For CPR purposes, pre-disposition priorities are considered.*

The child must be awake for the CPS caseworker to satisfy the face-to-face requirement. This must be clearly documented.

DCFS Practice Guidelines 202.4.C (2025):

A documented reason for failing to meet the priority response time frame for face-to-face contact must be entered into a SAFE activity log and must include at least one of the following:

1. Reliable collateral information is received that indicates that the family or child is going to be gone for more than three working days (for example, on vacation, camp, or relative visit).
2. The caregiver/parent is refusing to allow the CPS caseworker to have contact with the child, and
 - a. The caseworker has contacted the police for assistance, but the police have been unsuccessful in attempts to assist the caseworker in seeing the child, and
 - b. The caseworker contacted an Assistant Attorney General to discuss the legal options for gaining access to the child.
3. The only alleged victim is deceased.
4. The child is out of state and a request for courtesy casework is made and declined by the out-of-state child welfare agency and law enforcement in the area and/or the courtesy caseworker/officer cannot complete a face-to-face contact.
5. The child cannot be located despite reasonable efforts. Reasonable efforts include (but are not limited to):
 - a. Visiting the home at least twice at times other than normal business hours.

Case Process Review Guidelines: General CPS FY2026

- b. Contacting local schools for contact information.
- c. Contacting local and county law enforcement agencies for additional contact information.
- d. Checking public assistance records for additional contact information.
- e. Checking with the referent for additional contact information.
- f. Searching telephone directories (books and online) for additional contact information.
- g. Contacting the CLEAR license holder in the region to search for additional address information for the family.

Priority 1 cases require face-to-face within 60 minutes unless the child lives more than 40 miles from the caseworker. In such cases, the child will be seen within 3 hours. A Priority 2 case requires face-to-face within 24 hours and a Priority 3 case requires face-to-face by midnight of the third working day.

Yes	All child victims were seen within the priority time frame
No	Some, but not all of the child victims were seen within the priority time frame
N/A	At least one reason as identified in DCFS Practice Guidelines is entered into an activity log (family is gone more than three days, parent is refusing and law enforcement and an AAG have been notified, a child is deceased, the child is out of state and a courtesy worker has been declined, the child is considered Unable to Locate (by definition of reasonable effort.)

CPSG.2 Did the CPS worker follow the prompts on the suicide screener and contact parents/guardians or other emergency services when indicated?

DCFS Practice Guideline 708 (2023)

To appropriately determine children or youth who are at risk for suicide and connect them and their family to needed resources.

A. Child Protective Services

1. During the child interview, the Youth Suicide Screener will be completed on every alleged child victim/perpetrator age 10 or older, unless the child has been identified by a reliable source/caregiver as not being developmentally able to be interviewed. The CPS caseworker will follow the prompts on the suicide screener and contact parents/guardians or other emergency services when indicated.

E. Third Party Assessments

1. If the CJC, therapist, or medical facility has already completed a trauma screener, that includes a suicide screening section, with the child and the screener is still relevant and available, the caseworker does not need to complete another screener, but should obtain a copy or a verbal summary of the results. If the screener or the results cannot be shared, the caseworker will need to complete the Youth Suicide Screener

F. Once the Screener is completed:

1. If the youth answered YES to question 3, 4, or 5, on the screener, contact the parent/caregiver immediately. Discuss the results of the screener and verify the parent/caregiver is connected to the appropriate mental health services to support the youth.

For purposes of the CPR, the scope of review is limited to the Youth Suicide Screener associated with the child identified in the sample and located in the Content Management portion of SAFE.

Yes	The CPS caseworker followed the prompts on the screener and documented the contact with parents/guardians or other emergency services as indicated.
No	No evidence that the CPS caseworker followed the prompts on the screener.

Case Process Review Guidelines: General CPS FY2026

N/A	The child answered N to all questions on the suicide screener. The screener was not completed due to the child not being developmentally able to be interviewed and it is documented. The child is under 10 years old.
------------	--

CPSG.3 Was the investigation completed within 30 days of CPS receiving the report from intake or within the extension period granted?

DCFS Practice Guideline 204.15 (2025)

A CPS case will be closed no later than 30 days from disposition of the case by Intake to CPS

DCFS Practice Guideline 204.8 (2025)

If an investigation cannot be completed within 30 days from the disposition of the case to CPS, the CPS caseworker will make a request for an extension prior to expiration of the initial 30-day period.

