



TEXAS
**Department of Family
and Protective Services**

**Alternative Response Policy for
Advancement Regions**

March 2026

Purpose

This document contains updated Alternative Response (AR) investigation policy for **AR advancement regions only**. Staff in AR advancement regions must utilize the policy in this document as official AR policy. Regions not yet in advancement must continue to follow AR policy in the CPS Handbook.

Sections **2610**, **2611.1**, **2611.3**, and **2632**, contain differences from the handbook and staff in advancement regions should use the versions of those policies in this guide. **2611.3** is not currently published in the CPS handbook, but will be incorporated in a future update and applies to advancement regions as appropriate.

2600 Alternative Response

CPS March 2026

Unlike a traditional investigation, Alternative Response (AR) does not have a final case disposition of abuse or neglect or a designation of a perpetrator.

[DFPS Rules, 40 TAC §707.551\(16\)](#)

An AR investigation may be transferred to the traditional investigation pathway when new information renders the case unsuitable for AR.

Children Under the Jurisdiction of a Court in Another State

If a caseworker discovers during an AR investigation that an alleged victim is in the legal custody of another state, the caseworker must contact the other state to do both of the following:

- Determine why the child is in Texas.
- Make the necessary arrangements to do one of the following:
 - Return the child to the other state.
 - Begin the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) process.

Once the caseworker confirms that the child is under the other state's custody, the caseworker must stage progress the case to the traditional investigation pathway and complete the investigation related to abuse or neglect that occurred while the alleged victim was in Texas.

2610 Eligibility for Alternative Response

CPS March 2026

Only certain Priority 2 (P2) cases are eligible for AR. Child Protective Investigations (CPI) screeners make the initial decision to refer intakes received from Statewide Intake to AR.

A P2 case is eligible for AR if it meets both of the following criteria:

- The allegations meet the definition of abuse or neglect, and the report is unable to be closed at intake.
- The case is eligible to be screened and does not meet the criteria in [2611.1 Intakes Ineligible for Alternative Response](#).

A P1 case is eligible for AR if it meets both of the following criteria:

- The intake has been downgraded to a P2.
- The case meets the AR eligibility criteria for a P2 (listed above in this section).

2611 Intakes or Cases Ineligible for Alternative Response (AR)

2611.1 Intakes Ineligible for Alternative Response

CPS March 2026

An intake is **not** eligible for AR if it includes any of the following elements:

- A child 5 years old or younger lives in the home, and both of the following apply:
 - The child is an alleged victim of physical abuse in the intake.
 - The physical abuse is not prenatal exposure to marijuana.
- Child removal is imminent. See the definition of [imminent danger](#).
- The current intake involves a child fatality alleged to be a result of abuse or neglect. See [DFPS Rules, 40 TAC §707.553\(b\)](#).
- An allegation involves sexual abuse, forced or coerced marriage abuse, or sex or labor trafficking.
- A current member of the home where abuse or neglect is alleged is a convicted sex offender, and the allegations pose a danger to a child.
- The family has an open investigation, Family-Based Safety Services, or conservatorship case.
- A current member of the home where abuse or neglect is alleged is a designated or substantiated perpetrator of a child fatality due to physical abuse.
- Physical abuse allegations indicate serious injury, as defined by the Texas Penal Code, regardless of the age of the child.
- An allegation involves prenatal exposure to controlled substances, excluding marijuana, and a more immediate response is required for child safety.
- An allegation involves medical child abuse.
- An allegation involves medical neglect of a child that requires an immediate response.
- An allegation involves manufacturing of illegal substances or an active drug raid.
- An allegation includes a situation where a weapon (or any item that could be used to inflict serious or deadly harm) has been used to threaten or harm someone else in the home, and the alleged perpetrator has access to the child.

- The alleged perpetrator is a DFPS employee, school employee, or school volunteer, and the alleged victim is not a member of that person's family.
- The alleged perpetrator is a foster parent and the alleged victim is not a member of that person's family. (This applies regardless of whether the alleged victim is a foster child, and regardless of whether the foster home is active or inactive.)
- The alleged perpetrator is a prospective adoptive parent and the alleged victim is not a member of that person's family. (This applies if the person is at any step in the process of becoming an adoptive parent, starting at initial inquiry and ending immediately before consummation of an adoption.)

2611.2 Criteria for Routing a Case to Traditional Investigation

CPS March 2026

An AR investigation must be routed to the traditional investigation pathway if either of the following is true:

- There is a need for a disposition, meaning stage progression is required either for subsequent DFPS personnel actions or legal proceedings.
- A more immediate response is necessary to ensure child safety, and a critical task cannot be completed in AR.

[DFPS Rules, 40 TAC §707.555](#)

See [2630 Stage Progressing an AR Investigation to Traditional Investigation](#).

2611.3 Criteria for Stage Progressing a Traditional Investigation to an Alternative Response Investigation

CPS March 2026

A traditional P2 investigation can be stage progressed to an AR investigation within 120 hours of the intake or formal screening (if applicable) date and time if either of the following is true:

- The case now meets AR eligibility criteria due to new information found, and face-to-face contact has not been made.
- After face-to-face contact is made, the case meets AR eligibility criteria, and there is a need for ongoing CPI contact.

2612 New Intake on an Open Alternative Response Investigation

CPS March 2026

If a new intake is received on a family that is involved in an open AR investigation, the regional router sends the new intake directly to the supervisor, whether or not the new intake meets AR eligibility criteria. The supervisor must review the new intake and determine whether the new intake should be sent to the AR pathway or progressed to a traditional investigation.

See also [2630 Stage Progressing an AR Investigation to Traditional Investigation](#).

2612.1 If the New Intake Meets Alternative Response Criteria

CPS March 2026

If the new intake meets AR eligibility criteria, it must be staged progressed to AR within 24 hours (not counting weekends and holidays when DFPS offices are closed) and merged.

See [2612.4 Determining Whether Family Contact Needs to be Made on a New Intake](#).

2612.2 If the New Intake Does Not Meet Alternative Response Criteria

CPS March 2026

If the new intake does not meet AR eligibility criteria, the supervisor must ensure the following:

- The new intake is stage progressed to a traditional investigation within 24 hours (not counting weekends and holidays when DFPS offices are closed) from the time of the new intake.
- The supervisor's decision to stage progress the current AR investigation to a traditional investigation is documented in the AR investigation narrative in IMPACT.
- All the caseworker's documentation is entered into the current AR stage prior to stage progressing to a traditional investigation.
- The current AR stage is stage progressed to a traditional investigation.
- Both stages are merged.
- The entire case is then worked using the traditional investigation pathway.

See:

[2230 Investigation Tasks](#)

[2612.4 Determining Whether Family Contact Needs to be Made on a New Intake](#)

2612.3 Determining Whether Family Contact Needs to Be Made on a New Intake

CPS March 2026

When a new intake is received and there are new allegations or new incidents of abuse or neglect, the caseworker must make face-to-face contact with the family within priority time frames.

The caseworker must notify each parent or legal guardian of his or her rights prior to being interviewed in an Alternative Response investigation. See [2623.11 Required Notification of Rights to a Parent or Legal Guardian](#).

The caseworker must staff with the supervisor to determine whether face-to-face contact with the family is required if the case has one or more of the following circumstances:

- There are no new allegations.
- There are no new incidents of abuse or neglect.
- The intake contains the same information as the open AR investigation.

If the supervisor determines face-to-face contact is not necessary, an initial contact is entered in the new AR investigation, referencing the case number of the open case. This initial contact must include how the information in the new AR investigation was addressed in the current open case.

2620 Contacts

2621 Documentation and Contact Entry

2621.1 Same-Day Contact Entry with Children

CPS March 2026

In the *Contact Detail* window in IMPACT, the caseworker must enter any face-to-face contact or attempted contact with any child. The caseworker enters this information on the same day as the contact (or attempted contact).

The caseworker must select in the *Contact Detail* window all children seen during the contact. If the caseworker saw at least one child, the caseworker must not select *Attempted*.

If there were children whom the caseworker did not see during the contact, the caseworker must create a separate *Contact Detail* listing those children and indicating an attempted contact.

2621.2 Case Activities Requiring 24-Hour Documentation

CPS March 2026

In the narrative, the caseworker must enter full documentation of the interviews and observations of all children within 24 hours of contact.

The caseworker must also enter full documentation of all interviews and case activities within 24 hours of taking any of the following case actions:

- Establishing a safety plan.
- Initiating a parental child safety placement.
- Removing a child.

