



The Intake Investigation/Assessment

The Child Welfare Professional should consider these factors when planning an interview and should structure her/his approach accordingly. This will include the following:

1. Determining whom the Child Welfare Professional will initially approach to interview. The roles and position of family members must be considered to prevent an unintended insult to a family member who has decision making authority and responsibility;
2. Determining how the Child Welfare Professional will explain the purpose of the child protection agency and the situation to the family members;
3. Determining whether the worker should encourage the family to invite other community members who have knowledge of the family or the culture to jointly participate in the interview. This may include a pastor of a local church, an extended family member that the parent trusts, or a close family friend;
4. At times, the structure and culture of the family will influence which investigation/assessment worker should be assigned to work with the family. To the degree possible, a Child Welfare Professional who knows the culture and the local community, and who speaks the family's language, is recommended.

In both GPS and CPS investigations/assessments it is ALWAYS MANDATORY that the child be seen. The Child Welfare Professional must observe the child to determine the presence of injury. Both physical and behavioral indicators should be assessed.

1. In most situations, the child should be seen and/or interviewed first to gather first-hand data to substantiate or refute the allegation. If the child is of preschool age or older, the child should be interviewed directly by the worker, in private. This is most critical if the initial disclosure was made by the child. If the child is not interviewed immediately, the child may be threatened by the parent, may change the story, or may recant the allegation.



The Intake Investigation/Assessment (continued)

2. The Child Welfare Professional should use specialized interviewing techniques for children to gather accurate and pertinent data from the child, with the least amount of trauma to the child.
3. The Child Welfare Professional must be prepared to protect the child from retaliation or punishment by the parent for having disclosed the maltreatment.
4. When the alleged perpetrator is a stranger, or someone who is not emotionally involved as a member or friend of the family, the initial contact may be made with the parents, who may then be interviewed jointly with the child. This can help to promote a collaborative relationship with the parent.
5. In allegations of sexual abuse, there are very highly specialized means of interviewing the child and conducting the abuse investigation. This should be done by a well trained sexual abuse investigator. If at all possible, the child should not have to repeat her story more than once during the initial investigation process.
6. Infants and nonverbal children should be located immediately and should be examined by the worker for evidence of illness, injury, or neglect.

In allegations of physical abuse, the Child Welfare Professional should not undress the child; however, the child's body should be examined for evidence of injury. The Child Welfare Professional should get a parent, school nurse, or other adult known to the child to assist the child with removing his/her clothes, if necessary. The Child Welfare Professional should consult his/her supervisor for information regarding their agency policy. However, in general, to provide the least disruption to a child age three or older, the worker should:

1. Explain briefly to the child why it is necessary to see the area of his/her body that the caseworker must see.



The Intake Investigation/Assessment (continued)

2. If the child is first seen at the school, the child should undress themselves in the presence of a witness; i.e. a school nurse or the child's teacher. If the first interview takes place in a relative's home, ask the relative to serve as the witness. For a young child first seen in his/her own home, ask the parent to undress the child.
3. If a child is preadolescent or adolescent, he or she should undress in the presence of a worker of the same gender.
4. In situations of alleged sexual abuse, or when serious physical abuse is apparent, the child should be taken immediately to the hospital emergency room, and should be examined by a medical professional trained in evaluating child abuse. The caseworker should not attempt these examinations;
5. Following the best practice standards, Child Welfare Professionals should always have another person in the room (or watching) when any child is undressed or undresses his or her self.