



NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT
OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

New Jersey Department of Children and Families Policy Manual

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Volume:	II	Intake, Investigation and Response	
Chapter:	C	Initial Response	5-28-2013
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Purpose **1-14-2008**

This policy establishes uniform timeframes for the CP&P response to allegations of child abuse/neglect or child welfare service referrals/requests for service.

Authority **1-14-2008**

N.J.A.C. 10:129-2.3, Time frames for investigation.

Definition of Terms **4-8-2013**

"Good Faith Effort" - When an assigned Worker/Investigator is unable to make in-person contact with each child victim or subject child within the assigned response time, he or she is required to make a good faith effort to establish contact as follows:

- Make a minimum of three (3) attempts to contact the child in person within the assigned response time frame requirement.
- Wait at least one hour between subsequent attempts, unless there are clear indications that the family will "return home" before then.
- Consult your Supervisor after initiating two (2) attempts.
- If a clear indication is found that the family does not reside at the address provided - the address is an abandoned property, it is learned that the family is on vacation, etc. - apprise your Supervisor of the situation immediately. Confirm that no additional attempts are necessary that day.
- If the report indicates a "current" location for the child, as well as a home address, attempt to contact the child at each location.

An "Immediate Response" - The assigned Worker/Investigator shall make in-person contact with the child victim no later than the end of the work day in which SCR assigned the CPS report to the field office for response. Field Office Supervisors examine each assignment from SCR that is given an Immediate Response, and direct staff to respond as timely as needed to keep children safe based on the information known at the time the report is assigned.

"Initiate an Investigation" - To take action, as necessary, to see an identified child victim of child abuse or neglect within a specified time frame, or, if unable to contact the child in person, to make a good faith effort to see the child.

Respond "Within 24-Hours" - The assigned Worker/Investigator shall make in-person contact with the child victim/subject child within 24 hours of the SCR Screener assigning the report or referral to the field office for response.

Respond "Within 72-Hours" - The assigned Worker shall make in-person contact with the child and his/her family within 72 hours of the SCR Screener assigning the child welfare service referral to the field office for response.

Respond "Within Five Work Days" - The assigned Worker shall make in-person contact with the child and his/her family within five work days of the SCR Screener assigning the child welfare service referral to the field office for response.

Note: For the purposes of this policy, the term "SCR Screener" or "SCR" shall also apply to screening conducted by the Interstate Services Unit, the operation within DCF responsible for screening interstate referrals in accordance with the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children.

Relevant NJS Windows and Forms

1-14-2008

Each screening call is documented in NJ SPIRIT in the "Intake Window."

DCF Form [1-1](#), Screening Summary, is the "form," created by SCR Screeners through the NJS application, which documents an intake (including a CPS Report or a CWS Referral). DCF Form [1-1](#) is assigned to a field office for response.

Timeframes for Response

1-14-2008

INTAKE TYPE	RESPONSE TIME	AS DETERMINED BY
CPS Report	-Within 24 hours	SCR Screener

	-Immediate (respond by the end of the work day)	SCR Screener
	-More timely/prescribed time frame	LO Supervisor
CWS Referral	-Within 72 hours	SCR Screener
	-Within 5 work days	SCR Screener
	-More timely/prescribed time frame	LO Supervisor
Interstate Referral	-Within 72 hours	Office of Interstate Services Screener
	-Within 5 work days	Office of Interstate Services Screener
	-More timely/prescribed time frame	LO Supervisor
SPRU Assignment	-Immediate	SCR Screener
	-Within 24 hours	SCR Screener
	-Within 72 hours	SCR Screener
	-More timely/prescribed time frame	SPRU Supervisor

Determining the Need for an "Immediate" Response

1-14-2008

The SCR Screener uses seven (7) criteria to determine whether a CPS report warrants an Immediate Response:

Law enforcement requests an immediate response.

A child has died due to abuse/neglect and a sibling(s) or another child remains in the home/under the care of the parent/caregiver.

A child is a hospital "boarder child," or a drug-exposed newborn.

