

## Chapter 16

## INTERVIEWING THE NON-MALTREATING CAREGIVER AND HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS

16-1. Purpose. The initial purpose of the face-to-face contact and interview with the non-maltreating caregiver and other household members is to determine what information, if any, these individuals have regarding the specific alleged maltreatment incident(s). Additional information is also solicited on out-of-control individual or family conditions to assist in the identification of other danger threats in the home. Close adherence to the information collection protocol ensures, to the extent possible, sufficient information is obtained for all six information domains to present a complete picture of both the maltreatment incident and the family's overall functioning.

16-2. Procedures.

a. If it is not possible during the initial contact for the investigator to make face-to-face contact with and interview the non-maltreating parent or legal guardian residing in the household of focus, siblings of the alleged victim, or other children living in the home, the investigator must document the diligent efforts made to contact these individuals and continue to make daily attempts to complete the interviews. Daily attempts to interview other adult household members are not required when:

(1) Sufficient information has been obtained to determine that no present danger threat exists in the home.

(2) Sufficient demographic information has been obtained on all adult household members to complete child welfare and criminal history checks and the checks do not result in any child safety concerns.

b. Whenever possible, the investigator should interview both parents or legal guardians in person, as follows:

(1) Interview each person separately.

(2) Briefly explain the investigator's role in the child protection process outlining the interviewing and information collection requirements, and confidentiality protections for the family and reporter.

(3) Provide the parent(s) or legal guardian(s) with the "Child Protection: Your Rights and Responsibilities" pamphlet (CF/PI [175-32](#), available in DCF Forms), which includes written information regarding the child protective investigation assessment process including the court process and the rights of the parent(s) or legal guardian(s), along with a verbal explanation of the information contained in the pamphlet.

c. Ask questions related to concerns about domestic violence (e.g., the maltreating caregiver's pattern of coercive control, out-of-control individual behavior, or family conditions, etc.) in separate interviews only.

d. Off-site contacts should be conducted with the consideration for confidentiality, privacy, and the safety needs of all parties involved. An off-site contact (i.e., at an individual's place of employment, etc.) should be considered in the following circumstances:

(1) The maltreating caregiver's presence in the home during the interview is likely to keep the non-maltreating parent from disclosing essential information.

(2) Information contained in the intake describes the maltreating caregiver's behaviors as so 'out-of-control' as to create an unsafe environment for the non-maltreating parent, investigator, or both.

e. When a child's parents have separate households (i.e., partial or shared custody of the child), only the parent responsible for the alleged maltreatment is the focus of the FFA-Investigation. The non-maltreating parent must be interviewed as a collateral contact. If contact is not made with the non-maltreating parent, diligent efforts must be made to identify, locate, and contact the other parent and shall be documented in the official case record. This may include discussions with the child(ren) and other household members regarding the identity and contact information for the other parent, reviewing school records for contact information, or additional actions such as reviewing any available parenting plans to confirm accurate contact information and conducting outreach to validate and establish communication with the non-resident parent. Prior to notifying the other parent his or her child is involved in an investigation, the investigator shall determine, based upon the information available:

(1) The parent retains shared or partial custody and is thereby entitled to notification regarding the on-going investigation.

(2) No domestic violence injunctions are in place in accordance with sections [39.504](#) or [741.30](#), F.S. If an injunction is in place, the alleged offender shall not be notified of the investigation.

(3) When the other parent lives in a separate household, the investigator shall notify and interview that parent as a collateral source. No Family Functioning Assessment, child welfare or criminal background check is required on the non-maltreating parent unless the investigator is considering releasing or placing the child with the parent. If release or placement of the child is involved, then background checks and the Other Parent Home Assessment are required for the non-maltreating parent. Please see CFOP 170-7, Chapter 5, paragraph 5-2, for more specific details.

f. If during the course of an investigation there is reasonable cause to suspect maltreatment by a parent residing in a household other than the household under investigation, the investigator must contact the Hotline to initiate a new report requiring a second, separate FFA-Investigation on the other parent's household.

g. In situations where the non-resident parent reports that a child has been kidnapped or unlawfully removed in violation of a court-approved parenting plan, and there is an active law enforcement missing persons case, investigators must take immediate action.

(1) The investigator should obtain the law enforcement agency's contact information and case number.

(2) The investigator is then required to notify local law enforcement of the reported allegation and file a report for their consideration and investigation.

16-3. Supervisor. When initiated, the Supervisor Consultation should affirm:

a. To the degree possible, the investigator's interview of the non-maltreating caregiver or adult household member should provide sufficient information on all information domains.

b. The investigator has accurately assessed and sufficiently addressed issues likely to arise from domestic violence dynamics between the parents or caregivers creating a safe environment for disclosure by the non-maltreating caregiver.

c. Diligent efforts have occurred (or been exhausted) to identify, locate, and interview the non-maltreating parent not residing in the home.