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OUT-OF-FAMILY INVESTIGATIONS

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OUT-OF-FAMILY INVESTIGATIONS

5.1 Introduction

If a CPS report involves a caretaker who does not reside in the victim child's home, that investigation is deemed an "out-of-family" (OOF) investigation. There are many types of settings and situations that are considered OOF settings. These settings include those regulated by other agencies such as state licensed and religiously exempted child day care centers, regulated family day homes, private and public schools, group residential facilities, hospitals, or institutions. OOF settings may also include settings that are not externally regulated such as camps, athletic leagues, children's clubs, babysitters who are not required to be regulated, babysitting co-ops, and "sleepovers" at friends' or relatives' homes. Depending on the setting, there are certain regulations and policies that apply to the conduct of these CPS investigations.

This section sets forth the requirements and guidance for responding to child abuse and neglect reports in OOF settings. Complaints of abuse and neglect in OOF settings differ from complaints in the child's family setting because:

- The alleged abuser(s) in OOF settings may be caring for the alleged victim(s) as part of their job duties.
- The outcome of the CPS investigation may have administrative, regulatory and/or personnel implications.
- CPS is mandated by Code of Virginia [§ 63.2-1506 C](#) to respond to certain types of these valid allegations as Investigations (not Family Assessments).

There is a checklist of all requirements to conduct an OOF investigation in [Appendix C: Checklist for OOF investigations](#).

5.2 Authorities

In addition to Virginia Administrative Code (VAC) [22 VAC 40-705](#) et. seq. that provides the regulatory authority for the general conduct of the CPS program, the VAC [22 VAC](#)

[40-730](#) et. seq. provides additional requirements for CPS to conduct OOF investigations in designated settings.

([22VAC40-730-20](#)). Complaints of child abuse or neglect involving caretakers in out of family settings are for the purpose of this (regulation) chapter complaints in state licensed and religiously exempted child day centers, regulated family day homes, private and public schools, group residential facilities, hospitals or institutions.

These complaints shall be investigated by qualified staff employed by local departments of social services or welfare.

Staff shall be determined to be qualified based on criteria identified by the department. All staff involved in investigating a complaint must be qualified.

In addition to the authorities and the responsibilities specified in department policy for all child protective services investigations, the policy for investigations in out of family settings is set out in [22 VAC 40-730-30](#) through [22 VAC 40-730-130](#).

All CPS authorities, procedures, and requirements applicable to in home investigations found in [Section 4, Family Assessment and Investigation](#), apply to the investigation of complaints in an OOF setting. This section sets forth the additional requirements to respond to CPS reports in these OOF settings.

5.2.1 Minimum standards for CPS workers to conduct OOF investigations

([22VAC40-730-130A](#)). In order to be determined qualified to conduct investigations in out of family settings, local CPS workers shall meet minimum education standards established by the department including:

1. Documented competency in designated general knowledge and skills and specified out of family knowledge and skills; and

2. Completion of out of family policy training.

B. The department and each local department shall maintain a roster of personnel determined qualified to conduct these out of family investigations.

5.3 Definitions

In addition to the definitions contained in [22VAC40-705-10](#), [22 VAC 40-730-10](#) defines the following words and terms, when used in conjunction with this chapter, to have the following meanings, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

([22 VAC 40-730-10](#))

"Child Placing Agency" means those privately contracted agencies responsible for the training of specialized foster families and the intensive case management of the foster child.

"Child day program" means a regularly operating service arrangement for children where, during the absence of a parent or guardian, a person or organization has agreed to assume responsibility for the supervision, protection, and well-being of children as defined in §[63.2-100](#) of the Code of Virginia.

"Facility" means the generic term used to describe the setting in out of family abuse or neglect and for the purposes of this regulation includes schools (public and private), private or state-operated hospitals or institutions, child day programs, state regulated family day homes, and residential facilities.

"Facility administrator" means the on-site individual responsible for the day-to-day operation of the facility.

"Participate" means to take part in the activities of the joint investigation as per a plan for investigation developed by the CPS worker with the facility administrator or regulatory authority or both.

"Physical plant" means the physical structure/premises of the facility.

"Regulatory authority" means the department or state board that is responsible under the Code of Virginia for the licensure or certification of a facility for children.

"Residential facility" means a publicly or privately owned facility, other than a private family home, where 24-hour care, maintenance, protection, and guidance is provided to children separated from their parents or legal guardians, that is subject to licensure or certification pursuant to the provisions of the Code of Virginia and includes, but is not limited to, group homes, secure facilities, temporary care facilities, and respite care facilities.

5.3.1 Additional definitions used in OOF investigations

The following definitions are also commonly used in the guidance and procedures to conduct OOF investigations:

<u>Term</u>	<u>Definition</u>
Hospitals and Institutions	The residential placement responsible for the care and treatment of a child for behavioral and/or psychological reasons. These include juvenile detention and residential

treatment facilities.

Locally Approved The process where a local agency has approved and prepared a family for placement of local foster children or a home for placement of daycare children

5.3.2 Child care definitions

The following definitions are from the Child Care and Licensing Divisions of VDSS. Additional information regarding child care and licensing can be found on the [public website](#).

