

# Chapter 2 Investigation and assessment

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## Purpose

The investigation and assessment may be our first face to face contact with a child who has been abused or neglected and who may need our intervention to ensure their safety and well-being.

As part of the investigation and assessment Child Safety Services will:

- determine if the child is safe
  - investigate allegations of harm and risk of harm
  - undertake a holistic assessment of the child and family within their usual home environment
  - determine if the child is in need of protection
  - decide whether there are supports that Child Safety Services or other agencies can provide to the child and family.
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## Key steps

1. Plan the investigation and assessment
2. Engage the family and gather information
3. Assess the notified concerns and the child's need for protection
4. Finalise the investigation and assessment

What ifs - responding to specific investigation and assessment matters

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## Standards

1. All investigation and assessments commenced within the response timeframe of the notification.
  2. Staff safety is prioritised in the planning and conducting the investigation and assessment.
  3. The recognised entity is consulted for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.
  4. All subject children sighted and, where age and developmentally appropriate, are interviewed during the investigation and assessment.
  5. All alleged persons responsible are interviewed during the investigation and assessment.
  6. The safety of all subject children within their usual home environment is assessed.
  7. An holistic assessment of the child's need for protection is conducted.
  8. All outcomes recorded clearly identify any future risk, including severity, and a rationale for the assessment of the parents ability and willingness to protect the child.
  9. At least one parent is informed of the allegations and outcome of the investigation and assessment.
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## Practice skills (key areas for reflection)

- Have I given appropriate consideration to any history of Child Safety Services' contact with the child and family?
  - Have I considered and integrated all of the information gathered when making decisions?
  - What theories and research am I drawing on as part of my assessment?
  - Have I actively engaged with the child and family in a way that allows their meaningful participation in the process?
  - How have my personal values and practice style impacted on my assessment and decision-making?
  - Was my use of power in conducting the investigation and assessment appropriate?
  - Is my assessment holistic and focused on the child's safety and well-being?
  - Have I considered how the child or families strengths can be utilised to promote the protection of the child?
  - Have I considered what supports can be provided to this child and family?
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## Authority

- *Child Protection Act 1999*, sections 6, 9, 10, 14, 15, 16-20, 21A, 23-51, 97,153, 154,159C, 159I-L, 159M, 159N, 186-188, 195, 248B
- *Evidence Act 1977*
- Policy No 111-1: Operation of the case management protocol between commonwealth agencies and state/territory welfare authorities for unsupported young people and the provision of youth support payment
- Policy No. 372-2: Recordkeeping

# Key steps - Investigation and assessment

## 1. Plan the investigation and assessment

- 1.1 Plan the investigation and assessment

## 2. Engage the family and gather information

- 2.1 Commence the investigation and assessment
- 2.2 Inform the parents about the allegation of harm
- 2.3 Interview and sight the child
- 2.4 Interview the parents and other adults
- 2.5 Complete the safety assessment
- 2.6 Gather information from other sources

## 3. Assess the notified concerns and the child's need for protection

- 3.1 Complete the family risk evaluation
- 3.2 Determine whether the child is in need of protection

## 4. Finalise the investigation and assessment

- 4.1 Determine whether there will be ongoing intervention
- 4.2 Record the investigation, assessment and outcome
- 4.3 Inform the parents about the outcome of the investigation and assessment

## What ifs - responding to specific investigation and assessment matters

1. What if an investigation and assessment case needs to be **transferred**?
2. What if a parent will not consent to actions required - **use of a TAO**?
3. What if a parent will not consent to actions required - **use of a CAO**?
4. What if a **joint investigation** with the Queensland Police Service is required?
5. What if a child needs to be interviewed **without parental consent** - section 17?
6. What if Child Safety Services is contacted about **additional concerns** for a child?
7. What if the investigation and assessment is for an **unborn child**?
8. What if a child is at immediate risk of harm - use of **section 16 or 18**?
9. What if a child needs a **medical examination**?
10. What if a child needs to be placed under an **assessment care agreement**?
11. What if a matter needs to be **referred to the SCAN System**?
12. What if a child and family **cannot be located**?
13. What if parents **refuse to allow contact** with a child?
14. What if **assistance is required** from another jurisdiction?
15. What if **another jurisdiction** requires assistance?
16. What if a young person is **subject to youth justice intervention**?
17. What if a family is subject to the **Witness Protection Program**?

# 1. Plan the investigation and assessment

Under the *Child Protection Act 1999*, section 14, Child Safety Services has the statutory authority to investigate allegations that a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm, assess a child's need for protection or take other actions considered appropriate. For further information refer to the practice resource [Investigation and assessment - an overview](#).

## 1.1 Plan the investigation and assessment

*Planning is a first key step towards undertaking a targeted and holistic investigation and assessment of a child's safety and protective needs.*

The investigation and assessment plan identifies all the relevant activities required for the investigation and assessment. It must be completed by the CSSC responsible for the investigation and assessment and approved by a team leader **prior** to the commencement of the investigation and assessment.

The safety of Child Safety Services' officers must be considered at all times during the investigation and assessment. For further information refer to [Chapter 10.2 Staff safety and well-being](#).

To complete an investigation and assessment plan:

- refer to all of the practice considerations required as part of the planning process, as outlined in the practice resource [The investigation and assessment plan](#)
- ensure that any identified staff safety issues are addressed by the plan
- consult with the team leader or senior practitioner for complex matters, if required
- ensure all the key people are involved and undertake joint planning at the earliest possible time when other agencies will be involved
- ensure the recognised entity is contacted and given an opportunity to participate in the planning and decision-making process for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child
- clarify the roles and responsibilities of each person involved in the process
- record the plan in the 'Investigation and assessment plan' form in ICMS and seek verbal approval for the plan from the team leader, prior to commencement of an investigation and assessment.

For urgent matters, a written plan can be verbally approved by a team leader, without being recorded in ICMS, and is to be recorded in ICMS as soon as possible.

The investigation and assessment plan may be added to and amended during the investigation and assessment. The completed investigation and assessment plan will be 'approved' in ICMS by the team leader at the completion of the investigation and assessment.

### Requirement for two officers to undertake an investigation and assessment

When having contact with, or interviewing a child as part of an investigation and assessment, the authorised officer **will always be accompanied** by either:

- another authorised officer
- a police officer
- another Child Safety Services' officer or a student undertaking field education, if approved by the team leader after taking into account any practice implications that may result from their involvement - for example, it may not be appropriate for a convenor or CSSO to be involved when they may be required to work with the family in the future in their usual role.

This ensures that there is a witness to the information provided and ensures that a CSO is not put in the position of being accused of an action that did not occur.

In circumstances where the investigation and assessment is complex or likely to be conflictual, the investigating CSO will **only** be accompanied by another authorised officer or a police officer. Where there are serious safety issues present for Child Safety Services' staff, contact the QPS for their support and assistance.

### **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children**

For information that may assist with the planning and conduct of an investigation and assessment in relation to an Aboriginal or Torres Strait islander child, refer to the practice paper [Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children](#).

## **2. Engage the family and gather information**

### **2.1 Commence the investigation and assessment**

An investigation and assessment must be commenced within the response priority timeframe of the notification. The starting point for this timeframe begins when the decision is made that the concerns meet the threshold for a notification. This will be either:

- at the time of the notifier's initial contact with Child Safety Services
- at the completion of a pre-notification check - which cannot extend beyond a 24 hour timeframe.

The response timeframe assigned to the notification will be either:

- 24 hours, 5 days or 10 days for a 'standard' notification
- five days - where an unborn child is likely to be born within five days
- 10 days - where an unborn child is likely to be born more than five days after the receipt of the initial concerns.

An investigation and assessment **is considered to have commenced** when:

- the subject child (or the first of the subject children) is sighted and interviewed (as age and developmentally appropriate) by an authorised officer
- a pregnant woman is first sighted, interviewed and **consents** to the investigation and assessment, when the notification relates to an unborn child.

In **exceptional** circumstances where an authorised officer is **not able to access and sight a child** within the response priority timeframe, the subject child (or the first of the subject children) or pregnant woman may be sighted by a police officer or health professional, who can provide information to Child Safety Services in relation to the safety of the child. This date can be recorded as the date the child or pregnant woman was sighted.

In circumstances in rural and remote regions, where an authorised officer, police officer or health professional is **not able to sight** a child or pregnant woman within the response priority timeframe **due to geographical distance or lack of access due to seasonal conditions, one or both** of the following actions is to occur as a matter of urgency:

- seek information in relation to the safety of the child from other services or professionals who have regular, or have had, recent contact with the child
- take immediate action to allow for the commencement of the investigation and assessment - this may include organising transport or arranging for the child to be sighted.

When there are **serious** concerns for staff safety, and the QPS are unavailable to accompany staff within the response timeframe, the commencement of the investigation is not to occur until QPS are available to accompany staff.

In the above two circumstances, record what action was taken, or the reason for the delay, in a case note in the investigation and assessment event in ICMS.

The following actions **do not** constitute commencement:

- allocation of the investigation and assessment by the team leader
- further contact with the notifier
- an unsuccessful attempt to visit or contact the child or family
- face-to-face contact with the pregnant woman, where the pregnant woman refuses to consent to the investigation and assessment (refer to [7. What if the investigation and assessment is for an unborn child?](#)).

An investigation and assessment **cannot be completed** without the child being sighted by a Child Safety Services' authorised officer.

## 2.2 Inform the parents about the allegation of harm

An authorised officer or police officer investigating an allegation of harm or risk of harm to a child **must** give details of the alleged harm or risk of harm to **at least one** of the child's parents (*Child Protection Act 1999*, section 15). In doing so, consider whether the information should be provided to both parents, especially when parents are residing separately.

A parent is the child's mother, father or someone else (other than the chief executive) having or exercising parental responsibility for the child. This includes a person who, under Aboriginal tradition or under Torres Strait Island custom, is regarded as a parent of the child (*Child Protection Act 1999*, section 11).

Discretionary compliance with this requirement is permitted (*Child Protection Act 1999*, section 15(3)), if an authorised officer reasonably believes:

- someone may be charged with a criminal offence for the harm to the child, and compliance may jeopardise an investigation into the offence
- compliance may expose the child to harm.

If discretionary compliance is exercised:

- it must be approved by a team leader
- record the decision, rationale and approval process in a case note in ICMS.

For further information, refer to the practice resource [Informing parents about the harm and the outcome - section 15](#).

### Criminal matters

Where there is a criminal matter or an ongoing police investigation, and the provision of information may jeopardise the due process of the criminal matter, discuss the matter with the QPS prior to any information being provided to the parents.

### Privacy considerations

The *Child Protection Act 1999* overrides the privacy principles adopted by the State Government about how personal information, including that of clients, is collected, stored, used and disclosed. Decisions

about the provision of information must always be made in favour of the welfare and best interests of a child.

Where parents are estranged, or no longer reside together, provide only information specific to the alleged harms to the child. Do not release information about one parent's general circumstances to the other parent, for example, information such as employment and financial issues, extended family issues and a parent's health or medical treatment. If there are concerns about what information can be provided to a parent, seek advice initially from the team leader or senior practitioner and, when necessary, the team leader should seek legal advice from staff at Legal Services Branch, Corporate and Executive Services Division.

## **2.3 Interview and sight the child**

*Investigation and assessments are undertaken with the cooperation and agreement of parents wherever possible. The use of good communication and engagement skills are vital to this process.*

The following children are to be sighted, interviewed and assessed prior to the completion of an investigation and assessment:

- **all subject children** in the notification
- any other child in the home who is identified during the investigation and assessment as having been harmed, or as likely to be at unacceptable risk of harm.

Interviewing other children is important, as they may also have been harmed or be at risk of harm and may have information about the notified concerns. Consider interviewing:

- any other child in the home who may have information about the notified concerns
- any other child that is no longer in the home, but who was in the home at the time of the notified concerns, if it is assessed that they may be able to provide relevant information.

### **Contact a child without parental consent - section 17**

Prior to contacting and interviewing a child, consider whether the parents prior knowledge of the interview will compromise the safety of the child or interfere with a possible criminal investigation by the QPS. Where it is considered necessary to contact and interview a child without the parents consent or without them having prior knowledge of the interview, the use of powers under the *Child Protection Act 1999*, section 17, may be used. For further information refer to [5. What if a child needs to be interviewed without parental consent - section 17?](#)

### **Arrange the contact with a child**

Prior to contacting and interviewing a child, either:

- seek the permission of the child's parents
- obtain the authority of an assessment order in order to facilitate the interview - this is only to occur if the parents refuse contact with a child, or will not agree to work with Child Safety Services.

