

# Information Gathering at Access



Access is the process of receiving, analyzing and documenting reports of alleged child maltreatment. The functions of Access include: (1) receiving and documenting reports of alleged maltreatment from the community; (2) identifying families that the child protective services (CPS) system must respond to; (3) determining the urgency of the response time; and initiating an assessment of child safety and family strengths.



## Determining Household

- The Access report is created regarding the family of the child(ren) alleged to be unsafe, maltreated, at risk of maltreatment, or in need of agency intervention in a specific household
- If the child resides in more than one household (e.g. parents are divorced), the Access report is created as follows:
  - **Primary Assessment:** the family/household where there are threats to safety or allegations of maltreatment
  - **Secondary & Non-Caregiver Assessments:** the family/household that is the child's primary residence
- In Primary Assessment cases, when reported information indicates danger threats or allegations of maltreatment in two households, a separate report is created for each home
- When children from two or more separate families are reported as involved in an alleged maltreatment situation, a separate Access report is created for each family
- Reports of alleged maltreatment in a **foster home, treatment foster home, or family-operated group home** are documented with the foster parent as the reference person and casehead
- Reports of alleged maltreatment by a **staff of a residential facility** (shift-staff group home, shelter care, or residential care center) are documented as a **Secondary Assessment** under the child's case



## Gathering Person Information

- Name, age, gender, race and ethnicity for **all household members residing regularly or intermittently in the home** and their relationship to each other, including:
  - children, including other children who spend time in the home on a regular basis
  - adults, including adults who have access to the child(ren) on a regular basis, but may not "live" in the home
  - caregivers and non-caregivers
  - relatives and non-relatives
  - significant others
- The family's address and phone number
- The adults' places of employment and the child(ren)'s school or childcare, when applicable
- Identify any formal/informal custody agreements and/or visitation arrangements in the family
- Identify the alleged victim(s)
- Identify the alleged maltreater(s) and their relationship to the alleged victim(s)
- Determine if there is law enforcement involvement
- Gather reporter's name and relationship to the family
- Gather reporter's motivation and source of information, if possible
  - **Why did you call CPS today?**
  - **How do you know about the alleged maltreatment?**
- Gather name and contact information of other people with information regarding the child(ren) or family



## Gathering Information from Reporters: Alleged Maltreatment & Surrounding Circumstances

- Description of the alleged maltreatment/allegation(s)
  - **What do you have concerns about? What is going on in the family?**
  - **What have you observed [or heard] about the alleged maltreatment? Describe, in detail, the actual injuries/maltreatment (severe, multiple, face/head injuries, unexplained, unsupervised, dangerous environment)?**
  - **Are there multiple alleged victims in the home? If yes, who?**
  - **Does the alleged victim(s) need medical attention now? If yes, describe.**
  - **Where did the alleged maltreatment occur?**
  - **Where is the alleged victim(s) now (at school, daycare, home)? Is he/she afraid to return home? If yes, how do you know?**
  - **When will the alleged maltreater have access to the alleged victim(s)?**
- Determine the frequency and duration of the alleged maltreatment
  - **Is the alleged victim(s) currently being maltreated? If yes, describe.**
  - **When did the alleged maltreatment occur? How long did it last? How many times did it happen?**
  - **Has any maltreatment occurred in the past? If yes, describe.**
  - **When did you first know/think this was a problem? Why did you think it was a problem?**
- Determine the circumstances surrounding the alleged maltreatment
  - **What was happening in the family that led up to the maltreatment?**
  - **Where are the parents/caregivers, other siblings and family members when the maltreatment is occurring? Before and after the alleged maltreatment?**
  - **Did another parent/caregiver in the home know about the maltreatment? What was their response?**
  - **Does maltreatment appear to be planned, impulsive, or accidental? Why or how do you know this?**
- Determine what intervention or services are needed for the alleged victim(s)
  - **In your opinion, what would it take to create safety for the alleged victim(s)? Why?**
  - **What do you think CPS can do to improve the family situation? How/why would this improve the family situation?**
  - **What services, other agencies or resources might also be helpful to the family? Why?**



# Information Gathering at Access



## Gathering Information from Reporters:

Child(ren), Parents/Caregivers & Family Characteristics & Functioning

### Child(ren) Characteristics & Functioning

- Information about physical and emotional functioning and current vulnerability for all children in the home
  - **How old are the children in the home?**
  - **Tell me about all the children in the home. What is his/her level of functioning? How does the child(ren) communicate?**
  - **Do any children have special needs or disabilities? If yes, describe. How do his/her needs affect functioning?**
  - **Does the child(ren) attend school/daycare? If so, where and when?**