<u>Term</u>	<u>Definition</u>
Child Day Centers	<p>These are child day programs offered to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(i) two (2) or more children under the age of 13 years in a facility that is not the residence of the provider or any of the children in care, or(ii) 13 or more children at any location. Additional information can be found on the public website.
Family Day Homes	<p>These are homes that provide the care for five (5) to 12 children (exclusive of the provider's own children) and required by the Code of Virginia to be licensed. Additional information can be found on the public website.</p> <p>Note: Homes that provide care for four (4) or less children (exclusive of their own children) are not required to be licensed.</p>
Family Day System Homes	<p>The Code of Virginia requires licensure of any person who approves family day homes as a member of its system and who refers children to available day homes in that system. Additional information can be found on the public website. The only licensed Family Day Home System is operated by Infant/Toddler Family Day Care.</p>
Religiously Exempt Day Care Center	<p>A child day center may be exempt from licensing requirements and regular inspections due to its mission as a religious facility. Additional information can be found on the public website.</p>
Voluntarily Registered Family	<p>These homes have fewer than five (5) children in care (exclusive of the provider's own children). Voluntary</p>

Day Homes registration is a form of regulation offered to family day homes that are not required to be licensed. Additional information can be found on the [public website](#).

5.4 Responsibilities to conduct OOF investigations

5.4.1 Determine validity of report or complaint in OOF settings

The criteria used to determine validity of an allegation in an OOF setting are the same as that in an allegation of an “in-home” setting. These criteria are discussed in [Section 3, Complaints and Reports](#) of this guidance manual. Additional criteria for reports involving school personnel can be located in [Section 5.10](#).

5.4.2 Determine track decision

5.4.2.1 Investigation

The Code of Virginia § [63.2-1506 C](#) requires CPS reports in certain OOF settings to be investigated. These settings include programs that are subject to state regulatory oversight and where the relationship between the alleged victim child and caretaker is more professional than familial. In addition, CPS reports in locally approved provider settings must be investigated.

5.4.2.2 Family Assessment

Some CPS reports involve a caretaker who is a relative not residing in the child’s household (e.g., grandparent, aunt/uncle, etc.) or other person who has a more familial relationship with the alleged victim child. These reports may be placed in the Family Assessment Response Track (Refer to [Section 3, Complaints and Reports](#)) if there are no other elements of the report that require an investigation.

5.4.3 Identify the regulatory agency

- The Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) licenses or certifies facilities such as child day centers, including religiously exempt child day centers, licensed and voluntarily registered family day homes, and certain child care institutions and group homes. Contact information for VDSS Regional Licensing Offices is available on the [public website](#).
- The Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) operates juvenile correctional centers and halfway houses throughout the state. For investigations involving state-operated facilities, contact the appropriate facility superintendent. Contact information for these facilities is available on the [DJJ website](#). Also

contact the DJJ Gang and Investigation Unit (804-588-3850) to report the child abuse/neglect allegations.

- DJJ also certifies [locally-operated detention homes](#) and group homes. For investigations involving locally-operated detention homes and group homes, contact the DJJ Serious Incident Report (SIR) 24-hour hotline at (804)-212-8803, or the Certification Manager at (804)-516-9491 to notify the appropriate Certification Analyst.
- The Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) operates or licenses group homes; treatment facilities for children with substance abuse issues, developmental disabilities, and brain injuries; psychiatric hospitals that provide day or residential services to children; training centers; and state mental hospitals. Contact the DBHDS Office at (804)-786-1747 to reach the appropriate licensing specialist. Contact information is also available on the [DBHDS website](#).
- The Department of Education (DOE) licenses private schools for students with disabilities. This includes both day schools and schools within residential facilities. Contact Information and a listing of licensed private day and residential schools are available on the [DOE website](#) under Directory of Private Day and Residential Schools for Students with Disabilities. If a complaint of child abuse or neglect occurs in the school program of a residential facility or a private school for students with disabilities, contact DOE at (804)-371-0525 or ask the private school for the DOE specialist for their school and contact that person directly.

5.4.4 Facilities with no regulatory authority

[\(22VAC40-730-50A\)](#). In a facility for which there is not a state regulatory authority, such as in schools, the CPS worker shall ask the facility administrator or school superintendent to designate a person to participate in the joint investigative process.

In an OOF investigation with no regulatory authority, the designated staff person participating in the investigation is not considered a co-investigator with the CPS worker. The CPS worker should review the investigative process and confidentiality requirements with the facility designee, whose function is to minimize duplication of investigation efforts by CPS and the facility. The CPS worker may exclude the designee from interviews as necessary.

5.4.5 Develop joint investigative plan

[\(22VAC40-730-40.2\)](#). The CPS worker assigned to investigate and the appointed regulatory staff person will discuss their preliminary joint investigation plan.

The CPS worker and the appointed regulatory staff person shall confer on the preliminary investigation plan. The CPS worker and the regulatory staff person shall plan how each will be kept informed of the progress of the investigation and must confer at the conclusion of the investigation to inform the other of their respective findings and to discuss corrective action.

5.4.5.1 If regulatory staff is unavailable

If a designated regulatory staff person is not available to participate in the investigation process in a timely manner, the CPS worker should commence the investigation separately; however, efforts must be made to begin coordination and information-sharing as quickly as possible.

5.4.6 Notify CPS regional consultant

([22VAC40-730-60B](#)). The regional consultant shall be responsible for monitoring the investigative process and shall be kept informed of developments which substantially change the original case plan.

