

ER- Investigations

(Revised 08/23/24)

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Related Policies

Additional information can be found in the following policies:

- Body Checks
 - CACI Grievance Procedures
 - Calls for Service
 - Case Consultation
 - Case Plans
 - CSEC Interagency Protocol and CSEC Response Team Protocol
 - Child and Family Team Meetings
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**Related Policies
(cont.)**

- Child Victim Witness Protocol
 - Civil Rights Requirements
 - Commercial Sexual Exploitation – Identification Tool (CSE-IT)
 - Confidentiality - General
 - Confidentiality Guide
 - Contacts - SW and Child
 - Drug Endangered Children and Law Enforcement Liaison Protocol
 - Email Policy
 - ER - Authority to Take Custody of Child
 - ER - Changing Response Determination
 - ER - Closing Referrals
 - ER - Open Case Investigations
 - Foster Home and RFA Family Investigation
 - Genograms and Ecomaps
 - Highly Vulnerable Children Protocol
 - Hotline - Cross County Referrals
 - Hotline - Function and Procedure
 - Hotline - Non-Hotline Staff Takes Referral
 - Hotline - Priority of Referrals
 - Hotline - Referral Screening Criteria
 - ICWA Inquiry and Noticing Manual
 - IEU Investigations of Child Abuse Referrals at PCC
 - Importing Photos into CWS/CMS
 - Intensive Family Preservation Program (IFPP)
 - International Liaison
 - Interviewing a Child at School
 - Investigative Search Warrants (ISWs)
 - Medical Opinions - Forensic Examinations/Interviews and Medical Consultations
 - Military Investigations
 - Minor Parent Services (MPS)
 - Office of the Ombudsman
 - Parent Searches
 - Pre-Placement Preventative Services
 - Polinsky Children's Center – Inspection and Contraband Procedures
 - Processing DOJ Form BCIA 8583
 - Protective Custody Warrants (PCWs)
 - Protocol for Working with Indian Families, Children and Tribes
 - Reporting Suspected Animal Abuse or Cruelty
 - Reporting Suspected Welfare Fraud
 - Safety Plans
 - Standby After-Hours Investigations
 - STRTP Investigations
 - Structured Decision Making (SDM)
 - WIC 300 Petitions - Descriptions and Documentation
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Forms

The following forms are referenced in this policy:

- 04-2 Investigative Narrative
- 04-18 Genogram
- 04-26 Referral Closure Letter (English) (CWS/CMS template)
- 04-26Arabic Referral Closure Letter (Arabic) (CWS/CMS template)
- 04-26HaitianCreole Referral Closure Letter (Haitian Creole) (CWS/CMS Template)
- 04-26Korean Referral Closure Letter (Korean) (CWS/CMS Template)
- 04-26Mandarin Referral Closure Letter (Mandarin) (CWS/CMS template)
- 04-26Somali Referral Closure Letter (Somali) (CWS/CMS Template)
- 04-26Sp Referral Closure Letter (Spanish) (CWS/CMS Template)
- 04-26Tagalog Referral Closure Letter (Tagalog) (CWS/CMS template)
- 04-26Vietnamese Referral Closure Letter (Vietnamese) (CWS/CMS template)
- 04-4 Downgrade/Evaluate Out Template (CWS/CMS Template)
- BCIA 8583 Child Abuse or Severe Neglect Indexing Form
- 04-29 Authorization to Use or Disclose Protected Health Information- Single Provider (English), (Spanish)
- 04-46 Unable to Locate Letter (Arabic), (Dari), (English), (Farsi), (Mandarin), (Somali), (Spanish), (Tagalog), (Vietnamese)
- 04-52 Parent/Relative Search Request (CWS/CMS Template)
- 04-62 Letter to Parents When a Child is Being Removed from the Home (English), (Lao), (Spanish), (Tagalog), (Vietnamese)
- 04-73 Interviewing Children at School Letter
- 04-142 Emergency Response Closure Checklist
- 04-160 All About Me –Infants (English), (Spanish)
- 04-161 All About Me – (2-11) (English), (Spanish)
- 04-162 All About Me – (12-17) (English), (Spanish)
- 04-162NA All About Me – Native American Youth
- 04-277 Safety Plan (Arabic) (English), (Haitian Creole) (Korean) (Mandarin) (Somali) (Spanish) (Tagalog) (Vietnamese)

Forms (cont.)

- 04-359 Three Houses Template and Checklist
 - 04-361 Safety House Template and Checklist
 - 04-363 3-Column Map Template and Checklist
 - 04-807 Courtesy Home Walkthrough Checklist
 - 20-46 Language Needs Determination
 - [EA1](#) Emergency Assistance Application for Child Welfare Services
 - [PUB 13](#) “Your Rights” pamphlet
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Policy

State Division 31 regulations of the Child Welfare Services Program Manual of Policies and Procedures for the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) establishes the following:

- The county will respond to referrals which allege that a child is endangered by abuse, neglect, and/or exploitation.
- When it is determined that an in-person investigation is necessary, a Social Worker (SW) will conduct an in-person investigation immediately (within 24 hours) or within 10 calendar days from the date the allegation is received by the Hotline.
- The ER PSS and/or review team has the discretion to change the response time to conduct an in-person investigation from a 10 day response time to 5 business days, or from immediate response to 5 business days.
- The SW responding to a referral will be skilled in emergency response (ER).
- The SW will conduct an in-person investigation of all referrals from a law enforcement (LE) agency, which allege abuse, neglect, or exploitation.
- The SW conducting an in-person investigation on an open case will not be the assigned worker on the on-going case.
- CFWB Office of Child Safety (OCS) has 30 calendar days from the initial removal of the child or the first in-person contact of the investigation (whichever comes first) to make a determination after investigating a referral. CFWB will either determine that continued involvement with CFWB is necessary and complete a case plan, **OR** close the referral within this timeframe.

The Child Abuse Hotline evaluates all referrals that are made per the Hotline - Referral Screening Criteria. Hotline SWs utilize the SDM Hotline Tool to determine if an in-person investigation is required. Regional Response Review Teams (RRTs) may continue to assess assignment criteria prior to assigning a referral to an ER SW to conduct an in-person investigation.

Once the Hotline and ER teams determine that an in-person investigation is necessary, then the referral will be assigned to an OCS SW skilled in ER. The assigned SW will conduct a thorough in-person investigation on all referrals, including referrals on open cases, and follow all relevant policies and procedures regarding investigating referrals as detailed in this policy and other related investigations policies mentioned throughout this policy.

Policy (cont.)

If the referral alleges abuse, neglect, or exploitations of a youth with an open case, the Hotline will determine if the referral will be assigned to an ER SW or to a SW in the ER - Open Case Investigations (OCI) unit. The OCI policy provides guidance for any SW investigating a referral for a youth with an open case.

NOTES:

- Refer to Hotline - Referral Screening Criteria for information on how referrals are assigned.
- Refer to Hotline - Cross County Referrals for information on assignment of referrals on youth with active cases who are placed out of county.
- Refer to Hotline - Priority of Referrals for additional information on determined response timeframes.
- Refer to ER - Changing Response Determination for policies regarding evaluating out a referral in region or downgrading referrals.

Supervisor Review and Approval Process for Assigning Referrals

The Child Abuse Hotline is tasked with determining if assignment criteria is met, however RRTs may continue to assess assignment criteria prior to assigning a referral to an ER SW to conduct an in-person investigation. RRTs will review and follow policies outlined in the ER - Changing Response Determination to assess if a referral meets criteria to change the response determination. When changing the response determination of a referral, the Downgrade/Evaluate Out Template (04-4) will be completed for referrals reviewed by the RRT. The ER PSS and/or review team has the discretion to change the response time to conduct an in-person investigation from a 10 day response time to 5 business days, or from immediate response to 5 business days.

The table below explains the steps that will be taken by a Protective Services Supervisor (PSS) and/or Senior Protective Services Worker (SPSW) to approve a referral for assignment to a worker.

NOTE: This policy will generally use the term PSS, however a SPSW can be consulted with when they are covering PSS duties unless stated otherwise.

Review Response Decision	Who	Action
24hr/10 Day	ER PSS	After receiving notification that a referral has been assigned to a SW in their unit by CAT Team. Review and <ul style="list-style-type: none">• approve Decision Response in CWS/CMS, and• assign to SW OR

Supervisor Review and Approval Process for Assigning Referrals (cont.)

Review Response Decision	Who	Action
24hr/10 Day	ER PSS	<p>After receiving notification that a referral has been assigned to a SW in their unit by CAT Team.</p> <p>Review and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• approve Decision Response in CWS/CMS, and• assign to SW <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Change response determination after reviewing and following all procedures in the ER - Changing Response Determination policy.• Notify CAT team of response determination change

NOTE: The referral date will not be changed after initial screening from the Hotline, the date of the referral will be the date the call, e-mail, or fax, was received and assessed that an in-person response was required.

SDM Tools Used for a Referral on a Child/Youth not in an Open Case

With few exceptions, it is required to use Structured Decision Making (SDM) tools for assessing Safety and Risk when investigating a referral. For referrals on children/youth who are not in an open OCS case, ER SWs will complete Safety Assessment(s) and a Risk Assessment.

An SDM Safety Assessment is to be conducted in the field after interviewing all children/youth with allegations to determine if a safety threat is present and the initial Safety Assessment will be entered into WebSDM within two working days of each face-to-face contact with each victim child/youth. The determination of a safety threat will guide the next steps, prior to leaving the child/youth after an interview/contact.

SWs should carry with them, or access online, the SDM Safety Assessment and SDM safety threat definitions and reference these tools to guide their practice prior, during, and/or after concluding an in-person contact with a child, or parent/guardian. The SDM website (CA SDM | California SDM Application Login (sdmdata.org)) is also available, and SWs can find the definitions on the website.

NOTE: Per ACLs [23-64](#) and [23-101](#), when a SW is completing a Safety Assessment and/or safety plan in an investigation involving an Indian child, the SW will consult with the tribal representative when assessing safety by providing information regarding the possible safety threat and learning the prevailing social and cultural standards. The SW can share a blank SDM Safety Assessment tool with definitions with the tribal representative when assessing for safety threats. For additional information and policy for completing ER investigation involving a Native American Child, refer to CFWB Protocol Working with Native American Children and Families.

SDM Tools Used for a Referral on a Child/Youth not in An Open Case (cont.)

If a safety threat is identified, the SW will follow the requirements and procedures outlined in the Safety Plans policy.

