

## Child Protection Committee

### Comparison of Assessment, Investigation, and JPA Tracks

| <b>Comparison of Assessment, Investigation, and JPA Tracks</b> |   |  |   |
|--|---|--|---|
|  | <b>Assessment</b>   | <b>Investigation</b>   | <b>JPA track</b>  |
| Proportion accepted cases                                      | In 2013, 27% of accepted cases statewide were assessments.<br><br>Variation district by district: 20–34%.   | 52% statewide.<br><br>District by district: 44–57%.  | 21% statewide.<br><br>District by district: 15–30%.<br>A higher proportion of JPA cases are overrides by District offices?      |
| Purpose  | “[F]ocuses on the identification of the strengths and support needs of the child and the family, and any services they may require to improve or restore their well-being and to reduce the risk of future harm,” does not result in a formal determination as to whether abuse or neglect has occurred (33 V.S.A. § 4912(17), DCF Policy 50 p. 1). | “[S]ystematic gathering of information to determine whether” abuse or neglect occurred and appropriate response, results in a formal determination as to whether abuse or neglect has occurred (33 V.S.A. § 4912(16), DCF Policy 50 p. 3). | To allow DCF to accept a report that does not meet the criteria for an assessment or an investigation (not created in statute). |
| Upgrade / downgrade?   | Yes, an assessment can be “upgraded” to an investigation. In 2013, 26 assessments were upgraded; in 2012, 28.   | No, an investigation cannot be “downgraded” to an assessment.  | No, a JPA track cannot be upgraded to an assessment or investigation.   |
| Time period to begin   | Commence within 72 hours by contacting person responsible for child’s welfare (33 V.S.A. § 4915(b), Policy 52, p. 3).   | Commence within 72 hours by interviewing child, or observing child if non-verbal (33 V.S.A. § 4915(b), Policy 52, p. 3).   | Same as assessment.   |
| Time period waivable?  | Yes, but only if harmful to child, danger to SW or victim cannot be located (33 V.S.A. § 4915(b), Policy 52, p. 3).   | Yes, but only if harmful to child, danger to SW, or SW unable locate person responsible for child (33 V.S.A. § 4915(b), Policy 52, p. 3).  | Same as assessment.   |

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|  | <b>Assessment</b>  | <b>Investigation</b>   | <b>JPA track</b>    |
| How often waived?  | Unknown  | Unknown  | Unknown             |
| Time period to complete  | <p>Must be completed within 45 days, 60 days with written justification.</p> <p>Completion means child been interviewed or observed, all interviews completed, supervisor made a case disposition, and caretaker informed of disposition (Policy 52, p. 16).</p>   | <p>Must be completed within 60 days.</p> <p>Completion means all interviews done, case determination done, supervisor has made case disposition, and caretaker and perpetrator informed of outcome (Policy 52, p. 16).</p>   | Same as assessment. |
| Time periods met?  | Not always   | Not always   | Unknown             |
| Phases of intervention   | <p>Phase 1: Determine if child safe.</p> <p>Phase 2: SW use “family engagement strategies ... to assess risk and work with the family to prevent the placement of children in out-of-home care and to promote well-being” (Policy 52, pp. 2–3).</p>  | Same   | Same                |
| Steps  | <p>Visit child’s home.</p> <p>Interview adults in home who serve in parental role with focus on ensuring safety and engaging in collaborative process.</p> <p>Interview or observe child within 5 days.</p> <p>Evaluate safety of other children in home.</p> <p>Collaborate with family to identify unique strengths, resources, and service needs and develop plan.</p> <p>Interview reporter.</p> | <p>Visit child’s home.</p> <p>Interview or observe child (if non-verbal) within 72 hours. May be done without parent present, but another adult (not law enforcement officer) must be present.</p> <p>Visit location of abuse.</p> <p>Determine nature and extent of abuse.</p> <p>Identify person responsible. SW will interview perpetrator, unless perpetrator refuses.</p> | Same as assessment. |

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| Steps - continued  | <p>Give family child safety brochure and notify of rights and how access services policy.</p> <p>Risk assessment within 45 days to obtain an “objective appraisal of the likelihood that a family will maltreat their children in the next 12 to 18 months.”</p> <p>Within 60 days of risk assessment, develop initial case plan with family. Reassessment and plan updates 90 day intervals.</p> <p>(Rule 2012, 2012.01, Policy 52, pp. 5, 12, 15, Policy 69, pp. 1–2).</p> | <p>Interview reporter.</p> <p>Give family child safety brochure.</p> <p>Names and conditions other children.</p> <p>Determine risks to each child if remain.</p> <p>Relationship children to person responsible.</p> <p>Risk assessment within 60 days.</p> <p>(Rules 2007.02, 2007.03, 2009, Policy 52, pp. 4, 11, 12, 15)</p> |                  |
| Gathering of evidence  |  | <p>If trauma visible, photographs should be taken.</p> <p>Physicals or “radiological examination” may be conducted.</p> <p>Parental consent should be sought, but not necessary.</p> <p>(Rule 2008, Policy 52, p. 10).</p>  |                  |

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|  | <b>Assessment</b>  | <b>Investigation</b>  | <b>JPA track</b>  |
| Who carries out?   | Social worker  | Social worker   | Social worker   |
| Differences in training, duties, or qualifications             | See large binder for training information.   | <p>Training in forensic interviewing &amp; other topics (see large binder).</p> <p>Same social workers do assessments and investigations in many districts.</p> <p>No difference in qualifications, hiring process, title, pay.</p> | Same as assessment.   |
| Result   | <p>“Does not result in a formal determination as to whether the reported abuse or neglect has occurred” (33 V.S.A. § 4912(17), Policy 50 p. 1).</p> <p>If parent(s) refuse access to child in an abuse or neglect situation, can upgrade to investigation. In other cases, can evaluate or service needs and open “ongoing family case or close” (Policy 52, p. 11).</p> <p>If risk assessment level of family decreases to moderate or low, case can be closed (Policy 68, p. 3).</p> | <p>“Shall” result in formal determinations as to whether reported abuse or neglect occurred (33 V.S.A. § 4912(16), Policy 50 p. 3).</p>   | <p>Provision of support services.</p> <p>A new assessment or investigation could be opened depending on additional circumstances.</p> |
| Ongoing services   | If family scored high on risk assessment a case for ongoing services opened (Policy 52, p. 22).  | Same  | Same  |
| CHINS?   | Yes, can result in filing of a CHINS case.   | Yes   | Yes   |