

Meeting Initial Face-to-Face Contact Requirements

TIP SHEET

Timely initial face-to-face contact is a core responsibility of child protective services (CPS) professionals during the Initial Assessment (IA) phase of the CPS process. [Access & Initial Assessment Standards](#) indicate response time is met when a CPS professional has initial face-to-face contact with the alleged child victim and/or parent(s) or caregiver(s) on primary, secondary, and non-caregiver cases.

Timely initial face-to-face contacts are tracked by looking at case notes documented in eWiSACWIS. Initial face-to-face contacts are considered timely when an “Initial Face-to-Face” case note is entered and the date that contact took place indicates the initial face-to-face contact occurred within the assigned response time.



When entering initial face-to-face attempts during the IA process, CPS professionals should select “Initial Face-to-Face” as the case note type until a successful face-to-face contact occurs. CPS professionals should be documenting every attempt and marking “did not occur” if the attempt was unsuccessful. Initial Face-to-Face contacts that do not result in actual contacts and the dates of these attempted contacts are still tracked and is valuable information to have.

To support shared learning around the Initial Assessment process, information has been collected from several agencies, of differing sizes and from all regions, to learn more about the tools, resources, and strategies used to successfully meet our state’s initial face-to-face requirements.

The tips that follow on the next page may not work for all CPS agencies; however, some might spark new ideas or strategies to consider for improving initial face-to-face contact timeliness.

Please note that nothing in the tips should be construed as legal advice. CPS professionals should consult with their agency’s legal counsel with respect to any legal questions.

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Training

- Supervisors and staff trainers review and regularly reference [CPS Access and Initial Assessment Standards](#) with new workers so they are aware of Initial Face-to-Face expectations.
- New staff spend time shadowing more experienced CPS professionals performing IA responsibilities. This allows new staff to learn how to prioritize tasks and understand why timely Initial Face-to-Face contact is important.



Approaches

- Do not wait for the last day to attempt an initial face-to-face contact. For example, make plans to attempt an initial contact within two days of receipt of the report for conducting IAs with a 5-day response time.
- Provide the CPS professional assigned to conduct an IA with a copy of the report for all screened-in cases as soon as the report is screened to ensure that staff have ample time to plan their schedules in order to make their response timely.
- Consider the use of other communication methods, such as text messaging features on agency-issued cell phones to coordinate contact. Many agencies have found families to be more responsive to text messages when phone calls are not effective.
- Have CPS agency leadership and supervisors set the expectation that meeting initial face-to-face is critical to good information gathering and safety decision making. Staff at one agency indicated that making timely contacts is an expectation and a high priority communicated regularly.
- Set expectations higher than the federal requirement of 95%. One agency indicated their internal expectation of timely initial face-to-face contact is 100%.
- Be flexible with schedules and staff time to allow CPS professionals to maximize their ability to meet with families in a timely manner.
- Utilize schools, law enforcement, or other collateral contacts to locate other addresses or ways to contact the family when contacts have been attempted but not made.



Tracking

- Regularly and consistently review eWiSACWIS reports to track contacts. When these reports are reviewed early in a given month, workers are individually contacted about the missed response(s) to ensure there are no documentation errors. The report is reviewed again at the end of the month to ensure proper documentation.
- Supervisors closely monitor individual workload and schedules to ensure workload is evenly distributed and staff are available to respond to new cases. This includes consistent, weekly communication between CPS professionals and their supervisor. When/if issues arise, it is promptly discussed between the CPS professional and their supervisor privately to ensure timelines are met in the future.