An SDM Risk Assessment provides a data driven likelihood of whether the child's household may experience a subsequent maltreatment outcome in the next 18 months. A Risk Assessment will be completed within 30 days from the first face-to-face contact with the family. SWs will make every effort to complete a Risk Assessment at the earliest possible point when the SW has reached a conclusion regarding the allegation **AND** prior to the decision to promote to a case or close without continuing services. See the Structured Decision Making (SDM) policy for more information on policies and procedures for Risk Assessments.

SDM Safety and Risk Assessments will not be completed when any of the following applies:

- No contact is made with a family.
- The referral is an associated referral (a Safety and Risk Assessment will only be completed on the primary referral).
- The alleged perpetrator is a third-party non-household member and there are no allegations against the caregivers/parents (i.e. Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) where parent/caregiver is not a perpetrator of any abuse/neglect/exploitation).
- The child/youth is placed in an STRTP or other congregate care setting and the allegations are against the facility and/or facility staff. In this circumstance, the SW will complete a Congregate Care Safety Assessment.
- The child/youth is placed in a Resource Family home and allegations are against the Resource caregiver. In this circumstance, the SW will complete a Substitute Care Provider Safety Assessment.

See CA SDM PP Manual for the full Policy and Procedure Manual for all SDM Tools. It includes more detailed information about the tools, appropriate completion, and other SDM related information.

Investigations involving only allegations of a third-party alleged perpetrator, such as CSEC, where the parents or guardians are not named as an alleged perpetrator, will **NOT** use SDM Safety and Risk Assessment tools. These assessments were not designed for the use of these situations. When an in-person assessment demonstrates that the parent/caregiver had no prior knowledge or involvement with the exploitation, there are no allegations against them, and they have the ability to protect the child from further abuse, the SDM Safety Assessment and Risk Assessment should not be completed.

Refer to ER - Closing Referrals section to this policy for information on Safety Assessment(s) prior to closing referrals.

Refer to ER - Open Case Investigations policy for more information on SDM Safety Assessments and Risk Assessments for referrals with youth in open cases.

For further information, see the Structured Decision Making policy.

In-Person Contacts Required

Per Division 31 regulations, when it is determined that an in-person investigation is necessary, a SW will make an in-person contact immediately or within 10 calendar days after receipt of a referral, as appropriate. In addition to 24 hour and 10 calendar day responses, San Diego County has a 5-day (business) differential response. Whenever possible, it is recommended that the assigned SW responds within 2 hours of the referral being assigned on a 24-hour response.

All investigation contacts must be entered into CWS/CMS within **7 calendar days**. This includes in person contacts, phone calls, collateral contacts, etc. Refer to the Contacts - SW and Child policy for more information.

For referrals on open cases, assigned SWs will make all efforts to enter Investigation Contacts within 48 hours to ensure that this information is available to all parties.

For all referrals determined to need an in-person response, the SW will (at a minimum):

- conduct an in-person investigation with all children alleged to be abused, neglected, or exploited.
- conduct in-person contacts with all siblings in the home including when there are no allegations against them (must have parental consent).
- conduct an in-person investigation with all parents who have access to the child(ren).
- contact both parents, including the non-custodial parent unless parental rights are terminated.
- make 2 collateral contacts with persons having knowledge of the condition of each alleged victim child (Reporting Party [RP] contacts do not count as a collateral contact).

SWs are to conduct:

- unannounced visits on all investigations.
- both unannounced and scheduled visits for all other contacts after initial contacts are made.

If the SW is unable to make an in-person contact with the victim child(ren) by the determined response date, the SW will refer to the “Attempt In-Person Contacts” section of the Contacts - SW and Child policy.

If it is determined that a child/youth was **added in error** on a referral and is not a household member, the SW will:

- conclude the allegation as “entered in error” prior to the determine response date, with PSS approval.
- explain why the disposition for this allegation was found to be entered in error in the Investigation Narrative.

All siblings with an allegation must be included in an “Investigate Referral” contact in CWS/CMS. If during the course of the investigation the SW determines that there are siblings not listed on the referral, the SW will create notebooks for the siblings and add pertinent allegations of abuse if there are no existing client notebooks for the sibling in CWS/CMS. If client notebooks exist within CWS/CMS, the SW will notify Search Merge to assign client ID number. If an additional child, with a different mother, is found to be or could also be a victim, the SW as a mandated reporter must report the allegations using the CWS Suspected Child Abuse form (04-184) to generate a companion referral.

**In-Person Contacts
Required (cont.)**

The SW will follow all steps listed in the Hotline - Non-Hotline Staff Takes Referral policy when making a new referral to the Hotline.

If, during the course of the investigation, the SW discovers new facts to support an additional or different allegation, the SW will create new allegation(s) in CWS/CMS and investigate/disposition them following the same policies and procedures as all other allegations. **The SW will not create a new referral.**

If Law Enforcement (LE) instructs the SW not to interview a parent, victim, or collateral due to a LE investigation:

- Refer to the When Law Enforcement is Involved section of this policy
- Refer to Child Victim Witness Protocol

If the SW is unable to locate the family, the SW will refer to Unable to Locate a Parent and/or Family section of this policy.

**Safety Organized
Practice (SOP) and
Practice
Considerations**

SWs will conduct investigations through a rigorous and balanced assessment, by drawing on SOP Values and Principles, Solution Focused Inquiry, Safety Mapping, Harm and Danger Statements, and eliciting the Voice of the Child with tools like Three Houses. See the SOP section of the Resource Guide for these and many other SOP tip sheets, examples, and templates.

SWs are not required to utilize every tool with every family but must demonstrate and document that they are utilizing key components of SOP, such as the Three Questions, and that they have elicited the child's voice and identified impact to the child. Information garnered via SOP tools and techniques will be documented and used to guide critical thinking and decision-making.

The following table identifies SOP components for use during investigations and where to document their use and outcomes.

SOP Components	Where to Document
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Three Questions• Solution Focused Questions• Cultural Responsiveness• Appreciative Inquiry• SDM Safety and Risk Assessment tools• Harm and Danger statements• Safety Goals• Behavioral language in safety plans• Obtaining the voice of the child (such as Three Houses or Safety House)• Identification of family networks and use of networks if writing a safety plan• Family Centered Meetings (FCM) such as mappings or CFT meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contacts• Safety Plans• Court Reports• Investigation Narrative• Import SOP tools into CWS/CMS (i.e. Safety House, Three Houses, Safety Mapping)

Safety Organized Practice (SOP) and Practice Considerations (cont.)

The following are some activities that help engage the family:

- Gather Client Notebook (Field Worksheet/Face Sheet) information early in the interview process. Gathering this information can help build rapport with the family as you engage them in a family discussion.
- Develop a Genogram and Ecomap. This exercise can be a strong engagement tool and may assist in locating safety and support network members if needed. Genograms and Ecomaps are required for all referrals and must be imported into CWS/CMS.
- Ask the family to describe their culture and what may be important for the worker to know about how their family functions and needs they may have.
- Ask the family to describe what has happened that resulted in a referral, search for detail and clarity.
- Ask the family members to give their views of the concerns/needs and reasonable interventions.
- Encourage family members to express their opinions and feelings about the intervention and propose solutions, particularly those that have been effective in the past, and on an ongoing basis.
- Offer assistance to the family's expressed needs for basic services (food, transportation, clothing, medical, shelter, etc.).

Investigation Requirements

SWs must address the following when investigating referrals and document their efforts/results:

- Is the child/youth safe?
 - Assess for any safety threats during the initial contact of each family member and completing the SDM Safety Assessment within two working days of the initial face-to-face contact will improve accurate Safety Assessment for all referrals.
 - Has child abuse or neglect occurred?
 - Review the Penal Codes Definitions for each allegation type and the definitions of allegations conclusions (substantiated, inconclusive, unfounded) will help the SW determine if any abuse and/or neglect has occurred in an investigation.
 - Should the referral be promoted to a case?
 - Complete the Risk Assessment Tool in WebSDM within 30 days of initial contact, and as soon as an SW has a knowing of how the allegations are going to be concluded. Completing the Risk Assessment Tool as soon as possible will help understand the risk level of a household to assist in determining if a referral should be promoted to a case.
 - Does the evidence support court involvement?
 - Reviewing the WIC 300 Petitions - Descriptions and Documentation policy to help assess if the evidence collected supports court involvement.
 - Does the child/youth/family have Native American ancestry?
 - Document ICWA inquiries in contacts and in Investigation Narratives. See the Protocol for Working with Indian Families, Children and Tribes for more information.
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**Investigation
Requirements
(cont.)**

The table below lists the minimum requirements for investigating referrals of child abuse, neglect and/or exploitation

Stage of Investigation	Requirements
Preparing for an in-person Investigation	<p>SWs will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview the RP. • Review CWS history. • Review protocols related to allegations in referral and protocols for cross reporting. • Gather relevant information in advance prior to making an initial face-to-face contact with family members. <p>See details in Preparing for an In-Person Investigation section of this file.</p>
Interviewing Children	<p>SWs will interview all children alleged to be neglected, abused, or exploited, as well as all at risk siblings.</p> <p>For additional information see:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 Step Investigative Interview • 10 Step Investigative Interview (Spanish) • Interviewing Children • Infants 0 – 24 months • Protocol for Working with Indian Families, Children and Tribes • Minor parents • Youth perpetrators • Taking photos • Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC)
Interviewing Parents	<p>SWs must interview all custodial and non-custodial parents, legal guardians, and tribal custodians.</p> <p>For additional information see sections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviewing Parents • Interviewing the Alleged Perpetrator • SOP and Practice Considerations • Interviewing Parents Tip Sheet <p>Note: If during the interview process, the family identifies as being Native American from a local tribe, document all ICWA inquiry information in the contacts and Investigative Narrative. Add a pending ICWA status in the client notebook. For tribes from San Diego County, contact the corresponding tribal social worker and/or the ISU PSS at the beginning of the investigation or soon after discovering the child is Native American. See the Protocol for Working with Indian Families, Children and Tribes for more information.</p>