The CPS worker shall inform the CPS regional consultant of all OOF investigations as soon as possible. This may be done by sending an e-mail to the regional consultant that includes the following information:

- Referral # and locality.
- Type of abuse/neglect.
- Daycare/facility/school name.
- Brief case summary.

5.4.7 Notify Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC)

If the alleged victim is in the custody of another state and has been placed in Virginia through ICPC, immediately notify the Virginia [ICPC office](#) and the state agency which has custody of the child. The CPS worker shall document this notification in the automated data system.

5.4.8 Time frames to complete investigations

The Code of Virginia requires the LDSS to complete and document the investigation within 45 calendar days of receipt of the complaint or report. There are three (3) exceptions for completing an investigation within 45 days.

5.4.8.1 Fifteen-day extension to complete investigation

([22 VAC 40-705-120 A](#)). The local department shall promptly notify the alleged abuser or neglecter and the alleged victim's parents or guardians of any extension of the deadline for the completion of the family assessment or investigation pursuant to [§ 63.2-1505 B5](#) or [§ 63.2-1506 B3](#) of the Code of Virginia. The child protective services worker shall document the notifications and the reason for the need for additional time in the case record.

Upon written justification by the LDSS, based on locally determined guidelines, the investigation can be extended for **15 calendar days**.

5.4.8.2 Extension of joint investigations with law enforcement agency

The Code of Virginia, [§ 63.2-1505 \(5\)](#) allows for investigations which are being conducted in cooperation with a local law enforcement agency to be extended an additional 45 days, not to exceed 90 days. This must be agreed upon by both the LDSS and the law enforcement agency. This extension applies only to investigations.

5.4.8.3 Notification of extension

If an investigation is extended, the alleged abuser/neglector shall be notified. The notification to the alleged abuser/neglector or involved caretakers should include a brief explanation of the reason for the extension. If written notification is made, a copy of the notification must be included in the LDSS's record. If notification is made verbally, then the LDSS must document the notification in the automated data system. The LDSS must document the justification in the automated data system for the additional time needed to complete the investigation.

Sample letters for notification of an extension of an investigation are located in this guidance manual, [Section 4, Family Assessments and Investigations, Appendix K](#).

5.4.8.4 Suspension of certain investigations

([22VAC40-705-120 B](#)) Pursuant to [§ 63.2-1505 B5](#) of the Code of Virginia, when an investigation involving the death of a child or alleged sexual abuse of a child is delayed because of the unavailability of the records, the deadlines shall be

suspended. When such unavailability of records occurs, the local department shall promptly notify the alleged abuser or neglector and the alleged victim's parents or guardians that the records are unavailable and the effect of the unavailability on the completion of the investigation. The child protective services worker shall document the notifications and the reason for the suspension in the case record. Upon receipt of the records necessary to make a finding, the local department shall complete the investigation.

The Code of Virginia [§ 63.2-1505 B5](#) grants exceptions to completing certain investigations under specific conditions. In any child death investigation or sexual abuse investigations which require reports or records generated outside the local department in order to complete the investigation, the time needed to obtain these reports or records shall not be counted towards the 45 days. These records must be necessary to complete the investigation and not available due to circumstances beyond the control of the local department. When the LDSS receives the reports or records, the 45 day timeframe resumes where it had left off, it does not start over.

The decision to suspend making a disposition within 45 days in these cases should be approved by a supervisor and documented in the automated data system.

5.4.8.5 Notification of suspension

The LDSS should notify the alleged abuser/neglector or involved caretakers and the alleged victim's parents or guardians when suspending an investigation. The notification to the alleged abuser/neglector or involved caretakers should include a brief explanation of the reason for the suspension. If written notification is made, a copy of the notification must be included in the LDSS's record. If notification is made verbally, then the LDSS must document the notification in the automated data system. The LDSS must document the justification in the automated data system for the additional time needed to complete the investigation.

5.4.8.6 Contact while investigation is suspended

As long as the investigation remains open, the LDSS retains all authorities and responsibilities of an investigation. The LDSS should document monthly updates in the automated data system until such time that the necessary reports or records to complete the investigation have been received.

5.5 Conduct OOF investigation

5.5.1 Joint interviews and information sharing

(22VAC40-730-40.2a). The CPS worker and the regulatory staff person shall review their respective needs for information and plan the investigation based on when these needs coincide and can be met with joint interviews or with information sharing.

The LDSS shall share the complaint information with the regulatory authority who may appoint a staff person to participate in the investigation. The CPS worker and regulatory staff person should discuss informational needs, the feasibility of joint interviews, and develop an investigative plan.

5.5.2 Joint investigation requirements for LDSS and regulatory authority

(22VAC40-730-40.2b). The investigation plan must keep in focus the policy requirements to be met by each party as well as the impact the investigation will have on the facility's staff, the victim child or children, and the other children at the facility.

5.5.3 Joint investigation with law enforcement and facility

(22VAC40-730-50B). When CPS and law enforcement will be conducting a joint investigation, the CPS worker shall attempt to facilitate a coordinated approach among CPS, law enforcement and the regulatory authority or facility designee.

5.5.4 Notify facility administrator

(22VAC40-730-70A). The CPS worker shall initiate contact with the facility administrator or designee at the onset of the investigation.