- A. The supervisor or designee may grant one extension of up to 30 days when more information is needed to make a thorough and accurate assessment.
- B. An extension will not be granted for overdue documentation.
- C. An additional extension of 30 days may be requested where extenuating circumstances exist.

The case End Date must be within 30 days of the case Start Date. For an investigation to be considered complete there must be an investigation end date listed in SAFE along with the SDM Safety and SDM Risk Assessments completed within the 30-day period (or investigation period when an extension is provided).

If there is more than one extension, ensure that activity logs validate that tasks occurred during the first extension. If no documentation identifies attempts to complete the investigation during the period of the first extension, this question should receive a N response.

For CPR purposes, the original case closure date is considered the end date.

Yes	The investigation was completed within 30 days, or an extension was authorized and the investigation was completed within the extension time frame, not to exceed 90 days.
No	The investigation was not completed within 30 days, or not completed by the date provided on an extension, or an extension was provided and no activities were completed toward closure of the case, or the case exceeded 90 days.

CONTENT OF THE INVESTIGATION

CPSG.4 Did the worker conduct an interview with the child outside the presence of the alleged perpetrator?

DCFS Practice Guideline 202.9.I (2025)

A child under the age of five years will be personally interviewed by the CPS caseworker if the child is verbal. All investigative interviews will be audio and/or videotaped prior to the adjudication hearing. If the child is non-verbal, the CPS caseworker will follow the protocol outlined in Section 202.4.

DCFS Practice Guideline 202.4B (2025)

Non-verbal Children Under the Age of Five Years: The CPS caseworker will assess any non-verbal child under the age of five years in conjunction with the person currently caring for the child. The assessment will include a review of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Developmental Milestone checklist, which corresponds with the current age of the child (<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones>).

DCFS Practice Guideline 203.1.B (2025)

Child: Any child identified as an alleged victim having the ability to communicate verbally or through another reliable means (i.e., communication board, American Sign Language, writing, etc.) will be interviewed. Any other children residing in the home or cared for by the same caretaker that are reasonably likely to have also been subjected to similar abuse/neglect based on the specific shared circumstances, or are reasonably likely to be subjected to abuse/neglect having the ability to communicate verbally or through another reliable means (i.e., communication board, American Sign Language, writing, etc.) will be interviewed to assess risk, protection, and safety needs.

For purposes of the CPR it can be assumed that a child under age two is unable to communicate well enough to describe abuse situations. If a child over the age of two refuses, is nonverbal, or exhibits anxiety and the caseworker documents this as the reason they didn't conduct a private conversation that month, this will receive an N/A.

The Case Activity Record provides documentation that an interview was conducted outside the presence of the alleged perpetrator. If the child is interviewed with one parent present when the

Case Process Review Guidelines: General CPS FY2026

other parent is the alleged perpetrator, and it later turns out the parent present at the interview is also a perpetrator, it should be recorded that the interview took place outside the presence of the perpetrator, since that was true at the time. However, if the parent/alleged perpetrator refuses to allow the investigator to interview the child outside his/her presence, the investigator must discuss the situation with an AAG or supervisor in order to receive an N/A answer. If the child is interviewed with a person and it is unknown if the person is the perpetrator this question can still receive a Y response. If the parent is not the alleged perpetrator and refuses an interview, this may receive an N/A .

Yes	The child was interviewed outside the presence of/or influence of the alleged perpetrator
No	There is no evidence regarding the presence of the perpetrator during the interview, OR no interview was conducted/documented
N/A	Law Enforcement conducted the interview and DCFS observed OR the worker reviewed a copy of the Police report and no other information is needed, the child is age two or younger. If a child over the age of two refuses, is nonverbal, or exhibits anxiety and the caseworker documents this. The parent is not the alleged perpetrator and refused an interview. The parent/alleged perpetrator refused to allow the child to be interviewed outside of his/her presence AND the investigator discussed the situation with the AAG or supervisor.

CPSG.5 Did the worker interview the child's natural parents or other guardian when their whereabouts are known?

DCFS Practice Guideline 203.1.C (2025)

Parent/guardian:

1. The child's natural parents or other guardian will be personally interviewed regardless of residence, unless their whereabouts are unknown. If the child's natural parents or other guardian are incarcerated at the time of the investigation, they do not need to be personally interviewed. This interview may be conducted with only one parent. Investigation and interview exceptions are as follows:
 - a. Parent(s)/guardian(s) are incarcerated.
 - b. Caseworker is unable to locate parent(s) or guardian(s).
 - c. Parent(s)/guardian(s) are non-cooperative.
 Documentation of reasons for not interviewing a parent are required.
2. Each specific allegation will be discussed. Admissions or denials will be documented in the activity recording.
3. The parents will be asked about the child's eligibility for or membership in a Native American tribe.