**Investigation
Requirements
(cont.)**

Stage of Investigation	Requirements
Assessing other Household Members and Significant Contact Adults	<p>SWs will make every effort to interview and/or assess all other adult household members and all other adults who have significant access to the household, regardless of their relationship to the child.</p> <p>See Assessing All Household Members.</p>
Gathering Information	<p>The SW will seek relevant information from all collaterals/service providers who have knowledge of the child's safety and well-being.</p>
Assessing and Safety Planning	<p>The SW will conduct an SDM Safety Assessment upon every initial first contact with a child during an investigation prior to concluding the in-person contact with the child. See SDM section of this policy for additional information.</p> <p>If a safety threat is identified, the SW must determine if a Safety Plan mitigates the safety threat and provides child safety.</p> <p>See the Safety Plans Policy for more information on developing safety plans.</p>
Determining Need to file a petition and/or for Removal	<p>If a safety threat is identified and a viable Safety Plan cannot be established with the parents utilizing both their safety network and other in/formal supports, a determination for removal will be made in consultation with a PSS and ER PSPM. Removal of children from their parents is a very serious decision that significantly impacts lives and will be done only when the child(ren) cannot be safely maintained in the home.</p> <p>The SW will utilize the SDM Safety Assessment in consultations with the PSS prior to removing children from their homes and parental custody. The PSS will also utilize the SDM Safety Assessment in consult with the PSPM before approving the removal of any child.</p> <p>NOTE: Cultural considerations should always be part of the discussion around safety and removal, ensuring the family's individual strengths and needs are considered when making a removal decision.</p> <p>SDM Risk Assessments must also be used when determining whether or not a child will be removed from their homes when the removal is not an exigent removal.</p>

**Investigation
Requirements
(cont.)**

Stage of Investigation	Requirements
Determining Need to file a petition and/or for Removal (cont.)	See the Case Consultation Policy for more information on supervisor consults and other case consultations. Refer to Protective Custody Warrants (PCWs). Refer to ER - Authority to Take Custody of Child. Refer to ER - Open Case Investigations.
Providing Services	The SW will consider Pre-Placement Preventative Services prior to closing the referral and/or prior to removing the child from the home. Decisions regarding referrals to services should be made in consultation with the family during a Safety Mapping or Child and Family Team Meetings.
Promoting the Referral to a Case or Closing	Per state regulations (Division 31-101.5) CFWB has 30 calendar days from the initial removal of the child or the first in-person contact of the investigation (whichever comes first) to make a determination after investigating a referral. CFWB will either determine that child welfare services are necessary and complete a case plan, OR close the referral within this timeframe. Refer to ER - Closing Referrals

**Interviewing
the Reporting
Party (RP)**

The SW must attempt to interview the RP prior to making first contact with the family. A minimum of two attempts will be made to contact the RP. When interviewing the RP the SW will:

- verify that information in the referral is accurate and determine if there is additional information. The SW will do so by asking the following questions:
 - Is your information first-hand or second hand?
 - If first-hand, when and what exactly did you see/hear (what/where/when/why)?
 - If second-hand, who told you? What did the person say? What is the person's name, phone, address, or is there a way to contact this person?
 - When/where did the alleged abuse/neglect take place? Was it one time or multiple incidents? Is it ongoing?
 - Is the alleged abuse or neglect a result of lack of resources? What resources do you think this family could benefit from?
 - Have you reported it to anyone else?
 - Have you talked to the victim about it or anyone else in the family?
 - Do you think anyone else knows about it? If so, who? What is their name and contact information?
 - Is there a non-offending parent/caregiver? If so, do you think the non-offending parent knows about it? If so, what makes you think that? Did they take any action to protect or attempt to protect the child? If so, what were those actions?

**Interviewing
the Reporting
Party (RP)
(cont.)**

- Has anyone done anything to try to protect the child and/or keep them safe from the abuse?
 -
 - Are there any cultural considerations to be aware of when working with this family?
 - Is there anything else you think I should know?
- not use the RP contact as a collateral contact.
- document the RP contact in CWS/CMS by
 - In the “Participants” drop-down menu select, “Reporter” and identify the RP by their name and do not write any information that identifies the individual as the reporter/reporting party such as, “reporting party, RP, reporter, etc.”
 - Modify the Staff Person/Reporter section to Staff Person/Collateral.
- refer to Interviewing Collaterals tip sheet
- keep the RP contact information confidential. The name or any identifying information of the RP cannot be disclosed even if the RP disclosed it to the family the SW will not confirm nor deny the identity of the RP. If anyone asks or guesses who the RP is the SW will neither confirm nor deny who the RP is regardless if the person asking is correct or not.

NOTE: Although the SW must protect the identity of the RP, the SW cannot promise anyone, including the RP, that the information they provide will not be disclosed. The SW should advise the RP that the SW will not identify the RP as the person making the report to CFWB, but that if a petition is filed, the RP’s statements will be used as witness statements in court reports. The RP contact will be documented as a collateral in CWS/CMS.

**Preparing for
an In-Person
Investigation**

When assigned a referral, the investigating SW will attempt to complete the following tasks prior to making contact with the family:

- Check for any safety alerts on the referral.
- If the referral is on an open case the ER/OCI SW will:
 - consult with the assigned case carrying SW if child/youth has an open OCS case within 24 business hours (this includes referrals open for the children of EFC parents). If the case carrying SW is not available consult/notify the case carrying PSS.
 - notify the youth’s Children’s Legal Services (CLS) attorney.
 - if the youth is placed in an FFA, licensed group home, short term residential therapeutic program (STRTP) notification must occur within **36 hours**;
 - if the youth is not placed in a licensed facility but does have an open case, notification must occur **ASAP**.

NOTE: If the attorney requests information about the investigation, this information is to be provided by the SW within 30 days.

- Follow applicable protocols/policies that may apply if youth has an open case:
 - Foster Home and RFA Family Investigation
 - IEU Investigations of Child Abuse Referrals at PCC
 - STRTP Investigations
 - ER - Open Case Investigations
 - Review the Highly Vulnerable Children Protocol
 - Review applicable policies/protocols for alleged type of abuse
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Preparing for an In-Person Investigation

- Reviewing all CWS referral and case history is important to assess for safety. The totality of the information available/known is needed to conduct an accurate Safety Assessment at initial contact with the family. The ER SW will review the following to prepare for an in-person contact:
 - Read Investigation Narratives for all referrals
 - Read Case Notes and key court reports
 - Review CWS history for custodial and non-custodial parents, legal guardians, and tribal custodians
 - Review CWS history for step-parents
 - Review CWS history for all adult household members
 - Review cultural considerations for the family from history or from new information received
 - Request CWS history from a previous state where the family lived. A contact will be entered documenting the request. Once the information is received it will be reviewed, a contact will be entered in CWS/CMS, and any documentation provided will be imported into CWS/CMS.
 - Acknowledge possible cultural considerations and contact appropriate community based organizations to streamline communication and support to the family.

NOTE: For a 24-Hour/IRS that requires a time sensitive response, the assigned SW may be unable to read all of the history. In these situations the SW will notify their PSS to make an alternate plan to review the history before determining the outcome of the initial Safety Assessment.

- Determine if a detective is assigned, if one is not assigned ask if one will be assigned, and coordinate the investigation with law enforcement.

Contact and interview the RP

- Review any justice system involvement (criminal history),
 - Check the [San Diego County Sheriff's Department](#) website for restraining orders (RO) or call 858-974-2110 to determine if there are any ROs
 - Check the Sheriff's "[Who's in Jail](#)" website to determine if anyone is in custody or if there are pending warrants. Depending on the parent's arrest location or the length of time the parent may have already been detained for the parent may be detained a local police department's jurisdiction or in federal jurisdiction. Consider searching other local police department or federal department websites if the parent was not found to be detained under San Diego County Sheriff's Department (SDSO). Alternative sites include but are not limited to:
 - [Federal Bureau of Prisons](#)
 - [Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation](#)
 - [U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement](#)
 - Check [Megan's Law](#) website, if there are concerns that a registered sex offender may have access to the child(ren). SWs may do an additional check on the [National Sex Offender Public Website](#).
 - Call Department of Justice (DOJ) at 916-227-3244 to verify if any adults in the home have criminal history. SWs must call DOJ from a County landline or County issued cell phone
 - Check for LE Calls for Service
 - Follow the Military Investigations protocol for active duty members
-

Preparing for an In-Person Investigation (cont.)

- Follow the Protocol for Working with Indian Families, Children and Tribes for tribal child/youth or families
- Contact Family Advocacy Program for active duty members
 - Naval Base San Diego (32nd Street): <https://www.sandiegonaavalhousing.com/base-directory/family-advocacy-program>
 - Naval Base Coronado: <https://www.coronadonaavalhousing.com/base-directory/family-advocacy-program>
- Initiate a parent search if a parent's contact information is missing
 - Send Parent Search request (04-52) to regional Search Clerk
- Consider cross-reporting, if not already completed:
 - Determine if the allegations meet the requirements for immediate cross reporting to LE
 - Consult with Complaint Investigations Unit PSS and coordinate investigations if allegations of abuse are against a resource home/licensed foster home
 - Determine if the referral must be cross reported to Community Care Licensing (CCL) and/or Institutions and Evaluations Unit (IEU)

NOTE: All referrals for a youth injured in a licensed daycare, a licensed group home, an FFA home or an STRTP must be cross reported to CCL within 24 hours or receipt of the report.

- Refer to Hotline - Function and Procedure for more information on cross reporting
- San Diego Humane Society 619-243-3466 refer to Reporting Suspected Animal Abuse or Cruelty
- District Attorney (see additional information below)
- Adult Protective Services Hotline (800) 510-2020
- Juvenile Hall (JH) Superintendent, Fax (858) 694-4333 on allegations of abuse in JH
- California Department of Public Health Licensing and Certification Program (619) 688-6190 Fax (619) 688- 6444 for abuse in mental health facility (psychiatric hospital or day treatment center)

NOTE: The Licensing and Certification Program does not license all facilities mentioned above so SW may be directed to another licensing agency.

- Office of the Ombudsman for fatalities, near fatalities, and critical incidents
- Other county and state child welfare agencies
- The International Liaison (ILO) for cross border referrals with Mexico and other international referrals
- Provost Marshall Camp Pendleton (760) 725-3888 Fax (760) 725-0820 Attention: Military Police for abuse in day care on base
- Trans-border/International Liaison at (858) 514-6730 – Trans-border referrals
- Reporting Suspected Welfare Fraud (800) 421-2252 Fax (858) 514-6690.

NOTE: Whenever taking client data out into the field to conduct an investigation, staff will follow county policy related to the security of Portable Devices and Media.

Deconfliction Process

Deconfliction is a process coordinated by the DOJ and locally through the San Diego – Law enforcement Coordination Center (SD-LECC) to facilitate communication between local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies to ensure officer safety in the field. The process allows LE officers to know if another LE agency has criminal intelligence, an active investigation, or planned activity at a location.

As a non-LE partner, Deconfliction for CFWB promotes SW safety by allowing CFWB to notify the SD-LECC when a SW plans to make contact with a family that has a referral with High Conflict risk factors.

High Conflict (HC) risk factors include:

- Known gang activity
- Possession of weapons and possible criminal activity or mental health concerns
- Drug sales/ manufacturing
- CSEC (youth identified as CSE or at clear risk)
- Parolee with violent criminal history
- Other potentially violent criminal activity

See Drug Endangered Children and Law Enforcement Liaison Protocol for the Deconfliction process steps.