B. The CPS worker shall inform the facility administrator or his designee of the details of the valid complaint. When the administrator or designee chooses to participate in the joint investigation, he will be invited to participate in the plan for investigation, including decisions about who is to be present in the interviews. If the administrator or designee is the alleged abuser or neglecter, this contact should be initiated with the individual's superior, which may be the board of directors, etc. If there is no superior, the CPS worker may use discretion in sharing information with the administrator.

C. Arrangements are to be made for:

1. Necessary interviews;
2. Observations including the physical plant; and
3. Access to information, including review of pertinent policies and procedures.

D. The CPS worker shall keep the facility administrator or designee apprised of the progress of the investigation. In a joint investigation with a regulatory staff person, either party may fulfill this requirement.

The facility administrator is the on-site individual responsible for the day-to-day operation of the facility. The worker shall inform the administrator or designee of the allegations in the complaint. If there is no apparent conflict of interest in doing so, the administrator or designee should be invited to assist with the planning of the investigation. If the administrator or designee chooses not to be involved in the planning process, he shall nevertheless be informed of the progress of the investigation.

5.5.4.1 When the facility administrator or designee is the alleged abuser or neglector

If the administrator or designee is the alleged abuser or neglector, this contact should be initiated with the individual's superior, such as the chairman of the board of directors or the superintendent of schools. If there is no superior, the worker may use discretion in deciding what information to share with the administrator.

5.5.5 Interview alleged victim

(22VAC40-705-80 B1) The child protective services worker shall conduct a face-to-face interview with and observation of the alleged victim child *within the determined response time*.

The CPS worker shall conduct at least one (1) face-to-face interview (*worker visit*) with the alleged victim child and *shall* conduct this face-to-face *interview within the determined response time* as assessed in [Section 3: Complaints and Reports](#) of this manual. A face-to-face interview must be documented as a "worker visit" in the automated data system.

The CPS worker shall observe the child and document the child's recollection and perception of the allegations. Information regarding the allegations may be obtained during the CPS worker's observation of victim interviews conducted by other members of the investigative team including, but not limited to, law-enforcement officers, forensic nurses, physicians or other community professionals trained as forensic interviewers. When possible, it is important to not only observe the interview but also have the ability to ask additional questions as needed. If the CPS worker is not the primary interviewer, the CPS worker is still responsible for interviewing the child to gather any additional information regarding the allegations and to ensure that the child understands the role of the CPS worker and what will occur during the investigation. The CPS worker must review all electronically recorded victim

interviews to determine if additional interviews are necessary to comply with CPS guidance.

The CPS worker must still conduct a face to face interview with the child if the CPS worker is not the primary interviewer of the child regarding the allegations. This *worker visit shall be **within the determined response time.***

During the child interview, the CPS worker should inform the child about the investigation and what will occur during the investigation. The CPS worker should note the child's emotional and physical condition (including any injury). The CPS worker should learn about the child's needs and capabilities for the purposes of safety and risk assessment and service planning.

[\(22VAC40-705-80 B\)](#) During the course of the investigation, the child protective services worker shall *document* in writing in the state automated system the following contacts and observations. When any of these contacts or observations is not made, the child protective services worker shall *document* in writing why the specific contact or observation was not made.

The CPS worker *shall* document all observations and interviews involving the victim child in the automated data system. *If the face-to-face worker visit with the victim child is not made within the determined response time, this shall be documented in the automated data system.*

5.5.5.1 Information gathered in the interview with alleged victim child

Collect the following information during the alleged victim interview:

- Demographic information (date of birth, sex, grade in school, etc.).
- Child's developmental level.
- Child's description of the incident including but not limited to:
 - Child's statements about what happened. Include direct quotes of the child if appropriate.
 - Child's statements about the impact of the incident on him.
- Results of any tests or evaluation of the child's injury, behavior, or other characteristics.
- Prior history of abuse or neglect involving the child. The history of any prior abuse or neglect can be provided by any source.

5.5.5.2 Electronic recording

([22VAC40-705-80.B1](#).) The child protective services worker shall conduct a face-to-face interview with and observation of the alleged victim child *within the determined response time*. All interviews with alleged victim children must be electronically recorded.

In 2005, the Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals issued a ruling to affirm the regulatory requirement that victim interviews in an investigation must be electronically recorded according to [22 VAC 40-705-80](#) or clearly document the specific and detailed reasons for not taping victim interviews as well as the documentation that the decision was made in consultation with a supervisor. A copy of this decision, known as the [West Decision](#), is available on the website of the Virginia Court of Appeals case #2144042.

5.5.5.2.1 Exceptions to electronically recording interviews with the alleged victim child

([22VAC40-705-80.B1](#)). All interviews with alleged victim children must be electronically recorded except when the child protective services worker determines that:

- The child's safety may be endangered by electronically recording *his statement*;
- The age *or* developmental capacity of the child makes electronic recording impractical;
- A child refuses to participate in the interview if electronic recording occurs;
- In the context of a team investigation with law-enforcement personnel, the team or team leader determines that *electronic recording* is not appropriate; or
- The victim provided new information as part of a family assessment and it would be detrimental to re-interview the victim and the child protective services worker provides a detailed narrative of the interview in the investigation record.