Contact or interviews with a child may occur either by an unannounced visit to the home or an arranged appointment. Contact may happen in the family home, it can also occur in other locations such as a hospital, the child's school, a child care or day care centre, a police station, a CSSC or another location suitable to the child and family and appropriate to the circumstances of the investigation and assessment. When making these decisions, consider:

- the seriousness of the allegations and whether there is any history to inform the decision about the best place to interview the child

- whether there are any serious safety issues for Child Safety Services' officers, that will require the involvement and assistance of the QPS
- what culturally appropriate support is required for the child and family.

If a criminal offence may have been committed, and a joint investigation with the QPS is to occur, make decisions about sighting and interviewing children in consultation with the QPS, including whether or not the interviews will be recorded in line with the ICARE procedures (refer to [4. What if a joint investigation with the Queensland Police Service is required?](#)). In addition, if there are any safety issues for staff, refer to the practice resource [The investigation and assessment plan](#) and [Chapter 10.2 Staff safety and well-being](#).

## Sight the child

Contact with a child is key to determining the immediate safety of the child, and should be done in a way that allows the child to feel safe and able to communicate any fears or concerns they have. When sighting a child:

- make careful observations of the child's physical and cognitive developmental stage, behaviour, reactions, presentation and interaction with others, including the parent
- have personal contact with the child, speak to them or interview them if age and developmentally appropriate (see below).

For further information on child developmental stages, refer to the resource [Physical and cognitive developmental milestones](#).

## Interview the child

Prior to interviewing a child, consider the following factors:

- the decision to interview of a child must take into account the child's age, developmental level and ability to communicate
- interviewing a child in the presence of other people can reduce the likelihood of a child disclosing harm or risk of harm, especially if the person holds a position of authority in relation to the child
- the Child Safety Services' officer is responsible for ensuring that the child feels safe and supported during the interview process
- if a child requests that they have a support person present during an interview, the child is to be assisted to identify an appropriate support person - it is **not appropriate** for the alleged person responsible for harm to be the support person for the child or a parent.

For further information on support persons, refer to the practice resource [The role of a support person](#).

Where the allegations of harm include sexual abuse of a child, refer to the practice paper [Child sexual abuse](#).

For specific information on preparing and conducting an interview with a child, refer to the practice resource [Interviewing a child](#).

Note: CSOs will not use video and/or audio equipment to record interviews with children. Any written interview notes made during the interview will be held on the child's paper file, as they may be required or subpoenaed for court purposes. Copies of the interview notes may be provided to the QPS to assist with a joint investigation.

## Exceptions to contact or interviews with a child

In exceptional circumstances, professional judgment may indicate that the interview of a child would be inappropriate or not possible. Examples may include where a subject child has a serious or terminal illness, or when a child refuses to be sighted or interviewed after all reasonable attempts to interview them have been exhausted. The decision not to interview a child should be made in consultation with the team leader, and the rationale must be clearly documented.

## When a child has physical injuries

When physical injuries to a child are suspected or alleged:

- sight the injury or injuries if possible and appropriate - **do not sight** the injury or injuries when alone with a child or parent - there must always be a second person present, either another authorised officer or a police officer
- be mindful of the child's age, gender and comfort level in relation to deciding when and where injuries are sighted
- ask the parent, carer or the child to adjust or remove whatever clothing is necessary to see the alleged injury or injuries - do not undress or adjust the child's clothing yourself
- document details of the injury, including the location, size and colour, as relevant - the injury may be photographed (*Child Protection Act 1999*, section 181)
- assess whether a medical examination of the child is required - for further information refer to [9. What if a child needs a medical examination?](#)

If parents do not consent to the sighting of the alleged injury and it is imperative to the investigation and assessment that the injury be seen:

- advise the parents that the injury will need to be seen
- attempt to negotiate with the parents the most suitable way to do this
- consult with a team leader about further action as soon as possible, including consideration of the need for an assessment order to allow a medical examination to occur - for further information refer to [2. What if a parent will not consent to actions required - use of a TAO?](#) or [3. What if a parent will not consent to actions required - use of a CAO?](#)

## 2.4 Interview the parents and other adults

The purpose of interviews with parents and other adults is to:

- gather relevant information in relation to the concerns and the child's circumstances
- verify and clarify information received from other sources
- assess the ability and willingness of the parents to protect the child from harm.

### Who to interview

The following adults are to be interviewed:

- all persons alleged responsible for harm to a child
- the resident parent or parents (or carer) of the child and any adult who cares for a child, even if the concerns do not specifically relate to them
- any other adult that lives in the house when the concerns relate to them or they may be able to provide relevant information - this includes step-parents or partners of a parent living with the child who may not be the child's primary parent
- non-resident parents, other adults or parental figures not living in the primary care household, who have reliable knowledge of the family and the concerns and are likely to provide relevant information.

Make all reasonable attempts to contact each adult household member to arrange for an interview to address and obtain a response to the concerns, particularly when the adult household member is a parent of the subject child.

The team leader must approve any decision made to finalise an investigation and assessment without all relevant adults being interviewed. Record the decision and rationale in ICMS, where this occurs.

### **Prior to the interview**

Where a parent requests that they have a **support person** present during an interview, assist them to identify an appropriate support person. It is **not** appropriate for the alleged person responsible for harm to be the support person. For further information on support persons, refer to the practice resource [The role of a support person](#).

Wherever possible, plan to conduct interviews with adults individually, in order to elicit as much accurate information as possible. This is particularly important where there are indicators of domestic violence or a culture of silence or fear in the home. This can affect the parent or adult's ability to speak openly when the other partner or another person is present.

### **Undertaking the interview**

When interviewing parents, carers or other adults, without the involvement of the QPS:

- make introductions and provide your names, state who you work for and show your identity card, as required by the *Child Protection Act 1999*, section 153
- explain your role and the purpose of the visit
- provide the child's parents with the brochure [When Child Safety Officers visit your home](#), which outlines the rights of parents
- conduct the interview and gather relevant information.

In particular, gather:

- the names and dates of birth of the subject children and all other children in the household
- the names and dates of birth and roles of people who are part of the child's household and any relevant extended family members
- contextual information about the family and home environment
- the information required to complete the family risk evaluation
- the presence and impact of the risk factors, such as domestic violence, drug and alcohol misuse, psychiatric illness and childhood abuse
- the information required to complete a safety assessment, and if required, a safety plan
- the types of support available to the family
- any other stressors impacting on the family
- the parents:
  - response to the specific concerns raised, including their acknowledgment of, and response to the harm and any additional concerns identified during the investigation and assessment
  - perceptions and feelings about the child
  - parenting abilities, including their knowledge and skills
  - understanding of the child's physical and cognitive development (refer to the resource [Physical and cognitive developmental milestones](#)).

For information on ICARE interviews, refer to [4. What if a joint investigation with the Queensland Police Service is required?](#)

**Do not accept** at face value information provided by parents or other adults during interviews, where it is believed to be untrue, misleading or contradictory to other information received. It is the responsibility of Child Safety Services' staff to respectfully challenge the person in relation to the information they provide, and where required, seek independent verification from a reliable source, for example, request the name of the doctor if a parent says the child has had recent medical attention. Where contradictory information is subsequently received, re-contact the parent to discuss the differing information and seek a further response.

In cases of **domestic and family violence**, careful consideration should be given before challenging a perpetrator in the presence of the victim, to ensure the safety of the victim. If, during an interview, it becomes apparent that there are risks to a parent's immediate physical safety, provide the parent at risk with information about services available, or assist in making a referral to an appropriate crisis service, for example, dvconnect or a women's shelter. Dvconnect can be contacted in relation to women, children and young people 24 hours a day, through the dvconnect womensline on telephone 1800 811 811. The dvconnect mensline can be contacted daily from 9am till midnight on telephone 1800 600 636.

## **Legal representatives**

Parents are entitled to have a legal representative present during the interview, and if requested, make all reasonable attempts to accommodate such requests.

## **2.5 Complete the safety assessment**

*Ensuring the safety of children is the primary focus of intervention by Child Safety Services, and is an integral part of all interactions with a child and their family.*

The purpose of the safety assessment is to guide decision-making about:

- whether there is the threat of immediate harm to a child in the household
- what interventions are required to maintain their safety and protection
- a 'safety decision' for each child in the household
- the development of a safety plan to ensure the safety of any child who remains in the home, whenever immediate harm indicators have been identified.

A safety assessment is not completed for matters of concern or for the investigation and assessment of an unborn child, unless the child is born prior to the approval of the investigation and assessment, in which case, the safety assessment will be completed following the birth.

A safety assessment is completed at the commencement of an investigation and assessment. Subsequent safety assessments will occur throughout Child Safety Services' intervention with a child and family, as required and outlined below.

### **Complete a subsequent safety assessment**

A subsequent safety assessment is required in any of the following circumstances:

- where new information becomes available or a change in circumstances indicates a threat to a child's safety, but the threat does not reach the threshold of a notification. For example, where there is a change in household membership (such as a parent leaving, or an adult or another child moving in or the birth of another child)
- any time when the parties to a safety plan are not complying with the current safety plan
- prior to returning a child back home following an 'unsafe' safety decision in a previous safety assessment

- prior to returning a child subject to a care agreement back home
- when a parent removes a child from an out-of-home-care placement
- when a child in an out-of-home care placement chooses to return home without Child Safety Services' approval
- prior to closing an ongoing intervention case.

## Completing the safety assessment

The initial safety assessment begins at the first face-to-face contact with the child and family at the commencement of the investigation and assessment. Ensure that the information gathered during interviews and contact with the family is sufficient to complete the safety assessment, prior to leaving the child in the home. The child's need for immediate safety must be secured prior to continuing with the investigation and assessment.

To complete the safety assessment:

- assess only one household as part of a safety assessment - the household the concerns were received about
- consult with the recognised entity when completing the safety assessment for an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child
- gather and analyse information from observations of, and interviews with, the child, their family and other relevant people to determine whether any of the 13 immediate harm indicators are present in the family - refer to [SDM: Safety assessment](#)
- provide parents with information about the concerns, so that they understand the issues and can fully participate in the process
- ensure the safety of all subject children prior to leaving the home and continuing the investigation and assessment
- if no immediate harm indicators are identified, no further action is required - continue with the investigation and assessment
- if any immediate harm indicators are identified, discuss the issues with the family and explain that action is required to ensure the immediate safety of the children - this action will be either:
  - non-custody interventions that will keep the child safe in the household - always refer to the most vulnerable child in the home
  - placement interventions (with an approved carer) to ensure the safety of the child
- determine the actions or interventions that are required to ensure the child's safety, in consultation with the family
- encourage the family to identify people or services that they know and trust, who can participate in a safety plan
- use professional judgement to assess whether the agreed safety interventions are adequate to mitigate the safety concerns present in the household
- develop a safety plan for each child who is to remain in the home, where immediate harm indicators have been identified
- record the safety assessment in ICMS and submit the completed safety assessment, and if required, the safety plan for each child, to the team leader for approval **within 72 hours** of the safety assessment being completed.

Outcomes for every safety assessment completed on the family will appear in the assessment and outcome form in ICMS.

For more information on non-custody and placement interventions, refer to the practice resource [Safety assessment](#).

## **Develop a safety plan**

The safety plan is a written agreement between Child Safety Services and a family. It documents the specific time-limited, non-custody interventions that have been agreed to by all parties to ensure the safety of any child who remains in the home whenever:

- immediate harm indicators have been identified
- in-home interventions are assessed as sufficient to ensure the child's safety
- the parents have been assessed as willing to co-operate with Child Safety Services to implement the safety plan.

Child Safety Services is responsible for the development, implementation and appropriateness of the safety plan, regardless of the role played by other parties or agencies.

The safety plan is developed with the family's participation, including the child, where developmentally appropriate. To develop a safety plan:

- address each identified immediate harm indicator and the individual safety needs of all children - especially those with high vulnerability due to age or disability
- involve the recognised entity when the child is Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and articulate their role as a safety resource in the safety plan, where relevant
- get agreement from all parties to the necessary intervention and:
  - outline what the parents and other people must do immediately to ensure the child's safety in the home
  - contact other parties to confirm their willingness, ability and suitability to be involved
  - include details of how the plan will be monitored, including how frequently and who is responsible
  - include details of the family member/s agreement to the plan
- record the details of the safety plan, in culturally appropriate and family-centred language
- agree to the anticipated completion date of the safety plan
- get the safety plan signed by all the people involved in its implementation
- leave a copy of the completed and signed safety plan with the parents, and provide copies of the plan to the child, where appropriate and any other person involved in its implementation
- explain to the family that the plan will remain in place until either:
  - a case plan is developed that ensures the child's safety and addresses issues in the safety plan
  - the immediate danger is resolved.