Gathering Information

Relevant information not gathered prior to having in-person contact with the family, will be gathered during the investigation; refer to Preparing for an In-Person Investigation section of this policy. SW must make all efforts to obtain documents such as: police reports, restraining orders, medical reports, drug test results, etc. prior to closing the referral. SWs will make at least three attempts to obtain the necessary supporting documents, and the SW will enter contacts in CWS/CMS of all efforts made to obtain supporting documentation.

Referrals that are nearing the 30-day timeline, and only pending documentation, will be closed without importing the documents. There must be a CFWB manager approval to maintain the referral open past 30 days when the only pending item to close a referral is supporting documentation not received from an outside agency. If the documentation is received after the referral is closed, the PSS can import the documents into CWS/CMS and enter a contact explaining the reason the document was imported after the close date. If the SW does not receive the documentation requested after three attempts and the referral is open for 30 days or more the SW will follow steps listed in the Changing Allegation Conclusions and Reopening Closed Referrals section of the ER - Closing Referrals policy.

As information surfaces during the investigation, the SW will:

- Interview collaterals
 - Attempt to assess all household members
-

Gathering Information (cont.)

ER SWs may verbally share information regarding the allegation(s) with the parent. The referral does not need to be closed to provide verbal information collected or gathered during the investigation. SWs are encouraged to provide the parent(s) new information gathered that could impact the well-being and safety of the child. If a parent is requesting records when a referral is open and being investigation, the parent must wait until the disposition is complete and the referral is closed. SWs will **not** release records to parents. Parents seeking record copies on referrals will be directed to Legal Support Services, (858) 616-5950. See the Confidentiality - General policy for more information on releasing information to parents or sharing information to other entities.

If a child is not a family member in the referral (e.g., the child is a witness), then the SW must obtain consent from that child's parent(s) before interviewing that child. If that additional child is found to be or could also be a victim, open a companion referral (see Companion Referrals in this policy).

Interviewing Children

The SW will interview all children alleged to be abused, neglected, or exploited, as well as all siblings in an age-appropriate manner. If there is an infant in the home (age 0-24 months) refer to Infants 0-24 months section of this policy. Interviews will be completed within developmentally appropriate time-limits, and **never** longer than necessary regardless of the timeframe. Generally, interviews with children of any age should be kept under 60 minutes and will **never** exceed 60 minutes in schools.

NOTE: Refer to Interviewing a Child at School for policies regarding school interviews.

Consent from the parent or legal guardian (as appointed by a court) is required to enter a home and/or interview a child unless:

- Exigent circumstances exist, or
- An investigative warrant is obtained.

If a SW is **refused entry** to a family's home to assess the welfare of a child and it is a **non-emergency** situation, the SW must get an Investigative Search Warrants (ISWs) prior to entering. If it is an **emergency**, the SW will contact law enforcement.

SWs are to conduct investigations in the family home unless a particular interview would be more appropriate in a different setting. Generally, SWs will not interview children in the home when a parent/guardian is not home and must consult with a PSS prior to interviewing a child without a parent/guardian present. Children (and alleged adult victims) should be interviewed in a safe, private, and neutral location outside the presence of the parent(s), caregivers, and alleged perpetrators. SWs must utilize their engagements skills to discuss the parents' worries if they do not want to allow children to be interviewed in a private area (i.e. bedroom, living room and parent left to a different part of the house, etc.). Consider the allegations and if there is information about where the abuse or neglect took place and how discussing those incidents in that environment may impact the child.

Refer to Interviewing a Child at School for policies regarding school interviews.

Interviewing Children (cont.)

To prevent additional trauma to a child who is a victim of (or a witness to) child abuse, all attempts should be made to coordinate the initial interview with Law Enforcement if they are involved, except at school. If a child requires a forensic interview, the SW's initial interview with the child should gather only the "minimal facts" related to the allegations necessary to make immediate safety and investigative decisions before the forensic interview. Regardless of the allegation type, when a forensic interview cannot be scheduled before CFWB is required to make contact with the child and and/or to determine the immediate safety of the child. The SW can conduct the interview on other abuse types directly following the forensic interview. (See Child Victim Witness Protocol and the Child Victim-Witness Checklists.)

There are National protocols on best practice techniques in interviewing children about abuse. Ideally, the SW should use free-recall, open-ended questions (e.g., "Tell me all about your dad"; "You said your brother touched you, tell me all about it") as much as possible and encourage children to continue in their narrative responses by using narrative prompts (then what happened? What happened next? Tell me more about ____). See the 10 Step Investigative Interview guide for more information.

Once a child-victim has exhausted his/her narrative response, if the SW needs more information, the SW can ask additional focused questions (who, what, where, when, how?) to clarify needed areas.

Depending on the child's verbal and non-verbal responses, the SW may need to follow up with additional open-ended questions to assess the circumstances/contexts of the event(s) to determine the risk, if any, to the child.

If the child discloses concerning information during the general assessment, then the SW will conduct a minimal facts interview to get more information.

It is important for the SW to document not only the interviewee's responses, but the questions asked. Quote both whenever possible.

SWs need to be mindful that recantation is not unusual in child sexual abuse cases.

SWs must NEVER:

- ask leading questions (e.g., "Your dad did something to you, didn't he?")
- promise a child anything in exchange for information (e.g., as soon as you tell me what I need to know, we can go to the park.)

The 10 Step Investigative Interview guides social workers on how to conduct interviews based on national protocols and best practice techniques.

If a child needs medical attention, refer to Medical Opinions - Forensic Examinations/Interviews and Medical Consultations. Children with marks and bruises or concerns of sexual abuse should be seen by a medical child abuse expert. The policy requirements for Forensic Interviews and/or a Forensic Medical Exam can be found in full in the Child Victim Witness Protocol. For a table outlining the criteria for Forensic Interviews and/or Forensic Medical Exams for all allegations, refer to the Forensic Interview/Forensic Medical Exam Criteria resource.

Interviewing Children (cont.)

Additional interviews with the child should be conducted only when the necessary information is not included in any of the following:

- The initial interview held by the SW
- Interviews conducted by other professionals, including video recordings of interviews
- Reports from law enforcement, mental health, or medical personnel

When interviewing a victim child, the SW will reference the table below. As a reminder parental consent, exigent circumstances, or an investigative warrant is required to be able to interview a child. This includes asking the parent for consent to interview the child separately and away from the parent, caregiver, alleged perpetrator, or any other adult.

Setting/Timing of Interview	Approach
<p>Interviews will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• be apart from the adult, caregiver, and alleged offender.• be free from familial influence.• be neutral and comfortable to the victim, avoiding the site of the abuse whenever possible.• consider any immediate safety issues.• be in the language the victim knows and if more than one language be prepared to speak in the second language. If an interpreter is needed, arrange for a qualified interpreter to be present and brief the interpreter re: expectations. The interpreter cannot be a family member or another child.• be appropriate to the child's age and development.	<p>SWs will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• utilize the 10 Step Investigative Interview sheet.• build/develop rapport by exploring things that the victim likes to do, such as hobbies, school, being with friends, etc.• let the victim know who you are, what you do, and your purpose for visit. Example for a preschool-aged victim:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Instead of saying, "My name is John Smith and I am a Protective Services Worker," say, "My name is John and my job is to make sure kids are safe."• ensure there is a shared understanding of the word "safe."• be trauma informed, keeping the child's voice at the center of the interview. Three Houses and Safety House activities can engage a child and help gain investigation facts.• incorporate the use of SOP tools to build engagement and support a well-rounded assessment.• use comforting, nonthreatening verbal and nonverbal body language.• use language and sentence structures that are appropriate to the victim's developmental level. Example for a preschool-aged victim:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Instead of saying, "If I make a mistake, it is okay to correct me," say, "If I say something wrong, it's okay to tell me."

**Interviewing
Children (cont.)**

Setting/Timing of Interview	Approach
(cont.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• use solution-focused, open-ended questions, and follow-up questions.• avoid yes or no questions. For example, instead of, “can you tell me what happened the day you said your mom was taken by the police?” say, “tell me what happened the day you said your mom was taken by the police.”• elicit a promise to tell the truth, for example, “It’s really important that you tell me the truth. Do you promise that you will tell me the truth?” Avoid asking the difference between the truth and a lie.• never use coercion and/or make promises as a way to get a victim to talk. See the 10 Step Investigative Interview Tool.• ask the child about any known Native American/Indian heritage (if the child is old enough). See ICWA Inquiry and Noticing Manual and Protocol for Working with Indian Families, Children and Tribes for additional information.• take note and document the child’s appearance.• ask the child/youth who all lives in their home, what other adults frequently visit their home, and what other adults have frequent contact with them or take care of them.• Ask questions that help focus on how the abuse/neglect impacts the child/youth<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Ask clarifying questions to the children’s responses to understand more about the impacts to the child/youth.• Inquire about all types of abuse and neglect, assess for all safety threats.• Give a child a business card with an invitation to call any time (if age appropriate). <p>NOTE: Some situations are too risky for a child to have the SW’s business card before the SW has spoken to the parents. The SW will assess that risk before giving the child a card.</p>

Interviewing Children (cont.)

For additional tools/tips sheets on interviewing children, refer to:

- 10 Step Investigative Interview
 - 10 Step Investigative Interview (Spanish)
 - Interviewing Children/Youth Tip Sheet
 - Three Houses and Safety House How-To Guide
-

Infants (0-24 months)

When a referral is received with an infant in the home, the SW will complete the following and document this information in a contact:

- Request to see where the baby sleeps and naps
- Ensure the parents are educated on safe sleeping practices
- Ensure the parent(s) have adequate baby supplies
- Inquire about child care universal checklist items
- Inquire about immunizations and well-child exams
- Connect the family to cultural community based resources if they need support with meeting the needs of the baby.

One tool that can be used with the parents in the home is the Universal Checklist for Infants. If any items were identified on checklist as needing correction, the SW will ensure these corrections are made prior to closing the referral. The SW will upload the Universal Checklist for Infants in the CWS/CMS case file.

If the referral alleges that an infant (0 -12 months) may be malnourished or that any child in the home wearing a diaper is the victim of physical abuse, the SW will request to observe the parent change the baby's diaper and/or adjust the baby's clothing to ensure there are no visible signs of malnutrition or maltreatment. Refer to Body Checks policy.

Consistent with the child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) and existing California law, an "infant born and identified as being affected by substance abuse or withdrawal symptoms resulting from prenatal drug exposure, or a "Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder" is defined as an infant where substance exposure is indicated at birth, **AND** subsequent assessment identifies indicators of risk that may affect the infant's health and safety. This definition and more on the guidance regarding infants affected by substance abuse, plans of safe care, can be found in [All County Letter \(ACL\) 20-122](#).

The Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act (CARA) requires that both the infant and the parent/caregiver receive support and referrals for services to address any health and treatment needs. Asking the questions listed below and other relevant questions will assist in assessing the family's needs. When a referral is received regarding a substance affected infant, or if during the course of an investigation a substance affected infant is identified, the investigating SW will ask the following questions that will help gather pertinent information from the healthcare provider/service provider:

1. Did the infant test positive for a substance at birth?
 2. Did the mother use substances, including alcohol, during pregnancy?
 3. Did the mother screen positive for substances at delivery or during the pregnancy?
 4. Has a plan of safe care been developed?
-

Infants (0-24 months) (cont.)

5. Is the infant or parent already receiving services, or has the infant or mother been referred to services?
6. What is the nature of those services (e.g., inpatient/outpatient substance use treatment, Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT), parenting education, PHN services, etc.)?
7. Are there any additional concerns about the well-being of the infant, including concerns about the well-being of the mother/parent/caregiver that may indirectly affect the infant (e.g., family violence, human trafficking, etc.)?

The SW will document the information obtained in CWS/CMS. The CARA requires each state to report information about substance affected infants, including:

- data on the number of infants identified as substance-affected or withdrawal symptoms resulting from prenatal drug exposure (both illegal and legal substances), or a Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder
- The number of infants who had a plan of safe care developed
- The number of infants and affected family members or caregivers for who any referrals were made for necessary services of infants and affected family members or caregivers

In order to be compliant, the investigating SW will complete the **Contributing Factors** page in CWS/CMS on all children between 0-12 months of age with an allegation. As a reminder any substance use by the parents will be given a DECII special project code. Refer to Desk Guide Letter 8.10 and 8.11 for instructions on completing the contributing factors page.

When Safety Plans and/or Case Plans are developed and implemented for an infant born and identified as being affected by substance abuse, that plan will also act as the Plan of Safe Care (POSC) required by federal legislation. The safety plan must include all the plan of safe care requirements and these requirements will be documented in the safety plan and a contact. The SW will document in the investigative narrative that a plan of safe care was implemented with the family. The safety plan will be imported into CWS/CMS.

When investigating a referral that involves an infant 0-12 months, the SW will assess and identify any safety threats to the child, including any safety threat posed by a parent's substance use. The SW will document the safety threats when completing the Structured Decision Making (SDM) Safety Assessment and Risk Assessment tools. For more information on safety planning, refer to the Safety Plans policy.

NOTE: SW will consult with PSS and PHN regarding any health concerns for the infant.

Whenever there are allegations of abuse or neglect of an infant refer to the HVC protocol for policies regarding case management of these referrals. Review the Highly Vulnerable Children Protocol to determine if the child/circumstance is considered HVC.

HVC referrals/cases require multidisciplinary Case Consultation at each critical decision-making point.

Interviewing Parents

All parents must be contacted in-person regardless of custody orders, unless the parent's rights have been terminated then the SW will not contact them. An exception can be made if the parent is a witness to the reported abuse/neglect. All parents have equal rights to custody and legal rights to the child therefore non-custodial parents have a right to be aware of any referrals and allegations and may be able to provide safety when there is an identified safety threat. Non-custodial parents are oftentimes fathers and SWs must make all efforts to engage both parents equally. The Interviewing Fathers Tip Sheet is a resource available for SWs with tips and sample questions that can be utilized when interviewing fathers in an effort to engage them in the CWS process as much as possible. It is important that efforts be made to locate non-custodial parents and that a list of efforts made by the SW are documented in CWS/CMS. SWs will make the following attempts:

- Ask custodial parents, relatives, and collaterals about non-custodial parents names, custody orders, whereabouts, frequency and mode of contact with children, and contact information
- Ask children about all parents/caregivers, whereabouts, frequency and mode of contact with them, and contact information
- Make all efforts to locate whereabouts of non-custodial parents. This will include the following:
 - SWs will submit parent searches on parents whose whereabouts are unknown
 - SWs will document parent search results in a CWS/CMS contact and updated contact notebooks as needed
 - SWs will make in-person attempts to any addresses known within the county and follow all unable to locate steps
 - SWs will call any numbers identified for the non-custodial parent

When interviewing parents, the SW will:

- not enter the home without being invited in and be sure to document in a CWS/CMS contact how the SW was invited into the home and by whom. If permission is denied, the SW is prohibited from entering the home. A parent can withdraw their consent to be in the home. If a parent asks the SW to leave, the SW will ask to schedule an interview at an alternate location. The SW will immediately consult with PSS to discuss safety of the children in the home and whether or not contacting law enforcement or requesting a warrant is needed.
- ask which language they would prefer to speak in. Document the language the interview was conducted in using the 20-46. If an interpreter was used, document the interpreter's name.

NOTE: Children cannot be used as interpreters.

- inform the parent/caregiver of their Civil Rights Requirements, provide them with the following forms, and document that these forms were provided in a contact in CWS/CMS. If there is no in-person contact with the parent/caregiver then provide the following items by mail:
 - "Your Rights" pamphlet (Pub.13)
 - The Ombudsman brochure
 - HHSA form 20-46, "Language Needs Determination," even if the client's primary language is English. File the signed copy in the hard case file
 - Prepaid and pre-addressed envelope for client to return the 20-46 form.

Interviewing Parents (cont.)

- give the parents your business card.
- interview parents separately.
- investigate all allegations made in the referral and assess for all types of abuse and neglect. Get their specific responses to each part of the allegation.
- discuss child abuse and neglect laws with the parent(s), share the allegations made with the parents, and link the allegations with the child abuse laws. Document these conversations in the contacts.
- use solution-focused, open-ended questions to elicit information regarding Harm, Danger, and Acts of Protection.
- use strengths-based and trauma informed language to empower families.
- document the accounts of what happened using quotes as much as possible.
- document where interview took place. Document questions and responses.
- contact all parents, including any who do not live with the child(ren).
- ask parents about prior involvement with CWS, local or out-of-county/out-of-state, or out of country.
- ask the parents if they have lived in any other counties, states or countries, and if they have any children not living with them.
- ensure that information that could identify the RP is not disclosed.
- get Client Notebook (Field Worksheet/Face Sheet) information. Be sure to get birth date and place, social security number, marriage information, ethnicity, primary language, any aliases, and information about relatives. Ask to see a driver's license or other ID to verify information
- complete a genogram (04-18), ecomap, and/or Safety Circles if parent(s) are willing.
 - Verify parents of each child on referral. If there is a genogram from a previous investigation/case, verify information and add any new information. SWs will import the completed genograms and ecomaps/safety circles into CWS/CMS.

NOTE: If the parent(s)/children(ren) decline to participate in creating a genogram the SW will complete it and offer to share it with the family for further input. Refer to the Genograms and Ecomaps policy for all policies and procedures on genograms and ecomaps.

- ask the parent(s) who lives in the home (adults and children). Ask who else visits the home frequently and ask follow-up question, how often do they visit, do they help care for the children in the home, how do they support the family, etc.
- ask if the parents or children have any Native American ancestry, including:
 - Is the child a member of or eligible for membership in one or more federally recognized Indian tribes or Alaska Native villages? If yes, then which tribe or tribes may the child be a member of?
 - Is either biological parent of the child a member of a federally-recognized tribe? If yes, then which tribe?
 - Is the domicile or residence of the child, the child's parent, guardian or the child's Indian custodian on a reservation or in an Alaska Native village?
 - Does the child's biological family identify as having ancestry or heritage with one or more federally-recognized Indian tribe or Alaska Native village?
 - Does the child, or any of the child's relatives, receive services or benefits from a tribe or tribes? If yes, which tribe or tribes?
 - Does the child or any of the child's relatives receive services or benefits available to Indians from the federal government?

Interviewing Parents (cont.)

If the parent does not have all of the information, ask if there is anyone in the family who may have more information regarding Indian heritage. See Appendix 3 in the ICWA Inquiry and Noticing Manual for additional information on inquiry and noticing.

- Take note of the environment in the home and document observations. SWs will address the following:
 - Include a description of what makes the home safe and free from and safety hazard.
 - Assess for any potential safety hazards that may make the living conditions hazardous and immediately threatening to the health and/or safety of the child (consider child's age and developmental status). Examples of safety hazards include but are not limited to:
 1. Leaking gas.
 2. Lack of water or utilities and no alternative or safe provisions have been made.
 3. Open/broken/missing windows.
 4. Exposed electrical wires.
 5. Excessive garbage or rotted food that threatens the health.
 6. Serious illness or significant injury has occurred due to the living conditions, and these conditions still exists (e.g. lead poisoning, rat bites, child ingested chemicals/cleaning products, etc.).
 7. Evidence of human or animal waste throughout the living quarters.
 8. Accessible guns/weapons.
 9. Drug production in the home.
 10. Substances such as drugs (including prescription drugs), drug paraphernalia, cleaning supplies, or other unsafe objects within reach of a child that may endanger their health and/or safety.
 - **Note:** Whenever possible, partner with the family to address safety hazards and collaborate on ways to support the family in correcting conditions immediately threatening to the health and safety of the child.
- check the home for food, if there are allegations in the referral regarding lack of food or malnutrition.

Additionally:

- If there is an **infant** in the home (age 0-24 months) refer to Infants 0-24 months section of this policy
 - If a child is being removed,
 - ask the parent to fill out the applicable "**All About Me**" form (for children ages 1-17, or infants).
 - provide the parents a copy of the Letter to Parents When a Child is Being Removed from the Home (04-62).
 - Request the parents to sign the Consent to Treat (04-24p) and Authorization to use or disclose protected health information (04-29A-P).
-

Interviewing Parents (cont.)

- If the alleged perpetrator is not the parent/guardian **always assess the parent/guardian for General Neglect** to determine if the parent/guardian was appropriately protective of the child and knew or reasonably should have known about the abuse or neglect for situations. This does not mean allegations of Neglect will be added to the referral, only add a Neglect allegation when evidence indicates the parent was negligent and/or failed to protect. This includes but is not limited to:
 - Children/youth identified at risk for CSEC/HT
 - The alleged perpetrator is a step-parent or an extended family member
 - Abuse to a child/youth by a perpetrator outside of the household
 - Abuse to a child/youth perpetrated by a minor on another minor in the home

Under no circumstances will the SW confiscate any property. If a SW believes that certain property (e.g., drugs, pornography) should be confiscated, or that illegal activity is taking place, then the SW will contact the appropriate law enforcement jurisdiction immediately. It is the responsibility of law enforcement personnel to take the appropriate action. SWs are not law enforcement personnel, and are not trained to gather criminal evidence.