2621.3 All Other Documentation

CPS March 2026

The caseworker must document all other contacts, attempted contacts, staffings, and case activities within seven calendar days.

Documentation Content

Documentation of contacts with individuals must include information about all of the following:

- Danger to a child.
- Child vulnerabilities.
- Any required parental consent.
- Protective actions.
- Services that the family needs or is receiving.

Documentation of staffings must include any case-related decisions and required actions.

2622 AR Initial Contacts

CPS March 2026

After being assigned an AR investigation and before contacting the family, the AR caseworker reviews the family's DFPS and criminal history.

2622.1 First Contact

CPS March 2026

The caseworker attempts to make first contact with the family by phone to schedule the first face-to-face meeting with the family. This phone contact occurs within the following time frames:

- Within 24 hours after the intake becomes an AR investigation, if the intake was screened and stage progressed to AR during regular work hours.
- No later than the next business day after the intake becomes an AR investigation, if the intake was screened and stage progressed to AR outside regular work hours.

The table below explains required time frames that apply in various circumstances.

Situation or event	Time frame if stage progressed to AR during business hours (8 a.m. Monday – 5 p.m. Friday)	Time frame if stage progressed to AR outside business hours (5 p.m. Friday – 8 a.m. Monday or on state holidays)
Caseworker makes (or attempts to make) first contact by phone call.	Within 24 hours after date and time of stage progression to AR.	The next business day after stage progression to AR.
Family doesn't have a phone number listed in the intake or readily available from IMPACT history.	Within 24 hours after stage progression, the caseworker goes to the home where abuse or neglect is alleged to attempt to schedule the first face-to-face visit. The family may choose to have the face-to-face meeting at that time.	The next business day after stage progression, the caseworker goes to the home where abuse or neglect is alleged to attempt to schedule the first face-to-face visit. The family may choose to have the face-to-face meeting at that time.
Caseworker has made first phone call to attempt to schedule face-to-face visit but has received no response from family.	If the caseworker has been unable to speak with the family by phone within 24 hours after stage progression, the caseworker goes to the home where abuse or neglect is alleged within 48 hours after stage progression to attempt to schedule the first face-to-face visit. If the caseworker makes contact at the family's home, the family may choose to have the face-to-face meeting at that time or schedule a family meeting within the required time frame.	If the caseworker has attempted to make contact by phone on the next business day, but there is no response from the family, the caseworker goes to the home where abuse or neglect is alleged within 24 hours of the attempted phone call. If the caseworker makes contact at the family's home, the family may choose to have the face-to-face meeting at that time or schedule a family meeting within the required time frame.
Caseworker makes first face-to-face visit.	The caseworker must assess all children no later than 120 hours after stage progression to AR.	The caseworker must assess all children no later than 120 hours after stage progression to AR.

If any interview or discussion about the concerns occurs during the first contact, see [2623.11 Required Notification of Rights to a Parent or Legal Guardian](#).

2622.2 First Face-to-Face Contact

CPS March 2026

The caseworker's first face-to-face contact with a family in an AR investigation must do both of the following:

- Include all children listed as victims in the intake residing in the home where abuse or neglect is alleged.
- Occur within 120 hours after stage progression to AR.

If the first face-to-face contact with the family cannot be scheduled, the caseworker must conduct an interview or attempt to conduct an interview with each child listed as a victim in the intake at the child's school, home, or another location within 120 hours after stage progression to AR to assess for safety. See also 2622.61 Family Member Not Present.

Prior to case closure, the caseworker must have a meaningful contact with all children living in the home where abuse or neglect is alleged. See 2622.4 Meaningful Contact.

If the caseworker is unable to make contact with all children listed as victims in the intake within the prescribed time frames, the caseworker must immediately develop and implement a follow-up plan and document the supervisor's approval in IMPACT.

See:

[2622.8 Unable to Locate](#)

[3100 When a Child Who Is with His or Her Family Cannot Be Located](#)

Completing the 0-5 Day Assessment

The 0-5 Day Assessment is completed with the family together and must address all allegations identified in the intake and any other dangers the caseworker identifies while working with the family.

The 0-5 Day Assessment must also include a separate meaningful contact with each verbal child living in the home where abuse or neglect is alleged.

See:

[2623.1 Initial Tasks](#)

[2622.4 Meaningful Contact](#)

The 0-5 Day Assessment must occur in the home where abuse or neglect is alleged unless the family requests for it to occur elsewhere. It also must include all family members (defined, for this purpose, as everyone who lives in the home where abuse or neglect is alleged), if possible. See [2622.61 Family Member Not Present](#).

The caseworker must also contact anyone who has significant access in the home and assess that person for safety and risk before closure of the AR investigation.

If, after the 0-5 Day Assessment, CPI or the family decides to transfer the case to a traditional investigation, the caseworker must complete a face-to-face contact with any alleged victims who were not present to assess for safety. These contacts must occur as soon as possible, but no later than 120 hours after the date the case was stage progressed to AR. See [2630 Stage Progressing an AR Investigation to Traditional Investigation](#).

2622.3 Daily Briefings for Alternative Response

CPS March 2026

Daily briefings are required daily staffings between a caseworker and a supervisor or above (according to work schedules) to discuss the following:

- Every child that has not been seen within the required time frames.
- Any child that is due to be seen.

This staffing can occur face-to-face or virtually.

The supervisor is responsible for running any necessary report to determine what cases need to be staffed.

During the staffing, the caseworker and supervisor or above must discuss all that apply:

- Diligent efforts to make first contact with the family.
- When the 0-5 Day Assessment is scheduled.
- Why the child was not seen in a timely manner.
- What the plan is to see the child. This plan must be documented in IMPACT. See [2244.1 Time Frames for Interviewing Children](#).
- Any case merge errors, incorrect data entries, or missing documentation regarding a child that was seen. The caseworker or supervisor or above must correct the errors immediately during the briefing.
- Any child that is due to be seen and how the child will be seen within the required time frames.

2622.4 Meaningful Contact

CPS March 2026

During the first face-to-face contact and every 30 days after that, the caseworker must conduct an individual, meaningful contact with each verbal child who lives in the home where abuse or neglect is alleged. The initial meaningful contact must be audio or video recorded unless the child or parent objects. Subsequent meaningful contacts may need to be audio or video recorded if they meet certain criteria. See [2623.12 Audio and Video Recordings in an AR Investigation](#).

During a meaningful contact, the caseworker gets the child's input on the following topics and documents it in the AR investigation:

- Any safety concerns the child has that were not discussed during the face-to-face contact with the family.
- The child's ideas and suggestions about safety and case planning.
- The progress and outcome of any safety or case planning activities the child is involved in.
- The child's well-being (such as educational, medical, and mental or behavioral health).
- The child's safety and well-being in a parental child safety placement (PCSP) (if applicable).

The caseworker assesses the child's ability to communicate, as indicated in [2244.41 Assessing Communication Needs When Interviewing a Child](#).

2622.5 Home Visits

CPS March 2026

The caseworker must conduct a home visit and take photographs of the condition of the home where abuse or neglect is alleged in any of the following situations:

- There is a principal child in the home who is five years old or younger.
- The allegations involve the condition of the home.

- Other circumstances in the case make a home visit necessary to ensure child safety.

The caseworker must also photograph conditions that appear to present a safety threat or hazard to the health and safety of the child and conditions in which cleaning and repairs are needed.

The caseworker must return to the home where abuse or neglect is alleged at a later date to take photographs that document whether the home was cleaned or repaired, or whether it continues to be a hazard to the health and safety of the child.

Photographs of Physical Evidence and Incident Scenes

The caseworker photographs physical evidence when the caseworker becomes aware that the item referenced in the allegations is in the home where abuse or neglect is alleged but not in plain view. The caseworker may ask the parent or another adult resident in the home to retrieve the item for a photograph.

The caseworker must not ask a child to retrieve the item. The parent or caregiver has the right to refuse to provide the item referenced in the allegations. If the parent consents to providing the item referenced in the allegations for a photograph, the caseworker does not collect this item.

The caseworker consults with the supervisor and law enforcement immediately, before leaving the residence, if the caseworker believes that physical evidence should be collected or observed, such as drugs or drug paraphernalia at the residence.

The caseworker must photograph the incident scene and other areas that show the geographic location of where a child was injured or where the abuse or neglect allegedly took place. Those photographs of the home and incident scene can include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Outside the home.
- All rooms in the home.
- Sleeping accommodations for each child.
- Food and running water.
- Location of where the incident allegedly took place.
- Any safety hazards observed.