For full definitions for all sections of the safety assessment, and further information on the completion of the safety assessment, refer to [SDM: Safety assessment](#) and the practice resource 'Safety assessment'.

If non-custody interventions cannot ensure the child's safety, consult with the team leader to determine an appropriate placement intervention.

## **Private arrangements**

Sometimes the risks identified for a child are such that the child cannot safely remain in the home and needs to reside elsewhere for a period of time. In this circumstance, the parents may agree to take

protective action and arrange for the child to stay with a family member or friend. This is referred to as a private arrangement. Under a private arrangement the parent, not Child Safety Services, places the child with the person, and the person does not need to be approved as a carer. In the context of a safety assessment, a private arrangement is a **non-custody arrangement** and will generally be for a short period of time only, to allow parents time to take immediate actions required to address the safety issues identified.

Prior to including a private arrangement as part of a safety assessment, make direct contact with the person nominated by the parent to:

- determine their ability to provide care for the child for the agreed period of time
- determine their willingness and capacity to co-operate and keep the child safe from the identified harm
- ensure they are willing to advise the CSSC or CSAHSC if the child is returned home so Child Safety Services can re-assess the child's safety needs and make decisions based on the child's best interests
- provide them with the contact details for the CSSC and the CSAHSC
- advise them that a child protection history check will be conducted.

Where the person has agreed to care for the child and the child protection history check does not raise concerns, finalise the safety assessment.

Where the person nominated by the parent has a child protection history:

- discuss the outcome with the team leader and use professional judgment to determine the appropriateness of the arrangement
- discuss the child protection history outcome with the person affected to clarify any issues, if necessary
- clearly document the decisions and the arrangements made between the relevant parties
- do not disclose the outcome of the child protection history check to the parents of the subject child or to any other third party, due to privacy issues in relation to the nominated person
- review the details of the safety plan to ensure the child's safety - this may include the decision that a placement intervention is required.

## **Placement interventions**

Consider the use of a placement intervention under the following circumstances:

- it is in the best interests of the child to be provided with a formal, legal care arrangement
- it is assessed that the parent (and/or the proposed person to care for the child) may not adhere to a private arrangement and the child will return to the parent and the environment where the high risk factors exist, and the parent is more likely to adhere to a formal arrangement
- when the parent cannot identify a person to care for the child and the child requires a placement with an approved carer such as a Child Safety Services' foster carer.

A placement intervention can occur by way of:

- a care agreement - where the parents agree to work with Child Safety Services in a voluntary capacity
- an assessment order (TAO or a CAO with custody to the chief executive) - where a parent does not agree to the placement of the child in out-of-home care
- an interim order, or a child protection order with custody or guardianship to the chief executive, because no other interventions are available to adequately ensure the child's immediate safety.

Where a child is placed with an approved carer, normal placement procedures apply (refer to [Chapter 5. Children in out-of-home care](#)).

A placement intervention as part of the safety assessment will end when:

- a subsequent safety assessment establishes that the child is 'conditionally safe' and can be returned home with a safety plan
- a subsequent safety assessment establishes that there are no longer any 'immediate harm indicators' present and the child can return home safely
- the investigation and assessment is finalised and a decision is made as part of a case plan, that the child will remain in out-of-home care.

### **Separation of mother and baby after birth**

When it is assessed that a newborn baby must be separated from the mother's care following the birth, Employees of Queensland Health or private hospitals can only be requested to do this, if an investigation and assessment has commenced **and**:

- the child's immediate safety needs have warranted the child's removal from the parent under the *Child Protection Act 1999*, section 18
- the parents have entered into an assessment care agreement
- custody of the child has been granted to the chief executive under a TAO or CAO.

Once the authority for separation of the mother and child has been obtained:

- consult with the hospital staff to determine if the child can be placed in the nursery until they are able to be discharged
- locate an appropriate out-of-home care placement as soon as practicable, to minimise delays in the discharge of the child from the nursery.

Where a child is separated from their mother at birth, family contact arrangements from birth are crucial, as early attachment with a primary caregiver is extremely important to the overall emotional health and wellbeing of children, and to healthy adolescence and adulthood. For further information refer to [Chapter 5, 2.5 Facilitate and monitor family contact](#) and [Chapter 5, 3.14 Make family contact decisions](#).

## **2.6 Gather information from other sources**

In the process of contacting or interviewing children and relevant family members, other potential sources of relevant information are likely to be identified. These sources may not have been known at the time the investigation and assessment plan was completed. These sources should be contacted as part of the investigation and assessment, for example:

- school personnel
- other family members or significant people that may be able to provide relevant information
- the family doctor, a Child Health nurse, or Child and Youth Mental Health Service
- other professionals and staff of agencies or support services that the child or family are known to.

When contacting other agencies, request that **all** relevant information is gathered, particularly when an agency may have more than one file on a child or family, for example, Queensland Health.

## Substance misuse by a parent

In circumstances where parental substance misuse is identified as a risk factor **and** clarification or further assessment information is required, contact an Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drugs Services professional, prior to finalising the investigation and assessment, to:

- gain general, non-identifying advice or knowledge in relation to drug or alcohol issues
- gain specific information in relation to the potential impact of the drug misuse on the parents ability to parent.

For further information about responding to issues of substance misuse by the parents, refer to [Chapter 10.14 Undertake the substance testing of parents](#).

## 3. Assess the notified concerns and the child's need for protection

### 3.1 Complete the family risk evaluation

*The purpose of the family risk evaluation is to provide an objective evaluation about the probability of further incidents of abuse or neglect by a parent in the family, which may result in harm to a child in the next 12-24 months, and help guide decision-making about the need for ongoing intervention with the family to reduce the likelihood of future harm.*

The family risk evaluation is completed after all the investigation and assessment information has been gathered and prior to the determination of the investigation and assessment outcome. It includes two sets of questions, or indices - one for neglect and one for abuse. Each possible answer has an assigned score. The scores from each of the indices are totalled and the highest score becomes the 'scored risk level' for the family. The 'scored risk level' classifies the family into one of the following four risk levels:

- low
- moderate
- high
- very high.

The risk level recorded on the family risk evaluation will later be used as part of assessing the family risk re-reunification assessment to evaluate the family's progress.

The family risk evaluation **is not completed** for matters of concern or for the investigation and assessment of an unborn child, unless the child is born prior to the approval of the investigation and assessment, in which case, the family risk evaluation will be completed.

To complete the family risk evaluation:

- complete one family risk evaluation only per household, or one for each family, where more than one family lives in one household
- use the information gathered during the investigation and assessment and the definitions in [SDM: Family risk evaluation](#) to work through the list of questions and answer all questions for both the neglect and abuse indices - where the answer is unknown, take all possible steps to gather the information required
- refer to the primary parent when answering each question
- consult with the recognised entity when completing the family risk evaluation for an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child

- use professional judgement to determine whether either a policy override is applicable, which changes the 'scored risk level' to 'very high', or whether there are additional risk factors that require a discretionary override to increase the scored risk level
- seek team leader approval for the use of a discretionary override, if required
- record the family risk evaluation in ICMS and submit it to the team leader for approval.

For further information in relation to the primary parent and the use of a policy override, refer to the practice resource [Family risk evaluation](#).

Use the final risk level to:

- assist decision-making about ongoing intervention (see Case open/close recommendation below).
- determine the amount and frequency of contact a CSO will have with a child and family during ongoing intervention (refer to [Chapter 4, 4.2 Implement Child Safety Services' contact requirements](#)).

### **Criminal history**

Use information gathered from the parents about any criminal history. A formal request to the QPS for this information, using the [Section 95 - Child Protection Act 1999 - Request](#) should only occur in circumstances, such as:

- the primary parent refuses to disclose their criminal history, and reliable information cannot be gathered from other sources
- it is assessed that the primary parent has not fully disclosed their criminal history
- it is alleged that the primary parent has a history of offences against children, but the full history is not available.

### **Case open/close recommendation**

The family risk evaluation risk level does not determine whether a case is opened for ongoing intervention, but it assists the worker's professional assessment and decision-making about whether a child is in need of protection and, for families with a final 'scored risk level' of 'high' or 'very high', it recommends that a case be opened for ongoing intervention.

When the score is 'low' or 'moderate', and the child is not in need of protection, the matter will be referred to either another government agency or community service or closed.

For further information refer to [4.1 Decide whether there will be ongoing intervention](#).

## **3.2 Determine whether the child is in need of protection**

*The purpose of an investigation and assessment is to determine whether a child is in need of protection (Child Protection Act 1999, section 10). A child in need of protection is a child who:*

- has suffered harm, is suffering harm or is at unacceptable risk of suffering harm
- does not have a parent able and willing to protect the child from the harm.

### **Assessing a child's need for protection**

The determination about the child's need of protection is informed by risk assessment. This risk assessment is based on professional judgement and a weighing up of:

- the risk and protective factors as outlined in [Practice guide: The assessment of harm and risk of harm](#)

- the outcome of the family risk evaluation, particularly where the outcome differs from the assessment of the authorised officer (refer to [3.1 Complete the family risk evaluation](#)).

When the investigation and assessment is about an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child, provide a recognised entity with the opportunity to be involved in the decision-making with regard to the decision about whether a child is in need of protection and the type of ongoing intervention that will occur including referral to a family support service.

The outcome of the investigation is not focused on whether an alleged incident or abusive action has occurred, but whether the child has been harmed and whether there is unacceptable risk of harm in the future. To complete an investigation and assessment, consider all of the information gathered and draw on relevant professional knowledge to analyse the information and determine the appropriate outcome for each child. This decision requires:

- a holistic risk assessment for the child and family
- an assessment of the protective factors present for the child and family.

The outcomes do not require the criminal standard of proof ('beyond a reasonable doubt'), but are determined on the 'balance of probability', that is, more likely than not. The rationale for the outcome must be clearly recorded.

For further information about these key concepts refer to the practice resource [Investigation and assessment - key concepts and definitions](#).

The assessment allows the following questions to be accurately answered for **each subject child**:

- Was the investigation and assessment completed for this child?
- Has the child been harmed?
- Is there unacceptable risk of future harm?
- Is there a parent able and willing to protect the child from harm?

The answer to these questions, determines whether the child is in need of protection.

### **Determine an answer to the question 'Was the investigation and assessment completed for the child?'**

This question can only be answered 'yes' when the key steps for completion of the investigation and assessment have been undertaken, and there is sufficient information to accurately answer the three questions outlined below.

### **Determine an answer to the question 'Has the child been harmed?'**

This question can only be answered 'yes' when actual harm has occurred and the harm is having a detrimental effect on the child's physical, psychological or emotional well-being (in accordance with the definition of harm in the *Child Protection Act 1999*, section 9).

If the answer to this question is 'yes', **do not select** any of the unacceptable risk of harm items for the child in ICMS.

### **Determine an answer to the question 'Is there unacceptable risk of future harm?'**

This question can only be answered 'yes' when there is an unacceptable risk of harm - the answer to this question does not take into account the ability and willingness of a parent to protect the child. It focuses on the outcome of the family risk evaluation and whether there are current factors that place the child at unacceptable risk of harm, should no other factors mitigate the risk.

## Determine an answer to the question ‘Is there a parent able and willing to protect the child from harm?’

In order to answer this question, assess:

- both parents to determine whether **at least one** parent is **both** able and willing to protect the child
- the parents ability and motivation to protect the child - in circumstances where a child resides across two households, the ability and willingness of both parents to protect the child needs to be assessed.

In order to answer ‘yes’ to this question **at least one** parent must be **both** able and willing to protect the child. A parent may be willing to protect a child, but not have the means or capacity to do so. Alternatively, a parent may have the means and capacity to protect a child, but may not do so.

If there is at least **one parent able and willing** to protect the child, the child **cannot** be considered at unacceptable risk of harm and therefore, is not a child in need of protection.

### Outcomes

Once the questions above have been answered for each subject child, one of the following outcomes will be recorded:

- substantiated - child in need of protection
- substantiated - child not in need of protection
- unsubstantiated - child not in need of protection
- no investigation and assessment outcome.

For further information about the outcomes, refer to the practice resource [4.2 Record the investigation, assessment and outcome](#).

## 4. Finalise the investigation and assessment

An investigation and assessment must be completed and approved **within two months** of the date of the notification or, where the decision has been made that a child will have a ‘substantiated - child in need of protection’ outcome and a referral is made to the family group meeting convenor, the investigation and assessment must be completed and approved **within seven days** of the date of the referral.

Completion of an investigation and assessment **requires** that:

- all subject children have been sighted, and where appropriate, interviewed by a Child Safety Services’ authorised officer
- the investigation and assessment is finalised, including determining the appropriate outcomes
- the investigation and assessment document is approved in ICMS by a team leader.

