

Child Abuse

412.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines for the investigation of suspected child abuse. This policy also addresses when Alsip Police Department members are required to notify the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) of suspected child abuse.

412.1.1 DEFINITIONS

Definitions related to this policy include:

Child - Unless otherwise specified by a cited statute, a child is any person under the age of 18 years.

Child abuse - Any offense or attempted offense involving violence or neglect with a child victim when committed by a person responsible for the child's care or any other act that would mandate notification to a social service agency (325 ILCS 5/3).

412.2 POLICY

The Alsip Police Department will investigate all reported incidents of alleged criminal child abuse and ensure DCFS is notified as required by law.

412.3 MANDATORY NOTIFICATION

Members of the Alsip Police Department shall notify DCFS when they have reasonable cause to believe a child known to them in their official capacity was abused by a parent, immediate family member, any person responsible for the child's welfare, any individual residing in the same home as the child or a paramour of the child's parent. Members must also report any case of a neglected child (325 ILCS 5/4; 325 ILCS 5/3).

For purposes of notification, abuse includes physical injuries, risk of physical injuries, sex offenses, torture, excessive corporal punishment, female genital mutilation, etc. Neglect includes failure to provide necessary nourishment or medical care or blatant disregard of parent or caretaker responsibilities. Full definitions of abuse and neglect are provided in 325 ILCS 5/3.

412.3.1 NOTIFICATION PROCEDURE

Notification should occur as follows (325 ILCS 5/7):

- (a) All notifications of suspected child abuse or neglect shall be made immediately, either to DCFS on the statewide, toll-free telephone number, in person or by telephone through the nearest DCFS office (325 ILCS 5/7.6; 89 Ill. Adm. Code 300.30).
- (b) Notification, when possible, shall include:
 1. The name and address of the child and his/her parents or other persons having custody.

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2. The child's age, the nature of the child's condition, including any evidence of previous injuries or disabilities.
 3. Any other information that the person filing the report believes might be helpful in establishing the cause of abuse or neglect and the identity of the person believed to have caused such abuse or neglect.
- (c) A member who suspects that a child has died as a result of child abuse or neglect shall also immediately report his/her suspicion to the appropriate Medical Examiner (325 ILCS 5/4.1).

412.4 QUALIFIED INVESTIGATORS

Qualified investigators should be available for child abuse investigations. These investigators should:

- (a) Conduct interviews in child appropriate interview facilities.
- (b) Be familiar with forensic interview techniques specific to child abuse investigations.
- (c) Present all cases of alleged child abuse to the prosecutor for review.
- (d) Coordinate with other enforcement agencies, social service agencies and school administrators as needed.
- (e) Provide referrals to therapy services, victim advocates, guardians and support for the child and family as appropriate.
- (f) Participate in or coordinate with multidisciplinary investigative teams as applicable.

412.5 INVESTIGATIONS AND REPORTING

In all reported or suspected cases of child abuse, a report will be written. Officers shall write a report even if the allegations appear unfounded or unsubstantiated.

Investigations and reports related to suspected cases of child abuse should address, as applicable:

- (a) The overall basis for the contact. This should be done by the investigating officer in all circumstances where a suspected child abuse victim was contacted.
- (b) The exigent circumstances that existed if officers interviewed the child victim without the presence of a parent or guardian.
- (c) Any relevant statements the child may have made and to whom he/she made the statements.
- (d) If a child was taken into protective custody, the reasons, the name and title of the person making the decision, and why other alternatives were not appropriate.
- (e) Documentation of any visible injuries or any injuries identified by the child. This should include photographs of such injuries, if practicable.

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- (f) Whether the child victim was transported for medical treatment or a medical examination.
- (g) Whether the victim identified a household member as the alleged perpetrator, and a list of the names of any other children who may reside in the residence.
- (h) Identification of any prior related reports or allegations of child abuse, including other jurisdictions, as reasonably known.
- (i) Previous addresses of the victim and suspect.
- (j) Other potential witnesses who have not yet been interviewed, such as relatives or others close to the victim's environment.
- (k) Other investigative steps taken in compliance with any applicable county Child Advocacy Advisory Board protocol the Alsip Police Department follows (55 ILCS 80/3).

All cases of the unexplained death of a child should be investigated as thoroughly as if it had been a case of suspected child abuse (e.g., a sudden or unexplained death of an infant).

412.6 PROTECTIVE CUSTODY

Before taking any child into protective custody, the officer should make reasonable attempts to contact DCFS. Generally, removal of a child from his/her family, guardian or other responsible adult should be left to the child welfare authorities when they are present or have become involved in an investigation.

Generally, members of this department should remove a child from his/her parent or guardian without a court order only when no other effective alternative is reasonably available and immediate action reasonably appears necessary to protect the child. Prior to taking a child into protective custody, the officer should take reasonable steps to deliver the child to another qualified parent or legal guardian, unless it reasonably appears that the release would endanger the child or result in abduction. If this is not a reasonable option, the officer shall ensure that the child is delivered to DCFS.

Whenever practicable, the officer should inform a supervisor of the circumstances prior to taking a child into protective custody. If prior notification is not practicable, officers should contact a supervisor promptly after taking a child into protective custody.

Children may only be removed from a parent or guardian in the following situations (325 ILCS 5/5):

- (a) A court has ordered the removal of the child.
- (b) A court has not ordered the removal of the child but there is reason to believe the child cannot be cared for at home or in the custody of the person responsible for the child's welfare without endangering the child's health or safety, and there is no time to apply for a court order for temporary custody of the child.

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412.6.1 PROCEDURE

A department member taking a child into temporary protective custody shall immediately (325 ILCS 5/5):

- (a) Make every reasonable effort to notify the person responsible for the child's welfare.
- (b) Notify DCFS.