Documentation

If consent is obtained to take a photograph of the home where abuse or neglect is alleged, physical evidence, or the incident scene, the caseworker documents the following in a contact narrative in IMPACT:

- The name of the person providing consent.
- How consent was provided.

The documentation should include what the caseworker observed in the home, any safety threats identified, and what the parent or caregiver is doing to address those threats.

If the parent or caregiver objects to the home being photographed, the caseworker does both of the following:

- Consults with the supervisor to determine whether additional actions are necessary to obtain photographs.
- Documents the refusal in a contact narrative in IMPACT.

2622.51 Safe Sleep

CPS March 2026

DFPS must educate parents and caregivers in the home where abuse or neglect is alleged about safe sleep issues, including the dangers associated with bed-sharing. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has indicated that an infant (under 12 months of age) should sleep in the same room as the parents but not on the same sleep surface. However, many physicians do not agree with the AAP recommendations on bed-sharing.

Shared sleeping arrangements by themselves do not rise to the level of abuse or neglect unless there are other factors, such as drug use.

When making first face-to-face contact with a family with an infant, the caseworker must observe the area where the infant sleeps for any unsafe sleep practices. The caseworker must immediately and specifically address any concerns with the parent or caregiver and discuss safe sleep issues. The assessment and discussion of the sleep environment must involve:

- Assessing where the infant is sleeping and ensuring it is free of blankets, pillows, stuffed animals, bumper pads, or other material.
- Discussing the importance of infants sleeping on their back.
- Discussing the dangers of exposing an infant to smoke.
- Discussing the need for a firm sleep surface (not on cushions, sofas, waterbeds, and so on).
- Discussing the dangers of infants sleeping on the same sleep surface with adults or other children, such as roll-over deaths, asphyxiation, and suffocation.

The caseworker must consult with his or her supervisor if any of the following conditions apply:

- The caseworker becomes aware of unsafe sleep practices that a parent or caregiver is not able or willing to remedy.
- A parent or caregiver states that he or she will not follow the safe sleep recommendations, and there are other factors that would create an unsafe sleeping arrangement, such as drug or alcohol use while bed-sharing or medical conditions or medications that impair the parent or caregiver.

The supervisor must determine whether the situation requires further DFPS intervention.

The caseworker must provide a copy of the [Keeping Children Safe Wherever You Go!](#) handout to the parent or caregiver and review it with the parent or

caregiver, unless another worker has already documented doing so in the course of the current case.

The caseworker must document safe sleep discussions in a case contact. This includes parent or caregiver responses, observation of the sleeping arrangements, and related supervisor consultations.

If DFPS is involved in determining an appropriate caregiver, the caseworker must discuss safe sleep with that caregiver at initial contact. For safe sleep requirements for children in DFPS conservatorship, see [6411.22 Conducting the Monthly Visit](#).

If a family cannot ensure a safe sleep environment due to lack of resources, the caseworker must check with the Rainbow Room or local community resources to help address this need. However, staff must not consider bed-sharing, without any other issues, to be a form of abuse or neglect.

The caseworker must continue to view the infant's sleeping arrangements during every home visit and assess safe sleep practices.

2622.6 Notifying and Making Face-to-Face Contact with an Involved Parent

CPS March 2026

During the first face-to-face contact with the family, the caseworker must gather any available information about involved parents who live outside the home where abuse or neglect is alleged.

An involved parent is defined as a parent who sees the child, provides material items for the child, pays child support, or has some other type of involvement that maintains a relationship with the child. See the [Alternative Response Resource Guide](#).

The caseworker makes reasonable efforts to notify all involved parents of the child within 24 hours after the first face-to-face contact with the family to schedule a face-to-face contact with the involved parent, unless doing so would endanger any of the following:

- A child.
- A reporter.
- Anyone else who participated in the family assessment.

If DFPS has the involved parent's information at the time of case assignment or before the family assessment, the caseworker must contact the parent within 24 hours after the caseworker receives the case.

Working with an Involved Parent

The caseworker must complete a face-to-face contact every 30 days with each identified involved parent and document all efforts made in the attempt to complete this contact. The contact occurs at the involved parent's home, when possible. During each 30-day contact, the caseworker must discuss the following topics and document the discussion in the AR investigation:

- The relationship between the involved parent and the child, and the role the parent plays in the child's life.

- The strengths and needs of the involved parent and any services that might benefit the involved parent.
- The involved parent’s input about the following:
 - Case planning for the child and family.
 - All efforts made to engage the involved parent for 30-day face-to-face contacts.
 - The outcome of these efforts.

The parent who lives in the home where abuse or neglect is alleged may choose whether to include an involved parent who lives elsewhere in the first face-to-face contact with the family. If the involved parent is not included as part of the family meeting, the caseworker must contact the involved parent to notify him or her of the case and to gather information. The caseworker is not required to notify or contact a parent who is not involved with the child.

2622.61 Family Member Not Present

CPS March 2026

If a family member (a person living in the home where abuse or neglect is alleged) is not present at the first face-to-face contact with the family, the caseworker must do the following:

- Staff (consult) with a supervisor.
- Follow-up with that family member as soon as possible.

The caseworker documents in IMPACT the family member who was not present and the plan for making contact with that family member.

If a child listed as a victim in the intake who lives in the home where abuse or neglect is alleged is not present at the first face-to-face contact with the family, the caseworker must do the following:

- Staff (consult) with a supervisor.
- Make contact with that child within the 120-hour time frame to make sure child safety has been addressed.

If the caseworker has not made contact with all the children listed as victims in the intake to complete the first face-to-face contact within the 120-hour time frame, the caseworker must staff with a supervisor to determine next steps. The caseworker documents the staffing (consultation) in IMPACT. See [3100 When a Child Who Is with His or Her Family Cannot Be Located](#). The caseworker must make contact with all children who reside in the home where abuse or neglect is alleged prior to closing the AR investigation.

2622.62 Family Refuses to Participate

CPS March 2026

If there are safety concerns or abuse or neglect that needs to be addressed, the family does not have the option to choose whether it is investigated. The family has the choice to participate in an AR investigation or a traditional investigation. See [2637 Parent or Caregiver Request for Reassignment](#).

Refusal at Initial Face-to-Face Contact

If the family refuses to participate in the AR process during the first face-to-face contact, the caseworker must do the following:

- Attempt to explain how the family might benefit from AR.
- Give the family an opportunity to discuss its choice prior to leaving the home.

If the family still refuses and safety concerns have not been addressed, the caseworker must do all of the following:

- Take any steps to ensure child safety.
- Staff with the supervisor as soon as possible to determine the next steps, including any legal intervention needed.
- Stage progress the case to a traditional investigation in IMPACT within 24 hours.
- Continue to work with the family using traditional investigation methods.
- Document the decision to stage progress to a traditional investigation in the IMPACT contact narrative.

Refusal at Any Point after Initial Face-to-Face Contact

If a family refuses to cooperate in AR at any time after the initial face-to-face contact, the caseworker must work the case using traditional investigation methods. The caseworker must do all of the following:

- Take any steps to ensure child safety.
- Staff with the supervisor as soon as possible to determine the next steps, including any legal intervention needed.
- Stage progress the case to a traditional investigation in IMPACT within 24 hours.
- Continue to work with the family using traditional investigation methods.
- Document the decision to stage progress to a traditional investigation in the IMPACT contact narrative.

See:

[2633 Approval for Transferring a Case to Traditional Investigations](#)

[2634 Stage Progression Time Frames](#)

2622.7 Unable to Make Contact

CPS March 2026

The caseworker must staff with the supervisor if the caseworker is unable to contact the family within 24 hours or the next business day to schedule the first face-to-face visit. This staffing between the caseworker and supervisor occurs at the following times, whichever is sooner:

- Within 48 hours from when first contact is required.
- By the time the 120-hour first face-to-face visit is required.

The caseworker and the supervisor determine the next steps, and the caseworker must document the staffing in the contact narrative in IMPACT.

2622.8 Unable to Locate

CPS March 2026

If the caseworker cannot locate the family, see [3100 When a Child Who Is with His or Her Family Cannot Be Located](#).

If the supervisor approves the case for closure as *Unable to Locate*, the case is assigned to a child safety specialist for secondary approval. See [2292 Action on a Submitted Investigation](#).