### 4.1 Determine whether there will be ongoing intervention

Following an investigation and assessment, the decision about whether there will be ongoing intervention will be guided by the following requirements:

- ongoing intervention **is required** for any child who has been assessed as being **in need of protection**
- ongoing intervention will be **offered to the pregnant woman** when it is assessed that an unborn child will be **in need of protection after birth** - refer to [Chapter 7. Support service cases](#)

- ongoing intervention **is not required** for any child who has been assessed as **not being in need of protection**, but will be **offered to the family** where there is a 'high' or 'very high' outcome on the family risk evaluation.

The decision about the type of ongoing intervention that will occur with the family, will take into consideration what is required to:

- meet the child's protective and care needs
- reduce the likelihood of future harm to the child.

When determining the type of ongoing intervention that is to occur, refer to [Chapter 3. Ongoing intervention](#).

## 4.2 Record the investigation, assessment and outcome

*Recording the investigation and assessment is a key step in the assessment of a child's need for protection. The information recorded is critical for any ongoing or future contact with the child and family.*

### Recording key information

When recording the investigation and assessment, and completing the investigation and assessment event in ICMS:

- ensure that **all key information** is recorded in the investigation and assessment event in ICMS, including:
  - the date, time and details of all contact with subject children, parents and other persons
  - details of who conducted the interviews, including the names and positions of the primary and secondary officers and any police officers or other people present during the interviews
  - a summary of the significant information gathered from interviews and other sources
  - responses to the notifier's concerns and any relevant disclosures, admissions or denials by the subject child, other children, the parents, family members or other adults
  - any information relevant to the assessment of the child's safety and protective needs
  - any relevant observations about the child (presentation, demeanour, developmental level), the parents (interaction with child, non-verbal cues) and the home environment
  - any action taken that assists with the assessment such as medical examinations or photographs
  - the rationale for decisions made throughout and at the end of the investigation and assessment process, including whether there will be ongoing intervention with the family to meet the child's protection needs or reduce the likelihood of future harm to the child
- ensure that the **indigenous status** of all subject children and other relevant persons are accurately recorded in ICMS
- ensure that **each subject child** recorded in the notification is also recorded as a subject child in the investigation and assessment, with an outcome and rationale recorded, based on a professional judgement and assessment of the risk and protective factors assessed
- ensure that an assessment and outcome is recorded for any **additional subject child** identified as being harmed or at risk of harm during the investigation and assessment
- ensure that all relevant ICMS forms are completed in the investigation and assessment event - for further information, refer to the practice resource [Recording the investigation and assessment](#).

## Record the outcome in ICMS

Once a determination has been made about the child's need for protection, the investigation and assessment outcomes can be finalised. When there is a 'substantiated' outcome for a child, whether or not they are in need of protection:

- select **all** 'harm' types experienced by the child, if applicable - select from List 1 in Table 1 below
- select **all** 'unacceptable risk of harm' types for the child if applicable - select from List 2 in the table below
- record the person responsible for each harm type recorded - more than one person can be responsible for the same harm type for a child
- select the **most serious** harm for the child - this is based on the harm or unacceptable risk of harm that has the most serious impact on the child.

Note: the harm or unacceptable risk of harm substantiated may be different to the harm recorded in the notification.

**Table 1. Substantiated harm and unacceptable risk of harm**

List 1 - Harm	List 2 - Risk of unacceptable harm
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• physical harm</li><li>• emotional harm</li><li>• physical harm caused by neglect</li><li>• emotional harm caused by neglect</li><li>• physical harm caused by sexual abuse</li><li>• emotional harm caused by sexual abuse.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• risk of physical harm</li><li>• risk of emotional harm</li><li>• risk of physical harm caused by neglect</li><li>• risk of emotional harm caused by neglect</li><li>• risk of physical harm caused by sexual abuse</li><li>• risk of emotional harm caused by sexual abuse.</li></ul>

When the outcome is 'unsubstantiated', no harm types can be selected.

## Record the 'person responsible'

While an investigation and assessment focuses on the ability and willingness of the parents to protect the subject child, and they are generally recorded as the person responsible for a substantiated outcome, the following persons may also be recorded:

- another adult who lives in the home or has regular access to the child in the home
- another child aged 10 years or over who lives in the home, who is assessed by the CSO as having the developmental ability or capacity to understand the consequences of their actions - this is not common, but may occur in some circumstances.

A subject child **cannot** be recorded as a person responsible for another subject child in the same investigation and assessment event. Where there are child protection concerns for a child (aged 10 years or over) who is recorded as a person responsible for a subject child, a separate notification will need to be recorded on that child.

When a child has self harmed they **must not be recorded** as a person responsible for that harm.

The outcome for each subject child must be supported with clear information about the professional assessment of the harm or risk of harm to the child and the reasons for the outcome recorded.

## Record the outcome

Record a **substantiated - child in need of protection** outcome when it is assessed that there is harm or risk of harm to a child, as defined by the *Child Protection Act 1999*, section 9, and it meets one of the following:

- harm has been experienced by the child, there is unacceptable risk of harm and the child does not have a parent able and willing to protect them, whether or not the harm was part of the concerns received
- no actual harm has occurred but there is unacceptable risk of harm and the child does not have a parent able and willing to protect them, whether or not the harm was part of the concerns received
- there is unacceptable risk of harm to the unborn child after birth and the parents will not be able and willing to protect the child from the harm.

In most cases, the outcome of the family risk evaluation for these matters will be very high or high.

Record a **substantiated - child not in need of protection** outcome when it is assessed that either:

- harm, as defined in the *Child Protection Act 1999*, section 9, has been experienced by the child but there is no unacceptable risk of harm
- harm has been experienced by the child and there is unacceptable risk of harm, but there is a parent able and willing to protect the child.

There must be clear information recorded to support the ability **and** willingness of the parents to protect the child, not just statements to this effect.

Record an **unsubstantiated - child not in need of protection** outcome when it is assessed that either:

- the child has not suffered harm **and** there is no risk of unacceptable risk of harm
- the child has not suffered harm, there is unacceptable risk, but there is a parent able and willing to protect the child
- an unborn child will not be at unacceptable risk of harm after birth.

In most cases, the outcome of the family risk evaluation for these matters will be moderate or low.

Where the outcome is high or very high, ongoing intervention is recommended by the family risk evaluation, and the family will be offered ongoing intervention via a support service case, to address the risk factors identified. Clear information needs to be recorded about the risk factors identified and the family's response to the services offered.

When this outcome is recorded for an unborn child, no further action is required, however, where there are identified needs, and the pregnant woman has expressed a willingness to receive support:

- make a referral to another agency to offer the pregnant woman help and support
- make a referral to a RAI service (refer to [Chapter 10.5 Referral for active intervention services](#)).

Record a **no investigation and assessment outcome** on rare occasions only, when:

- the investigation and assessment has not commenced because the child and family could not be located and actions taken to locate them have been unsuccessful
- the investigation and assessment has commenced, but is not able to be completed, as there is insufficient information to decide on an outcome, and the family has subsequently moved following Child Safety Services' contact, and is not able to be located
- a subject child has died prior to the completion of an investigation and assessment and there is insufficient information to decide on an outcome

- a pregnant woman advises that she is no longer or has never been pregnant, her appearance supports this information, and this is confirmed with her medical practitioner (or reasonable attempts have been made to do so)
- the pregnant woman has not been located and two months have passed since the estimated date of delivery.

This outcome is **not to be used** to:

- manage a lack of resources, or high workloads
- finalise an old investigation and assessment that is only partly completed.

Prior to approving this outcome, other than for an unborn child notification, the team leader must consult with the senior practitioner, and record a clear rationale for its use.

When this outcome is used, complete the 'Record of actions - mobile family' form in the investigation and assessment event in ICMS and a 'no investigation and assessment' outcome will be recorded.

There may be times when this outcome is used for one of a number of subject children in a family, due to a child absconding or not being able to be located or contacted. In these cases, there must be an assessment that there is insufficient information already gathered about the child and family to record an outcome for the child, without the child being sighted or interviewed. In this case an outcome must still be recorded for all other subject children.

### **Approve the investigation and assessment**

All investigation and assessments will be approved by a team leader, **within 2 months**, with the following exceptions:

- when an investigation and assessment relates to a vexatious or malicious notifier with a 'no investigation and assessment outcome', the CSSC manager must approve the investigation and assessment and provide a clear rationale for its use
- when the approving team leader undertakes any key steps related to the investigation and assessment, another team leader or CSSC manager must approve the investigation and assessment.

## **4.3 Inform the parents about the outcome of the investigation and assessment**

The *Child Protection Act 1999*, section 15(2), requires that, as soon as practicable after completing the investigation and assessment, an authorised officer must:

- tell at least one of the child's parents about the outcome of the investigation
- if asked by the parent, provide the outcome of the investigation and assessment in writing.

In doing so, consider whether the information should be provided to both parents, especially when parents are residing separately.

### **Provide information to the parents**

When providing this information, either verbally or in writing:

- provide sufficient information about the key child protection concerns outlined in the notification, to ensure they understand the reasons for Child Safety Services' intervention, without identifying the notifier

- provide the outcome of the investigation and assessment, the rationale for the decisions made, including an explanation of the terminology and a rationale for any harm or risk of harm to the child and any protection and care needs identified
- outline the reasons and rationale for any decision to open an ongoing intervention case, to assist the parents to participate in further decision-making, and strengthen their ability to meet the child's needs in the future.

### **Discretionary compliance with section 15(2)**

The *Child Protection Act 1999*, section 15(3), permits discretionary compliance of this requirement if the authorised officer reasonably believes either:

- someone may be charged with a criminal offence for the harm to the child, and compliance may jeopardise an investigation into the offence
- that compliance may expose the child to harm.

When considering the use of discretionary compliance:

- determine what is reasonable and appropriate in each particular circumstance, taking into account the practice considerations outlined in the practice resource [Informing the parents about the harm and the outcome - section 15](#)
- consult with the QPS if there is an ongoing criminal investigation, prior to any information being provided to the parents
- use professional judgement, the outcome of the family risk evaluation and any relevant information in relation to domestic violence issues to determine if the provision of information may expose the child to harm
- seek team leader approval for any decision not to provide the information
- record the decision, rationale and approval process in the 'Information provision to parents' form in ICMS.

For information about privacy considerations, refer to [2.2 Inform the parents about the harm](#).

## **What ifs - responding to specific investigation and assessment matters**

### **1. What if an investigation and assessment case needs to be transferred?**

The transfer of an investigation and assessment:

- **will** occur when child protection concerns are received and recorded by the CSAHSC or a CSSC in a different geographical area other than where the child and their family reside
- **may** occur when a child and their family or carer relocate during the investigation and assessment, regardless of the reason.

The transfer process will occur in a manner that prioritises the safety of the child and the provision of continuous and planned service delivery to the child and family.

To transfer an investigation and assessment, the transferring CSSC:

- completes the relevant checks, including child protection history checks and, if required, pre-notification checks
- completes and approves the screening criteria, response priority and notification in ICMS

- immediately advises the intake officer at the receiving CSSC of the notification details and the response timeframe
- reassigns the investigation and assessment event in ICMS to the receiving CSSC.

The receiving CSSC:

- allocates the investigation and assessment
- commences the investigation and assessment within the required timeframe
- completes the investigation and assessment within the specified timeframe.

If a family leaves an area during an investigation and assessment, on an unplanned basis, the transferring CSSC retains case responsibility until the transfer process is completed. The transferring CSSC will:

- attempt to locate the family
- determine whether the investigation and assessment can be completed with the assistance of another CSSC, or, where the majority of the investigation and assessment tasks are still to be completed, transfers the investigation and assessment
- determine the appropriate CSSC, where a transfer is appropriate
- immediately contact the team leader of the receiving CSSC to advise of the pending transfer and the tasks required to complete the investigation and assessment
- ensure that all information gathered as part of the investigation and assessment by the transferring CSSC is electronically recorded in ICMS as soon as possible
- reassign the investigation and assessment event in ICMS to the receiving CSSC, including outstanding 'event tasks' so that any partially completed forms are also transferred
- promptly transfers any paper files to the receiving CSSC.

The receiving CSSC **must**:

- accept responsibility for completing the investigation and assessment at the first point of contact by the originating CSSC
- allocate the investigation and assessment immediately
- ensure the subject children are sighted within the recorded response priority timeframe (24 hours, 5 days or 10 days) if the investigation and assessment has not yet commenced
- ensure the subject children are sighted within one week, if the investigation and assessment has already commenced
- complete a new safety assessment at first contact with the family
- complete the investigation and assessment in accordance with relevant procedures.

