

441—175.25 (232) Assessment process. A child abuse assessment shall be initiated within 24 hours following the report of suspected child abuse. A family assessment shall be initiated within 72 hours following the report of suspected child abuse. The primary purpose in conducting an assessment is to protect the safety of the child named in the report. The secondary purpose of the assessment is to engage the child's family in services in a culturally competent way, to enhance family strengths and to address needs, where this is necessary and desired.

175.25(1) *Observing and evaluating the child's safety.* A safety assessment and risk assessment will be completed during the course of a child abuse assessment or family assessment.

a. During a child abuse assessment, when there is an immediate threat to the child's safety, reasonable efforts shall be made to observe the alleged child victim and evaluate the safety of the child named in the report within one hour of receipt of the report of suspected child abuse. Otherwise, reasonable efforts shall be made to observe the alleged child victim and evaluate the child's safety within 24 hours of receipt of the report of suspected child abuse.

(1) When the alleged perpetrator clearly does not have access to the alleged child victim, reasonable efforts shall be made to observe the alleged child victim and evaluate the child's safety within 96 hours of receipt of the report of suspected child abuse.

(2) When reasonable efforts have been made to observe the alleged child victim within the specified time frames and the worker has established that there is no risk to the alleged child victim, the observation of the alleged child victim may be delayed or waived with supervisory approval.

b. During a family assessment, reasonable efforts shall be made to observe the alleged child victim and evaluate the child's safety within 72 hours of receipt of the report of suspected child abuse.

(1) When reasonable efforts have been made to observe the alleged child victim within the specified time frame and the worker has established that there is no risk to the alleged child victim, the observation of the alleged child victim may be delayed or waived with supervisory approval.

(2) If at any time during a family assessment a child is determined unsafe or in imminent danger, it appears that the immediate safety or well-being of a child is endangered, it appears that the family may flee or the child may disappear, or that the facts otherwise warrant, the department shall immediately commence a child abuse assessment as defined in Iowa Code section 232.71B as amended by 2013 Iowa Acts, House File 590.

(3) If the department determines that safety issues continue to require a child to reside outside of the child's home at the conclusion of a family assessment, the department shall transfer the assessment to the child abuse assessment pathway for a disposition.

175.25(2) *Interviewing the alleged child victim.* The primary purpose of an interview with the child, during the course of a child abuse assessment or family assessment, is to gather information regarding the abuse allegation, the child's immediate safety, and risk of abuse. During a child abuse assessment, the child protection worker shall also identify the person or persons responsible for the alleged abuse as well as the nature, extent, and cause of injuries, if any, to the child named in the report of suspected child abuse.

175.25(3) *Interviewing subjects of the report and other sources.*

a. During a child abuse assessment, attempts shall be made to conduct interviews with subjects of the report and persons who have relevant information to share regarding the allegations. This may include contact with physicians to assess the child's condition. The child's custodial parents or guardians and the alleged perpetrator (if different) shall be interviewed or offered the opportunity to be interviewed. The court may waive the requirement of the interview for good cause.

b. During a family assessment, the child's custodial parents or guardians shall be interviewed or offered the opportunity to be interviewed. The child protection worker may request information from any person believed to have knowledge regarding a child named in an assessment. A family assessment requires the cooperation of the family; should a family choose not to participate, the department is required to transfer the assessment to the child abuse assessment pathway for a disposition.

175.25(4) *Gathering of physical and documentary evidence.* During a child abuse assessment, evidence shall be gathered from, but not be limited to, interviews, observations, photographs, medical and psychological reports and records, reports from child protection centers, written reports, audiotapes and their transcripts or summaries, videotapes and their transcripts or summaries, or other electronic forms.

175.25(5) *Evaluating the home environment and relationships of household members.* An evaluation of the home environment shall be conducted during the course of an assessment with the consent of the parent or guardian. If permission is refused, the juvenile court may authorize the worker to enter the home to observe or interview the child.

a. If protective concerns are identified, the child protection worker shall evaluate the child named in the report and any other children in the same home as the parents or other persons responsible for their care.

(1) Each assessment shall include a full description of observations and information gathered during the assessment process. This description shall provide information which evaluates the safety of the child named in the report.