2622.9 Determining Military Status

CPS March 2026

In an AR investigation, the caseworker must ask each adult identified as an alleged perpetrator in the intake whether he or she is an active duty member of the U.S. armed forces or is the spouse of a member on active duty. If the person states he or she meets one of those descriptions, the caseworker must notify the nearest U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) Family Advocacy Program about the investigation.

[Texas Family Code §261.301\(k\)](#)

See DoD's [Military Installations](#) website to find the nearest Family Advocacy Program.

For information about timing of the notification and documentation, see [2248.5 Determining the Alleged Perpetrator's Military Status](#).

2623 Initial Contact Tasks

2623.1 Initial Tasks

CPS March 2026

During the first face-to-face contact with the family members who reside in the home where abuse or neglect is alleged, the caseworker must do all of the following:

- Provide notification of rights. See [2623.11 Required Notification of Rights to a Parent or Legal Guardian](#).
- Provide [A Guide to Alternative Response](#) to the family (using the English or Spanish version, as appropriate).
- Gather sufficient information to complete the initial Safety Assessment.
- Address any immediate dangers.
- Gather information about home members to facilitate review of all DFPS history, run any additional required criminal background checks, and determine eligibility for emergency assistance. (See [2700 Eligibility for Emergency Assistance](#).)

- Complete a meaningful contact alone with each verbal child living in the home. The meaningful contact occurs after the family meeting to give the child an opportunity to share any additional information or concerns about the case that were not discussed during the larger family meeting. Another meaningful contact must occur every 30 days with each verbal child. If the caseworker is unable to gather information from the child, the caseworker documents the attempts and why the information could not be gathered. See [2244.41 Assessing Communication Needs When Interviewing a Child](#).
- Document the meaningful contact as a separate entry for each child in the case narrative in IMPACT.

Before leaving the home (if the first face-to-face contact occurs at the home), the caseworker must assess all of the following:

- The child's safety in the home (based on CPI's reason for involvement and other information gathered during the AR investigation).
- The child's living circumstances.
- The child's general well-being.

2623.11 Required Notification of Rights to a Parent or Legal Guardian

CPS March 2026

Upon first contact, the caseworker must notify each parent or legal guardian of his or her rights prior to being interviewed in an AR investigation

The caseworker must do the following with [Form 3010 Notification of Rights](#) (the form) prior to conducting an interview:

- Provide a copy of the form and [A Guide to Alternative Response](#).
- Verbally review the form and *A Guide to Alternative Response*.
- Obtain a signed copy of the form.
- Mark the box on the form that reflects the refusal to sign, if the parent or legal guardian refuses to sign the form.
- Leave a copy of the form with the parent, legal guardian, or the attorney representing the parent or guardian.
- Upload a copy of the form into neuDocs.
- Document in IMPACT that the form and *A Guide to Alternative Response* were verbally reviewed and copies were provided.

New Allegations in an Open Alternative Response Investigation

If new allegations or a new incident of abuse or neglect is received during an open Alternative Response investigation that requires face-to-face contact, the caseworker must provide [Form 3010 Notification of Rights](#) and *A Guide to Alternative Response*.

[Texas Family Code §261.307](#)

2623.12 Audio and Video Recordings in an AR Investigation

CPS March 2026

The caseworker must make an audio or video recording of the initial meaningful contact with each child. The caseworker must obtain consent from any of the following to audio or video record a child:

- A parent.
- An adult authorized to consent.
- A child who has the capacity to consent.

If the parent or caregiver is present, the caseworker must request permission from the parent or caregiver to audio or video record the child. The audio or video recording must include the child verbally providing consent, or the caseworker identifying which parent or authorized adult provided consent for the child to be audio or video recorded.

The caseworker is not required to make an audio or video recording in either of the following scenarios:

- The child or parent is unwilling to have the interview recorded.
- The recording equipment unexpectedly malfunctions.

Subsequent meaningful contacts may need to be recorded if they meet certain criteria. The contact must be recorded if the caseworker makes the decision to interview a child without a parent or primary caregiver present for one of the following reasons:

- At the child's request.
- Due to safety issues.
- A new allegation was reported outside of the initial concern.
- A child has made an outcry of abuse or neglect.

Documentation

If consent is obtained to audio or video record the interview with the child, the caseworker documents in a contact narrative in IMPACT the name of the individual providing consent, and how consent was provided.

The documentation should include what the child stated in the child's interview.

If the child refuses to be audio or video recorded, the caseworker must document the reason.

[Texas Family Code §104.002](#)

[Texas Family Code §261.302\(e\)\(2\)](#)

Only state-issued equipment is approved for audio or video recording a child during a case. A caseworker may not use any personal device for audio or video recording a child during a case. The recording must be uploaded into neuDocs as soon as possible after completion. The most current upload procedures are located on the [DFPS OneCase / neuDocs page](#) (on the DFPS intranet, accessible to DFPS employees only).

If state-issued equipment is not available for any reason, the caseworker must immediately staff with the supervisor.

2623.13 Photos in an AR Investigation

CPS March 2026

The AR caseworker must take photos of children in the following circumstances:

- If there are allegations of physical abuse or physical injury to a child.
- If the case is stage progressed from Alternative Response to Investigations.

If a child has an injury, see *Photographing a Child's Injuries*, below in this section.

Consent to Take Photos

The caseworker must obtain consent from any of the following to take a photograph of the child:

- A parent.
- An adult authorized to consent.
- A child who has the capacity to consent.

If the parent or other adult authorized to consent is present, the caseworker must request that person's permission to take photographs of the child.

The caseworker must not photograph the child if the child, parent, or adult authorized to consent for the child objects. See [2242 Requirements for Consent](#).

Equipment for Taking Photos

Only state-issued equipment is approved for taking photographs during an Alternative Response investigation. A caseworker may not use any personal device to take photographs, for reasons related to DFPS requirements about the following:

- Client confidentiality.
- Use of technology.
- Maintenance of equipment.

All photographs must be labeled and uploaded into neuDocs.

If state-issued equipment is not available for any reason, the caseworker must immediately staff (consult) with the supervisor.

Photographing the General Appearance of a Child

When photographing a child, the caseworker must take a full body photograph showing the child from the top of the child's head to the child's feet.

Photographing a Child's Injuries

The caseworker must take a photograph of the injury to the child that includes the child's clothing and other body part references.

If an injury is observed, a photograph of the injury should include the child's clothing or face in the photo as a reference.

Exceptions to Photographing a Child's Injuries

A caseworker must not photograph a child's genitals, except in the most limited circumstances. With a parent's consent, the caseworker may photograph a child's diaper area to show extreme diaper rash or injury, only in the presence of a parent or other adult authorized to consent to the photograph.

Only a medical professional or trained sexual abuse examiner may photograph a child's genitals for evidence of physical abuse, sexual injury, or another type of abuse or neglect beyond the exception identified above.

Documentation

If consent is obtained to take a photograph of the child, the caseworker documents in a contact narrative in IMPACT the name of the individual providing consent, and how consent was provided.

If the parent, adult authorized to consent, or child objects to the child being photographed, the caseworker does both of the following:

- Consults with the supervisor to determine whether additional actions are necessary, in order to obtain photographs.
- Documents the refusal in a contact narrative in IMPACT.

2623.2 Contact with Collaterals

CPS March 2026

During the first face-to-face contact with the family, the caseworker must do all the following:

- Explain CPI's responsibility to contact collaterals.
- Discuss whom the caseworker will contact.
- Provide an opportunity for the family to offer input regarding collaterals to contact.
- Clarify the information the caseworker will request from collaterals.

2624 Assessing Child Safety

CPS March 2026

The caseworker assesses child safety during every contact with the family. At a minimum, the caseworker must do the following:

- Interview all children in the home where abuse or neglect is alleged.
- Interview all caregivers in the home where abuse or neglect is alleged.

The caseworker can also get critical information from collaterals, such as professionals and relatives who have direct knowledge of the family or interaction with the family.

2624.1 Completing the *Safety Assessment Tool*

CPS March 2026

Before completing the *Initial Safety Assessment tool*, the caseworker makes efforts to interview the home members, including all of the children, living in the home where abuse or neglect is alleged within 120 hours after the case is stage progressed to AR.

The caseworker uses the table below to determine the home for which to complete the *Safety Assessment tool*. If the case involves a situation that is not addressed in this table, the caseworker consults with the supervisor.