If the investigation and assessments is for a child or family in another jurisdiction, refer to [Chapter 1, 1. What if the child protection concerns are about a child in another jurisdiction?](#) and [14. What if assistance is required from another jurisdiction?](#)

It is the responsibility of CSSC managers to resolve any disagreement that may occur during the transfer process of investigation and assessment cases.

## **2. What if a parent will not consent to actions required - use of a TAO?**

Under the *Child Protection Act 1999*, part 2, section 23-36, a TAO can be sought at any stage during an investigation and assessment, where a parent will not consent to actions considered essential for the completion of the investigation and assessment. The magistrate may decide the application for a TAO without notifying the child's parents of the application or hearing them on the application.

For more information about the provisions available under a TAO, refer to the practice resource [Assessment orders](#).

To apply for a TAO:

- complete a 'Form 1 - Application for a temporary assessment order' draft order in ICMS
- ensure the application articulates the nature of the child protection concerns and the rationale for seeking the specified provisions, for example, a medical examination or custody
- complete the 'Form 17 - Recognised entity participation' in ICMS, if applicable
- make a time to appear before the magistrate, or if after hours, contact the magistrate to discuss the application for the TAO - where possible, provide the [Temporary Assessment Order \(Form 3\)](#) for their consideration during the discussion.

Note: The application must advise the magistrate what actions were taken in relation to the child during any period of custody of the child under the *Child Protection Act 1999*, section 18. The magistrate must be satisfied that reasonable steps have been taken to obtain the consent of at least one of the child's parents to do the actions sought to be authorised under the order, or that it is not practicable to take steps to obtain the consent (*Child Protection Act 1999*, section 27(2)).

When a TAO is granted by a magistrate:

- finalise the 'Form 1 - Application for a temporary assessment order' in ICMS
- record the order details in the 'Form 1 - Temporary assessment order outcome form' (TOF) in ICMS
- provide a copy of the order to at least one of the child's parents
- tell the child about the order
- explain to the child and the parents the reasons for, and the effect of, taking the TAO
- inform the parents about the right of appeal and because of the duration of the order, that if they wish to appeal, they must take immediate action to lodge the appeal
- ensure that a child who has been placed in the custody of the chief executive, understands the reasons why they have been removed from the home and placed in out-of-home care.

## Duration of the TAO

A TAO cannot remain in effect for longer than three days, from midnight on the date it was decided, for example, a TAO decided on Tuesday will end on Friday. The provisions of a TAO cannot be exercised once the order has ended.

If the magistrate is satisfied that Child Safety Services intends to apply for a CAO or a child protection order, the TAO can be extended, once only, to the end of the next business day. This allows the application for another order to be lodged with the court during business hours. The application for another order must be lodged before the court closes on the day the TAO expires. Complete the application for the TAO extension in the same event in ICMS as the initial application.

Under the *Child Protection Act 1999*, section 99, a custody provision made in a TAO will continue until the application for the CAO is decided.

## Assessing safety prior to returning a child to the care of the parents

When a child has been placed in out-of-home care subject to a TAO granting custody to the chief executive, conduct an assessment of the child's safety **prior to** returning the child to the care of the parents. To assess the child's safety, consider all of the available information and complete the safety assessment.

If the child is considered to be 'unsafe', determine the appropriate custody intervention that will ensure the child's safety and where applicable, lodge an application for a CAO or child protection order, before the TAO expires.

### **3. What if a parent will not consent to actions required - use of a CAO?**

Under the *Child Protection Act 1999*, section 37-51, a CAO can be sought at any stage during an investigation and assessment, where a parent will not consent to actions considered essential for the completion of the investigation and assessment, or it is not practicable to obtain the parent's consent, and it has been determined that more than three days will be necessary to complete the investigation and assessment.

This includes circumstances where initial contact has occurred, but consent for subsequent actions is refused by the parents.

For more information about the provisions available under a CAO, refer to the practice resource [Assessment orders](#).

To apply for a CAO:

- complete the 'Form 5 - Application for a court assessment order' in ICMS and clearly articulate the nature of the concerns and the rationale for seeking specific provisions, for example, a medical examination or custody
- complete the 'Form 17 - Recognised entity participation' in ICMS, if applicable
- lodge the application, including the above forms, with the Childrens Court
- serve the documentation on the child's parents.

When a CAO is made:

- complete in ICMS, either:
  - the 'Form 5 - Court outcome form (COF) - final order'
  - the 'Form 9 - Court outcome form (COF) - Adjournment order', if an adjournment is granted
- complete the [Court Assessment Order \(Form 7\)](#), if not already provided by the Court
- provide a copy of the order to the child and the child's parents
- explain to the child and the parents the reasons for, and the effect of, taking the CAO
- provide written notice to the child and the parents, explaining the terms and effect of the order, that the parties may appeal (within 28 days), and how to appeal
- ensure that a child who has been placed in the custody of the chief executive, understands the reasons why they have been removed from the home and placed in out-of-home care.

For further information on recording a CAO application and outcomes in ICMS, refer to the resource [CPE2 - Linking of court orders](#).

#### **Duration of the CAO**

A CAO cannot remain in effect for any longer than 28 days, from midnight on the date it was decided. The provisions of a CAO cannot be exercised once the order has ended.

If an investigation and assessment cannot be completed in the 28 day period, a CAO can be extended, once only, to allow the investigation and assessment to be completed. The court can only extend a CAO if satisfied that it is in the child's best interests. The application for an extension of a CAO must be lodged before the expiry of the original CAO, and can be for no more than 28 days. Complete the application for the CAO extension in the same event in ICMS as the initial application.

Before a decision is made to apply for an extension of a CAO, depending on the child's age and level of understanding, consult the child to obtain their views about arrangements for their care for the duration of the extension.

When a child is subject to a CAO and an application for a child protection order granting custody or guardianship will be made, and custody of the child needs to continue until the application is decided, the application for a child protection order must be lodged before the CAO expires.

### **Assessing safety prior to returning a child to the care of the parents**

When a child has been placed in out-of-home care subject to a CAO granting custody to the chief executive, conduct an assessment of the child's safety **prior to** returning the child to the care of the parents. To assess the child's safety, consider all of the available information and complete the safety assessment.

If the child is considered to be 'unsafe', determine the appropriate custody intervention that will ensure the child's safety and where applicable, lodge an application for a child protection order, before the CAO expires.

## **4. What if a joint investigation with the Queensland Police Service is required?**

Child Safety Services has a legislative responsibility to **immediately** notify the QPS where it is reasonably believed that harm to a child may have involved the commission of a criminal offence relating to the child (*Child Protection Act 1999*, section 14(2)).

Where this occurs, in consultation with the QPS, determine whether there will be a joint investigation. A joint investigation allows each agency to meet their respective statutory responsibilities while addressing the protection needs of the child. It links Child Safety Services' role of investigating and assessing harm and risk of harm with the criminal investigation role of the police.

For further information about the roles and responsibilities of each agency, when conducting a joint investigation, refer to the practice resource [Planning for and undertaking a joint investigation](#).

### **Refer the matter to the QPS**

To refer a matter to the QPS, complete a [Police Referral Fax](#), and provide this, along with a copy of the child concern report or notification, where relevant. If requested, the CSO may inform the QPS of the notifier's identity, to enable the QPS to perform their functions under the *Child Protection Act 1999*.

Send the information to the QPS, in descending order, to the officer in charge of the nearest:

- Child Safety and Sexual Crimes Group (in the Brisbane metropolitan area)
- Child Protection and Investigation Unit (CPIU)
- Criminal Investigation Branch (CIB)
- police station.

Following the written referral, contact the QPS by phone, to determine whether a joint investigation is required, and where applicable, to commence joint planning.

Note: Where the Department of Education and Training or another notifier contacts Child Safety Services with concerns about the possible commission of a criminal offence against a child who is attending school, immediately provide the written referral and follow up with a phone call to the QPS. This will allow the best opportunity for ICARE interviews to be conducted within school hours.

Ensure the regular exchange of information between Child Safety Services and the QPS for the duration of the joint investigation, and where applicable, on an ongoing basis, for example, regarding criminal court proceedings and outcomes.

### **Undertake joint planning**

When a joint investigation is required, **prior to** the commencement of the criminal investigation and investigation and assessment, contact the investigating police officers and plan the joint investigation.

Once planning is complete and prior to the commencement of the joint investigation:

- complete the investigation and assessment plan
- seek verbal approval from the team leader for the investigation and assessment plan
- consult QPS prior to any major deviation from the agreed plan.

When the matter requires urgent attention and the QPS are unable to attend within the required Child Safety Services' response timeframe, notify the QPS of the decision to proceed and the reason for doing so. In this circumstance, prior to an investigation and assessment commencing, the team leader:

- gives approval for the investigation and assessment to proceed
- ensures the QPS has been notified of the decision to proceed in their absence
- ensures that any action by Child Safety Services does not interfere with a QPS investigation into a criminal offence, if possible.

Ensure that the QPS is kept informed and updated during the investigation and assessment process.

### **Interview the child and record evidence**

Where an interview with a child is conducted in accordance with the *Evidence Act 1977*, section 93A, the interview should, where practicable, be undertaken by an officer (whether Child Safety Services or QPS) who is accredited in Interviewing Children and Recording Evidence (ICARE). Whenever possible, ICARE interviews should be conducted jointly with the QPS. In such circumstances, the police officers and Child Safety Services' officer should discuss all relevant material and the most appropriate and effective approach to conducting the interview, prior to the interviews being conducted.

In the absence of the QPS, follow existing investigation and assessment procedures for record keeping, but do **not** use video or audio equipment to record a child's interview - this includes ICARE trained Child Safety Services' staff. File any written records made during the interview on the child's paper file. Copies of these interview notes may be provided to the QPS.

Where an interview of a child is being conducted by Child Safety Services' officers only and the child begins to make disclosures of harm relating to a criminal offence, cease the interview and seek immediate advice from the QPS. In this situation:

- ensure that the child is supported and will feel safe to speak at a later time
- obtain sufficient information to make a determination about the child's immediate safety and take any required action, including legal action, to ensure the child's safety (for example, use of the *Child Protection Act 1999*, section 18, or a TAO).

In the absence of QPS, if an interview is conducted by a Child Safety Services' officer who is accredited in ICARE and a child makes a disclosure regarding an offence and ceasing the interview would hinder the provision of information and safety of the child, the ICARE process of interviewing will continue, and the QPS will be contacted immediately after the interview.

In this circumstance, provide all interview notes to the QPS. The Child Safety Services' officer may also be required to provide a statement to the QPS regarding the disclosures made by the child during the

interview. Subsequent interviews with the child are most likely to be led by the QPS, who will facilitate the recording of the interview. The Child Safety Services' officer will document their participation in the interview in a case note in the child's file.

### **Interview the alleged offender**

Following a child's disclosure of harm, it is QPS policy and procedure that interviews involving possible offenders are to be conducted by police officers. In this circumstance, if there is to be a joint investigation, the QPS will decide who will conduct the interviews and when they will occur.

In some instances, where the alleged offender is a parent of the child, and where appropriate, the Child Safety Services' officer may be permitted to view the interview from a viewing room and take relevant notes. If the police conduct an interview without a Child Safety Services' officer being present, or where a Child Safety Services' officer has only viewed an interview, the officer will also interview both parents **prior to** finalising an investigation and assessment.

On occasion a police officer may decide that it is more appropriate or convenient for an interview to occur in a person's home or another location. Where such an interview is conducted by police with a parent or guardian, for example, conducted at the residential address of a parent, the interview may be conducted in the presence of the Child Safety Services' officer.

In circumstances where the QPS are not able to attend interviews, Child Safety Services is still obliged to investigate and assess the safety and well-being needs of the child, without addressing the criminal matters with the parents.

### **Obtain information from the QPS**

If a Child Safety Services' officer requires a copy of the taped interview or information obtained during an interview, the CSSC manager requests the information from the QPS in writing, by completing the [Request for information pursuant to chapter 5A](#) form. Where QPS approval has been granted, it may be possible for the video evidence to be viewed at the police station.

An audiotape provided to a Child Safety Services' officer remains the property of the QPS and must **not** be released to a third party.

Any person that does not work for Child Safety Services, that requests access to the audiotape, will be referred to the QPS.

### **Refer the matter to a SCAN AM Team**

The Child Safety Services' officer is required to refer any matter to a SCAN AM Team, where it meets the mandatory referral criteria and one of the five Child Safety Services' referral criteria outlined in the [SCAN AM Team Referral Form \(SCAN Form 1\)](#). The QPS is required to refer any matter to a SCAN AM Team, where it meets the mandatory referral criteria and one of the five QPS referral criteria outlined in the 'SCAN Form 1'.

