



NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT
OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

New Jersey Department of Children and Families Policy Manual

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Issuance:	400	Documentation of Finding Determinations	

Documentation of Finding Determination

4-1-2013

Within 60 calendar days of the field office's receipt of a CPS report assignment from State Central Registry, the assigned Worker concludes documentation of the following in writing, and obtains supervisory approval. (The Worker completes case recording within 45 days, leaving the Supervisor 15 days for review, feedback, and approval.) The Worker also documents investigative or good faith efforts, events, and contacts as they occur, so that the case record is reasonably current at all times.

Documentation includes:

- A narrative account of the events/circumstances that precipitated the CP&P intervention by posing risk to the children, including a clear statement (when applicable) of the type of maltreatment that occurred, the harm inflicted on any child(ren), and any medical treatment that was required;
- All the Worker has undertaken as part of the investigation;
- Factual observations, statements gathered through interviews and observations of non-verbal communication, as well as any information verified by collateral information sources, see [CP&P-II-C-5-175](#);
- A clear statement of the investigation finding determination for each allegation documented at screening and each allegation determined during the investigation, which shall include:
 - A determination of whether child abuse or neglect occurred; if yes, the finding is Substantiated or Established; if no, the finding is Not Established or Unfounded;
 - For Substantiated or Established findings, include a statement as to whether an "absolute" condition was found, which mandates a finding of Substantiated. If yes, enter the absolute condition in the case recording.

If no "absolutes" apply, include a statement in the case recording which lists all applicable Aggravating Factors and all applicable Mitigation Factors. Include a statement that describes the analysis process followed by the Worker and Supervisor in weighing the factors, which resulted in the specific finding.

- For Not Established or Unfounded findings, include a statement as to whether a child was harmed or placed at risk of harm. If harmed/risk of harm, state that the finding is Not Established;
- A clear statement of the investigating assessment of the safety and well-being of each child in the household (document the child safety assessment by use of the Structured Decision-Making child safety assessment tool, CP&P Form [22-22](#));
- A clear statement of the investigating assessment of the degree of risk posed to all children living in the home (document risk determination by use of the Structured Decision-Making Family Risk Assessment tool, CP&P Form [22-23](#), see [CP&P-III-B-6-600](#));
- A clear statement of any actions the Worker (or other persons or agencies) has taken in an attempt to assure child safety and eliminate or reduce risk to children and family members along with an assessment of how well these steps have worked;
- A clear summary of the family's problems/needs and available strengths and resources -- this summary may include the investigator's statements of uncertainty about the nature and extent of the family's problems and needs (see SDM™ policy and related forms on assessing child's and parent's strengths and needs, [CP&P-III-B-6-600](#) and 2005);
- A statement of the investigative and/or assessment activities (if any) that the Worker has not yet completed, with a clear statement of follow-up activities that are needed;
- A statement describing the need (if any) for immediate services and/or actions to reduce or eliminate risk; the purpose of these services and actions should be clearly identified;
- Documentation that needed interim or emergency services/actions are being or have been provided; a Safety Protection Plan has been implemented, is being monitored, and its status, if necessary; the purposes of these actions and services are stated, and the Worker assesses in writing how well they are working (Safety Protection Plans are short term in duration. See complete discussion at [CP&P-III-B-6-600](#), Child Safety Assessment (In-Home); and

- A statement assessing family members' willingness to cooperate with and participate in CP&P intervention.

The required documentation appears in a combination of CP&P Form [2-1](#), Investigation Summary, and Contact Activity Notes, documented in NJ SPIRIT, the system of record, to be completed within 60 calendar days of SCR assigning the incoming report alleging child abuse/neglect to the Local Office for response.

When documenting a Substantiated incident, complete and process police notifications, CP&P Form [9-32](#) and Form [9-33](#) within those first 60 days. See [CP&P-IX-G-1-100](#) and [CP&P-IX-G-1-200](#) .

As appropriate, the response Worker documents that the matter under investigation was referred to the County Prosecutor. The Worker's responsibility to report to the County Prosecutor arises as soon as the Worker has any reason to suspect that the alleged child abuse or neglect, meeting the criteria in [CP&P-II-C-4-200](#), has occurred and that the child's injuries or condition did not come about accidentally. The Worker documents any agreements that are reached with the County Prosecutor as well as all joint investigation activities that take place.

The investigating Worker clearly describes any court action that has occurred in the Investigation Summary.

If the incident was institutional abuse/neglect, IAIU provides a copy of its investigation finding determination notification letter to each LO that supervises a child placed in the home or, for an incident occurring in a facility, to each LO that supervises a child involved in that incident. The LO files a copy of the IAIU finding determination letter in the child's case record.

Documenting a Reversed Finding in NJS After an Appeal 4-1-2013

After a finding has been reversed from "Substantiated" to "Established," "Not Established," or "Unfounded" during the appeal process, document the reversal in NJS on the Appeals Window. This reverses the finding in the Investigation Window. Enter the reason for the reversal in the "Comments" section of the Appeals Window. See NJS How Do I Guide - Legal Forms.

For investigations conducted prior to April 1, 2005, findings may be reversed to "Not Substantiated." Not Substantiated was eliminated as a finding determination for CPS reports received on or after April 1, 2005. "Established" and "Not Established" were adopted as DCF investigation findings effective April 1, 2013.

For notification policy and procedures, see [CP&P-II-C-6-300](#), When a "Substantiated" Finding Is Reversed, and [CP&P-IX-G-1-100](#) and [CP&P-IX-G-1-200](#), Disclosure of Client Information to Law Enforcement Agencies/Police.

**Documenting Modifications in Findings in NJS (Not Related to an Appeal)
8-9-2010**

All needed NJ SPIRIT data modifications must be requested through the NJ SPIRIT Help Desk (HD), including investigation finding upgrades or reversals not related to an appeal (e.g., due to a Family Court disposition, or a case practice review).

Staff will be asked to provide the necessary information in order to process each request. A modification in findings requires Local Office Manager level authorization. IT staff will request and accept Local Office Manager authorization via e-mail.

Document the reversal in the electronic case record maintained in NJS, on the Contact/Activity Notes Window, printable as CP&P Form [26-52](#), Contact Sheet. Access the form through the NJS Desktop>Contact/Activity Notes Window>Options Drop-down. Document the reversal and reasons in the "Supervisory>Other" options.

See [CP&P-IX-H-1-100](#), NJ SPIRIT Data Modifications.