

Specialized Investigations—Goals and Considerations

| Type of Investigation | Goals and Considerations |
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| Sexual Abuse | <p>The following goals will be addressed when conducting an investigation alleging sexual abuse:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the child's immediate safety needs • Minimize trauma to child • Gather a minimum amount of information from the child to determine if a crime may have occurred. If so, the social worker is to contact law enforcement in the jurisdiction where the crime may have occurred to assess the appropriateness of a CAST forensic interview <p>Other factors to consider:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. Disclosure of one incident of touching a child in a sexual manner indicates a possible crime. Touching over the clothes is also considered a crime. It does not have to be "skin to skin." B. Attempt to determine where the incident occurred to establish legal jurisdiction. C. Clarify the approximate timeframe of the most recent sexual abuse incident, when possible. D. Determine if an immediate medical exam is needed. E. Identify any other possible victims. |
| Voluntary/ Mutual Sexual Behaviors | <p>In the case of sexual activity including a child that is reported to be mutual or voluntary, a careful assessment of the relationship of the child and his or her partner, the parent's response to the sexual activity, as well as the developmental factors must be considered. For further information regarding sexual activities that are considered to be developmentally appropriate or inappropriate, refer to CFS P&P Sexual Abuse Allegations—Child Abuse Registry (A-0205).</p> <p>Information regarding two of the most common reports alleging voluntary or mutual sexual activity is summarized below.</p> |

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| | <p>A. <u>Sexually Active Teenagers:</u> It is common for the Child Abuse Hotline (CAH) to receive reports alleging voluntary sexual activity between two teenagers or between a teenager and an adult. These reports may include information indicating that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teen is pregnant or has a child • The teen has a sexually transmitted disease • The teen is living with his or her boyfriend or girlfriend (and possibly with the boyfriend's or girlfriend's family) <p>The following goals will be addressed when conducting an investigation alleging sexually active teenagers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the teenager's immediate safety needs • Assess the teenager's relationship with partner • Assess the teenager's relationship with parent(s) • Assess the parent(s) knowledge of teenager's whereabouts, behaviors • Assess the willingness of parent(s) to take responsibility for the teenager • Identify other alternative living arrangements for the teenager if the parents are not willing or available <p>Other factors to consider:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teenager's history of behavior. 2. Prior attempts made by parent(s) to control teenager. 3. School attendance. 4. If pregnant, is teenager receiving prenatal care. <p>Depending on the information obtained during the investigation, if the teenager has a child, it may be necessary to file a C to C to ensure that the child is receiving adequate care and is not at risk of abuse or neglect. Also, if the teenager is pregnant and is taken into custody, refer to CFS P&P Sexual/Reproductive Health and Parenting (I-0207) for further guidelines.</p> |

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| | <p>NOTE: Because all sexual activity by an adult with a child under age 18 is illegal, staff will notify the appropriate law enforcement agency of mutual sexual activity involving children, regardless of the ages of the teenager and partner. If a police report is taken, the SSW will document the report (DR) number in the file and file a copy of the report in the referral packet.</p> <p>B. <u>"Child-to-Child" Allegations:</u> Child abuse reports alleging sexual activity between two children that involve developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviors (e.g., two preschoolers imitating oral sex) are generally coded by CAH as "sexual abuse by an unknown perpetrator." For further information, refer to CFS P&P Sexual Abuse Allegations - Child Abuse Registry (CAR) (A-0205).</p> <p>The following goals will be addressed when conducting an investigation alleging "child-to-child" sexual activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the child's immediate safety needs • Evaluate age difference of the participants • Type of activity • Use of coercion, threats • Past incidents of abuse • Responsibility for supervision <p>Other factors to consider:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When investigating a referral involving young children "acting out" sexually, the purpose of the investigation is to determine if one or more children have been sexually abused, not to establish guilt on the part of the child who initiated the sexual activity. However, if a child is specifically listed as an alleged perpetrator in the allegation, or if information is discovered during the investigation indicating that the child acted as a perpetrator, then the child will be identified as such. 2. A child under the age of 14 may be considered a perpetrator when the perpetrating child has sufficient mental and emotional capacity to intentionally commit the abuse and act on that intent. |

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| General Neglect Allegations | <p>Investigations involving general neglect allegations may concern adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care, substance abuse, or supervision where no physical injury to the child has occurred. The primary focus of the investigation will be determined by the allegation(s). The following goals will be addressed when conducting an investigation alleging general neglect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the child's immediate safety needs • Identify child's special needs • Assess whether child's basic needs are being adequately met • Assess parent's willingness and ability to meet child's needs <p>Other factors to consider:</p> <p>A. Lack of supervision:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required age limits for children left home alone varies according to the legal jurisdiction • Length of time and time of day/night child was left alone • Safety/emergency plan in place (e.g., has mother's cell phone or pager number) • Presence of a responsible adult nearby (e.g., next door or down the hall) • Presence of older/younger siblings, and the characteristics of those siblings <p>B. Lack of basic necessities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look for fresh and/or packaged foods • Milk or other drinks • Refrigerator or some form of refrigeration • Stove, or some safe way to cook food • Functioning utilities • Adequate and sanitary plumbing • Adequate sleeping arrangements <p>C. Caregiver absent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provisions made for child's care, including medical and educational needs |