A referral to a SCAN AM Team **does not** constitute meeting the legal requirement for Child Safety Services to immediately notify the QPS of information under the *Child Protection Act 1999*, section 14(2).

For further information in relation to the SCAN System, refer to the [Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect \(SCAN\) System Inter-agency Policy and Procedures, September 2006](#).

## Resolve differences of opinion

At times there will be differences of opinion between officers of Child Safety Services and the QPS, due to the different roles and legislative responsibilities and priorities. These differences are to be resolved as soon as possible after they arise and with the safety of children as the key priority.

Note: For further information about notifying the QPS of possible criminal offences refer to [Chapter 10.3 Statutory obligation to notify the Queensland Police Service of possible criminal offences](#) and the practice resource [Schedule of criminal offences](#).

## 5. What if a child needs to be interviewed without parental consent - section 17?

The *Child Protection Act 1999*, section 17, enables an authorised Child Safety Services' officer or police officer to have contact with a child at a school, or place where child care is provided, to investigate allegations, before the parents are told, if the officer reasonably believes that:

- it is in the child's best interest that the officer has contact with the child, before the parents are told about the investigation and assessment
- prior knowledge of the proposed contact with the child by the child's parents is likely to adversely affect the investigation and assessment.

### Interview the child prior to parents

Interview the child prior to interviewing the parents when:

- concerns relate to the commission of a criminal offence and a joint interview with the QPS requires the preservation of evidence from the child
- the child may be placed at greater risk by interviewing the parents first
- the concerns involve sexual contact between the child and a parent, and there is reason to believe that:
  - a parent will influence the child to withhold information or retract information that has already been given
  - the child would not receive support from a parent and is likely to be harmed or adversely influenced during the investigation and assessment process
- the child has made a disclosure and more detailed information is required prior to interviewing the parents
- the parents are unavailable and it would be inappropriate to delay the commencement of the investigation and assessment
- a child self-refers.

### Use of section 17 to have contact with a child

When it is considered necessary to have contact with a child, prior to the parents being told of the contact with the child and the reasons for the contact, the use of powers under the *Child Protection Act 1999*, section 17 is required.

Prior to exercising the use of powers:

- consult a team leader
- consider whether the QPS should be involved in the interview, depending on the nature of the concerns, and make a referral to the QPS, if applicable

- notify the principal or person in charge of the school or place, of the intention to exercise the power - contact with the child can only occur lawfully and with the permission of the person in charge of the facility.

If access is denied, the power **cannot** be exercised and other options for contact with the child must be considered.

When contacting the principal, or other person in charge, discuss:

- the need to interview the child prior to the parents being made aware of the concerns, the general nature of the concerns, sufficient information to ensure an effective interview and the rationale for the decision
- their obligation to maintain confidentiality under the *Child Protection Act 1999*, section 188, including ensuring adherence to confidentiality by other personnel and not informing parents of child protection concerns or that an interview has, or will, take place without their consent
- the names and positions of interviewing officers.

In addition, negotiate the following matters with the principal, or person in charge:

- an interview time that minimises interruption to the child's usual school routine and avoids or reduces feelings of embarrassment or distress that the child may experience by being interviewed at school
- the conditions of the interview, including an appropriate venue and how the interview will be conducted
- whether there will be a staff member present during the interview.

When discussing whether a staff member will be present, advise the principal or person in charge of the alleged nature of the concerns prior to the interview, and advise that the person may be called to give evidence as a result of their participation in the interview.

Note: If the interview is an ICARE interview with the QPS, the support person should not be the person the child initially made disclosures of harm to, as this person may be considered by the QPS as a witness for any subsequent criminal proceedings.

At the commencement of the interview, show identity cards to the principal or other person in charge and ensure that the child will be safe and supported during the interview process, by having a support person of their choice, from that location, present.

### **Implement actions following the use of section 17 powers**

**Immediately** following the interview, advise the principal or person in charge of the actions that will be taken by Child Safety Services, of any immediate support needs the child has and that Child Safety Services will advise the parents of the contact with the child and the outcome.

As soon as practicable after the interview, tell at least one of the child's parents that the *Child Protection Act 1999*, section 17, was used to have contact with the child and the reasons for the contact. Make whatever effort is necessary to ensure that the parents are informed about the contact with the child **prior to** the child seeing their parents. It is the responsibility of Child Safety Services to inform parents of the contact with the child - do **not** place this responsibility on any other person.

In addition, advise the parents of your name, position and department, show them your identity card and commence interviews regarding the concerns. Undertake a safety assessment with the family to determine the safety of the child in the household.

Record details of the contact with the child at the first reasonable opportunity in the 'Record of use of powers' in ICMS, regardless of whether a Child Safety Services' officer or QPS officer has exercised the power.

## 6. What if Child Safety Services is contacted about additional concerns for a child?

When an investigation and assessment is in progress and has not yet been approved in ICMS, and new child protection concerns are received independently from a notifier (that is, not as part of the current investigation and assessment process), determine the correct way to record them in ICMS, as follows:

- where the new concerns do not meet the exceptions outlined in [Chapter 1, 2.6 Decide the response](#), record the concerns in an 'additional notified concerns' form in the investigation and assessment event in ICMS - do not open a new intake event in ICMS
- where the new concerns do meet the exceptions outlined in [Chapter 1, 2.6 Decide the response](#), record the concerns in a new intake event in ICMS.

Once concerns are recorded in an 'additional notified concerns' form, **do not** record the information again, either as a child concern report or a notification (the current message in the ICMS form to either 'Record a child concern report' or 'Record a notification') refers to whether or not the additional concerns reach the threshold for a notification.

The allocated CSO is responsible for investigating and assessing all information received about the family during the course of the investigation and assessment, until the investigation and assessment is **finalised and approved in ICMS**. This includes:

- all concerns that have been 'screened in', both the original concerns and any additional notified concerns
- any new child protection concerns that arise as part of the investigation and assessment process - which are to be assessed as part of the investigation and assessment and do not need to be recorded as additional notified concerns.

There is no limit to the number of additional concerns that may be recorded as part of one notification and investigation and assessment process.

When additional notified concerns are received:

- record all relevant information in the 'additional notified concerns' form
- conduct a child protection history check
- conduct a pre-notification check, if required
- complete an 'additional notified concerns' form in the investigation and assessment event in ICMS, which includes a screening criteria and if required, response priority
- submit the completed form to the team leader for consideration and approval
- consider whether a subsequent safety assessment is required, due to any changes in circumstances for the family
- if the additional concerns meet the threshold for a notification, they must be responded to within the shortest response timeframe, which may be:
  - the response timeframe already recorded for the open investigation and assessment
  - the response timeframe relating to the new concerns.

Where the investigation and assessment has commenced prior to a decision that additional concerns meet the threshold for a notification, the subject child must be sighted and interviewed again, to meet the new response timeframe and assess the additional concerns. Where the additional concerns **do not** meet the threshold for a notification, there is no need to re-interview or re-sight the child, however, consider the information in the context of assessing and finalising the open investigation and assessment.

Where additional notified concerns are received and recorded and the information is to be transferred to another CSSC, the team leader is responsible for electronically approving the 'additional notified concerns' form in ICMS, prior to the transfer occurring.

## **7. What if the investigation and assessment is for an unborn child?**

The purpose of an investigation and assessment prior to the birth of a child is to assess the likelihood that an unborn child will need protection **after birth** and determine what help and support can be offered to the pregnant woman, and where relevant, her partner or the father of the unborn child. Refer to the [Unborn Child Checklist](#) for an overview of the specific steps required.

Any intervention by Child Safety Services **must occur with the consent** of the pregnant woman and not interfere with her rights and liberties.

### **Before commencing the investigation and assessment**

Prior to commencing the investigation and assessment for an unborn child, the **team leader** must decide whether to either:

- delay the commencement of an investigation and assessment until after the birth of a child (see below)
- proceed with the investigation and assessment.

An investigation and assessment for an unborn child **is considered to have commenced** when a pregnant woman is first sighted, interviewed and **consents** to the investigation and assessment.

Do not continue with the investigation and assessment if, at the outset of an investigation and assessment the woman:

- informs the authorised officers that she is no longer pregnant, due to a miscarriage or termination
- the woman states that she was never pregnant and it appears from her physical presentation that she is not pregnant.

Seek confirmation that the woman is not pregnant from the woman's medical practitioner, if their details are known. This action does not require the woman's consent.

### **Delay commencement of the investigation and assessment**

The decision to delay the commencement of an investigation and assessment until after the birth of a child will only occur when there is a high probability that, if alerted to the concerns, the pregnant woman would relocate to avoid intervention by Child Safety Services at the time of the birth, thus placing the newborn baby at increased risk of harm.

When the commencement of the investigation and assessment has been delayed:

- the team leader will record the rationale and date of the decision to delay the commencement of an investigation and assessment, in the investigation and assessment event in ICMS

- record an 'unborn child alert' on the person records of the pregnant woman and the unborn child in ICMS
- keep the investigation and assessment event open in ICMS until the child is born and the investigation and assessment is completed
- complete and forward complete an [HRA Form 1: Unborn child high risk alert: Request for immediate notification when pregnant woman presents for delivery](#) (HRA Form 1) to the hospital/s where the pregnant woman is likely to give birth (refer to [List of Maternity Hospitals and Nominated Positions](#)), **and/or** a letter to the private or interstate hospital/s where the pregnant woman is likely to give birth - refer to the practice resource [Unborn children](#)
- telephone the hospital/s to ensure that the form or letter has been received
- attach the 'HRA Form 1' to the investigation and assessment event in ICMS
- provide the CSAHSC with a [Child Safety After Hours Service Centre: After hours referral form](#) and all relevant information, including the 'HRA Form 1' or the letter
- refer the case to the SCAN AM Team
- contact the pregnant woman's medical practitioner (if known) to:
  - discuss the concerns identified
  - request that information be shared with relevant health professionals, such as the midwife or social work services
  - ask that Child Safety Services be advised when the child is born.

In circumstances where, following the decision to delay an investigation and assessment, a subsequent decision is made to proceed, on the basis of new information received about the family, the team leader is responsible for recording the rationale and date of the decision to proceed with the investigation and assessment before the child's birth in the 'Assessment and Outcome' form in ICMS.

### **Investigate and assess the concerns**

Where consent has been given by the pregnant woman, investigate and assess the likelihood that the child will be in need of protection **after birth**, including:

- the level and type of risk to the child after the birth
- the services that may assist the pregnant woman, and where relevant, her partner and/or the father of the unborn child, prior to the birth.

The safety assessment and family risk evaluation are not completed for the investigation and assessment of an unborn child **unless** the child is born prior to the approval of the investigation and assessment.

Use the following to assist the assessment:

- [Practice guide: The assessment of harm and risk of harm](#)
- consideration of the risk and protective factors relating to children, and in particular, those for high risk infants.

### **Investigating concerns about an unborn child and their siblings**

When an unborn child and their siblings are both listed as subject children in a notification, investigate and assess the concerns specific to the unborn child, in addition to those relating to the siblings. If the pregnant woman does not consent to the investigation and assessment of the unborn child, clearly record that the woman did not consent, in the investigation and assessment event in ICMS, and proceed with the investigation and assessment of the siblings.

While the investigation and assessment of the unborn child cannot proceed in this circumstance, information from the investigation and assessment of the siblings will inform future action and any planning by Child Safety Services in relation to the unborn child after birth.

If it becomes apparent during an investigation and assessment for a child, that the mother is pregnant, use professional judgement to make a decision about whether the unborn child will be recorded as a 'subject child' or an 'other child' in ICMS. Where the decision is to record the unborn child as a 'subject child':

- investigate and assess the child protection concerns in relation to the unborn child after birth (where consent is given) **and** the concerns relating to the siblings
- edit the approved notification to ensure the category is listed as 'unborn'.

### **Actions when unable to commence an unborn child investigation and assessment**

In circumstances where the investigation and assessment is unable to be commenced **prior** to the child's birth, for **client reasons**:

- make all reasonable efforts to locate the pregnant woman, where applicable, while the investigation and assessment remains open
- record an 'unborn child alert' on the person records of the mother and the unborn child in ICMS
- complete and forward an 'HRA Form 1' to the hospital/s where the pregnant woman is likely to give birth (refer to 'List of Maternity Hospitals and Nominated Positions'), **and/or** a letter to the private or interstate hospital/s where the pregnant woman is likely to give birth - refer to the practice resource [Unborn children](#)
- attach the 'HRA Form 1' to the investigation and assessment event in ICMS
- provide the CSAHSC with a 'Child Safety After Hours Service Centre: After hours referral form' and all relevant information, including the 'HRA Form 1'
- refer the case to the SCAN AM Team
- record details of all actions taken in a case note in the investigation and assessment event
- record a 'Member of a mobile family' alert on all relevant person records, where there is information to suggest the pregnant woman is highly mobile
- contact the pregnant woman's medical practitioner (if known) to:
  - discuss the concerns identified
  - request that information be shared with relevant health professionals, such as the midwife or social work services
  - ask that Child Safety Services be advised of the birth of the child.