Home Composition	Person or Household to be Selected on Safety Assessment
The parents or legal guardians live in the same home.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed on the parent or legal guardian who is the person about whom DFPS has concerns. If both parents or legal guardians are listed as people about whom DFPS has concerns, complete the Safety Assessment tool on the primary caregiver.
The parents or legal guardians live in separate homes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed on the home of the parent or legal guardian where there are concerns of abuse or neglect. If there are concerns of abuse or neglect regarding both parents or legal guardians, complete a separate <i>Safety Assessment tool</i> on each parent's or legal guardian's home.
The child lives with a parent or legal guardian, and the person about whom DFPS has concerns is a relative who is not a member of the parent or legal guardian's home.	Completed on the home of the parent or legal guardian who allowed the person about whom DFPS has concerns access to the child.
Parent placed the child with relative or fictive kin who has no legal custody, and the parent's location is unknown.	Completed on the home of the relative or fictive kin.
Relative or fictive kin has primary legal guardianship of the child, but the parent has legal rights over the child, and someone in the home of the relative or fictive kin is the person about whom DFPS has concerns.	Completed on the home of the relative or fictive kin.
Relative or fictive kin has primary legal guardianship of the child, but the parent has legal rights over the child, and someone in the home of the parent is the person about whom DFPS has concerns.	Completed on the home of the parent.
Child is in the care of DFPS and resides in a kinship home.	No <i>Safety Assessment tool</i> is completed.
Child resides in a Family-Initiated Parental Child Safety Placement (PCSP), and the PCSP caregiver or someone in	Completed on the parent's or legal guardian's home.

Home Composition	Person or Household to be Selected on Safety Assessment
the caregiver's home is the person about whom DFPS has concerns.	
Child resides in a Family-Initiated PCSP, and the parent or legal guardian is the person about whom DFPS has concerns.	Completed on the parent's or legal guardian's home.

2624.2 Time Frames for Completing a *Safety Assessment* Tool

CPS March 2026

The *Safety Assessment* tool in IMPACT must be completed within 24 hours if one or more of the following apply:

- A safety intervention was implemented.
- A change in circumstances warranted a safety reassessment to reflect a change in the child's safety.
- More than 45 days have passed since the previous *Safety Assessment*.

If a safety intervention is not implemented, the initial *Safety Assessment* tool in IMPACT must be completed within seven days of priority time frames, unless the family is unable to be located.

The caseworker must make efforts to interview all members of the home where abuse or neglect is alleged, prior to completing the initial *Safety Assessment* tool. If this is not possible, the caseworker must staff with the supervisor to determine next steps for following up with those not interviewed.

Completing a Closure *Safety Assessment* Tool

If 45 days have passed since the last *Safety Assessment* tool was completed, the caseworker completes the *Closure Safety Assessment* tool before closing the AR investigation.

A *Closure Safety Assessment* tool is not required if either of the following apply:

- Child Protective Investigations (CPI) cannot locate the family.
- The family is uncooperative, and legal intervention is not possible.

2624.3 Safety Interventions

CPS March 2026

If an immediate danger to a child is present, a safety intervention must be implemented. There are two safety interventions a caseworker may implement:

- Safety Plan – Parent and child are temporarily supervised by a relative or fictive kin.
- Legal intervention – Court-ordered services or removal. See [5160 Requesting a Court Order to Participate in Services](#) and [3220 Taking Legal Custody of a Child](#).

2624.4 Safety Assessment Discussion Box

CPS March 2026

This section of the *Safety Assessment* tool must include the following information:

- The child is safe, safe with a plan, or unsafe.
- Circumstances surrounding the abuse or neglect and family situation.
- The actions taken to protect the child (including actions taken by the family or others and resources available to the family).

If the child is unsafe, this section must also include any reasonable efforts made to prevent legal intervention.

2625 Completing the *Risk Assessment* Tool

CPS March 2026

The caseworker uses the table below to determine the home for which to complete the *Risk Assessment* tool. If the case involves a situation that is not addressed in this table, the caseworker consults with the supervisor.

Home Composition	Risk Assessment
Both parents or legal guardians live in the same home.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Completed on the parents or legal guardians where there are concerns of abuse or neglect.• If the parents or legal guardians separate during the AR investigation, complete one risk assessment that includes both parents or legal guardians.
The parents or legal guardians are separated and lived in separate homes prior to the reported incident.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Completed on the home of the parent or legal guardian where there are concerns of abuse or neglect.• If there are concerns of abuse or neglect against both parents or legal guardians, complete a separate <i>Risk Assessment</i> tool on the home of each parent or legal guardian.
The child lives with a parent or legal guardian, and the person about whom DFPS has concerns is a relative who is not a member of the home.	Completed on the home of the parent or legal guardian who allowed the person about whom DFPS has concerns access to the child.
Prior to CPI involvement, the parent placed the child with relative or fictive kin. Relative or fictive kin is listed as the person about whom DFPS has concerns but has no legal custody, and parent's location is unknown.	Completed on the home of the relative or fictive kin.
Relative or fictive kin has primary legal guardianship of the child, but parent has legal rights over the child, and someone in the home of the relative or fictive kin is the person about whom DFPS has concerns.	Completed on the home of the relative or fictive kin.
Relative or fictive kin has primary legal guardianship of the child, but parent has legal rights over the child, and someone in the home of parent is the person about whom DFPS has concerns.	Completed on the home of the parent.

Home Composition	Risk Assessment
Child is in the care of DFPS and resides in a kinship home.	No <i>Risk Assessment</i> tool is completed.
Child resides in a Family-Initiated Parental Child Safety Placement (PCSP), and the PCSP caregiver or someone in the home is the person about whom DFPS has concerns.	Completed on the parent's or legal guardian's home.
Child resides in a Family-Initiated PCSP, and the parent is the person about whom DFPS has concerns.	Completed on the parent's or legal guardian's home.

2625.1 Time Frames for Completing the *Risk Assessment* Tool

CPS March 2026

Prior to completing the Risk Assessment, the caseworker should do all of the following:

- Identify any risk factors.
- Identify how risk has been addressed.
- Identify needed services or referrals at the end of the case.

The caseworker completes the *Risk Assessment* tool prior to case closure.

The caseworker must refer the case to Family-Based Safety Services (FBSS) when any of the following criteria is met:

- An unresolved danger indicator is present, and a safety plan is being carried out to mitigate the danger, regardless of the score on the Risk Assessment.
- The Risk Assessment score (risk level) is high or very high, and FBSS services are needed to address this risk.
- There is a court order (motion to participate or court-ordered services) that requires the parent or legal guardian to participate in FBSS.

The caseworker must close the Alternative Response stage without a referral to FBSS if any of the following apply:

- The risk level is high or very high, and the Alternative Response investigation reflects how risk has been addressed.
- The family refuses services, and legal intervention is not possible.
- The caseworker has made reasonable efforts to locate the child and has been unsuccessful. See [3100 When a Child Who is with His or Her Family Cannot be Located](#).

See [2291.4 Need for Ongoing Services](#).

The caseworker must staff for legal intervention when, regardless of the risk level, there is an unresolved danger indicator making the final safety decision unsafe.

See [3200 DFPS Actions When Danger to a Child Is Present](#).

2626 Supervisor Review of Case Actions and Safety Decisions

CPS March 2026

Fifteen Days from Intake

No later than 15 calendar days from the date of intake, the supervisor reviews case documentation to ensure that the caseworker has done the following:

- Completed a 0-5 Day Assessment and meaningful face-to-face contact with all children living in the home where abuse or neglect is alleged (or, if not, is making appropriate efforts to make face-to-face contact). This does not apply to cases approved for administrative closure that do not require contact with children.
- Completed all initial case tasks (see [2622 AR Initial Contacts](#) and [2623 Initial Contact Tasks](#)), unless the supervisor approves the case for a type of administrative closure that does not involve completing these tasks.
- Completed any required Safety Assessment tools (see [2624.1 Completing the Safety Assessment Tool](#)).
- Taken any action needed to ensure child safety.

Documentation of Supervisor Review

After completing this 15-day review, the supervisor documents the following in IMPACT:

- The completion of the review.
- Any actions necessary to address child safety.

Cases That Will Be Administratively Closed

The requirement to conduct a 15-day review applies to all cases open on the 15th day after the date of the intake, including any case for which the plan is to administratively close it.

See [2656 Resulting Actions](#) for more information about administratively closed AR investigations that do not involve contact with alleged victims.

2627 Alternative Response Family Agreement Plan

CPS March 2026

The family agreement plan includes actions that aim to reduce concerns of risk to the child or to support family functioning. The family creates the plan with CPI assistance. CPI asks family members to identify any strengths, needs, and resources that can be used to address the concerns. A family agreement plan does not include supervision actions related to danger indicators; such actions are included in a safety plan.

