

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

Policy Chapter: Investigations
Policy Number: 2.03.02
Policy Name: Extending Time Frames or Waiving Completion of Assessment / Investigation Activities

Original Effective Date: 05/04/1993
Revision Date(s): 03/01/2015, 07/18/2011, 11/17/2006
Current Revision Date: 03/01/2019
Approved By: Cynthia G. Weiskittel

PURPOSE: To ensure all reports are responded to within state mandated time frames and to ensure proper documentation of any inability to meet required deadlines or complete specific assessment/investigation activities are included in the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS). Supervisors within the Agency serve as the director's designee for approval of waivers. If the assigned staff is requesting a waiver for the entire assessment and/or investigation, the final approval of the waiver must be completed by a senior manager.

SCOPE: This policy applies to all Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services (CCDCFS) child protection specialists (CPS) responsible for the assessment and/or investigation of reports accepted by the agency.

POLICY

- I. CCDCFS may extend time frames and waive the completion of specific assessment/investigation activities with written justification and supervisory approval.
- II. 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. The time frame of the extension shall not exceed five working days.

PROCEDURES

I. TIME FRAME EXTENSIONS

Procedures for Extension of Safety Assessment:

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.

- A. The investigating worker makes at least 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 within the first four working days from the date the referral was screened in as a report. If this is unsuccessful, the investigating social worker documents all attempts in SACWIS and completes the appropriate waiver in SACWIS.
- B. The investigating worker forwards the waiver in SACWIS to his/her supervisor for final approval.
- C. Once the investigating worker has 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 is completed within three days of that face-to-face contact.

Procedures for Fifteen Day Time Frame Extensions:

All referrals are investigated within a forty-five-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 when the investigating worker is unable to obtain within the first forty-five days. This includes family assessment, ongoing case assessment/investigations, and specialized assessment/investigations.

- A. The investigating worker documents in SACWIS the specific reason(s), which justifies the need for an extension of mandated time frames. The investigating worker forwards the waiver in SACWIS to his/her supervisor for approval.

A fifteen-day extension is permitted only if diligent efforts to complete the necessary action have been unsuccessful and one of the following applies:

1. A principal of the report has not been interviewed.
 2. The worker is waiting on documentation/information from another entity that is necessary in determining the disposition or case decision.
 3. Interview with collateral of witnesses who have specific information about the allegations have not been completed. The case is assigned to the alternative response pathway and additional time is needed to complete the linkage to services prior to case closure.
- B. All time frame extensions are requested by the investigating worker and approved by the supervisor before the forty-fifth calendar day of receipt of the report by the Agency.
 - C. Time frames for the completion of the assessment/investigation are only extended for an additional fifteen days over the original forty-five-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 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:

If a safety plan is completed, the signature of the parent, guardian, or custodian, or person(s) responsible for an action step occurs within twenty-four hours from receipt of the verbal authorization. The time frame of the extension cannot exceed five working days.

- A. The investigating worker obtains 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 unsuccessful, investigating worker documents attempts made to secure signatures in SACWIS and completes the appropriate waiver in SACWIS. The time frame of the extension does not exceed five working days.
- B. The investigating worker forwards the waiver in SACWIS to his/her supervisor for approval.

II. WAIVING ASSESSMENT / INVESTIGATION ACTIVITIES

Procedures for Waiving the Completion of Assessment / Investigation Activities:

The completion of specific assessment / investigation activities are waived with written justification and supervisory approval.

- A. The investigation worker documents a written justification in SACWIS when unable to complete specific casework activities related to the assessment / investigation of an assigned report as per *CCDCFS Policy 2.03.00 Investigations and Assessments*.

The waiver justification:

1. Identifies the reason each assessment / investigation activity cannot be completed.
2. Is approved by senior supervisor prior to the expected completion date of the assessment/investigation or due date of the extended time frame.
3. Is maintained in the SACWIS case record.

- B. The completion of the following casework activities may be waived:
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.
- C. The investigating worker waives the completion of the safety assessment, family assessment, ongoing case assessment/investigation and specialized assessment/investigation only when sufficient information from any principal of the report or identified witnesses/collaterals has not been obtained. The Senior Supervisor approves this waiver **ONLY if ALL of the following apply:**
1. The parent, guardian, or custodian of the ACV refused CCDCFS to have contact with family members, including principals of the report, to complete the required assessment activities,
 2. CCDCFS consulted legal counsel regarding the report and the family's refusal to engage in the assessment/investigation process,
 3. CCDCFS legal counsel advised CCDCFS no legal action will be pursued,
 4. CCDCFS report disposition is unsubstantiated, substantiated, or indicated,
 5. 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.

The investigating worker completes the waiver in SACWIS and forwards it to his/her supervisor for approval.

CCDCFS will not complete a justification to waive or extend the completion time frame for any assessment / investigation activity not identified within Ohio Administrative Code rule 5101:2-36-11.

SEE ALSO:

Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) Family, Children, and Adult Services Manual

Ohio Administrative Code: 5101:2-36-11

Extending time frames for completion or waiving completion of assessment/ investigation activities

Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services Policies and Procedures Manual

Policy 2.03.00 Investigations and Assessments

Policy 2.03.03 Investigative Dispositions: Other Forms of Confirmation, Isolated Indicators