NOTE: For guidance on procedures regarding confiscating property from youth at Polinsky Children's Center (PCC), please see the Polinsky Children's Center – Inspection and Contraband Procedures policy.

If the parent(s) want to record the interview, the SW will permit it, following the policy in the Confidentiality - General policy.

Should the parent wish for an additional party to be present during the interview (i.e. friend, attorney, etc.), the SW will explain to the parent that these individuals are not privy to confidential CFWB information.

If the parent insists that another person be present during their interview, the SW will:

- consult with PSS and/or Manager if there are concerns that the third party is intimidating the parent, compromising the integrity of the investigation, or there is a safety concern.
- advise the parent and additional party that child abuse investigations are confidential per WIC 827.
- advise that no information is to be disclosed to others.
- document that parties were advised of the confidential nature of the interview.

Refer to Interviewing Parents Tip Sheet.

Minor Parent Services

If a minor parent discloses to a Human Services Specialist (HSS) during the CalWORKS application process that living with a senior parent, legal guardian, or another adult relative would place the minor parent or their infant at risk of abuse, the HSS will make a referral to the Child Abuse Hotline. The investigating SW is required to complete a full investigation on these referrals and respond to CalWORKs within 20 calendar days regarding the youth applying for assistance.

Minor Parent Services

A “minor parent” is a pregnant or parenting minor, under age 18, who has never been married. A minor parent is not necessarily a dependent and can be the mother/father/parent of the infant. A “dependent minor parent” is a parent under the age of 18, who has an open dependency case.

If it is determined that there is a safety threat in the home of the senior parent or caregiver (parent or caregiver of the minor parent), and the minor parent is able to live independently with their infant, then the minor parent must be offered Minor Parent Services (MPS) which are:

- intended to be in-home SW visiting model of supportive services to provide.
- education and support for minor parents and their infant(s), to assist them in
- creating a healthy and safe environment.
- provided in the form of a Voluntary Services case, and should also focus on the
- following:
 - Infant health and development
 - Nutrition
 - Parenting skills
 - Life skills
- only offered to minor parents until age 18, who do not have an open case with OCS.
- provided and case managed by the MPS Liaison in the ILS Program.

The minor parent’s SW will inform the MPS Liaison of the following:

- new referral/allegations
 - a case gets opened
 - MDT meetings, CFTM and other case planning activities.
-

Assessing All Household Members and Others with Significant Contact

SWs should make best efforts to interview/assess **all** household members to ensure an investigation is thorough and complete.

Household members include all persons who have significant in-home contact with the child, including those who have a familial or intimate relationship with any person in the home. Note that SDM defines a household as all persons who have significant in-home contact with a child, including those who are a familial or intimate relationship with any person in the home. This may include persons who have an intimate relationship with a parent in the household (boyfriend/girlfriend/partner) but may not physically live in the home or a relative where the legal parent allows the relative authority in parenting and child caregiving decisions. Although the household assessed in SDM is the household of the alleged perpetrator the SW will interview/assess all members from all households the child is a part of including roommates or any other individuals living in the same house/physical structure.

Assess to determine if non-immediate family household members, and/or individuals with “significant contact” should have a client notebook in the referral. The individual with “significant contact” must have a client notebook for the SW to be able to substantiate an allegation against the “significant contact” perpetrator and refer the individual to the Child Abuse Central Index (CACI).

Refer to Processing DOJ Form BCIA 8583 .

Interviewing Collaterals

The SW will interview at minimum 2 collaterals. Collaterals are people who have (or may have) knowledge of the safety of the children and/or the situation alleged in the referral. Collaterals include, but are not limited to:

- Family members and friends
- School staff
- Medical staff (refer to Medical Opinions – Forensic Examinations/Interviews and Medical Consultations for more information)
- Law enforcement (including probation and parole)
- Caregiver/day care provider
- Service providers (e.g., therapists, drug treatment counselors, etc.)
- Neighbors, apartment managers, etc.

SWs will not disclose confidential information to collaterals.

SWs will advise collaterals that they may be called as witnesses.

NOTE: Collaterals provide additional information to the investigation or have knowledge of the family dynamic. Consider how this relationship may impact the collateral's view of the family. The RP (including a police report from law enforcement) is not considered a collateral source, as they have already provided the initial investigation information. See the Interviewing Collaterals section for more guidance on how to document RP contacts.

Interviewing the Alleged Perpetrator

An investigation requires interviewing the victim and the alleged perpetrator or documenting attempts to interview the alleged perpetrator.

If the alleged perpetrator is a parent who cannot be located, the SW will complete the Unable to Locate Letter (04-46) (available in English, Arabic, Farsi, Korean, Mandarin, Persian, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese) and mail it to the parent's last known address. At least 3 in-person attempts (only if the alleged perpetrator resides in San Diego County) and 3 telephone attempts will be made to contact the alleged perpetrator. If the alleged perpetrator refuses to be interviewed no additional attempts need to be made. All efforts will be documented in a CWS/CMS Contact Notebook and the investigation narrative prior to closing the referral.

When interviewing an alleged perpetrator:

- follow all of the protocols outlined in the Interviewing Parents section of this file.
- protect the identity of the reporting party (RP). Discuss the allegations in a way so as not to identify the RP (e.g., only discuss the relevant details of the alleged abuse, stay away from information that may identify the RP).
- inform the alleged perpetrator of the complaint/allegations against them.
- document the accounts of what happened using quotes as much as possible.

NOTE: If the SW interviews the alleged perpetrator before law enforcement does, the SW should not disclose to the alleged perpetrator any information about any physical evidence (e.g., videos, photographs, weapons, instruments, etc.).

Youth Perpetrators

If the alleged perpetrator is a minor youth, the SW must consider and document the following considerations in the Investigation Narrative:

- The relationship between the perpetrator and victim, including ages and developmental levels.
- The severity and frequency of the abuse.
- The possible long-term impact to the victim child.
- If the action constitutes developmentally normal behavior (i.e., non-extreme physical aggression between siblings, sexual exploration among pre-school aged children, etc.).
- If the perpetrator has the developmental capacity to understand the seriousness or willful disregard for the pain/fear of the victim child.

A minor identified as the perpetrator of sexual or physical abuse can be sent to DOJ/CACI. Physical abuse by a minor is reported when it is deemed assaultive behavior. Note that youth reported to CACI remain on CACI for 10 years and are then removed unless there is another offense.

See the CACI Grievance Procedures policy for additional information regarding reporting to the Department of Justice (DOJ) Child Abuse Central Index (CACI).

Taking Photographs

SWs should document with photos any evidence, including exculpatory evidence, that is relevant to the disposition of an allegation. Exculpatory evidence includes information that can excuse, justify, or absolve the parent or guardian of the allegation.

Always request to photograph:

- a hazardous home environment.
- the environment where an abusive/negligent act occurred.
- an object allegedly used to cause an abusive act.
- injuries on a victim of domestic violence.
- a physical injury on a child's body.

If the parents refuse to allow the SW to take photograph of any evidence, document that the request was made and that it was denied and document details of what was observed.

EXCEPTION: Do not photograph breasts or genitals. Instead, the SW will refer to Medical Opinions - Forensic Examinations/Interviews and Medical Consultations regarding getting an expert medical evaluation and opinion.

SWs will use only county-issued cell phones to take photos.

ALL photos must be saved by importing them into CWS/CMS. SWs **cannot** select which photographs to keep or delete, even if a photo is blurry, too dark, too light, etc.

SWs will email or Teams photos, taken on county-issued cell phones, to their county email for importation into CWS/CMS. Photos cannot be sent via text message. Photos should be imported within 7 calendar days; when entering a contact, the photos related to that contact should be imported and deleted from the cell phone.

Taking Photographs (cont.)

For policies and procedures on photographing children refer to the Body Checks policy.

When taking photographs, the SW will: follow all policies and procedures in Importing Photos into CWS/CMS and:

- explain the reason for taking photographs to the child.
 - ease the situation (if necessary) by allowing the child to photograph the SW
 - place a standard-sized object in the picture (e.g., coin, ruler, pen) to give the proper perspective as to the size of the injury.
 - print photos for court reports, as needed, and handle printed photos as any other evidence.
 - when printing, make sure to label each photo as described in the taking photographs section of the Body Check policy.
 - describe an injury in writing, providing any details that do not show up on the photograph.
-

When Law Enforcement (LE) is Involved

When LE is involved in a referral, the SW will make **all** attempts to contact assigned detectives, officers, and/or supervisory LE staff prior to starting any interviews.

CFWB will make every effort to work collaboratively with LE to implement Child Victim Witness Protocol and Child Victim-Witness Checklists to minimize trauma for children victims of serious physical abuse, sexual abuse, severe neglect or exposure to severe domestic violence.

CFWB will work with LE to preserve the criminal investigation, but CFWB **will not compromise establishing safety** for a child. Safety planning requires obtaining adequate information to establish if a safety threat is present and establishing a plan (that includes transparency of the threat) with the parent(s) to mitigate the threat.

If LE is requesting a SW not to investigate an allegation until they take the lead, the SW will explain CFWB 's mandate to investigate and establish safety. The SW can establish with LE what information they are specifically requesting the SW to withhold from the family. The SW and PSS will consult to determine how to proceed to ensure safety is assessed for the child(ren).

SW will clearly document in the contact narrative if LE requests that CFWB **not** contact the alleged perpetrator or victim for reasons related to their own investigation. If LE makes such a request, the SW will elevate the matter to the PSS, who will elevate it to the Manager. The Manager will discuss with the LE Lieutenant the need for CFWB to complete our child abuse investigation within our mandated timeframes.

If CFWB agrees to postpone an interview until LE can interview the alleged perpetrator, but LE's interview is delayed, then the Manager will make a decision to determine if the SW will interview the alleged perpetrator despite LE's request.

SWs are allowed to share investigation information with LE. See the Confidentiality Guide for guidelines related to sharing information and information on out-of-county and/or out-of-state (LE) sharing procedures.

When Law Enforcement (LE) is Involved

SWs can email photos and other documentation through encrypted email to LE. See Email Policy for more information.

NOTE: If SWs have photos, or other documents they would like delivered to Chula Vista Police Department, San Diego Police Department (SDPD) or the San Diego County Sheriff's Department they may email these documents directly. Only these two law enforcement agencies are connected via the Transport Layer Security (TLS) system that encrypts and delivers email securely. See the TLS List for a full list of approved providers on the TLS system.

Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC)

SWs are to become familiar with the risk factors and possible indicators of CSEC so they can make accurate assessments. If a SW suspects that a youth may be a victim of CSEC, an allegation of Exploitation should be added to the referral. The SW will ask the youth directly (but gently) if she/he/they have ever exchanged sex for something of value (e.g. money, food, drugs, or shelter, etc.). If, during the course of the investigation, the caregiver is found to be involved in the exploitation or trafficking of the child, an allegation of Sexual Abuse should be added. In referrals when a child is exploited or trafficked by someone without parent/caregiver knowledge or involvement, the extent to which the parent/caregiver is aware of the abuse is addressed under General Neglect/Failure to Protect and allegations of General Neglect should be added when applicable. The SW will explore the following to assess General Neglect:

- Is the caregiver aware of the exploitation, if so what actions have they attempted to make to protect the child? (e.g., called LE and reported child missing, called CFWB, referred youth to services, called youth's friends in attempt to locate them, etc.)
- Has the caregiver made any changes to the level of supervision for the child (e.g., checks phones regularly, has safety network stay at the home to supervise the child, etc.)
- Do the parent's inactions rise to the level of a safety threat? SW will assess for any potential safety threats based on the information/evidence collected

SWs will complete the Commercial Sexual Exploitation – Identification Tool (CSEIT) to screen for commercial sexual exploitation on **all children age 12 and above on every referral** (even referrals not identified as CSEC).

ER SWs are required to **document CSEC factors in CWS/CMS** in the Client Management Section (blue section)/Client Notebook by the following the steps in the table below:

Step	Action
1	Click the ID tab to access the CSEC Data table.
2	Select from the six CSEC Types and enter the Start Date . NOTE: The Start Date is a mandatory field; it cannot be less than the date of birth for the child or youth and cannot be a date in the future.

**Commercial Sexual
Exploitation of
Children (CSEC)
(cont.)**

Step	Action
3	<p>Enter the End Date.</p> <p>NOTES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The End Date is mandatory if an 'At Risk' value is created and an active 'Victim' row already exists. The same is true when a 'Victim' row is created and an active 'At Risk' row already exists. A child or youth cannot be at risk and a victim at the same time.• The End Date field is mandatory if 'Absence from Placement' is selected because the child or youth would have returned, and the SW would have interviewed them.• The End Date must be greater than or equal to the Start Date and cannot be a future End Date.

Refer to ER - Closing Referrals policy for instructions on documenting an Abuse Subcategory, while Substantiating a CSEC allegation of Exploitation or General Neglect involving the parent/caregiver.

For more information on CSEC, reference the CSEC Interagency Protocol and CSEC Response Team Protocol.

Complete SDM tools as appropriate.

**Pre-Placement
Preventive Services
(PPPS)**

Before removing a child from their home, SW will consider whether Pre-Placement Preventative Services (PPPS) would eliminate the need for removal.

PPPS are services provided to a child and family to eliminate the need to remove the child from the home. The SW or other persons may provide these services. If these services were provided, they must be documented on the Associated Services page of the Contact Notebook, whether or not a petition is filed. PPPS may include any of the following services:

- Safety Plans
 - Counseling
 - Child and Family Team Meetings
 - Intensive Family Preservation Program (IFPP)
 - Crisis Intervention
 - Emergency Shelter Care
 - Parent Training
 - Referrals to Community Resources (i.e. substance use treatment, mental health services, IFPP, Family Jewish Services, wraparound, etc.)
 - Referrals for Public Assistance, including Medi-Cal
 - Respite Care
 - Temporary/Emergency In-Home Caregiver Services
 - Teaching/Demonstrating Homemaker
 - Transportation.
-

**Pre-Placement
Preventive Services
(PPPS)**

NOTE: Continue to build on the family's existing strengths and utilize these strengths to mitigate danger and provide safety.

Exception: When the SW's contact with the child occurs during an emergency situation and the SW determines that the child cannot safely remain at home, that there is no viable safety plan, even with the provision of reasonable services, the child will be placed or detained without provisions of PPPS.

If PPPS were not provided, the reason(s) must be documented in the Detention Hearing Report (DHR).

**Releasing a Child in
Custody (W&IC
309[a])**

SWs will comply with [WIC 309\(a\)](#) when investigating a referral with a child who has been detained in protective custody by:

- immediately investigating all the facts and circumstances surrounding the child being taken into protective custody and,
- immediately releasing the child to the custody of the parent(s), legal guardian(s) or responsible relative unless the SW is able to document danger to the child, if returned.

The SW will not release the child from protective custody if:

- the child has no parent, guardian, or responsible relative; or the child's parent, guardian, or responsible relative is not willing to provide care for the child. The SW will exhaust all efforts to locate a safe relative or caregiver to care for the child when a parent/legal guardian cannot. SW must have approval of the parent/caregiver to safety plan with a relative/network person.
 - continued detention of the child is a matter of immediate and urgent necessity for the protection of the child and there are no reasonable means by which the child can be protected in their home or the home of a responsible relative.
 - there is substantial evidence that a parent, guardian, or custodian of the child is likely to flee the jurisdiction of the court.
 - the child has left a placement in which they were placed by the juvenile court.
 - the parent or other person having lawful custody of the child voluntarily surrendered physical custody of the child pursuant to Section 1255.7 of the Health and Safety Code (Safely Surrendered Baby) and did not reclaim the child within the 14-day period specific in subdivision (e) of that section.
-

**Unable to Locate a
Parent and/or
Family**

The SW must make reasonable efforts to locate the family until the SW can document that the family does not live at the address(es) given and/or there is no other way of contacting the family.

Reasonable efforts to **locate** a family include:

- Attempting three in-person home visits at different times of the day (this includes custodial and non-custodial parents' households; 3 attempts for each household),
AND
 - Attempting three telephone contacts at different times of the day.
-

Unable to Locate a Parent and/or Family (cont.)

“Different times of day” means at least 1 morning, 1 afternoon, and 1 evening/very late afternoon attempt. The SW will document in the CWS/CMS Contact Notebook the times the attempted in-person contacts/calls were made, as well as all information and efforts to contact the family.

Additional efforts to locate a family could include:

- Attempting a visit to their prior addresses in CWS/CMS.
- Speaking with relatives or collaterals from the current or previous referrals
- Contacting the school for the Emergency Contact information
- Going to the school during pick up/drop off time to meet the parents
- Asking neighbors or property managers about the family’s location
- Asking the RP for updated information
- Reviewing police reports or any other documentation that may contain other addresses or phone numbers for the family

The table below outlines the minimum in-person attempt requirements for referrals.

Category	In-Person Response Time	If Attempted Initial In-Person Response Is Not Successful
IRS/24-Hour	Within 2-24 hours from the time the referral is received by CFWB.	SW must make (and document) three in-person attempts within 24 hours. NOTE: Best practice is to consult with PSS for reasonable attempts. See ER - Closing Referrals for reasonable attempts when unable to locate. SW will make additional daily in-person attempts until the child/family is seen or until all avenues to locate/interview them have been exhausted and documented.
5-Day	Within 5 working (business) days from the date the referral is received by CFWB.	SW must make (and document) a subsequent inperson attempt no more than 3 business days after the initial attempt. SW will make additional weekly in-person attempts until the child/family is seen or until all avenues to locate/interview them have been exhausted and documented.
10-Day	Within 10 calendar days from the date the referral is received by CFWB (day 1 is the date the referral is received by CFWB.	SW must make (and document) a subsequent inperson attempt no more than 3 business days after the initial attempt. SW will make additional weekly in-person attempts until the child/family is seen or until all avenues to locate/interview them have been exhausted and documented.

Unable to Locate a Parent and/or Family (cont.)

The SW will do all of the following that apply:

- Check with the RP prior to closing the referral for any new information, updates, location, etc. A minimum of 2 attempts will be made to contact the RP.
- Search CWS/CMS for other address information or relatives' address/telephone information.
- For a 24-Hour/IRS the PSS will consider requesting standby assistance on very high risk situations when SW is unable to locate the family. See Standby After-Hours Investigations policy for more.
- If there is, or was, an Eligibility case, check with the Hotline or Eligibility staff for address information.
- Complete online searches for parents/caregivers.
- Contact apartment manager and/or neighbors.
- Check with area schools to determine if child is attending school.
- Check the child's listed school of origin for possible new home address and/or phone numbers..
- Check ["Who's in Jail Website"](#) , the [Federal Bureau Prisons](#) site to rule out a parent being incarcerated and other inmate search sites.
- If the child is from one of the federally recognized Tribes in San Diego County, contact the Tribal Representative before going out on an investigation. For additional information on completing investigations on a Native American child, refer to CFWB Protocol to Working with Native American Children, Families and Tribes.

When the SW is unable to locate a family after making reasonable efforts, the referral may be closed. An "Unable to Locate" letter (04-46 available in English, Arabic, Farsi, Korean, Mandarin, Persian, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese) must be sent to the last known home address and a copy placed in the hard file.

REMINDER: The SW must maintain confidentiality.

Updating Notebooks in CWS/CMS

The SW will add allegations of abuse to the current referral in CWS/CMS if:

- any additional sibling(s) is/are added to the referral and the additional sibling is found to be at risk for abuse or neglect.
- Any new allegation(s) of abuse or neglect are reported during an open investigation.

If no client notebook exists, the SW will create new client notebooks in CWS/CMS for:

- any additional siblings not listed on the referral.
- any additional household members, with allegations, not initially identified by the RP at time the report was made to the Hotline.

SW will contact their office specific Search Merge clerk when new notebooks are created or to assign a State ID on updated notebooks.

When there are siblings, or any household members, with allegations, not initially identified by the RP at the time the report was made to the Hotline, the SW will complete a CWS/CMS search prior to creating a new client notebook. If a client notebook exists for the youth/parent/household member/alleged perpetrator, the SW will attach the existing notebook to the referral. If no client notebook is found, a new notebook will be created in the referral.

Updating Notebooks in CWS/CMS (cont.)

For instructions on how to search for a client in CWS/CMS and/or attaching a client notebook to a referral see Attaching a Client to a Referral or Case in the CWS/CMS Desk Guide.

When the name of a referral that is listed as a “no-name” is discovered, the Hotline or assigned SW will:

- change the name on the ID page of the Referral Notebook in CWS/CMS.
- search for existing client notebooks.
- update client notebooks.
- contact the appropriate search/merge clerk for state ID number assignment.

If new allegations are added, the ER SW will cross report to LE all allegations except General Neglect.

If a perpetrator is identified during an investigation, the ER SW will update the allegation notebook in CWS/CMS with the alleged perpetrator’s information.

All information added throughout the investigation will be included in the Investigation Narrative, if deemed appropriate.