For purposes of the CPR: If only one parent is interviewed then the reason why the other parent is not interviewed must be documented. If the allegation involves a child in foster care, the SCF caseworker may need to be interviewed to determine parental rights or contact information for the parents. If the child is in foster care and parental rights are intact then the child's parents are to be interviewed.

If law enforcement interviews both parents and DCFS believes no additional information is necessary, documentation of this rationale is required. Documentation of the CPS worker's determination that further interviews are not necessary may result in a NA response. The reviewer cannot assume no further information is necessary based only on documentation that law enforcement interviewed both parents. If law enforcement interviews one parent and DCFS does not interview the other parent without a valid reason provided, this question should receive a N response. If law enforcement interviews one parent and DCFS interviews the other parent, this question should receive a Y response.

Yes	The worker interviewed the child's parent(s)/guardian. The worker interviewed one parent and law enforcement interviewed the other parent.
-----	--

Case Process Review Guidelines: General CPS FY2026

No	The whereabouts of the natural parent(s)/guardian were known but there is no evidence that the worker interviewed the parent(s)/guardian. Law Enforcement interviewed one parent and DCFS did not interview the other parent. Some, but not all allegations were discussed with the parent(s)/guardian.
N/A	The identity of the child's parents is unknown OR the parents' whereabouts were unknown, OR Law Enforcement interviewed both parents and the investigator did not need additional information as identified in documentation, OR the parent(s) was incarcerated during the entire investigation.

CPSG.6 Did the worker interview third parties who have had direct contact with the child, where possible and appropriate?

DCFS Practice Guideline 203.1.D (2025)

Third party/collateral contacts:

1. Third party/collateral contacts having had direct association with the child, or who are otherwise knowledgeable about the child's safety and family's functioning, will be interviewed.
2. If a third party or collateral contact is identified as an eyewitness or has first-hand knowledge of the child's safety and family's functioning, an interview will be conducted, including siblings. If the third party can only speak to the allegations, the CPS caseworker must speak to others who know about the family's functioning.
3. If the third party is a professional (i.e., medical, therapist, school, law enforcement) who has provided the CPS caseworker with a report and the report clearly details the third parties' involvement with the child/family, the report will be sufficient and an interview need not be conducted. The CPS caseworker will upload the report into content management. If the report is not sufficient or there are additional questions that need to be asked of the third party, an interview shall be conducted.
4. For cases where it is verified the alleged perpetrator does not/will not have access to the child and there is no identified third party/collateral contact that can provide additional information regarding the case or safety of the child, a third party contact is not needed.

For purposes of the CPR: Third parties may include school personnel, health care providers, day care providers, relatives, neighbors, and others who have had direct association with the child or are otherwise knowledgeable about the case and are believed to have information regarding the allegation or the safety of the child. If the investigator interviews the referent, the requirement for this question will be met. The support person present during the child's interview could be considered a third party if the support person was interviewed.

Look at the initial referral to determine if any third parties were identified at the time of referral. Check the Activity Record of the case for documented evidence of third parties such as: interview transcripts or reports from doctors and other health care providers as well as school staff members. **Siblings listed as victims for the same allegations as the PV cannot be considered third parties.** **Stepparents who are primary caretakers of the victims cannot be considered third parties.** DCFS staff who are providing a direct service to the family and who have first-hand knowledge about the services the family is receiving can be considered a third party. If law enforcement interviews the third parties, provides a written report to DCFS of the interviews and DCFS feels the interviews are

Case Process Review Guidelines: General CPS FY2026

satisfactory and no additional information is needed, the investigator does not need to re-interview the third parties. This rationale must be clearly documented.

Yes	At least one third-party was interviewed about the child's safety and family's functioning, or the referent was interviewed.
No	There was an indication of third parties who had knowledge about the child's safety and family's functioning but there is no evidence that a third party was interviewed.
N/A	There were no third parties identified or it is documented that the report is supported on the word of the child and/or other available evidence, and no third-party interviews are necessary, or law enforcement requested no interviews with third parties because of on-going criminal investigations, or law enforcement interviewed the third parties and it is documented that no additional information was needed. The referent is anonymous and there are no other third parties appropriate to interview. It is verified that the alleged perpetrator does not/will not have access to the child and there is no identified third party/collateral contact that can provide additional information regarding the case or safety of the child, and this is documented.

