

**Cuyahoga County Department of Children and Family Services
(CCDCFS)
Policy Statement**

Policy Chapter	Investigations
Policy Number:	2.03.02
Policy Name:	Justifications and Waivers When Completing Investigations

Approved:	Richard B. Werner, Interim Director
Effective Date:	05/04/1993
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PURPOSE: To ensure that all reports are responded to within state mandated time frames and proper documentation of the failure to meet deadlines or complete specific assessment/investigation activities are included in each record.

SCOPE: This policy applies to all Cuyahoga County Department of Children and Family Services (CCDCFS) social work staff responsible for the assessment/investigation of reports accepted by the agency.

POLICY

- A. The completion of the safety assessment is required within the first four working days of receiving the report. This time frame may be extended until face-to-face contact with each required participant is completed or until CCDCFS is required to make a report disposition or final case decision.
- B. All referrals are to be investigated within a thirty day mandated time frame. A fifteen-day extension of this time frame may be requested if there is information, which is required to make case resolution/disposition that the investigating social worker is unable to obtain within the first thirty days. This includes family assessments, ongoing case assessment/investigations, and specialized assessment/investigations.
- C. CCDCFS may extend time frames and waive the completion of specific assessment/investigation activities with written justification and supervisory approval.
- D. If a safety plan is completed, the signature of the parent, guardian, or custodian, or person(s) responsible for an action step will occur within twenty-four hours from receipt of the verbal authorization.
- E. Senior Supervisors within the agency serve as the director's designee for approval of justifications/waivers.

PROCEDURES

I. TIME FRAME EXTENSIONS

Procedures for Extension of Safety Assessment

- A. The investigating social worker will make two face-to-face attempts with the alleged child victim (ACV) and at least one parent, guardian, or custodian having routine responsibility for the care of the alleged child victim. If this is unsuccessful, investigating social worker will document attempts in SACWIS and complete appropriate waiver in SACWIS.
- B. The investigating social worker will forward the waiver in SACWIS to his/her supervisor for approval.
- C. The supervisor will approve and route the waiver in SACWIS to the senior supervisor.
- D. The senior supervisor will review and complete the final approval.
- E. Once the investigating social worker has had face-to-face contact with the ACV and at least one parent, guardian, or custodian having routine responsibility for the care of the alleged child victim, the safety assessment must be completed within 24 hours.

Procedures for Fifteen Day Time Frame Extensions

- A. The specific reason(s), which may justify the approval of a need for an extension of mandated time frames, shall be documented by the investigating worker in SACWIS.
- B. The investigating social worker will forward the waiver in SACWIS to his/her supervisor for approval.
- C. The supervisor will approve and route the waiver in SACWIS to the senior supervisor.
- D. The senior supervisor will review and complete the final approval.
- E. All time frame extensions must be requested by the investigating worker and approved by the supervisor and senior supervisor before the thirtieth calendar day of receipt of the report by the Agency.
- F. Time frames for the completion of the assessment/investigation may only be extended for an additional fifteen days over the original thirty-day time limit.

CCDCFS may NOT extend the completion time for the following activities:

- A. Time frames for attempting the initial face-to-face contact with principals of the case, including the alleged child victim or the telephone contact with a collateral source.
- B. Requesting assistance from the county prosecutor, CCDCFS's legal counsel, or the court, when refused access to the alleged child victim or any record needed to conduct the assessment/investigation.

Procedures to Extend Safety Plan Signatures

- A. The investigating social worker will attempt to obtain signatures of the parent, guardian, or custodian, or person(s) responsible for any action step on the Safety Plan within twenty-four hours from receipt of verbal authorization. If this is unsuccessful, investigating social worker will document attempts in SACWIS and complete the appropriate waiver in SACWIS. The time frame of the extension shall not exceed five working days.
- B. The investigating social worker will forward the waiver in SACWIS to his/her supervisor for approval.
- C. The supervisor will approve and route the waiver in SACWIS to the senior supervisor.
- D. The senior supervisor will review and complete the final approval.

II. WAIVING ASSESSMENT/INVESTIGATION ACTIVITIES

Procedures for Waiving the Completion of Assessment/Investigation Activities

- A. When the investigating social worker is unable to complete specific casework activities related to the assessment / investigation of an assigned report as per CCDCFS Policy # 2.03.00 *Standards for the Investigations of Intake Reports*, a written justification must be documented in SACWIS.
The waiver justification must:
 - 1. Identify the reason each assessment / investigation activity cannot be completed.
 - 2. Be approved by senior supervisor prior to the expected completion date of the assessment/investigation or due date of the extended time frame.
 - 3. Be maintained in the SACWIS case record.