Keep the investigation and assessment event in ICMS open until either:

- the child is born and the investigation and assessment is completed
- two months have elapsed since the estimated date of delivery of the child and the woman has still not been located - in this circumstance:
  - complete a 'Record of actions - mobile family' form in the investigation and assessment event in ICMS
  - record a 'no investigation and assessment' outcome.

### **Investigation and assessment outcomes**

For an unborn child, one of the following outcomes may be recorded:

- substantiated - child in need of protection
- unsubstantiated - child not in need of protection

- no investigation and assessment outcome.

For further information refer to [4.2 Record the investigation, assessment and response.](#)

### **Record a notification after the birth of a child**

The purpose of recording a new notification following the birth of the baby is to determine the child's current protection needs and whether ongoing intervention is required to ensure the protection and care needs of the child are met.

Record a new notification **immediately** following the birth of the baby or the receipt of the [HRA Form 2: Unborn child high risk alert: Notification that pregnant woman has presented for delivery](#) (HRA Form 2), when the outcome of an investigation and assessment completed prior to the birth of a child was 'substantiated - child in need of protection' and either:

- the woman did not consent to a support service case, and further assessment is required to determine the current risk of harm to the child
- it is assessed that an application for a child protection order is required to ensure the child's safety
- new child protection concerns are received at the time of the birth that have not previously been investigated and assessed.

Where it is assessed that a newborn baby must be separated from the mother's care following the birth, refer to [2.5 Complete the safety assessment.](#)

If Child Safety Services is contacted about additional concerns for an unborn child, refer to [6. What if Child Safety Services is contacted about additional concerns for a child or an unborn child?](#)

### **Complete an HRA form 3, if required**

Complete and forward an [HRA Form 3: Cessation of unborn child high risk alert](#) to all relevant hospitals when, either:

- an 'HRA Form 1' has previously been sent to multiple hospitals and, following the baby's birth, the remaining hospitals need to be notified of the cessation of the alert
- Child Safety Services has been informed that the pregnant woman has had a miscarriage or termination and the relevant hospital/s need to be notified of the cessation of the alert.

## **8. What if a child is at immediate risk of harm - use of section 16 or 18?**

When undertaking an investigation and assessment, an authorised Child Safety Services' officer or police officer has the power to have contact with a child at immediate risk of harm (*Child Protection Act 1999*, section 16) or to take a child who is at immediate risk of harm into custody (*Child Protection Act 1999*, section 18).

These powers may be exercised with help and the use of force deemed reasonable in the circumstances. Prior to taking any action under the *Child Protection Act 1999*, section 16 or 18:

- make considerable effort to engage parents and negotiate an appropriate solution
- always consider contacting the QPS for assistance
- discuss the decision with a team leader.

If the power is exercised prior to consultation due to the nature of immediate risk to the child, advise a team leader as soon as possible following the use of the power. If a Child Safety Services' officer is accompanied by the QPS, the QPS may use discretionary powers to enter and search, and remain on a premise.

For information about when the *Child Protection Act 1999*, section 16 and 18 can be exercised, refer to the practice resource [Use of powers for a child at immediate risk - section 16 and 18](#).

Note: Custody of a child under the *Child Protection Act 1999*, section 18, overrides any other child protection order granting custody or guardianship to someone other than the chief executive, made under the *Child Protection Act 1999*.

### **Use section 16 to have contact with a child at immediate risk**

When exercising the use of powers under the *Child Protection Act 1999*, section 16, advise the parents of:

- the purpose of the visit, the child protection concerns and any intended actions
- your name, position and the name of the department
- your authority under the *Child Protection Act 1999*, section 16, to enter, search and remain in the premises or residence.

If an authorised officer damages property while exercising this power, provide a written notice of particulars of the damage to the owner or leave this notice at the property and retain a copy of the notice (*Child Protection Act 1999*, section 154).

In addition, during the investigation and assessment:

- show your identity card (*Child Protection Act 1999*, section 153)
- give the parents a final opportunity to allow contact with the child with their consent
- sight, and where appropriate, interview the child
- complete a safety assessment for the household with the parents, as soon as possible after the use of the power has been exercised, and include the actions taken under the use of powers
- take other action as required, as part of the investigation and assessment.

Record details of the contact at the first reasonable opportunity in the 'Record of use of powers' form in ICMS, regardless of whether a Child Safety Services' or QPS officer has exercised the power.

Note: If after contact is made, the parents refuse to allow further contact with the child to complete the investigation and assessment, the CSO should apply for the appropriate assessment order - refer to [2. What if a parent will not consent to actions required - use of a TAO?](#) or [3. What if a parent will not consent to actions required - use of a CAO?](#)

### **Use of section 18 to take a child at immediate risk into custody**

When exercising the use of powers under the *Child Protection Act 1999*, section 18, take reasonable steps to advise at least one parent of:

- your name, position and the name of the department
- the purpose of the visit and the concerns regarding the child
- the authority under this power to enter, search and remain in the place until the child is located
- the child having been taken into the chief executive's custody
- the rationale for taking the child into the chief executive's custody, unless this would jeopardise the child's safety or a criminal investigation
- of the legal obligation for Child Safety Services to apply for a TAO.

If an authorised officer damages property while exercising this power, provide a written notice of particulars of the damage to the owner or leave this notice at the property and retain a copy of the notice (*Child Protection Act 1999*, section 154).

In addition, during the investigation and assessment:

- show your identity card (*Child Protection Act 1999*, section 153)
- sight and if appropriate, interview the child
- complete the safety assessment, with the parents if possible
- remove the child - the CSO is not required to tell the parents with whom the child has been placed (*Child Protection Act 1999*, section 20)
- tell the child about being taken into custody, including what this type of custody means, the reasons for the custody and the period of the custody (*Child Protection Act 1999*, section 195)
- progress the investigation and assessment
- apply to a magistrate for a TAO as soon as possible, but within eight hours of taking the child into custody
- serve at least one of the parents with a copy of the TAO, explain the terms and effects of the order and explain their right of appeal (*Child Protection Act 1999*, section 32).

Record details of the contact at the first reasonable opportunity in the 'Record of use of powers' in ICMS, regardless of whether a Child Safety Services' officer or QPS officer has exercised the power.

### **Implement actions following the use of section 18 powers**

Following the use of section 18 powers, apply for a TAO as soon as practicable, but **within eight hours** after the power is exercised. Custody to the chief executive ends either when the TAO application is decided or eight hours after the power has been exercised, whichever is the earlier timeframe.

Complete a subsequent safety assessment prior to any decision to return the child to the home. If it is determined that it is safe for a child to be returned to the custody of their parents, the TAO application **must still be made**, even when custody is no longer required prior to the order being made.

### **Facilitate a medical examination, where applicable**

When a child is taken into custody under the *Child Protection Act 1999*, section 18, a medical examination or medical treatment may be arranged for the child, if it is urgent or reasonable in the circumstances. If the need is not urgent, the CSO must wait until a magistrate grants a TAO.

For further information about medical examinations, refer to [9. What if a child needs a medical examination?](#)

## **9. What if a child needs a medical examination?**

*A 'medical examination' is a physical, psychiatric, psychological or dental examination, assessment or procedure, and includes forensic examination and an examination or assessment carried out by a health practitioner, as defined in the Child Protection Act 1999, schedule 3.*

### **When to consider a medical examination**

As part of the investigation and assessment, a medical examination of the child, or a specialist assessment by a health worker professional may be considered necessary to ensure the child's immediate health and safety, or to inform the outcome of the investigation and assessment.

Wherever possible, speak with the child first about the incident, or the injuries they may have, to ensure that:

- the child is able to speak in a more relaxed environment prior to any medical procedures, without the influence of the possibly intrusive examination

- there is the opportunity to have the information from the interview corroborated, if the child subsequently speaks to the medical practitioner.

Consider whether a medical examination of the child is required in the following circumstances:

- the child is reluctant to show an injury
- the injury is in the genital area
- the child's condition or injury may not be consistent with the explanation given by the parent
- the child's developmental level or physical and intellectual skills are inconsistent with explanations given for the harm
- the expertise of a medical practitioner is required to provide additional information, such as:
  - an assessment of the impact of long-term neglect on the child
  - a developmental assessment of the child.

### **When to undertake an urgent medical examination**

During an investigation and assessment, make arrangements for an **immediate medical examination** of any child, even if the child does not appear 'unwell', who:

- appears ill, is in poor physical condition or is dehydrated
- has an altered state of consciousness
- has obvious serious physical injuries
- is manifesting significant abnormalities of behaviour or ideation
- has allegedly been sexually abused
- is an **infant** who
  - displays a lack of response to stimuli, alterations in breathing or temperature, poor feeding, irritability and lethargy
  - is alleged to have suffered significant trauma or 'shaking', especially a child under two years of age
  - has bruises.

In most circumstances a paediatrician with child protection experience is preferred for the undertaking of a medical examination.

### **Parental consent for a medical examination**

In all cases, plan the medical examination and **seek parental permission** to have the child medically examined. In circumstances where the parents will not give their permission, the *Child Protection Act 1999*, section 97, enables a medical practitioner to carry out an examination or treatment without consent of the parents when:

- a child at immediate risk has been taken into custody (*Child Protection Act 1999*, section 18)
- a TAO or CAO authorises the examination or treatment.

In this situation the medical practitioner **must**:

- not override the rights of the child in relation to the examination or treatment
- only carry out treatment that is reasonable in the circumstances
- provide a report about the examination or treatment to Child Safety Services, or to the QPS.

## Inform the child

Consider the best way to inform the child and seek their views about the need for a medical examination. This may involve assisting the parent to explain the need for a medical examination to the child.

A child **should not be forced** to have a medical examination. The decision to proceed, will depend on the age and 'Gillick' competency of the child and the need for immediate treatment, and will be made by the examining doctor. For information about Gillick competency, refer to the practice resource [Investigation and assessment - key concepts and definitions](#).

## Determine the appropriate time for the examination

For urgent matters, arrange for an immediate medical examination. In other circumstances arrange the medical examination **as soon as possible** after sighting or interviewing the child, to allow timely medical examination and treatment. A medical examination following an **alleged sexual assault must occur within 72 hours** for the collection of evidence.

Ensure that there is sufficient planning with medical professionals, and where there is a joint investigation, the QPS, to co-ordinate interviews and medical examinations. Where the police are not involved, ensure that Child Safety Services' interviews and medical examinations occur in the most appropriate order.

## Attendance of the parents at the examination

Ensure that a parent or someone nominated by a parent **always accompanies** the child to the medical examination. It is important that a parent or nominated person attends the examination to provide relevant child and family medical history. The nominated person **cannot** be:

- a Child Safety Services' officer, even if nominated by the parent for this purpose
- a parent or other person suspected of causing a serious injury to a child.

A parent's attendance at the child's medical examination cannot be prevented, unless Child Safety Services decides the parent's attendance at the examination would jeopardise a criminal investigation or expose the child to harm and either:

- the child has been taken into custody under the *Child Protection Act 1999*, section 18
- the child is subject to a TAO or CAO and is in the custody of the chief executive.

If a medical examination or treatment occurs by the use of statutory powers under the *Child Protection Act 1999*, still make every effort to encourage and assist the parents to attend the medical examination, unless this would jeopardise a criminal investigation or expose the child to harm.

A Child Safety Services' officer may transport and accompany the child and parent or nominated person to the appointment, however, they **cannot** transport the child unaccompanied by the parent or their nominated person, unless there is a TAO or CAO in place.

## Record the outcome of the medical examination

Record the details and outcome of the child's examination in ICMS and where a written report is also provided by the medical practitioner or specialist, file a copy on the child's file and attach the report to the investigation and assessment event in ICMS.

Any outcomes from medical examinations that occur as part of an investigation and assessment are to be incorporated into the subsequent health assessment. This will ensure the health assessment is adequately informed and will also avoid duplicating medical examinations or treatment. For further information refer to [Chapter 5, 2.3 Develop a child health passport](#).

## 10. What if a child needs to be placed under an assessment care agreement?

An assessment care agreement is an agreement, signed by a parent that allows a child to be placed with an approved carer during the investigation and assessment phase. If the parents agree to an assessment care agreement, they retain all custody and guardianship rights and responsibilities during the period of the care agreement.