The VAC provides five (5) exceptions to electronic recording of an interview with an alleged victim child. Before electronically recording an interview with a child, the CPS worker must assess the circumstances surrounding the allegations of abuse or neglect and determine whether any of the five (5) exceptions precluding audio recording the interview apply. Adequately considering the circumstances may include assessing the complaint or report; speaking with the mother, father or guardians of the child; speaking with collateral witnesses; and conducting an assessment of the child.

The CPS worker shall consult with the supervisor when the decision is made not to electronically record an interview with an alleged victim child. The consultation and the specific reasons why electronic recording is not

done in the specific investigation shall be documented in the automated data system.

- **Exception: The child's safety may be endangered by electronic recording**

If the child's safety is endangered or may be endangered by electronically recording the interview, then the interview must not be electronically recorded. The CPS worker may need to conduct a brief assessment of the child to determine the risk of any harm that may occur to the child as a result of electronically recording the interview. The CPS worker may be able to assess any potential harm to the child by speaking with the child's mother, father or guardians, or collateral witnesses. If the interview is not electronically recorded, the CPS worker shall carefully document the details of the interview in writing for the case record.

- **Exception: The age or developmental capacity of the child makes electronic recording impractical**

The CPS worker must assess the mental and physical capacities of the child. The age or development of the child may preclude electronically recording the interview. It may be appropriate to electronically record the questions being asked by the CPS worker and to describe, either verbally or in writing, the child's responses.

- **Exception: The child refuses to participate in the interview if electronic recording occurs**

The interview with the child should not be jeopardized because the child refuses to be electronically recorded. If the child refuses to be electronically recorded, the CPS worker should explore the child's reasons and discuss those reasons with the child. If the child still refuses to participate in an electronically recorded interview, then the CPS worker must not electronically record the interview. The CPS worker shall document the reasons why the child refused to be electronically recorded.

- **Exception: In the context of a team investigation, the team or team leader determines that electronic recording is not appropriate**

If a complaint or report of abuse or neglect is being investigated in conjunction with a multidisciplinary team, then the multidisciplinary team should make the decision to electronically record the interview with the alleged victim child based on the specific child and referral. A team investigation includes a joint investigation with the Commonwealth's Attorney office or law enforcement.

- **Exception: The victim provided new information as part of a family assessment**

If the victim provides new information during a family assessment resulting in an investigation and it would be detrimental to re-interview the victim, the CPS worker shall provide a detailed narrative of the interview in the investigation record and document this exception to electronically recording the victim interview.

5.5.5.3 Each interview with the alleged victim child must be electronically recorded

Each interview with the alleged victim child must be electronically recorded unless one (1) of the above mentioned exceptions to electronically recording the interview applies. When an interview is not electronically recorded for any reason, the CPS worker shall complete a detailed summary of the interview, including the reasons for not recording the interview and the supervisory consultation for this decision and enter the information into the automated case record.

5.5.5.4 Notify the child's parents or caretakers that interview was electronically recorded

While there is no provision in the Code of Virginia or the VAC that requires an LDSS to inform the child's parents that the interview was electronically recorded, the LDSS should notify the mother, father or guardians of the alleged victim child about the interview and that the interview was electronically recorded.

The LDSS should explain to the mother, father or guardians that § [63.2-1518](#) of the Code of Virginia allows the CPS worker to interview the alleged victim child without the consent of the parents and [22VAC40-705-80](#) of the VAC requires the interview to be electronically recorded.¹

5.5.5.5 Parents or caretakers object to electronically recorded interview

There is no provision in the VAC allowing an exception to electronic recording when the mother, father or guardians object to the LDSS electronic recording the interview of the alleged victim child. The CPS worker should explore the foundation for the parents' objection. The objection to the electronic recording may satisfy one of the enumerated exceptions to electronic recording.

¹ VA Code § [63.2-1518](#) provides any person required to make a report of abuse or neglect with the authority to talk to a child suspected of being abused or neglected outside the presence of the child's parents, guardian, other person standing in loco parentis or school personnel. [22 VAC 40-705-80 B](#) requires that any interview by a CPS worker with an alleged victim child be electronically recorded.

5.5.5.6 Equipment malfunction

[22VAC40-705-80 B1](#) provides that a CPS finding may be based on the written narrative should equipment failure occur. If an interview of an alleged victim child is not electronically recorded because of equipment malfunction, then the CPS worker shall write a detailed narrative of the interview and include that narrative in the record.

5.5.6 CPS worker determines who may be present during child interview

([22VAC40-730-80](#)). Contact with the alleged victim child. The CPS worker shall interview the alleged victim child and shall determine along with a regulatory staff person or facility administrator or designee who may be present in the interview. Where there is an apparent conflict of interest, the local department shall use discretion regarding who is to be included in the interview.

When the CPS worker is conducting an interview with the alleged victim child, the CPS worker shall determine who may be present during the interview, taking into consideration both the comfort of the child and other parties' need to have first-hand information. The CPS agency has the final authority over who may be present if there is no consensus between CPS worker, regulatory staff, and/or facility administrator or designee when issues arise such as the discomfort of the interviewee or an apparent conflict of interest.

5.5.7 Notify parents or guardian of the child

The mother and father, guardian or agency holding custody should be informed of their child's interview and the investigative process in advance; when this is not practical, they shall be informed as quickly as possible after the interview.