### Parents/Caregivers Characteristics & Functioning

- Gather information about the functioning of each adult in the home
  - **Describe the adults in the home. Describe what behaviors are concerning to you and why? Describe his/her level of functioning.**
  - **Do the adults have substance use and/or MH concerns that pose a threat for the child(ren) in the home? If yes, describe the concerns. When and how often is this a concern? How do you know?**
  - **What are the stressors in the adult's life at this time? How are the adults dealing with those stressors?**
- Gather information about parental protective capacities
  - **Describe what you have seen the parent/caregiver do that lets you know they are protective of their child(ren) and can keep them safe?**
  - **Describe the parent's/caregiver's view of the child(ren) (positive, negative, bizarre)?**

### Family Characteristics & Functioning

- Gather information about family functioning
  - **How do you think the family will respond to agency intervention (positive, negative, hide, flee)? Why?**
  - **How does this family usually solve problems?**
  - **Who are the family's supports? Describe how the family utilize their supports.**

- Gather information about American Indian heritage for all children in the home
  - **Do you have reason to believe that any child might be of American Indian heritage? If yes, describe.**
  - **If so, what tribe(s) does the child(ren)'s American Indian heritage derive from?**
- If there is previous confirmation that the child(ren) is an American Indian child(ren), notify tribe(s) of Access report within 24 hours
- Refer to the [WICWA Online Resource for Case Workers](#) on the WCWPDS website for more information

- Gather information about parenting practices
  - **Who provides care and supervision of the child(ren) in the home?**
  - **Where are the parents/caregivers now?**
  - **Describe the parent's/caregiver's parenting style.**
  - **How does the parent/caregiver perform basic care duties?**
  - **Describe how is the parent/caregiver able to meet the child(ren)'s special needs/disabilities?**
  - **What is positive about the relationship between the parent/caregiver and the child(ren)?**

- Gather information on family strengths
  - **What is going well with this family? What positive things do you see in this family?**
- Gather information on family stressors



## Gathering Information:

Specific Topics

### Signs of Domestic Violence

[Appendix 5](#)

- Gather information to determine if there are signs that domestic violence may be occurring
  - **Has there been any police contact at the home? If yes, describe.**
  - **Do you know if anyone else in the home, besides the alleged victim(s), has been hurt or assaulted? Describe who, when and how?**
  - **Are family members afraid of or intimidated by the alleged maltreater? If yes, describe.**
  - **Do you know if there are any weapons in the home? If yes, what kind and who has access?**

### Signs of Sex Trafficking of Children

[Appendix 9](#)

- Gather information to determine if there are signs that sex trafficking may be occurring
  - **Is the child missing, runaway or homeless?**
  - **Does the child have money, electronics, new hair, nails or material items that cannot be explained for accounted for?**
  - **Does the child have a history of multiple sexual partners (known or unknown)?**
  - **Does the child have sexually explicit pictures of herself/himself on the internet?**
  - **Does the child have a history of sexually transmitted infections or pregnancies?**
  - **Is gang affiliation reported, confirmed or suspected?**

### Signs of Drug Affected Infants

[DAI Addendum](#)

- Gather information to determine if an infant has controlled substances in their system at birth
  - **Describe the infant's general functioning, including effects of illegal substances.**
  - **Describe the parent's functioning, specifically how the mother's use of illegal substances impacts the infant needs and daily care.**

### Infant Relinquishment (Safe Haven)

[FAQs](#)



## Documenting the Access Report

- Do not include your own biases when recording the reporter's information, but do analyze and synthesize information provided as it pertains to child welfare concerns.
- Do not fill in gaps or make assumptions; instead ask clarifying questions
- The Access report should clearly show that an attempt was made to gather all of the necessary information
- Information gathered for each question must be documented in the space provided for that specific response
- If the reporter does not know some information, this should be documented in the Access report as: **"reporter was asked and did not know"** rather than as n/a, none, or unknown

### Records Search

- Document the family's and alleged maltreater's CPS records (include allegation and outcome)
- Document CCAP and SOR records of all household members age 17+ and the alleged maltreater(s)



Access Desk Guide

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