See the Abandoned Newborn Infant Protection Policy for guidance regarding the Abandoned Newborn Infant Protection Act (325 ILCS 2/10 et seq.).

412.7 INTERVIEWS

412.7.1 PRELIMINARY INTERVIEWS

Absent extenuating circumstances or impracticality, officers should record the preliminary interview with suspected child abuse victims. Officers should avoid multiple interviews with a child victim and should attempt to gather only the information necessary to begin an investigation. When practicable, investigating officers should defer interviews until a person who is specially trained in such interviews is available. Generally, child victims should not be interviewed in the home or location where the alleged abuse occurred.

412.7.2 DETAINING SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE VICTIMS FOR AN INTERVIEW

An officer should not detain a child involuntarily who is suspected of being a victim of child abuse solely for the purpose of an interview or physical exam without the consent of a parent or guardian unless one of the following applies:

- (a) Exigent circumstances exist, such as:
 - 1. A reasonable belief that medical issues of the child need to be addressed immediately.
 - 2. A reasonable belief that the child is or will be in danger of harm if the interview or physical exam is not immediately completed.
 - 3. The alleged offender is the custodial parent or guardian and there is reason to believe the child may be in continued danger.
- (b) A court order or warrant has been issued.

412.8 MEDICAL EXAMINATIONS

If the child has been the victim of abuse that requires a medical examination, the investigating officer should obtain consent for such examination from the appropriate parent, guardian or agency having legal custody of the child. The officer should also arrange for the child's transportation to the appropriate medical facility.

In cases where the alleged offender is the custodial parent or guardian and is refusing consent for the medical examination, officers should notify a supervisor before proceeding. If exigent circumstances do not exist or if state law does not provide for officers to take the child for a medical examination, the notified supervisor should consider obtaining a court order for such an examination.

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412.9 DRUG-ENDANGERED CHILDREN

A coordinated response by law enforcement and social services agencies is appropriate to meet the immediate and longer-term medical and safety needs of children exposed to the manufacturing, trafficking or use of narcotics.

412.9.1 SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

The Investigation Unit Supervisor should:

- (a) Work with professionals from the appropriate agencies, including DCFS, other law enforcement agencies, medical service providers and local prosecutors to develop community specific procedures for responding to situations where there are children endangered by exposure to methamphetamine labs or the manufacture and trafficking of other drugs.
- (b) Activate any available interagency response when an officer notifies the Investigation Unit Supervisor that the officer has responded to a drug lab or other narcotics crime scene where a child is present or where evidence indicates that a child lives there.
- (c) Develop a report format or checklist for use when officers respond to drug labs or other narcotics crime scenes. The checklist will help officers document the environmental, medical, social and other conditions that may affect the child.

412.9.2 OFFICER RESPONSIBILITIES

Officers responding to a drug lab or other narcotics crime scene where a child is present or where there is evidence that a child lives should:

- (a) Document the environmental, medical, social and other conditions of the child using photography as appropriate and the checklist or form developed for this purpose.
- (b) Notify the Investigation Unit Supervisor so an interagency response can begin.

412.10 STATE MANDATES AND OTHER RELEVANT LAWS

Illinois requires or permits the following:

412.10.1 RELEASE OF REPORTS

Information related to incidents of child abuse or suspected child abuse shall be confidential and may only be disclosed pursuant to state law and the Records Maintenance and Release Policy (325 ILCS 5/11).

412.10.2 CHILD ADVOCACY ADVISORY BOARD PROTOCOL

This department has adopted the Illinois Child Advocacy Advisory Board's protocol governing the investigation of child maltreatment including sexual abuse, physical abuse, exploitation and neglect of a child.

All investigations and interviews conducted by this department shall comply with this protocol, with the procedures to be used in investigating and prosecuting cases arising from alleged child maltreatment and in coordinating treatment referrals for the child and his/her family (55 ILCS 80/3).

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412.10.3 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF REPORTING RESPONSIBILITY

The Administration supervisor shall ensure that members of this department who are directly involved in the enforcement of the law sign statements acknowledging that they are mandated to notify DCFS of suspected child abuse and neglect. The statement shall be on a form prescribed by DCFS. It shall be signed before beginning employment and shall be retained by this agency as a permanent part of the personnel record (325 ILCS 5/4).

412.10.4 ASSISTANCE TO CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES INVESTIGATORS

Upon receiving a request for assistance from a child protective services investigator involving an investigation of a high-risk report of child abuse or neglect officers should determine the reason for the request. If the protective services investigator reasonably believes that the person being investigated has a potential for violence, officers should accompany him/her. However, if resources are limited or unavailable, officers should notify the Patrol Sergeant to arrange for the assistance to occur at a mutually agreeable time (325 ILCS 5/7.2).

412.10.5 SEXUAL ABUSE INVOLVING SCHOOL PERSONNEL

In all reported incidents of sexual abuse of a child involving school personnel, including vendors or volunteers, the Investigation Unit supervisor or authorized designee shall notify the relevant school when the investigation has been suspended or completed, as well as the outcome of the investigation (105 ILCS 5/22-85).

412.11 TRAINING

The Department should provide training on best practices in child abuse investigations to members tasked with investigating these cases. The training should include:

- (a) Participating in multidisciplinary investigations, as appropriate.
- (b) Conducting forensic interviews.
- (c) Availability of therapy services for children and families.
- (d) Availability of specialized forensic medical exams.
- (e) Cultural competence (including interpretive services) related to child abuse investigations.
- (f) Availability of victim advocate or guardian ad litem support.

412.11.1 TRAINING RECORDS

In addition to providing copies of completed mandated reporter training records to the Services Supervisor as required in the Personnel Records Policy, members should maintain records of their completed training and forward copies to their licensing or certification board (325 ILCS 5/4).