

	<b>GEORGIA DIVISION OF FAMILY AND CHILDREN SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY MANUAL</b>			
	<b>Chapter:</b>	(3) Intake	<b>Effective Date:</b>	August 2016
	<b>Policy Title:</b>	Introduction to Intake		
	<b>Policy Number:</b>	3.0	<b>Previous Policy #:</b>	N/A

### **CODES/REFERENCES**

O.C.G.A. §19-7-5 Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect  
O.C.G.A. §49-5-12 Licensing and Inspection of Child Welfare Agencies; Standards  
O.C.G.A. §49-5-41 Persons and Agencies Permitted to Access Records  
Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) Reauthorization Act of 2010, P.L. 111-320

### **DISCUSSION**

The Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) engages colleagues, the community, families and children with courtesy and respect in order to translate our values and principles into practice. DFCS has the authority and obligation to receive and assess reports of child abuse or neglect (maltreatment) that meet the statutory and regulatory definitions of child abuse or neglect where the alleged maltreater is in a caregiving role.

When reporters are concerned about the maltreatment of a child and want to make a Child Protective Services (CPS) report, DFCS is available and accessible to the community continuously 24 hours a day, seven days a week via a CPS Intake Communication Center (CICC) at (1-855-GA-CHILD).

CICC began implementation in September 2013 to address the growing need for a statewide child abuse and neglect reporting hotline to improve customer service with the community when reporting alleged abuse and neglect as well as to standardize the Intake Assessment process.

DFCS emphasizes a customer service model approach for conducting the Intake Assessment (IA) and as such requires a high degree of responsiveness to the reporter including showing:

1. Respect and courtesy in all interactions with the reporter;
2. Interest in all aspects of the reporter’s account and concerns;
3. Patience which allows the reporter to tell his/her story;
4. Empathy for feelings and circumstances the reporter may be experiencing;
5. Support to the reporter for contacting DFCS with his/her concerns.

Since its inception and spanning statewide implementation, the CICC has made steady progress in both accessibility and standardization. CICC has a statewide Mandated Reporter Intake Mailbox and virtual fax line to accommodate Mandated Reporters in Georgia, in an effort to further the mission of customer service excellence.

The Intake Assessment begins the process of comprehensively assessing child safety by gathering information to assist in locating the problems and behaviors in the everyday life of

the family that led to the maltreatment concerns; as well as information that will help to build partnerships with families in identifying solutions to address child safety. The reporter's knowledge of and relationship with the family may not always result in their ability to adequately respond to questions detailed in the intake assessment. Therefore, it may be necessary to guide the reporter in communicating their knowledge of present danger situations or impending danger safety threats, child vulnerability, diminished caregiver protective capacities, and child and adult functioning by asking questions, clarifying responses and affording the reporter the opportunity to correct or expound upon the information reported.

Many reporters fear the caregiver's response to CPS intervention and may elect to report their concerns anonymously. The identity of persons who report allegations of child abuse or neglect is kept confidential. Reports of child abuse or neglect allegations from persons who wish to remain anonymous will be accepted; however intake staff encourage all reporters to provide contact information so follow-up can occur if more information is needed. An intake report received from an anonymous reporter does not diminish the reporter's credibility or the seriousness of their concerns. Likewise, intake reports received from reporters whose knowledge of the family is limited is not discounted or dismissed. The information shared determines DFCS' response to an intake report.

DFCS CICC staff may be the first point of contact that individuals or agencies interact with in order to obtain information about community resources to strengthen a family and to report their concerns about a child's safety and/or well-being. The Social Services Case Manager (SSCM) must possess the skills necessary to gather sufficient information by engaging reporters to assist in determining the reason for contacting the agency. In addition, the SSCM must determine when to refer reporters to community resources and/or to gather information regarding child abuse and neglect, also referred to as child maltreatment.

There are four objectives for the Intake process:

1. To provide information to individuals or agencies requesting access to agency or community resources on behalf of themselves or other families;
2. To provide the community a point of contact for expressing concerns about children who may be in need of protection;
3. To assist individuals who are reporting their concerns, provide behaviorally specific, detailed information about families that will assist DFCS in initiating the Initial Safety Assessment (ISA);
4. To determine the agency's response to the report of alleged child maltreatment including whether the allegations of maltreatment meet policy and Georgia statutory requirements.

The intake assessment encompasses the requirement to screen case participants via information systems maintained by DFCS (Georgia SHINES, SUCCESS, County Master Files, IDS Online, Master Index, Placement Central) as well as other available state agency databases (Georgia Medicaid Management Information System, Sex Offender Registry, Board of Pardons and Paroles, Department of Corrections Offender Query). Safety screenings are a critical part of the Intake Assessment and have a direct impact on the intake assessment decision-making process. Information included in safety screenings that are gathered from each database (DFCS and other State Agency resources) must be carefully reviewed, analyzed, and the results considered during the intake assessment process. The result of the

analysis is a critical factor in identifying patterns of behavior and drives the response/intervention to ensure child safety. A Safety Screening analysis includes, but is not limited to:

1. Prior allegations of maltreatment;
2. Specific findings concerning the prior allegations of maltreatment;
3. Ages of the child(ren);
4. Number of prior reports that indicate repeated instances or repeated suspicions of abuse or neglect;
5. Severity of prior reports including both substantiated and unsubstantiated incidents;
6. Specific maltreater information, including if he/she still has access to the children and/or is serving in a caregiver role;
7. Responsiveness of the caregivers to DFCS, and the outcome of previous interventions and/or services provided;
8. Cooperation with the Office of Family Independence concerning benefits;
9. Sex Offender Registry information;
10. Department of Corrections information;
11. Pardons and Parole information.

An intake decision is made after conducting the intake assessment which includes analyzing information gathered related to the seven areas of family functioning, including the analysis of the safety screening information. The following are the possible intake decisions:

1. **Screen In:** There are allegation(s) of maltreatment based on the information gathered
  - a. Case is assigned for an Initial Safety Assessment
    - i. Response time assigned Immediate: Present Danger is Indicated
    - ii. Response time assigned (up to)24 hours: Impending Danger is Indicated
    - iii. Response time assigned (up to) 72 hours: There is no Present or Impending Danger Indicated
  - b. Case is assigned Special Investigation: All Special Investigations are assigned response times of Immediate to 24 hours. Immediate response is based on Present Danger Indicated. All others are assigned (up to) 24 hours response time.
2. **Screen In:** Case is assigned to Investigation due to Special Circumstances
3. **Screen In: Policy Violation Assessment:** There are no allegations of maltreatment based on the information gathered, however an assessment is needed to determine if there is a violation of foster care policy by the placement resource. Response time for Policy Violation Assessments are 24 hours.
4. **Screen Out and Refer:** There are no allegations of maltreatment based on an analysis of the information gathered, however the family can benefit from services to strengthen caregiver protective capacity and child vulnerabilities.
5. **Screen Out:** There are no allegations of maltreatment based on an analysis of the information gathered.

Through responsive customer service, standardization, improved information gathering, assessment and decision making, the CICC is leading the way to ensuring Safe Children, Strengthened Families and Stronger Communities in Georgia.