Companion Referrals

When documenting companion referrals in CWS/CMS:

- The people in companion referrals are not entitled to each other’s information. To preserve confidentiality, contacts and investigation narrative should mainly address referral child(ren). If there is a need to address what the companion referral child said for clarity, they will include their initials and the 19-digit companion referral number, and provide basic information about that child’s statement, but will state “for additional info on other minor’s interview(s), see companion referral # ____.”
 - These contact will be documented as collateral contacts as they are witnesses not the victim child.
 - subsequent references to that child will be documented by their initials only. The child’s name may be used if the child is not listed as a victim child in another referral and consent was provided by the child’s parent/caregiver.
 - The statement **“If this record is released to anyone, the names from this contact will be redacted”** will be added to the top of the contact narrative.
 - The SW **will not** associate companion referrals with the primary referral or add companion children as collaterals. **Refer to the companion referral by referral number only** to protect the confidentiality of the other family.
-

Complaint Investigations

ER SWs are the lead investigators when a referral is received by the Hotline alleging abuse or neglect by a relative, NREFM, licensed foster parent, resource parent, or family member in the household of a licensed foster home or a resource family approved home. The ER SW will consult with the supervisor of the Resource Home Investigating Unit/Complaint Specialists Unit to determine if a secondary assignment will be given to a Complaint Investigator SW.

The contact number for the Complaint Unit is 858-650-5876.

Closing Referrals

If contact is lost with the family and the most recent Safety Assessment was unsafe, the referral must be consulted at an MDT meeting prior to closing the referral.

Determine if the information described, disclosed, corroborate, and/or found as evidence is applicable to a specific category of child abuse as defined in the California Penal Code (Physical Abuse, Neglect, Sexual Abuse, and/or Emotional Abuse). See Definitions of Allegation Types.

Reminder: As with all investigations regardless of the allegation type, the SW will assess for **all** types of abuse/neglect (see Consistent Investigations).

If a new allegation is discovered during the investigation and/or alleged, the SW will not create a new referral but add the allegations to the existing referral prior.

For policies and procedures on closing referrals refer to the ER - Closing Referrals policy

Definitions of Allegation Types

The table below describes the different types of allegations and their definitions. When determining the disposition of allegations, the SW will refer to the definitions of Unfounded, Inconclusive, and Substantial found in the “Investigations Outcome” section of the ER - Closing Referrals policy as well making a determination of whether the information obtained during the course of the investigation meets the penal code definition.

Allegation Type	Definition
General Neglect	Per Penal Code 11165.2(b), means the negligent failure of a person having the care of custody of a child to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care, or supervision where no physical injury to the child has occurred but the child is at substantial risk of suffering serious physical harm or illness. “General neglect” does not include a parent’s economic disadvantage.
Severe Neglect	Per Penal Code 11165.2(a), means the negligent failure of a person having the care or custody of a child to protect the child from severe malnutrition or medically diagnosed non-organic failure to thrive. It also means those situations of neglect where any person having the care or custody of a child willfully causes or permits the person or health of the child to be placed in a situation such that his or her person or health is endangered , as proscribed by Section 11165.3, including the intentional failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, or medical care.

**Definitions of
Allegation Types
(cont.)**

Allegation Type	Definition
Emotional Abuse	Per Penal Code 11165.3, as “a situation in which any person willfully causes or permits any child to suffer, or inflicts thereon, unjustifiable physical pain or mental suffering , or having the care or custody of any child, willfully causes or permits the person or health of the child to be placed in a situation in which his or her person or health is endangered.
Physical Abuse	<p>Per Penal Code 11165.4, as “unlawful corporal punishment or injury” in a situation where any person willfully inflicts upon any child any cruel or inhuman corporal punishment or injury resulting in a traumatic condition.</p> <p>As defined by Penal Code 11165.3: As used in this article, “the willful harming or injuring of a child or the endangering of the person or health of a child,” means a situation in which any person willfully causes or permits any child to suffer, or inflicts thereon, unjustifiable physical pain or mental suffering, or having the care or custody of any child, willfully causes or permits the person or health of the child to be placed in a situation in which his or her person or health is endangered.</p>
Sexual Abuse/ Exploitation	<p>Per Penal Code 11165.1 as sexual assault or sexual exploitation as defined by the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) "Sexual assault" means conduct in violation of one or more of the following sections: Section 261 (rape), subdivision (d) of Section 261.5 (statutory rape), 264.1 (rape in concert), 285 (incest), 286 (sodomy), subdivision (a) or (b), or paragraph (1) of subdivision (c) of Section 288 (lewd or lascivious acts upon a child), 288a (oral copulation), 289 (sexual penetration), or 647.6 (child molestation). (b) Conduct described as "sexual assault" includes, but is not limited to, all of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Any penetration, however slight, of the vagina or anal opening of one person by the penis of another person, whether or not there is the emission of semen. (2) Any sexual contact between the genitals or anal opening of one person and the mouth or tongue of another person. (3) Any intrusion by one person into the genitals or anal opening of another person, including the use of any object for this purpose, except that, it does not include acts performed for a valid medical purpose.

**Definitions of
Allegation Types
(cont.)**

Allegation Type	Definition
Sexual Abuse/ Exploitation (cont.)	<p>(4) The intentional touching of the genitals or intimate parts (including the breasts, genital area, groin, inner thighs, and buttocks) or the clothing covering them, of a child, or of the perpetrator by a child, for purposes of sexual arousal or gratification, except that, it does not include acts which may reasonably be construed to be normal caretaker responsibilities; interactions with, or demonstrations of affection for, the child; or acts performed for a valid medical purpose.</p> <p>(5) The intentional masturbation of the perpetrator's genitals in the presence of a child.</p> <p>Per Penal Code 11165.1 as sexual assault or sexual exploitation as defined by the following:</p> <p>(a) Sexual exploitation refers to any of the following:</p> <p>(1) Conduct involving matter depicting a minor engaged in obscene acts in violation of Section 311.2 (preparing, selling, or distributing obscene matter) or subdivision (a) of Section 311.4 (employment of minor to perform obscene acts).</p> <p>(2) Any person who knowingly promotes, aids, or assists, employs, uses, persuades, induces, or coerces a child, or any person responsible for a child's welfare, who knowingly permits or encourages a child to engage in, or assist others to engage in, prostitution or a live performance involving obscene sexual conduct, or to either pose or model alone or with others for purposes of preparing a film, photograph, negative, slide, drawing, painting, or other pictorial depiction, involving obscene sexual conduct. For the purpose of this section, "person responsible for a child's welfare" means a parent, guardian, foster parent, or a licensed administrator or employee of a public or private residential home, residential school, or other residential institution.</p> <p>(3) Any person who depicts a child in, or who knowingly develops, duplicates, prints, or exchanges, any film, photograph, video tape, negative, or slide in which a child is engaged in an act of obscene sexual conduct, except for those activities by law enforcement and prosecution agencies and other persons described in subdivisions (c) and (e) of Section 311.3. Commercial sexual exploitation refers to either of the following:</p> <p>i. The sexual trafficking of a child, as described in subdivision (c) of Section 236.1.</p>

Definitions of Allegation Types (cont.)

Allegation Type	Definition
Sexual Abuse/ Exploitation (cont.)	(4) The provision of food, shelter, or payment to a child in exchange for the performance of any sexual act described in this section or subdivision (c) of Section 236.1.
At-Risk, Sibling Abused	<p>Per ACL 07-52, the at-risk, sibling abused allegation is to be used when a report has been made about a child alleging abuse and/or neglect, and the child's siblings(s) are also at-risk of abuse and/or neglect.</p> <p>Refer to the WIC 300 Petitions - Descriptions and Documentation for guidance on filing petition on siblings at risk of being abused and/or neglected, and what to document.</p>
Caretaker Absence/Incapacity	Per ACL 07-52 , the caretaker absence/incapacity allegations should be used when a child has no parent or guardian capable of providing appropriate provisions for care. In some of these cases the parent or guardian has been incarcerated or institutionalized and no provision for care has been arranged for the child for the duration of their absence. In other cases the parent or guardian's whereabouts are unknown at the time, and it appears the parent or guardian has no intention of returning.

Courtesy Walkthrough

The following table reviews the process for when the Hotline receives a request by an outside state's child welfare agency for a courtesy walkthrough/site inspection of a non-offending parent's home. San Diego CFWB will accept the request if there is a court order or minute order showing the request is made by the state's juvenile dependency court.

Step	Who	Action
1	Hotline SW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Hotline SW will request a copy of the court order showing cause to do the home visit. • The Hotline SW will inform the caller that a SW may be assigned to complete a home walkthrough, but they will not recommend placement or complete a Safety/Risk Assessment. • If the caller wishes to continue, the Hotline SW will utilize the parent's zip code to assign the walkthrough to the appropriate office, with CAT determining the SW assignment, and CC the ICPC inbox. Please see Hotline - Assignment of Referrals for further information on assignments.

**Courtesy
Walkthrough (cont.)**

Step	Who	Action
1	Hotline SW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Hotline SW will request a copy of the court order showing cause to do the home visit. The Hotline SW will inform the caller that a SW may be assigned to complete a home walkthrough, but they will not recommend placement or complete a Safety/Risk Assessment. If the caller wishes to continue, the Hotline SW will utilize the parent's zip code to assign the walkthrough to the appropriate office, with CAT determining the SW assignment, and CC the ICPC inbox. Please see Hotline - Assignment of Referrals for further information on assignments.
2	ICPC SW	<p>The ICPC desk will track and log all requests for a courtesy walkthrough including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Date of request Requesting state Assignment information: region/program and SW Date of completion. Date provided back to the requesting state
3	ER SW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The assigned ER worker will contact the parent and schedule the home walkthrough within 10 calendar days of receiving the request. The ER SW will utilize the 04-807 (Courtesy Home Walk Through Checklist) to complete the courtesy walkthrough with the parent. <p>NOTE: The SW will not complete investigative interviews or Safety and Risk Assessments for a courtesy walk-through. The SW is only responsible for completing the 04-807 "Courtesy Home Walk Through Checklist".</p>
4	ER SW and PSS	Once the ER SW completes the 04-807, they will review it with their supervisor and both the SW and PSS will sign the document within 7 calendar days from the completed visit.
5	ER SW	The ER SW will send the signed 04-807 to the requesting state and CC the ICPC desk for tracking.
6	ICPC SW	The ICPC desk will log the completion of the 04-807 and store the completed 04-807.

Alignment with SET

This policy supports SET [Value 1](#) by valuing the importance of meaningful relationships with children, youth and families, recognizing that enhancing safety for children and youth in the home is the top priority, and building on family strengths.