A child, under the age of six (6), is currently unsupervised or being left alone.

A child requires medical attention now.

A child is being seriously physically abused.

A child has suffered serious physical harm or sexual trauma, and:

- a) There is reason to believe that a parent, guardian, or caregiver may have been responsible, and the child's immediate safety needs to be assured; or
- b) Physical evidence may be lost if not immediately and properly documented.

If a physician, the director of a hospital, or his or her designee takes a child into protective custody (i.e., invokes a "hospital hold"), State law requires prompt CP&P intervention. See [CP&P-II-B-1-800](#).

Discretionary Override

1-14-2008

If an SCR Screener accepts a report for child abuse/neglect investigation that does not fit into one of the seven (7) criteria for an Immediate Response, yet he or she believes an Immediate Response is needed to assure the safety of a child, the Screener immediately consults the Call Floor Supervisor.

The SCR Call Floor Supervisor has the authority to approve a "discretionary override," to assign a CPS report an Immediate Response.

Response to CWS (Within 72 Hours)

5-28-2013

For a Child Welfare Service referral, the assigned Worker is required to contact the child and family, in-person, to initiate an assessment of the family's need for services within 72 hours of SCR transmitting the assignment to the Local Office. An effort to visit the home is required.

The Local Office Intake Supervisor (or the SCR Screener or SPRU Supervisor after hours) may dictate a quicker field response to the CWS, based on the nature of the referral, situation, or request for services.

Response to CWS Home Study Requests (Within Five Work Days) 3-7-2011

The field response time is "within five work days" of SCR (or Interstate Services Unit) transmitting the home study request to the Local Office for assignment, including a:

Request for a home study under the Parole Exchange Program.

Request for a home study under the DCF/Juvenile Justice Commission Affiliation Agreement (inter-agency protocol currently being finalized). See [CP&P-VIII-F-1-700](#), Interagency Affiliation Agreement Regarding Juvenile Parolees Presenting Potential Protective Service Concerns.

Request for a home study from another state's CPS agency, under the Interstate Compact.

Request for a home study to facilitate permanency planning on behalf of an expectant inmate's unborn child. See [CP&P-II-B-1-2100](#), Referrals on Behalf of Pregnant Inmates. See also [CP&P-V-A-1-600](#), Services to Pregnant Women.

Timeliness of Response Determined by Field Office 1-14-2008

Upon accepting an assignment from SCR, the Supervisor at the Local Office assumes responsibility for directing the investigation/assessment. The Supervisor is responsible for prioritizing intakes assigned to his or her unit from SCR, based on the severity of the allegations or the emergency nature of presenting situations, child safety, and impending risk.

The assigned Supervisor in the field office has the authority to dictate how timely the assigned Investigator or Worker commences the agency's response within the timeframe designated by SCR. When the Supervisor determines a quicker response is needed, he or she dispatches field staff promptly to the scene/location of the child/family.

Compliance 1-14-2008

Compliance with the assigned response time is measured from the time SCR transmits the report/referral to the field office for assignment. When unable to make contact within the assigned timeframe, the Worker makes a good faith effort. See [CP&P-II-C-5-125](#).

After Hours/SPRU Response 1-14-2008

SPRU Workers initiate an investigation within one hour of assignment from SCR.

When given more than one assignment, the SPRU Worker prioritizes his or her work, based on safety and risk factors and the unique circumstances of the child/family. A SPRU Supervisor is available at all times for consultation, to assure all responses occur in a manner that addresses the safety of the child and is consistent with policy.

For determining whether to assign a report/referral to SPRU or hold it for day staff intervention, see [CP&P-II-C-1-100](#), Case Assignment to Field Office vs. SPRU.

When an SCR Screener determines that response to a CWS referral cannot wait 72 hours, he or she assigns the referral to a SPRU Worker. When necessary, the SPRU Worker discusses the nature and timing of the response with the SPRU Supervisor. Some situations may be appropriately and efficiently handled by SPRU over the telephone, with field contact follow-up within the 72 hour timeframe.