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| | <p>D. Dirty home (e.g., safety and health hazards), including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spoiled, rotten food • Vermin, especially in or near food supplies • Sharp objects within reach of young children • Medication/alcohol/drugs/drug paraphernalia within reach of young children, or older children who might abuse the substance • Matches or cigarette lighters within reach of young children • Lack of clear exits in case of fire (e.g., very cluttered rooms) • Broken windows, second story windows without screens • Animal or human feces or urine • Hazardous chemicals, cleaning supplies in reach of young children • Abandoned vehicles or machinery that present unsafe conditions <p>E. Domestic violence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child's awareness and proximity to conflict |
| <p>Severe Neglect Allegations</p> | <p>Severe neglect is distinguished from general neglect by the demonstration of willful behavior on the part of the perpetrator. This includes negligent failure to protect from severe malnutrition or medically diagnosed nonorganic failure to thrive. It also includes the intentional failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, or medical care. The following goals will be addressed when conducting an investigation alleging severe neglect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate whether the child's health and safety is endangered • Identify neglectful behavior • Assess whether behavior was intentional • Identify whether a safety plan may be effective in mitigating any existing concerns <p>Other factors to consider:</p> <p>A. Substance exposed infants:</p> |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mother's prenatal care • Length and degree of substance use during pregnancy • Mother's and infant's toxicology results • Infant's withdrawal symptoms • Child abuse and criminal history • Mother's living circumstances, provisions for the child, support system • Follow guidelines in CFS P&P Substance Exposed Infants (D-0605) for further information <p>B. Medical neglect concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of follow-through for routine and emergency medical care • Failure to give child medication as prescribed • Failure to appropriately use and maintain prescribed medical equipment <p>Note: A child receiving treatment by spiritual means or not receiving specified medical treatment for religious reasons will not be considered neglected for that reason alone (WIC 16509.1). An informed and appropriate medical decision made by a parent or guardian after consultation with a physician who has examined the child does not constitute neglect.</p> |
| Physical Abuse Allegations | <p>The legal definition of physical abuse in the Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act (CANRA) is a non-accidental injury to the child. The following goals are to be addressed when conducting an investigation alleging physical abuse:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the child's immediate safety needs • Obtain available physical evidence • Obtain description of events • Assess whether discipline was age appropriate • Assess consistency of the injury with the history provided • Evaluate size, location, and duration of the injury • Assess need for medical follow-up <p>Note: When a physical injury is present, the SSW will contact law enforcement to provide the opportunity to pursue a criminal investigation.</p> <p>Other factors to consider:</p> |

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| | <p>A. A single, small scratch or bruise, depending on the location, does not necessarily constitute physical abuse. For example, slight injuries that occur as a result of the parent attempting to use reasonable methods to restrain a child to protect the safety of the child or others does not constitute abuse.</p> <p>B. Physical abuse may be substantiated without a visible injury under certain circumstances. The injury to the child does not have to be visible (e.g., head injuries, internal injuries) may constitute physical abuse without yielding a visible injury.</p> <p>C. Corroboration for physical injuries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Injury seen by investigating SSW, or • Injury seen by a mandated reporter, or • Injury reported by victim AND perpetrator, or • Injury reported by victim AND other credible source, such as family members, school nurse, etc. <p>Note: When observing a child's physical condition including injuries, care and consideration will be made to ensure that another adult such as a parent, teacher, or law enforcement is present. The SSW will consider the following factors when determining the need to evaluate injuries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Type of injury • Location of injury • Age of child • Whether injury has already been documented |
| Domestic Violence History | <p>Domestic violence may be coded by CAH as either general neglect and/or emotional abuse. The following goals will be addressed when conducting an investigation alleging domestic violence concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the child's immediate safety in the home • Assess the child's awareness of the conflict including level of fear, reaction • Confirm the location of the child during the conflict • Ascertain the effect of the violence on the child • Assess the child's ability to seek help • Protect the child from future abuse • Educate parents regarding the effect of domestic violence • Encourage adult victim(s) to protect self and child |

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| | <p>Other factors to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Adult victim's support system. B. Adult victim's reliance on alleged perpetrator. C. Referrals and safety strategies including a safety plan. D. Prior attempts made by adult victim to escape. E. How and when to notify the alleged perpetrator of the investigation in light of the alleged victim and family's safety needs. <p>Note: When possible, do not interview domestic violence victims or their child at home when the alleged perpetrator is present or may come home during the interview. Further, do not provide resources to the adult victim through the mail if the alleged perpetrator may have access to the material.</p> |
| Emotional Abuse | <p>The SSW will determine whether the child has suffered, or is at risk of suffering, emotional damage as evidenced by severe anxiety, depression, withdrawal, or untoward aggression towards self and others as a result of the conduct of the parent or guardian, or who has no parent or guardian capable of providing appropriate care. The following goals are to be addressed when conducting an investigation alleging emotional abuse:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the child's immediate safety in the home • Identify the child's symptoms and duration • Identify parent(s) or guardian(s) behaviors and duration • Determine whether there is a relationship between the symptoms and behaviors <p>Other factors to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. History of mental health issues. B. Relationship between child and parent(s). C. Adult's perception of the child's emotional condition. |