An assessment care agreement:

- can only be for a maximum of 30 days
- cannot be extended past 30 days
- is only to be used where it is assessed that there are no safety concerns about the parents retaining custody and guardianship rights
- does not confer Child Safety Services with custody rights to the child, as it has not yet been determined that the child is in need of protection.

For further information, refer to [Chapter 5, 3. Decision-making for the child](#).

When a child needs to be placed during an investigation and assessment:

- consult with the parents to obtain their consent, complete an [Care agreement - Form 1 \(CA\)](#) and get them to sign the form
- obtain necessary information about the child, to provide to the child's carer, and commence the placement in accordance with the procedure [Chapter 5, 1. Place a child in out-of-home care](#)
- ensure that appropriate decisions about the child's safety are made by the end of the 30 day period outlined above, even when a decision is not able to be made about whether the child is in need of protection
- use the 30 days to undertake key investigation and assessment tasks, such as completing the safety assessment and family risk evaluation, interviewing relevant parties, information gathering and arranging medical assessments, if applicable.

It is generally not appropriate to supervise the child's contact with the parents during the assessment care agreement period, given the voluntary nature of the agreement. There may be occasions where it is assessed that the risk to the child during contact may be high, however, the parents have agreed to both the placement under the assessment care agreement and to supervised contact, and therefore an assessment order is not appropriate. In these cases, the contact will be supervised, and this contact may also provide an opportunity for observations of the interactions that will constitute part of the assessment of the parents' ability to meet the child's protection and care needs.

When a child subject to an assessment care agreement is subsequently assessed as being in need of protection, a decision may be made to continue the out-of-home care placement as part of ongoing intervention. Where this is to occur with the parents agreement, the assessment care agreement will end and a child protection care agreement needs to be negotiated with the parents (refer to [Chapter 6, 3. Place a child using a child protection care agreement](#)).

## 11. What if a matter needs to be referred to the SCAN System?

When undertaking an investigation and assessment, it may be appropriate to make a referral to a SCAN AM Team if the core member representative assesses that the case meets the two mandatory referral criteria and will benefit from discussion and planning by senior officers and inter-agency co-ordination of service delivery.

For further information, refer to the [Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect \(SCAN\) System Inter-agency Policy and Procedures, September 2006](#).

## 12. What if a child and family cannot be located?

All reasonable steps must be taken to locate a family subject to a notification within the response priority timeframe. Where a family cannot be located, consider the following actions:

- re-contact the notifier
- check SCAN AM Team records
- consult with the recognised entity for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child
- search telephone directories
- contact the QPS for information and assistance
- send letters through the Child Support Agency
- search electoral rolls
- contact schools to request assistance
- request assistance from Centrelink.

Note: The Commonwealth and Child Safety Services have agreed procedures under an [Information Sharing Protocol between the Commonwealth and Child Protection Agencies](#) that allow Centrelink to release a family's last known whereabouts to an authorised officer however local Centrelink officers are not able to assist and requests are only to be made via Data Management Services after all other attempts to locate a family **have been exhausted**.

To request the whereabouts of a family from Centrelink, complete the [Centrelink Request Form](#) and e-mail the form to DMS ([DMS\\_Centrelink@childsafety.qld.gov.au](mailto:DMS_Centrelink@childsafety.qld.gov.au)) with a subject heading of '*Response Priority: Centrelink Request for Family Name*'. For assistance with making a request, please contact DMS on telephone 3235 9918.

### Record the outcome of attempts to locate a family

When it has not been possible to commence an investigation and assessment and the team leader is satisfied that all reasonable attempts have been made to locate the family, taking into account the seriousness of the concerns, the potential risk of harm and the age and vulnerability of the child:

- record a 'member of a mobile family' alert in ICMS for each relevant person as soon as the decision is made that the family are mobile, or will be difficult to locate
- document all actions taken to locate the child and family in the investigation and assessment, in the 'Record of actions - mobile family' form in ICMS, including:
  - attempts made to locate the family and conduct the investigation and assessment
  - the results of all actions taken
  - relevant information received from other parties about the family
  - decisions made, and the rationale for decisions
- finalise the investigation and assessment within two months and record a 'no investigation and assessment outcome' for each subject child.

If there is a subsequent notification and the family has been located:

- do **not** reopen the original investigation and assessment event
- assess the previous concerns along with the current concerns, as part of the investigation and assessment

- record the previous concerns and the appropriate outcomes in the current investigation and assessment event.

### 13. What if parents refuse to allow contact with a child?

If during an investigation and assessment, a parent refuses entry to the home, or contact with the child:

- make every attempt to gain the consent of the family to undertake the investigation and assessment
- explain the legal obligation of Child Safety Services to investigate and assess the concerns under the *Child Protection Act 1999*, section 14
- emphasise the responsibility of Child Safety Services to sight the child and speak to the child and the parents, to assess the concerns
- explain that the process provides an opportunity for the parents to respond to the concerns
- acknowledge the parents reluctance and suggest alternatives such as the use of a support person for the parents, or, prior to leaving the premises, arrange an appointment at a later time if no immediate danger is identified for the child, either from the notification information or from observations made during contact with the parents.

If the parents continue to refuse contact, determine the appropriate powers or assessment order to be used to allow the investigation and assessment to be conducted, either:

- the use of powers under the *Child Protection Act 1999*, section 16 or 18, to access the child or secure their immediate safety, where there are concerns for the **immediate safety** of a child - refer to [8. What if a child is at immediate risk of harm - use of section 16 or 18?](#)
- the use of a TAO - refer to [2. What if a parent will not consent to actions required - use of a TAO?](#)
- the use of a CAO - refer to [3. What if a parent will not consent to actions required - use of a CAO?](#)

### 14. What if assistance is required from another jurisdiction?

When there is a notification on a child who currently resides in Queensland, but the parent or carer who is the alleged person responsible resides in another jurisdiction, Child Safety Services may request assistance from another state, territory or New Zealand (jurisdiction) to complete the investigation and assessment.

To request assistance for the completion of an investigation and assessment:

- complete a [Request for interstate notification](#), including the current address in the other jurisdiction, and attach the current notification and any other relevant information that has been gathered
- specify the tasks required of the other jurisdiction in order for the investigation and assessment to be completed
- fax all relevant documentation to the Interstate Liaison Officer (ILO) at Court Services Unit.

The ILO will:

- forward this documentation to the ILO in the jurisdiction where the child lives, for that jurisdiction to make a decision about whether they will assist with interviewing the identified parties as requested
- follow up with the ILO in the other jurisdiction, to determine whether that jurisdiction is willing to conduct the interviews requested.

If the other jurisdiction agrees to assist, the ILO will obtain the report of the interviews with the nominated parties upon their completion.

If the whereabouts of the family in another jurisdiction is unknown, request an interstate alert - refer to the procedures in [Chapter 1, 1. What if the child protection concerns are about a child in another jurisdiction?](#) If updated information is received about the family or the family's whereabouts, notify the ILO immediately.

If a family relocates to another jurisdiction prior to the investigation commencing, request an interstate notification - refer to the procedures in [Chapter 1, 1. What if the child protection concerns are about a child in another jurisdiction?](#) The other jurisdiction will respond to the concerns received in accordance with their legislative requirements and no further action is required.

## **15. What if another jurisdiction requests assistance with an investigation and assessment?**

When another state, territory or New Zealand (jurisdiction) requests assistance from Queensland to complete an investigation and assessment that is being conducted in that jurisdiction, the ILO will:

- ensure the relevant documentation, including the current interstate or New Zealand address, history checks and notification information have been received
- ensure that the other jurisdiction has specified the tasks required in order for the investigation and assessment to be completed
- forward all relevant documentation to the relevant CSSC for actioning.

The receiving CSSC will:

- allocate the matter
- seek clarification, as necessary, with the requesting office in the other jurisdiction
- complete the tasks as requested
- forward a written report to the ILO for forwarding to the requesting office in the other jurisdiction.

Use professional judgment to decide whether or not, during the investigation and assessment, to ask direct questions relating to assessing and deciding the provision of placement information to parents. In circumstances where the removal of a child is likely to occur, gather information to inform decisions about the provision of placement information to parents. For further information refer to [Chapter 5, 1.8 Assess the provision of placement information to parents](#) and [Chapter 5, 1.10 Provide placement information to parents](#).

## **16. What if a young person is subject to youth justice intervention?**

When an investigation and assessment is conducted in relation to a child who is also subject to youth justice intervention, contact the youth justice case worker to:

- gather information to inform the assessment
- verify information provided by the child or the parents during assessment interviews
- provide relevant information, for the purpose of coordinating service delivery
- advise of a child's placement in out-of-home care, if applicable.

A Department of Communities' (Youth Justice Services) officer may act as a support person for the child during the interview or investigation and assessment process, when requested by the child or their family.

Any involvement by Youth Justice Services in the implementation or monitoring of a safety plan for a child, is to be negotiated by Child Safety Services with the youth justice case worker or their line manager.

When a child subject to youth justice services is in the custody of the chief executive:

- inform the youth justice case worker of who has custody and guardianship rights and responsibilities for the child, and explain the implications for decision-making about custody and guardianship matters (refer to [Chapter 5, 3. Decision-making for the child](#))
- coordinate service delivery for the duration of the out-of-home care placement.

The involvement of Youth Justice Services' officers in the SCAN System, and the sharing of relevant information between departments, is to occur in accordance with the [Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect \(SCAN\) System Inter-agency policy and procedures, September 2006](#).

When the investigation and assessment is completed and if the Department of Communities remains involved with the child, contact the youth justice case worker and provide the following information, where the information is likely to impact on the child's youth justice case plan:

- the outcome of the investigation and assessment
- the return of the child to the parents
- the nature of ongoing intervention to be provided, if applicable.

## **17. What if a family is subject to Witness Protection Program?**

At times, families who are subject to the Witness Protection Program through any one of the state or territory police services may reside in Queensland and be the subject of a notification. These families have a heightened need for confidentiality, due to the importance of protecting their identity, whereabouts and personal safety.

Witness protection in Queensland is administered by the Crime and Misconduct Commission, but is operationalised by the QPS Witness Protection Unit.

When it becomes known during an investigation and assessment that a family is subject to witness protection:

- liaise with either of the officers identified below, in the Witness Protection Unit, to ensure the best response to these complex and sensitive matters:
  - the Officer in Charge, QPS Witness Protection Unit, telephone: (07) 3360 6127
  - the Operations Coordinator, QPS Witness Protection Unit, telephone: (07) 3360 6295
- ensure Child Safety Services meets its legislative responsibility to investigate the child protection concerns that are received.

# Resources

## Forms and template

- Care Agreements Form 1 (CA)
- Centrelink Request Form
- Child Safety After Hours Service Centre: After hours referral form
- Court Assessment Order (Form 7)
- HRA Form 1: Unborn child high risk alert: Request for immediate notification when pregnant woman presents for delivery
- HRA Form 2: Unborn child high risk alert: Notification that pregnant woman has presented for delivery
- HRA Form 3: Cessation of unborn child high risk alert
- Police Referral Fax
- Request for information pursuant to chapter 5A
- Request for interstate notification
- SCAN AM Team Referral Form (SCAN Form 1)
- Section 95 - *Child Protection Act 1999* - Request
- Temporary Assessment Order (Form 3)

## Child Safety Services' resources

- CPE2 - Linking of court orders
- List of Maternity Hospitals and Nominated Positions
- Memorandum of understanding between Disability Services Queensland and the Department of Child Safety 2007-2010
- Physical and cognitive developmental milestones
- Practice guide: The assessment of harm and risk of harm
- Practice Paper: Child sexual abuse
- Practice Paper: Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- Practice resource: Assessment orders
- Practice resource: Family risk evaluation
- Practice resource: Informing parents about the harm and the outcome - section 15
- Practice resource: Investigation and assessment - an overview.
- Practice resource: Investigation and assessment - key concepts and definitions
- Practice resource: Interviewing a child
- Practice resource: Planning for and undertaking a joint investigation
- Practice resource: Recording the investigation and assessment.
- Practice resource: Safety assessment
- Practice resource: Schedule of criminal offences
- Practice resource: The investigation and assessment plan
- Practice resource: The role of a support person
- Practice resource: Unborn children
- Practice resource: Use of powers for a child at immediate risk - section 16 and 18
- SDM: Family risk evaluation

- SDM: Safety assessment
- Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect (SCAN) System Inter-agency Policy and Procedures, September 2006
- Unborn Child Checklist
- When Child Safety Officers visit your home brochure

**External resources**

- Information Sharing Protocol between the Commonwealth and Child Protection Agencies