2627.1 Completing the Family Agreement Plan

CPS March 2026

When a Family Agreement Plan Is Required

If a safety plan is completed, the caseworker must complete [Form 2706 Family Agreement Plan](#) with the family on the same day.

The family agreement plan must include tasks and activities to reduce risk concerns and increase parent or caregiver protective actions to mitigate risk concerns and danger. If any dangers are identified after the family agreement plan is created, the plan must be revised to include services, tasks, and activities related to the newly identified dangers.

If danger exists, at least some of the services provided must directly address risk concerns and protective actions related to that danger.

The caseworker and the parents or caregivers sign the plan. The caseworker gives the family a copy of the plan at the end of the visit.

When a Family Agreement Plan Is Not Required

If there are no dangers and a safety plan is not required, a family agreement plan or other plan created by the family is optional. Such a plan can still be completed, depending on risk concerns for children in the home and the family's needs. The plan can include services, tasks, and activities to increase parent or caregiver protectiveness and family functioning, based on the needs that the family identifies.

In this situation, the caseworker and the family complete the family agreement plan during a face-to-face visit within 21 days after the case is stage progressed to AR. The caseworker and the parents or caregivers sign the plan. The caseworker gives the family a copy of the plan at the end of the visit.

For more information, see the [Alternative Response Resource Guide](#).

2627.2 Documenting the Family Agreement Plan in IMPACT

CPS March 2026

The caseworker documents the process of developing the family agreement plan in a contact in IMPACT.

The caseworker discusses the family's progress and compliance with the family agreement plan during every contact with the family.

2628 Ongoing Contact

2628.1 15-Day Contact

CPS March 2026

Contact between the caseworker and a parent or legal caregiver must occur at least once every 15 days after the date of the initial face-to-face contact with the

family while the case is open. Contact may occur more often if the supervisor determines that additional ongoing contact is needed to address safety concerns and meet the needs of the family.

The ongoing contacts at least every 15 days are important to do the following:

- Continue to engage the family and build relationships with them.
- Support the family as they make changes to ensure child safety.
- Make sure the family feels the caseworker's presence, support, and interest in their well-being and the safety of the children in the home.

Requirements for 15-Day Contact

This contact must be relevant to the family's case, and it may be made face-to-face or by other means, such as a phone call, text message, or email.

If a safety plan or family agreement plan is in place, the caseworker must do the following during each 15-day contact:

- Review the contents of the plan or plans.
- Review any progress made toward the goals in the plan or plans.
- Assess whether any changes to the plan or plans are needed to support the safety of the children.

The caseworker documents all of the above in a contact in IMPACT.

If there is not a reason to be involved with the family, then the caseworker does the following:

- Closes the case as soon as possible.
- Contacts the family to share the status of the case if the caseworker is unable to close the case within 15 days.

2628.2 30-Day Contact

CPS March 2026

The caseworker must make a face-to-face contact with the family, including all children in the home where abuse or neglect is alleged, at least every 30 days after the initial face-to-face contact with the family. If a child is not present at the 30-day contact, the caseworker notifies the supervisor to discuss a plan for making contact with the child as soon as possible.

At each 30-day visit with the family, the caseworker must have an individual meaningful contact, without a parent or caregiver present, with each verbal child. The caseworker documents this contact in IMPACT.

During the 30-day contact, the caseworker must assess all of the following:

- The child's safety in the home (based on the reason for CPI involvement and other information gathered during the AR investigation).
- The child's living circumstances.
- The child's general well-being.
- The family's involvement in services and progress toward goals that increase child safety.

- The family's need for any additional services to address risk and safety issues in the home.

The caseworker continuously considers whether the case is still eligible for AR throughout the life of the AR investigation. The caseworker must immediately consult with the supervisor if concerns arise that indicate the case might no longer be eligible for AR.

2630 Stage Progressing an AR Investigation to Traditional Investigation

CPS March 2026

During the life of an AR investigation, there are various points at which a decision may be made to stage progress the case to a traditional investigation, depending on case circumstances and information obtained during assessments.

2631 When an AR Investigation Must Be Progressed to Traditional Investigation

CPS March 2026

A case must be stage progressed from AR to the traditional investigation pathway if any of the following apply:

- One or more of the AR ineligibility criteria are discovered after the case is assigned to the AR pathway. These criteria are listed in [2611.1 Intakes Ineligible for Alternative Response](#).
- A previous case was closed with a disposition of *Unable to Complete (UTC)* and the recommended action of *Family Moved/Cannot Locate*, and another report about the family is received within one year.
- A referral to Family-Based Safety Services (FBSS) is required.
- Legal orders are being requested to aid an investigation, remove the child from the home, or request court orders to participate in services. See [2636 Legal Orders to Participate in Services](#).

2632 Approval for Transferring AR Investigations or Traditional Investigations

CPS March 2026

After Stage Progression

After a case is referred to AR from the Statewide Intake screener, the AR supervisor reviews the case. If it is believed the case should have been routed to traditional investigations, the caseworker must get supervisor or above approval before stage progressing the case. The decision is documented in the AR investigation narrative in IMPACT.

Before stage progressing a case from a traditional investigation to an AR investigation, the caseworker must staff (consult) with a supervisor or above to determine whether the case meets AR eligibility criteria. This staffing must be completed within 120 hours of the date and time of the intake or formal screening.

After First Face-to-Face Contact

If the decision is made to transfer the case to a traditional investigation during or after completing the first face-to-face contact, the AR supervisor approves the transfer. The decision is documented in the AR investigation narrative in IMPACT.

New Intake Received

If, during an open AR investigation, a new intake is received involving the same family, the supervisor determines whether the new intake meets AR eligibility criteria. The supervisor must follow policy in [2612 New Intakes on an Open Alternative Response Investigation](#).

See:

- [2631 When an AR Investigation Must be Progressed to Traditional Investigation](#)
- [2633 Stage Progression Time Frames](#)

2633 Stage Progression Time Frames

CPS March 2026

Once the supervisor approves the transfer of the AR investigation to a traditional investigation, the caseworker must do the following:

- Complete a face-to-face contact with any alleged victims who have not been seen to assess safety no later than 120 hours from the date and time the case was stage progressed to AR.
- Progress the case in IMPACT within 24 hours (not counting weekends and holidays when DFPS offices are closed).

See:

- [2200 Basic Investigation Process](#)
- [2248 Interviews and Contact with Alleged Perpetrators, Parents, Legal Guardians, or Other Adults in the Home Where Abuse or Neglect is Alleged](#)

2634 Referring a Case to Family-Based Safety Services (FBSS)

CPS March 2026

CPI refers a parent or legal guardian to Family-Based Safety Services (FBSS) when any of the following apply:

- The Risk Assessment score (also called the risk level) is *High* or *Very High*, and services through FBSS are needed to address this risk.
- The Risk Assessment score is *Low* or *Moderate*, but the final safety decision is *Safe with a Plan* because unresolved danger indicators remain in the home.
- There is a court order (motion to participate or court-ordered services) that requires the parent or legal guardian to participate in FBSS.

CPI does not refer a parent or legal guardian to FBSS, and AR closes its case, when any of the following are true:

- The risk level is *High* or *Very High*, but the AR investigation reflects how risk has been addressed.
- DFPS has made reasonable efforts to locate the child and has been unsuccessful. See [3100 When a Child Who is with His or Her Family Cannot be Located](#).

If CPI determines that a family needs FBSS, the AR investigation must be stage progressed to a traditional investigation using the *INV – CPI Decision* closure reason. The caseworker who worked the AR investigation completes the FBSS referral form in the *Investigation* stage in IMPACT.

See:

[2400 Referring a Case from Investigations to Voluntary or Court Ordered Family-Based Safety Services \(FBSS\)](#)

[2410 Process for Concurrent Stages – Referring a Case to Family-Based Safety Services \(FBSS\)](#)

2635 Legal Orders to Participate in Services

CPS March 2026

When requesting a court order to participate in services, the case must be stage progressed to a traditional investigation. See [5160 Requesting a Court Order to Participate in Services](#).

2636 Parent or Caregiver Request for Reassignment

CPS March 2026

At any time during an AR investigation, the parent or caregiver about whom DFPS has concerns has the option to request reassignment to the traditional investigation pathway. Parents or caregivers who are not involved in the concerns of abuse or neglect in the current report cannot request reassignment to the traditional pathway. Reporters also cannot request a specific pathway.

