



Access Response Time Changes: Talking Points for Communicating with External Partners

Introduction

This document was created for local child welfare agencies to have talking points for conversations with community partners about the June 2026 Access Response Time changes. The talking points include general information that may be applicable to anyone you talk to, and more specific for groups that CPS may often interact with in relation to response time. Agencies can use whichever talking points would be beneficial for their targeted audience and are free to change them to fit the conversation as needed. For instance, there are not specific talking points for medical professionals, but an agency may find that some of these talking points can be used with medical professionals if there are any questions that arise.

Agencies may decide to have conversations before the changes occur or wait until questions come up, and these talking points can help you have those conversations. Since agency practice regarding collaboration varies throughout the state, this document was not created as a resource for you to simply provide to community partners, but rather to aid you in conversations so you can talk about the impacts this change has on your local agency practice, what might be different, including potential changes to MOUs, etc.

Talking points and information for all audiences

Why are the changes being made?

- Response time changes will streamline and simplify the decision-making process for how quickly an agency responds to a screened-in CPS Report.
 - Statewide data shows response time assignments vary widely across the state. In some counties, as few as 7% of screened-in reports receive a same-day response, compared to 43% in others.
 - CW professionals and supervisors have indicated that the process of identifying danger threats from an access report is often ambiguous and more difficult than it needs to be.

What will the changes affect?

- Changes are being made to the way response time is determined. There will be two response times instead of three, and a new method will be used to determine how quickly an agency needs to respond. National research on response time policies shows variability across the country, however, states most commonly use two response times (20 states).



- The fastest response time is shifting from “same day” to “within 24-hours.” Agencies will continue to respond on the same day whenever it’s needed and will have up to 24 hours when they determine it’s appropriate. They will also continue to respond to all other screened-in reports as quickly as needed, but within 5 business days.
 - Even though the timing of CPS’s response might look different than what you’re used to, the decisions that impact child safety will remain the same. The Initial Assessment professional will still meet with the family to complete an assessment, and safety will be assessed at every contact with the family. This ensures CPS professionals meet with families to understand the family’s circumstances and identify any threats to child safety after they’ve met with them.
 - CPS professionals will continue to gather information through a series of questions asked of reporters that assist in making decisions regarding CPS intervention and response time.
- The new method allows CPS agencies to more clearly identify when a quicker CPS response is needed. This means that there may be some situations that have received an immediate response in the past and will not require an immediate response moving forward. This change is part of DCF’s Putting Families First initiative, which is focused on making improvements to the child welfare system that preserve child safety while better supporting families and the CPS workforce. As part of those efforts, these changes help clarify and refocus on what situations truly need an urgent CPS response when a CPS report is screened in.
- CPS must continue to partner with tribal child welfare agencies when a child with Native American heritage is identified. The shift from “same day” to “within 24 hours” may offer additional time to collaborate with tribal child welfare agencies as well as other community partners.
- Agencies who have piloted this method have indicated these changes are having a positive impact on their ability to meaningfully engage with families right from the beginning of their work with them.

Talking points for targeted audiences

Law Enforcement

- Even though law enforcement and CPS work closely together in situations of alleged child abuse or neglect, their roles are very different. Law enforcement responds to every call for service, without requiring a threshold for when their services are needed, whereas CPS intervention is guided by statutory authority.



This means that not every situation that is reported to CPS warrants being screened in. Understanding the similarities and differences between these two professions helps build the foundation for stronger partnerships when working together. Similar to how law enforcement receives specific training about all aspects of their jobs, CPS professionals also receive specific training related to child safety decision-making and use that training to make decisions based on individual family circumstances.

- While fewer situations may require an urgent response by CPS with the new method, it doesn't change the situations that require CPS to screen in a report and complete an Initial Assessment. It is considered best practice for CPS and law enforcement to coordinate their responses, when possible, in situations where both entities will be involved, but there may be times when respective agency response times differ.
 - In instances where law enforcement is on the scene of an incident, the CPS response will depend on local agency protocol and the information available about the situation.
- No changes are being made to any of the statutory requirements. CPS will still be required to notify law enforcement within 12 hours in cases of suspected or threatened sexual abuse, including cases of suspected or threatened sex trafficking. It is generally considered best practice for CPS and law enforcement to coordinate their response to these allegations of maltreatment to minimize the number of times a victim needs to be interviewed.
- Conversations between law enforcement agencies and CPS agencies will be beneficial for the professionals to understand how these changes might impact their work together. Proactive conversations will help with a more seamless transition to these changes.

Education

- When a report is screened in, the CPS agency will determine, based on the information in the report, when to make contact with the family. School staff are encouraged to follow their own agency protocol regarding dismissal of students to prevent assumptions about when CPS may be responding.