B. CCDCFS may waive the completion of the following casework activities:

1. Face-to-face interview with each alleged child victim or child subject of the report.
2. Face-to-face interview with each child in the home of the alleged child victim or child subject of the report.
3. Face-to-face interview with each adult residing in the home of the alleged child victim or child subject of the report, including the parent(s), guardian, or custodian.
4. Face-to-face interview with the alleged perpetrator.
5. Face-to-face or telephone interviews with any identified witnesses and collateral sources.
6. Completion of required Safety Assessment, Family Assessment, Ongoing Case Assessment, and Specialized Assessment/Investigation documents if:
 - a) The family has moved and CCDCFS is unable to complete the assessment/investigation.
 - b) If the family has moved out of the county and a referral was made to the appropriate Public Children's Services Agency (PCSA).
 - c) If the family is unable to be located.
7. When investigating worker has not obtained sufficient information from any principal of the report or any witnesses/collaterals, the completion of the safety assessment, family assessment, ongoing case assessment/investigation and specialized assessment/investigation may be waived. This is **ONLY if ALL of the following apply:**
 - a) The parent, guardian, or custodian of the ACV refused CCDCF to have contact with family members, including principals of the report, to complete the required assessment activities,
 - b) CCDCFS consulted legal counsel regarding the report and the family's refusal to engage in the assessment/investigation process,
 - c) CCDCFS legal counsel advised CCDCFS no legal action will be pursued,
 - d) CCDCFS report disposition is unsubstantiated, substantiated, or indicated,
 - e) Notifying the alleged perpetrator in writing of the report disposition unless the disposition is 'unable to locate' or 'family moved; unable to complete assessment investigation', or the alleged perpetrator is unknown.

- C. In order to waive specific casework tasks, the investigating social worker will complete the waiver in SACWIS and forward to his/her supervisor for approval.
- D. The supervisor will approve and route the waiver in SACWIS to the senior supervisor.
- E. The senior supervisor will review and complete the final approval.

CCDCFS may NOT waive the completion of any of the following notifications:

- A. Notifying the ACV of the report disposition.
- B. Notifying the ACV's parent, guardian, or custodian of the report disposition unless the disposition is 'unable to locate' or 'family moved—unable to complete assessment investigation'.
- C. Notifying the alleged perpetrator in writing of the report disposition unless the disposition is "unable to locate" or "family moved—unable to complete assessment investigation", or the alleged perpetrator is unknown.
- D. Notifying the alleged perpetrator of the allegations made against him/her at the time of the initial contact with the individual unless CCDCFS did not make contact with him/her during the assessment/investigation.
- E. Notifying the administrator, director, or other chief administrative officer of the out-of-home care entity of the allegations contained in the child abuse or neglect report and the person named as the alleged perpetrator.
- F. Notifying the administrator, director, or other chief administrative officer of the out-of-home care entity in writing of the disposition.
- G. Notifying the appropriate licensing and supervising authorities of a child abuse or neglect report involving an out-of-home care entity.
- H. Notifying law enforcement regarding a request for a third party investigation if a child abuse or neglect report alleges a criminal offense.

The following additional casework activities may NOT be waived:

- A. Completion of report disposition.
- B. Providing of required information to mandated reporters, upon request.
- C. Providing licensing and supervising authorities with information regarding the investigation of an out-of-home care abuse or neglect report.

- D. Providing written notification of the right to appeal the report disposition and the method for filing the appeal to the alleged perpetrator at the time of the official notification of the report disposition unless notification is waived because CCDCFS did not make contact with him/her during the assessment/investigation.
- E. Referring any child under the age of three who is involved in a substantiated case of child abuse or neglect to Help Me Grow for early intervention services (Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act {CAPTA} requirement).
- F. Referring any infant that has been born and identified as affected by an illegal substance or withdrawal symptoms resulting from prenatal exposure to Help Me Grow.
- G. Making a screening decision to investigate child abuse, neglect, or dependency reports.
- H. Providing an interpreter for all interviews when CCDCFS has determined that a principal of the case has a language or any other impairment that causes a barrier in communication, e.g., deaf or hearing impaired, limited English proficiency, or developmentally delayed.

SEE ALSO:

CCDCFS POLICIES:

POLICY No. 2.01.03 – Referrals—Criteria for Agency Intervention

POLICY No. 2.03.00 – Standards for the Investigation of Intake Referrals

RELATED REFERENCES:

**Ohio Job and Family Services (ODJFS) Family, Children, and Adult Services Manual
Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) 5101:2-36-11**