2640 Extension

CPS March 2026

For certain cases, a one-time 20-day extension is allowed, with supervisor approval. Staff may request a case extension at any time, but no later than 60 days from stage progression to AR.

2641 Criteria for Extension

CPS March 2026

To qualify for an extension, a case must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- The caseworker completed a safety reassessment on the household of concern within the last 30 days. The reassessment indicated there is a danger present in the child's home. The caseworker and supervisor agree that the danger will be resolved such that the child will be safe and the case will be closed within the extension time frame, with no further CPI intervention.
- The risk level on the risk assessment for the family is high or very high. The caseworker and supervisor agree that the risk will be resolved such that the child will be safe and the case may be closed within the extension time frame, with no further CPI intervention.

2642 When Not to Allow Extension

CPS March 2026

The case is not eligible for an extension if the danger or the high or very high risk level cannot be resolved during the case extension time frame. In this situation, the case must be progressed to a traditional investigation, and CPI must do one (or both) of the following:

- Refer the case to FBSS (see [2400 Referring a Case from Investigations to Voluntary or Court-Ordered Family-Based Safety Services](#)).
- Consider whether a removal is appropriate.

2643 Closure Time Frames for Cases with Extension

CPS March 2026

If the supervisor approves a case extension, the following time frames apply:

- The caseworker must save and submit the AR investigation for closure within 80 days after stage progression to AR.
- The supervisor must formally close the case no later than 90 days after stage progression to AR.

2650 Case Closure

2651 Required Actions

CPS March 2026

Before closing an AR investigation, the caseworker must make sure all of the following actions have been completed:

- All allegations reported in the intake have been addressed with the family living in the home where abuse or neglect is alleged.
- A meaningful contact has occurred with each verbal child living in the home where abuse or neglect is alleged.
- All children have been observed in a way that is appropriate for the developmental level of each child.

2652 Closure Time Frames

CPS March 2026

The caseworker must save and submit an AR investigation for closure no later than 60 days after stage progression to AR.

The supervisor must formally close the case no later than 70 days after stage progression to AR, unless an extension was approved.

2653 Action on a Submitted AR Investigation

CPS March 2026

The caseworker submits the investigation to a supervisor once the investigation is complete. The supervisor reviews and either approves the investigation or returns it to the caseworker within five business days after submission. If the supervisor approves the investigation, the case is automatically closed in IMPACT.

If the supervisor returns the investigation, the supervisor communicates to the caseworker any case actions needed to resolve the investigation.

If the caseworker is unable to complete any case actions needed to resolve the case within investigation time frames, the caseworker must request a case extension.

If the supervisor has worked the case as the primary caseworker, completed substantial contacts, or taken actions to address child safety, that supervisor must save and submit the case to a program director for closure.

A caseworker “acting” as supervisor (such as filling in as temporary supervisor) must not approve a case for closure and instead submits the case to a supervisor or above for closure.

2654 Roles of the Child Safety Specialist, Supervisor, and Program Director

CPS March 2026

The supervisor assigns a child safety specialist (CSS) as secondary approver on any AR investigation that meets established criteria, including any of the following:

- The AR investigation is being closed with the closure reason of *Unable to Locate*. See [2622.8 Unable to Locate](#).
- Both of the following apply:
 - There is an alleged victim younger than 4 years old at the time of intake, or concerns are identified for a child younger than 4 years old during the AR investigation.
 - Any risk assessment score in the current AR stage is high or very high.

Documenting Whether There Are Concerns for a Child Younger than Age 4

When concerns of abuse or neglect are identified in an AR investigation for a child younger than 4 years old during the case, the answer *Yes* must be selected on the *Case Conclusion* page.

When there are no concerns for abuse or neglect in an AR investigation for a child younger than 4 years old during the case, the answer *No* must be selected on the *Case Conclusion* page.

Within five business days of receiving the AR investigation for secondary approval, the CSS must approve, reject, or determine a three-business-day hold.

Holding the Alternative Response Investigation

The CSS holds the AR investigation for three business days to allow for corrections. These corrections could include the following:

- Making additional contacts by phone.
- Fixing grammatical errors.
- Clarifying the documentation.

The CSS emails the supervisor and program director to explain the reason for the three-day hold. The CSS includes details about what corrections are needed.

The CSS does not invalidate the case for corrections. The case remains on the CSS *To-Do* list while the corrections are made.

The caseworker and supervisor must return the case to the CSS within three business days from the CSS notification to make corrections. If the caseworker or supervisor makes changes that cause the AR investigation to invalidate, the supervisor must submit the AR investigation back to the CSS.

Rejecting the Alternative Response Investigation

The CSS rejects the AR investigation for only the following reasons:

- A danger indicator is present, and an action needs to be taken.

- The AR investigation does not reflect sufficient information to determine whether a danger indicator is present.
- The AR investigation does not reflect sufficient information to adequately assess the risk and determine the risk level.
- The risk level is high or very high, and the AR investigation does not reflect how risk has been addressed.
- Policy for a disposition of *Unable to Locate* has not been followed.

See [2291.2 Unable to Complete, Family Moved/Cannot Locate](#).

If the CSS rejects the AR investigation, the CSS documents in a contact in IMPACT the case actions that the CSS recommends to ensure that child safety and identified risk have been addressed. The caseworker and supervisor review the CSS's recommendations, and the caseworker completes case actions to ensure that child safety and identified risk have been addressed. The caseworker then submits the case to the supervisor.

Approving the Alternative Response Investigation

The supervisor reads the AR investigation to ensure that child safety and identified risk have been addressed before approval and then submits the AR investigation to the program director for final approval.

The program director reviews the CSS's recommended case actions and reads the AR investigation to ensure that child safety and identified risk have been addressed before final approval.

2655 Alternative Response Investigation Closure Notifications

CPS March 2026

When Written Notification Is Required

The caseworker must provide written notification within the following time frames:

- Within 24 hours after an administrative closure.
- Within 15 calendar days after all other types of AR investigation closure.

In any closure of an AR investigation, the caseworker must provide written notification to each of the following people (except as stated in [2655.1 Exceptions to Providing Case Closure Notifications](#)):

- Each involved parent of each child in the case.
- Each other person with primary or legal responsibility for each child in the case, including those living in the home where abuse or neglect was alleged.
- Each person who reported the alleged abuse or neglect, if DFPS knows this person's identity and address.

[DFPS Rules, 40 TAC §707.499](#)

[DFPS Rules, 40 TAC §707.567](#)

2655.1 Exceptions to Providing Case Closure Notifications

CPS March 2026

When Written Notification Is Not Required

The caseworker is not required to provide notification of case closure to any person whom the caseworker could not reasonably locate during the AR investigation.

[DFPS Rules, 40 TAC §707.499 \(d\)\(1\)](#)

When Written Notification Is Prohibited

The caseworker must not provide notification of case closure to anyone in the following circumstances:

- The case is being administratively closed because it is being referred to another authorized entity, such as law enforcement or another state agency.
- The caseworker determines that notification is likely to endanger any child in the home, a reporter, or anyone else who participated in the case.

[DFPS Rules, 40 TAC §707.499 \(d\)\(2\),\(4\)](#)

[Texas Family Code §261.311\(c\)](#)

2656 Resulting Actions

CPS March 2026

Based on CPI's assessment of the family, one of the following actions must occur at the time of case closure:

- The AR investigation is closed because child safety concerns have been addressed.
- The AR investigation is closed because CPI cannot locate the family, and an AR investigation is not possible. See [3100 When a Child Who is with His or Her Family Cannot be Located](#).
- The AR investigation is administratively closed because all allegations in the intake and additional information gathered indicate that continued CPI intervention is not warranted.
- The case is stage progressed to a traditional investigation, and the AR stage is closed because further CPI intervention is required through a traditional investigation.

The table below describes the actions that can occur at the end of an AR investigation.

Resulting Action	Closure Reason in IMPACT	Description
AR investigation is closed. (CPI located the family.)	<i>Close – No Danger Indicators/CPS Decision</i>	The AR caseworker has completed the initial Safety Assessment and has determined that one of the following applies: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There are no danger indicators present, and the risk level is low or moderate.

