



Practice Points

COLLATERAL CONTACTS CA/N Investigations and Family Assessments

The purpose of this Practice Point is to provide a reminder to staff to interview all essential collaterals as needed to verify findings, or to gain information not accessible from the family. [Child Welfare Manual Section 2 Chapter 4.1.4.4](#) and [Section 2 Chapter 5.3.11.1](#) state, “**staff shall make Collateral Contact(s), for all investigations/family assessments. This contact shall be with someone other than the reporter and/or other household members.**”

Collateral Contacts should be able to provide staff with information of a significant interest specific to the CA/N Investigation or Family Assessment, or be able to provide factual, essential evidence. Staff should ensure that all information obtained is documented and clearly articulated with specificity in the case record.

Collateral Contacts may have any other relevant information not otherwise known to the Division. Possible collateral contacts may include, but are not limited to:

- ✦ School professionals/School liaison (teacher, counselor, Principal, school nurse)
- ✦ Therapist/Counselor;
- ✦ Parent’s as Teachers Coordinator;
- ✦ Physician or other health care professional;
- ✦ Neighbor;
- ✦ Extended family member(s) not in the household;
- ✦ Witnesses of the alleged incident in the reported concern; and/or,
- ✦ Witnesses suggested by the alleged perpetrator in CA/N Investigations.

In CA/N investigations, staff must follow every lead in order to determine if the elements are present for a POE finding, or to document why they are not. The

worker gives out very little information, but seeks it from anyone likely to have pertinent information (i.e., a child care provider and medical professional when the safety of an infant or toddler is in question; neighbors when a lack of supervision and young children being in the street is a concern; etc.). Staff should ask questions without divulging private information about the family or child unless absolutely necessary.

Though the family assessment approach is more about gaining information regarding the family's strengths, needs and overall supports, the worker must also seek out collaterals to be certain the Division gains a clear picture of the reported concern and any issues related to child safety.