CPSG.7. Did the CPS worker make a scheduled or unscheduled home visit (based on DCFS Practice Guideline 203.2 (2025) during the investigation period?

DCFS Practice Guideline 203.2 (2025)

The CPS caseworker will complete a home visit during the course of each investigation in order to make a thorough assessment of the family. The caseworker will assess for safety, risk, health, and well-being of the child and family.

Unscheduled Home Visits CPS caseworkers will complete unscheduled home visits in cases with allegations involving:

- Domestic Violence
- Child Endangerment (when there are concerns of drug use or drug activity in the home)
- Environmental Neglect
- Non-Supervision
- Physical Neglect

Unscheduled home visit will occur on cases involving other allegation types when the information gathered would indicate a need for an unscheduled visit to the home.

Scheduled Home Visits: A scheduled home visit will be completed on all cases where an unscheduled home visit is not required. If the alleged perpetrator is a parent or guardian of the victim the scheduled home visit will occur in the household of the alleged perpetrator. If the alleged perpetrator is not a parent or guardian of the victim, but has or is likely to have access to the victim, the scheduled home visit will be completed where the child primarily resides.

The Activity Record contains documentation of home visits. The home visit should occur in the child's home where the child normally lives and/or where the abuse occurred. Remember that the reason for the home visit is to ensure the home is safe for the child and can occur at any time during the investigation.

Yes	The worker made a home visit OR the worker made an unscheduled home visit for cases with specific allegations as identified in Practice Guidelines
No	There is no evidence that the worker made a home visit; OR an unscheduled home visit is not documented for cases with specific allegations as identified in Practice Guidelines.

Case Process Review Guidelines: General CPS FY2026

N/A	<p>The child and family have moved out of state; or their whereabouts are unknown; OR the parent(s)/guardian refuses access to the home, or the child has been placed in foster care prior to the closure of the CPS case. It is verified that the alleged perpetrator does not have access to any home where the child may reside and is not anticipated to have access at any time in the future to any home where the child may reside and the caregiver is making efforts to protect the child to best of their ability from contact with the alleged perpetrator and it is documented. The worker documented two or more attempts to make the required type of home-visit as identified in Practice Guidelines.</p>
-----	---

Investigation Findings

CPSG.8. Were the case findings of the report based on facts/information obtained/available during the investigation?

DCFS Practice Guideline 204.10 (2025)

At the conclusion of a CPS investigation, a finding will be made for each allegation identified at the time of Intake or identified during the investigation. Each alleged victim in the case will be linked to a specific allegation or allegations and to an alleged perpetrator or alleged perpetrators.

- A. Acceptable findings include:
 - 1. Supported.
 - 2. Unsupported.
 - 3. Without Merit.
 - 4. Unable to Locate.
 - 5. Unable to Complete Investigation.
 - 6. False Report.
- B. A case finding of Unsupported will be used when there is insufficient evidence to conclude that abuse, neglect, or dependency occurred.
- C. The case finding decision may be based on the child's statements alone; corroborating evidence will not be required in all cases.
- H. A case finding of Unsupported will not be made solely because the CPS caseworker was unable to identify the alleged perpetrator when the evidence shows that abuse, neglect, or dependency occurred.
- I. The determination of acceptable findings will be based on the facts of the case obtained at the time of the investigation.
- J. An allegation will not be considered Unsupported or Without Merit because the family corrected the conditions that caused the abuse, neglect, or dependency while the investigation was pending.
- K. The conclusions of the health care professional regarding an abusive injury, sexual abuse, or medical neglect will be considered by the CPS caseworker in making case findings. DCFS and the family may obtain a second opinion.

DCFS Practice Guideline 204.13 (2025)

The CPS caseworker will record all casework activities and information obtained on a CPS case.

Case Process Review Guidelines: General CPS FY2026

Yes	<p>The decision was based on facts/information obtained/available during the investigation; there is clear documentation which specifies a finding and explanation for finding, and, if the finding was unsupported, all the following conditions were met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The unsupported decision was not based on an inability to identify or locate the perpetrator or because the perpetrator was an out-of-home perpetrator.• The unsupported decision was not based on improved conditions in the home.• The unsupported decision was contrary to the evidence in the record supporting that decision.
No	<p>There is no documentation in the case that the decision made is based on facts/information obtained/available during the investigation. There were multiple allegations in the case, some of which had findings based on facts/information as explained above, and some of which did not .</p>