The investigative process should be explained to the child's parents, guardian, or agency holding custody. The child's mother and father, guardian or agency holding custody should be interviewed to obtain information about the child and about their knowledge of the allegations and the facility.

The child's mother, father, guardian, or agency holding custody should be kept informed of sufficient information to involve them in planning and support for the child.

5.5.8 Interview alleged abuser or neglector

([22VAC40-730-90](#)). Contact with the alleged abuser or neglector.

A. The CPS worker shall interview the alleged abuser or neglector according to a plan developed with the regulatory staff person, facility administrator, or designee. Where there is an apparent conflict of interest, the local department shall use discretion

regarding who is to be included in the interview. At the onset of the initial interview with the alleged abuser or neglector, the CPS worker shall notify him in writing of the general nature of the complaint and the identity of the alleged victim child to avoid any confusion regarding the purpose of the contacts.

B. The alleged abuser or neglector has the right to involve a representative of his choice to be present during his interviews.

The alleged abuser or neglector shall be given written notice of the CPS report, [“Child Protective Services: A Guide to Investigative Procedures in Out of Family Settings.”](#)

5.5.8.1 Inform alleged abuser or neglector of right to electronically record interview

([22VAC40-705-80 B4a](#)). The child protective services worker shall inform the alleged abuser or neglector of his right to electronically record any communication pursuant to [§ 63.2-1516](#) of the Code of Virginia.

5.5.8.2 Law enforcement or Commonwealth’s Attorney objects to informing the alleged abuser or neglector of his right to record the interview

A law enforcement officer or the Commonwealth’s Attorney may object to the LDSS informing the alleged perpetrator of his right to electronically record an interview. If a law-enforcement officer or a Commonwealth’s Attorney objects, then the LDSS shall not advise the alleged perpetrator of that right. This objection applies when the Commonwealth’s Attorney or the law enforcement officer believes that the instruction will compromise the investigation of any criminal charges.

This objection must be documented in the automated data system.

5.5.8.3 LDSS shall provide recording equipment upon request

([22VAC40-705-80 B4b](#)). If requested by the alleged abuser or neglector the local department shall provide the necessary equipment in order to electronically record the interview and retain a copy of the electronic recording.

The CPS worker must be prepared to provide the equipment should the alleged abuser or neglector elect to electronically record the interview. The LDSS must provide a copy of the electronically recorded interview to the alleged abuser or neglector upon request.

5.5.8.4 Use of statements as evidence

The Code of Virginia § [63.2-1503 M](#) provides that statements made by the alleged abuser or neglecter to the investigating CPS worker after the alleged abuser or neglecter has been arrested are not admissible in any criminal proceedings unless the alleged abuser or neglecter was advised of his rights against self-incrimination. If a person suspected of abuse or neglect is arrested, that person must be advised of his rights against self-incrimination or any subsequent statements made by the person cannot be used during the criminal proceedings. This section of the Code of Virginia only pertains to the admissibility in criminal proceedings of statements made by the alleged abuser or neglecter after that person has been arrested. This section of the Code of Virginia does not pertain to the use of any statements made by the alleged abuser or neglecter in determining whether the complaint or report is founded or unfounded. While certain statements made by the alleged abuser or neglecter may not be admissible in a court of law, there is no specific exclusion to the LDSS using those statements in determining a founded or unfounded disposition.

5.5.9 Interview collateral children

([22VAC40-730-100](#)). Contact with collateral children. The CPS worker shall interview non-victim children as collaterals if it is determined that they may have information which would help in determining the finding in the valid complaint. Such contact should be made with prior consent of the non-victim child's parent, guardian or agency holding custody. If the situation warrants contact with the non-victim child prior to such consent being obtained, the parent, guardian or agency holding custody should be informed as soon as possible after the interview takes place.

5.5.10 Observe environment where the alleged abuse or neglect occurred

([22VAC40-705-80 B7](#)). The child protective services worker shall observe the site where the alleged incident took place.

5.6 Assess safety

The VAC provides regulatory authority to conduct the safety assessment in OOF investigations:

([22VAC40-730-30](#)). If the complaint information received is such that the local department is concerned for the child's immediate safety, contact must be initiated with the facility administrator immediately to ensure the child's safety. If, in the judgment of the child protective services worker, the situation is such that the child or children should be immediately removed from the facility, the parent or parents, guardian or agency holding

custody shall be notified immediately to mutually develop a safety plan which addresses the child's or children's immediate safety needs.

The safety assessment focuses on the child and the child's immediate needs. Factors to consider when assessing the immediate situation of the child include:

- Whether the child has sustained a mental or physical injury warranting immediate attention or care;
- Whether an emergency or crisis situation exists meriting immediate action to protect the child;
- Whether the child is at risk of serious abuse or neglect in the near future.