Resulting Action	Closure Reason in IMPACT	Description
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The risk level is high or very high, but the risk has been addressed during the AR investigation. <p>CPI decides to close the case, whether or not the family agrees. No services (other than information and referral to resources) have been offered.</p>
AR investigation is closed. (CPI located the family.)	<i>Close – Services Completed</i>	<p>Both of the following have occurred:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The AR caseworker has done at least one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provided a service to the family (such as goods, transportation, or paid services). Addressed a risk or need through education or role modeling. Partnered with the family to develop a plan that addresses the family's needs. The family has initiated this plan, has completed the plan, or both. <p>All danger indicators have been resolved and have been managed. Risk concerns in the home where abuse or neglect was alleged have been addressed and controlled.</p>
AR investigation is closed. (CPI located the family.)	<i>Close – Family Declined Services/No Danger Indicators</i>	<p>The AR caseworker did all of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Met with the family. Completed the initial Safety Assessment. Determined there are no danger indicators that warrant further CPI involvement or FBSS. <p>However, there is high or very high risk, and the family could benefit from AR services, but the family is declining services. The case is closed because there are no safety issues.</p>
AR investigation is closed because CPI cannot locate the family.	<i>Close – Unable to Locate</i>	<p>The AR caseworker has done due diligence to try to locate the family but has been unsuccessful. This may occur before the first contact, or the family may become unable to be located during the case before a resolution of danger indicators or risk concerns. If the caseworker has not made first contact, the Safety Assessment and Risk Assessment are not required.</p> <p>The case is designated as <i>Unable to Complete (UTC)</i>, and CSCAL policy applies. See 3110 Purpose of the Child Safety Check Alert List.</p>
AR investigation is administratively closed.	<i>Close – ADMIN – Anonymous Report</i>	See 2657.1 Close – Admin – Anonymous Report .
AR investigation is administratively closed.	<i>Close – ADMIN – Refuting the Allegations</i>	See 2657.2 Close – ADMIN – Refuting the Allegations .

Resulting Action	Closure Reason in IMPACT	Description
AR investigation is administratively closed.	<i>Close – ADMIN – Lacks Authority</i>	See 2657.3 Close – ADMIN – Lacks Authority .
AR investigation is administratively closed.	<i>Close – ADMIN – Already Investigated</i>	See 2657.4 Close – ADMIN – Already Investigated .
Case is progressed to a traditional investigation.	<i>INV – CPS Decision</i>	This is used when new information, including new danger indicators, is discovered that makes the case ineligible or inappropriate for AR.
Case is progressed to a traditional investigation.	<i>INV – FBSS</i>	This is used when one of the following occurs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FBSS is needed because danger or risk cannot be adequately addressed within the standard or extended AR investigation time frame. See 2400 Referring a Case from Investigations to Voluntary or Court-Ordered Family-Based Safety Services (FBSS). If referring to FBSS, the AR caseworker continues to work the case as the primary caseworker while the case is in the traditional investigation pathway. • A court order to participate in services is needed because a parent or legal guardian is uncooperative or unwilling to participate in services that directly address the danger indicator that causes concern for child safety. See 2414 Court-Ordered Participation in FBSS.
Case is progressed to a traditional investigation.	<i>INV – Removal</i>	This is used if any of the removal circumstances exist, and CPI must seek legal removal of the child. See 2247 Removing a Child from the Child's Home . The AR investigation must be stage progressed to a traditional investigation before seeking removal or other legal intervention.
Case is progressed to a traditional investigation.	<i>INV – Child Fatality Allegations</i>	This is used if a child in the open AR investigation dies as a result of alleged abuse or neglect.
Case is progressed to a traditional investigation.	<i>INV – Family Request</i>	This is used when the family requests to be assessed through the traditional investigation pathway instead of the AR pathway. The parent or caregiver about whom DFPS has concerns is the only person who can make this request. See 2637 Parent or Caregiver Request for Reassignment .

2657 Submitting an Alternative Response Investigation for Administrative Closure

CPS March 2026

The caseworker may submit an AR investigation to the supervisor for closure with the recommended action of *Administrative Closure* if the information gathered indicates that CPI's involvement is not warranted.

Approval from both the supervisor and the program director is required for all administrative closures of cases.

When submitting an AR investigation for administrative closure, the following requirements apply:

- The caseworker documents all contacts, case history, case actions, and staffings (meetings) with the supervisor, following policy [2621 Documentation and Contact Entry](#).
- The caseworker staffs (meets to discuss) the case with the supervisor for administrative closure.
- If the supervisor approves, the supervisor assigns the case to the program director for secondary approval, then documents the supervisor's approval in a contact narrative in IMPACT and approves the case in IMPACT.
- The program director reads the case and approves or rejects the case in IMPACT as the secondary approver.

2657.1 Close – ADMIN – Anonymous Report

CPS March 2026

The caseworker may submit the Alternative Response investigation to the supervisor for administrative closure if all of the following apply:

- DFPS received the intake report from law enforcement, who received the information from an anonymous reporter.
- The caseworker determines through information gathered that there is no evidence to support the allegations.
- The parent has taken action to protect the alleged victim from any identified dangers.

[DFPS Rules, 40 TAC §707.489\(c\)\(1\)\(D\)](#)

2657.2 Close – ADMIN – Refuting the Allegations

CPS March 2026

The caseworker may submit an AR investigation to the supervisor for administrative closure if all the allegations are refuted. For this type of administrative closure, the caseworker must submit the case no later than 15 days after the date of the intake.

All of the following criteria must apply for this type of administrative closure:

- No parent or caregiver in the home where abuse or neglect was alleged was any of the following in a previous CPI case:
 - A designated perpetrator in a case with a disposition of *Reason to Believe* for abuse or neglect.
 - An alleged perpetrator in a case with a disposition of *Unable to Determine* for abuse or neglect.
- During the current case, DFPS has not received a new report of abuse or neglect involving any alleged victim in the case. A new report does not count for this purpose if it involves only incidents and allegations that are already part of the case.
- The caseworker has not contacted any alleged victim or person about whom DFPS has concerns.
- The caseworker determines that no abuse or neglect occurred.
- The caseworker has contacted a professional or another credible source with direct knowledge about the alleged victim's condition who has provided information about the allegations and the current safety of the alleged victim. This source may be the reporter if the person provides new information that is not in the report about the allegations and current safety of the alleged victim.

[DFPS Rules, 40 TAC §707.489 \(b\)\(1\)\(A-D\)](#)

[Texas Family Code §261.3018\(e\)](#) defines “professional” as a person who meets both of the following criteria:

- Is licensed or certified by the state, or is an employee of a facility that is licensed, certified, or operated by the state.
- Has direct contact with children in the normal course of the person's job duties.

2657.3 Close – ADMIN – Lacks Authority

CPS March 2026

The caseworker may submit an AR investigation to the supervisor for administrative closure if CPI lacks authority to address the allegations. For this type of administrative closure, the caseworker must submit the case no later than seven calendar days after determining that this reason applies.

One of the following criteria must apply for this type of administrative closure:

- CPI does not have jurisdiction to address the allegations (by investigating or doing Alternative Response) because another authorized entity, such as law enforcement, another state agency, or another DFPS program, has jurisdiction to investigate. See [When Written Notification Is Prohibited in 2655.1 Exceptions to Providing Case Closure Notifications](#).
- There is evidence to support that the alleged victim was not a child at the time of the alleged abuse or neglect or was not born alive.
- The abuse or neglect, danger, or risk of abuse or neglect is not occurring in Texas and did not occur in Texas. See [2372 Out-of-State Abuse or Neglect Incidents](#).

- The person about whom DFPS has concerns is younger than age 10.

[DFPS Rules, 40 TAC §707.489\(b\)\(1\)\(C\)](#)

[DFPS Rules, 40 TAC §707.497\(a\)\(1\)](#)

2657.4 Close – ADMIN – Already Investigated

CPS March 2026

The caseworker may submit an AR investigation or a new Priority 1 investigation received during an open AR investigation to the supervisor for administrative closure if all the allegations have already been investigated (or addressed in AR). For this type of administrative closure, the caseworker must submit the case no later than seven calendar days after determining that this reason applies.

Both of the following criteria must apply for this type of administrative closure:

- CPI has already investigated the same incidents and the same allegations in a previous case, or the incidents and allegations are currently being addressed in an open Alternative Response investigation.
- There are no new incidents or new allegations.

[DFPS Rules, 40 TAC §707.489\(b\)\(1\)\(A\)](#)

In this situation, the caseworker must do the following:

- Document the case number of the previous case or open AR investigation (in a contact in the case being closed) and explain how the information in the new report was addressed in the previous case or open AR investigation.
- Merge the case being closed with the previous case or open AR investigation.