

	GEORGIA DIVISION OF FAMILY AND CHILDREN SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY MANUAL			
	Chapter:	(5) Investigations	Effective Date:	August 2016
	Policy Title:	Introduction to Investigations		
	Policy Number:	5.0	Previous Policy #:	N/A

CODES/REFERENCES

O.C.G.A. § 19-7-5 Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect
O.C.G.A. § 49-5-8 Powers and Duties of Department of Human Services
O.C.G.A. § 49-5-1 and 49-5-8 Children and Youth Act
O.C.G.A. § 49-5-41 Persons and Agencies Permitted to Access Records Title IV-E of the Social Security Act Sections 471(a)(9) and 471(a)(15)(F) 45 CFR Parts 1356.21(d), 1356.21(k), 1356.21(b)(4), and 1356.67 Adoptions and Safe Families Act of 1997
Child Abuse Prevention, Adoption, and Family Services Act of 1988
Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) as Amended by P.L. 111-320 CAPTA and the Born-Alive Infants Protection Act of 2002
McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act Section 106(b) (2) (F)

REQUIREMENTS

As the designated child welfare agency in Georgia, the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) is legally mandated to investigate reports of known or suspected instances of child abuse and neglect, including physical or mental injury, sexual abuse or exploitation, or negligent treatment or maltreatment under circumstances that indicate that the child's health or welfare is threatened.

The Investigation track is utilized when an Initial Safety Assessment (ISA) indicates a present danger situation, an impending danger safety threat, or the reported maltreatment allegations fall into specific categories requiring the assignment of the report to investigation. Investigations is a non-voluntary intervention with families with the following goals:

1. Assess and determine if children are safe.
2. Assess and determine if maltreatment occurred.
3. Assess and determine if caregivers have sufficient caregiver protective capacities to protect a child.
4. Assess and determine the need for formal or informal supports/services to strengthen caregiver protective capacities.
5. Intervene to protect children when caregivers are unable or unwilling to do so through:
 - a. Seeking court action.
 - b. Developing an in-home or out-of-home safety plan.

During the investigation, families are engaged using DFCS' Practice Model as informed by Solution-Based Casework (SBC). SBC is best thought of as the architecture that holds our practice to a consistent focus on safety outcomes. At the heart of SBC is the belief that by building a partnership with the family, a true focus on developing pragmatic solutions to the family's everyday problems can be achieved. Documenting and celebrating the successes of

the family are also acknowledged and provide a framework for the family to sustain positive change moving forward. By using the SBC model the case manager is able to follow a conceptual map for family-centered practice from assessment through case closure. ¹

Objectives of Investigation

1. Continue the assessment of child safety by interviewing and observing all children that live in the home and/or have access to the alleged maltreating caregiver.
2. Engage all household members in order to gather information related to how the family functions on a day to day basis.
3. Engage individuals subject to the child abuse or neglect allegations to gather information regarding child safety and maltreatment.
4. Develop and manage an in-home or out-of-home safety plan when present danger situations or impending danger safety threats are identified.
5. Meet the emergency needs of the family that are apparent at the onset or during the course of the investigative process.
6. Conduct a structured, thorough collection and analysis of information which includes a review of the family's DFCS history, response to prior intervention, and engagement of individuals who are knowledgeable about the family.
7. Keep caregivers informed and appropriately involved throughout the decision-making process.
8. Determine the existence of child maltreatment consistent with Georgia statutes and DFCS policy.
9. Link the family to community resources that will strengthen the family, or initiate ongoing DFCS case management, including Family Preservation Services or Foster Care, when applicable.

Children and Caregiver Rights during Investigation

1. Children have a right to be safe and secure, to be with their families, to be associated with their culture and to experience the least trauma or interference in their lives as is possible.
2. Caregivers and children have the right to family, integrity, privacy and due process.
3. Caregivers also have the right to be informed and involved, have and care for their children and receive prompt responses regarding their children.

¹ Solution Based Casework TM Training: SSA, L.L.C. © Dana N. Christensen PhD; 2013