(2) If the child protection worker has concerns about a child's safety or a family's functioning, the worker shall conduct a more intensive assessment until those concerns are addressed.

b. When an assessment is conducted at an out-of-home setting, an evaluation of the environment and relationships where the abuse allegedly occurred shall be conducted.

c. The child abuse assessment shall include a description of the name, age, and condition of other children in the same home as the child named in the report.

175.25(6) *Evaluating the information.* During a child abuse assessment, evaluation of information shall include an analysis, which considers the credibility of the physical evidence, observations, and interviews, and shall result in a conclusion of whether or not to confirm the report of suspected child abuse.

175.25(7) *Determining placement on central abuse registry.* During a child abuse assessment, a determination of whether the report data and disposition data of a confirmed case of child abuse is subject to placement on the central abuse registry pursuant to Iowa Code section 232.71D shall be made on each assessment. Determining placement on the central abuse registry is not applicable in a family assessment.

175.25(8) *Service recommendations and referrals.* During or at the conclusion of a child abuse assessment or a family assessment, the department shall consult with the child's family to offer services to the child and the child's family which address strengths and needs identified in the assessment. The department may recommend information, information and referral, community care referral, or services provided by the department. If it is believed that services are necessary for the protection of the abused child or other children in the home, juvenile court intervention shall be sought.

a. Information or information and referral.

(1) Either information or information and referral shall be offered when:

1. A family assessment has identified the child to be at low risk of future abuse or neglect; or

2. A child abuse assessment has identified the abuse is not confirmed and the child is believed to be at low risk of future abuse or neglect; or

3. A child abuse assessment has identified the abuse is confirmed and not placed on the registry and the child is believed to be at low risk of future abuse or neglect.

(2) Recommendation options for information and information and referral.

1. When no service needs are identified, the worker may recommend no service; or

2. When service needs are identified, the worker may recommend new or continuing services to the family to be provided through informal supports; or

3. When service needs are identified, the worker may recommend new or continuing services to the family to be provided through community organizations.

b. Referral to community care.

- (1) A referral to community care shall be offered when:
1. A family assessment has identified the child to be at moderate or high risk of future abuse or neglect; or
 2. A child abuse assessment has identified the abuse is not confirmed and the child is believed to be at moderate or high risk of future abuse or neglect; or
 3. A child abuse assessment has identified the abuse is confirmed and not placed on the registry and the child is believed to be at moderate risk of future abuse or neglect.

(2) Referral to community care not offered. A referral to community care shall not be offered when any child in the family has an open child welfare service case with the department, a child in need of assistance petition was filed or is pending, or if the abuse occurred in an out-of-home setting.

(3) Responsibilities for community care referral.

1. At the conclusion of a family assessment, the department shall transfer the case, if appropriate, to a contracted provider to review the service plan for the child and family.
2. The contracted provider shall make a referral to the department abuse hotline if a family's noncompliance with a service plan places a child at risk.
 - If any of the criteria for child abuse as defined in Iowa Code section 232.68 are met, the department shall commence a child abuse assessment.
 - If criteria for a child in need of assistance as defined in Iowa Code section 232.2(6) are met, the department shall determine whether to request a child in need of assistance petition.

c. Referral for department services.

- (1) The department shall provide or arrange for and monitor services for abused children and their families on a voluntary basis or under a final or intermediate order of the juvenile court when:
1. A child abuse assessment has identified the abuse is confirmed and not placed on the registry and the child is believed to be at high risk of future abuse or neglect; or
 2. A child abuse assessment has identified the abuse is founded.
- (2) The worker shall recommend new or continuing services to the family to be provided by the department, either directly or through contracted agencies.
- (3) Families that refuse voluntary services shall be referred for a child in need of assistance petition through juvenile court.

175.25(9) *Court action following assessment.* If, upon completion of an assessment performed under Iowa Code section 232.71B as amended by 2013 Iowa Acts, House File 590, the department determines that the best interests of the child require juvenile court action, the department shall act appropriately to initiate the action.

a. If at any time during the assessment process the department believes court action is necessary to safeguard a child, the department shall act appropriately to initiate the action.

b. The department shall assist the juvenile court or district court during all stages of court proceedings involving an alleged child abuse case in accordance with Iowa Code section 232.71C as amended by 2013 Iowa Acts, House File 590.