5.6.1 Assess immediate needs of the family or facility

After assessing the immediate safety needs of the child, the worker must evaluate the immediate needs of the family or facility. Factors to consider include:

- If the child has been injured or harmed, whether the family or facility has the capabilities or capacity to protect the child from further harm;
- Whether an emergency or crisis situation exists and the family's or facility's ability to cope;

5.6.2 Assess immediate danger to the other children in the family or facility

After assessing the immediate safety needs of the child and family or facility, the worker must evaluate the immediate needs of any other children in the care of the family or facility. Factors to consider include:

- Whether any other child in the family or facility has sustained a mental or physical injury warranting immediate attention or care
- Whether any other children are at risk of harm or danger
- Whether an emergency or crisis situation exists meriting immediate action to protect the other child(ren) in the home or facility
- Whether the family or facility has the capability or capacity to protect other children from further harm;

5.6.3 Make safety decision

After safety and protective factors have been assessed, the CPS worker must make a decision about the safety of the child(ren) in the home or facility. The safety

decision should be made on the basis of the needs of the least safe child in the home or facility, if there is more than one (1) child. One of the following safety decisions must be determined and documented in the automated data system and shared with the family or facility.

- **SAFE.** There are no children likely to be in immediate danger of serious harm at this time. No safety plan is required.
- **CONDITIONALLY SAFE.** Protective safety interventions have been taken and have resolved the unsafe situation for the present time. A safety plan is required to document the interventions.
- **UNSAFE.** Without controlling intervention(s) a child is in immediate danger of serious harm. A court order is required to document intervention.

5.6.4 Emergency removal of child in OOF investigations

If the CPS worker is concerned for the child's immediate safety and the situation is such that the child should be immediately removed from the facility, the mother, father, guardian or agency holding custody and the facility administrator shall be notified immediately to mutually develop a safety plan providing for the child's safety. Written notification shall be provided to the mother, father, guardian or agency holding custody and the facility at the time of the removal.

[\(22VAC40-730-40\)](#). The authority of the local department to investigate valid complaints of alleged child abuse or neglect in regulated facilities overlaps with the authority of the public agencies which have regulatory responsibilities for these facilities to investigate alleged violations of standards.

[\(22VAC40-730-40.1\)](#). For valid complaints in state regulated facilities and religiously exempted child day programs, the local department shall contact the regulatory authority and share the valid complaint information. The regulatory authority will appoint a staff person to participate in the investigation to determine if there are regulatory concerns.

5.7 Risk assessment and disposition

5.7.1 Risk assessment

[\(22VAC40-705-110 B\)](#) *In all completed family assessments and investigations, the child protective services worker shall conduct a risk assessment to determine whether or not the child is in jeopardy of future abuse or neglect and whether or not intervention is necessary to protect the child.*

The decision on risk of future harm should be based on the assessment of individual, family, facility, and other risk factors. Any identified services for the family

or caretaker should be based on the needs identified, which is documented in the automated information system. The outcome of the risk assessment will influence the type and intensity of services to be provided. One of these outcomes must be documented in the automated data system.

- **Low.** The assessment of risk related factors indicates that there is a low likelihood of future abuse or neglect and no further intervention is necessary.
- **Moderate.** The assessment of risk related factors indicates that there is a moderate likelihood of future abuse or neglect and minimal intervention may be needed.
- **High.** The assessment of risk related factors indicates that there is a high likelihood of future abuse or neglect without intervention.
- **Very High.** The assessment of risk-related factors indicates there is a very high likelihood of future abuse or neglect without intervention.

5.7.2 Disposition and consult with CPS Regional Consultant

The CPS worker and supervisor must consult with CPS regional consultant prior to making a finding and notifying the alleged abuser/neglector of the disposition. This shall not interfere with the requirement to complete the investigation in the legislatively mandated time frame of 45 days. (60 or 90 days when an extension is documented to be necessary)

[\(22VAC40-705-10\)](#). "Disposition" means the determination of whether or not child abuse or neglect has occurred.

[\(22VAC40-705-110.C\)](#). In investigations, the child protective services worker shall make a *disposition of either founded or unfounded as defined in [22VAC40-705-10](#)* after collecting and *assessing* information about the alleged abuse or neglect.

After collecting evidence and before expiration of the time frames for completing the investigation, the CPS worker shall determine the disposition. The VAC provides the definition of disposition.

5.7.2.1 Unfounded disposition

The definition of an unfounded disposition as defined in the VAC is:

[\(22VAC40-705-10\)](#). "Unfounded" means that a review of the facts does not show by a preponderance of the evidence that child abuse or neglect occurred.

However, an unfounded disposition may not mean that abuse or neglect did not occur, but rather that the evidence obtained during the investigation did not reach the preponderance level.

5.7.2.2 Founded disposition

The definition of a founded disposition is found in the VAC:

[\(22VAC40-705-10\)](#) "Founded" means that a review of the facts shows by a preponderance of the evidence that child abuse or neglect has occurred. A determination that a case is founded shall be based primarily on first source evidence; in no instance shall a determination that a case is founded be based solely on indirect evidence or an anonymous complaint.

See [Appendix E](#) for a sample format for documenting a founded dispositional assessment in the automated data system.

5.7.2.2.1 Preponderance of the evidence

The VAC defines a preponderance of the evidence as:

[\(22VAC40-705-10\)](#). "Preponderance of evidence" means *just enough evidence to make it more likely than not that the asserted facts are true*. It is evidence which is of greater weight or more convincing than the evidence offered in opposition.

As the standard of proof in making a founded disposition of abuse or neglect, a preponderance of the evidence means that the evidence offered in support of the allegation is of greater weight than the evidence offered in opposition. The evidence gathered should be evaluated by its credibility, knowledge offered and information provided.

Proof of one or more of the following factors, linking the abuse or neglect to the alleged abuser or neglecter, may constitute preponderance of evidence:

- Medical or psychological information from a licensed medical professional or other treatment professional that indicates that child abuse/neglect occurred.
- An admission by the alleged abuser/neglector.
- The statement of a credible witness or witnesses regarding the abuse or neglect.

- The victim child's statement that the abuse occurred. In assessing the weight to be given to the child's statement, consider:
 - level of detail described;
 - emotional/cognitive developmental level of the child;
 - consistency of statements if more than one interview is conducted;
 - corroboration of statement by other circumstances and/or witnesses;
 - secrecy- child instructed, asked, or threatened to keep the sexual abuse a secret; or
 - coercion- child reports elements of coercion, persuasion, or threats by the alleged abuser to engage in the sexual abuse.
- Circumstantial evidence, or indirect evidence, which links the alleged abuser or neglecter to the abuse or neglect.

5.7.2.2.2 First source, direct and indirect evidence

First source evidence and indirect evidence are defined in the VAC:

[\(22VAC40-705-10\)](#) "First source" means any direct evidence establishing or helping to establish the existence or nonexistence of a fact. Indirect evidence and anonymous complaints do *not* constitute first source evidence.

"Indirect Evidence" means any statement made outside the presence of the child protective services worker and relayed to the child protective services worker as proof of the contents of the statement.

In no instance can a founded disposition be based solely on indirect evidence or an anonymous complaint.

- **First source or direct evidence.** First source or direct evidence means evidence that proves a fact, without an inference or presumption, and which in itself, if true, conclusively establishes that fact. First source evidence includes the parties and witnesses to the alleged abuse or neglect. First source evidence also includes: witness depositions; police reports; photographs; medical, psychiatric and psychological reports; and any electronic recordings of interviews.

- **Direct evidence** may include witnesses or documents. For example, first source evidence would include a witness who actually saw the alleged act or heard the words spoken. First source evidence would also include the examining physician's report establishing that the child sustained a spiral fracture.
- **Indirect evidence.** Indirect evidence, also known as circumstantial evidence, is evidence based on inference and not on personal knowledge or observation.⁶ Indirect evidence relies upon inferences and presumptions to prove an issue in question and may require proving a chain of circumstances pointing to the existence or non-existence of certain facts.

5.7.2.2.3 Credibility of evidence

There is no clear distinction between the reliability and credibility of first source evidence and indirect evidence. It remains incumbent upon the LDSS to weigh the credibility of all the evidence when determining a disposition. Indirect evidence may be used in support of a founded disposition; however, indirect evidence cannot be the sole basis for the disposition.

5.7.2.3 Determine level of founded disposition

A founded disposition must be categorized into one of three levels. Categorization is dependent on the nature of the act and the seriousness of the harm or threatened harm to the child as a result of maltreatment. In all founded cases, there may be circumstances influencing the severity of the abusive or neglectful incident. The circumstances may increase or decrease the severity of harm or threatened harm.

The level for a founded disposition must be supported by a preponderance of the evidence. The evidence supporting the level must be documented in the record. The facts supporting the level will relate to the type and pattern of abuse/neglect, the vulnerability of the child, the effect or potential effect of the abuse/neglect, and the action or inaction of the caretaker.

5.7.2.3.1 Level 1

([22VAC40-705-110 DI](#)) Level 1. This level includes those injuries or conditions, real or threatened, that result in or were likely to have resulted in serious harm to a child.

Examples of injuries or conditions that resulted in or were likely to have resulted in serious harm include but are not limited to:

- For physical abuse:
 - the situation requires medical attention in order to be remediated;
 - the injury may be to the head, face, genitals, or is internal and located near a vital organ;
 - injuries located in more than one place;
 - injuries were caused by the use of an instrument such as a tool or weapon;
 - an inappropriate drug was administered or a drug was given in an inappropriate dosage; or
 - child exposed to the production or sale of methamphetamine or other drug and is not able to self-protect.
- For neglect situations:
 - the condition would be one where the child's minimal needs are rarely met for food, clothing, shelter, supervision, or medical care;
 - the child is frequently unsupervised or unprotected;
 - the child is left by the caretaker with no plan for the child's care or no information about the caretaker's whereabouts or time for return; or
 - a young child is left alone for any period of time.
- For mental abuse or neglect:
 - the child has engaged in self-destructive behavior;
 - has required psychiatric hospitalization;
 - has required treatment for severe dysfunction;
 - presents a danger to self or others; or
 - problems related to the caretaker behavior.
- For sexual abuse:

- the situation would be one where there was genital contact;
- force or threat was used; or
- the abuse had taken place over a period of time and there were multiple incidents.
- For medical neglect:
 - caretaker failed to provide medical care in a life threatening situation; or
 - a situation that could reasonably be expected to result in a chronic debilitating condition.
- For non-organic failure to thrive: the syndrome is considered to be a form of physical or emotional maltreatment. (refer to physical or mental abuse or neglect above)

5.7.2.3.2 Level 2

([22VAC40-705-110 D2](#)). Level 2. This level includes those injuries or conditions, real or threatened, that result in or were likely to have resulted in moderate harm to a child.

Examples of injuries or conditions that resulted in or were likely to have resulted in moderate harm include but are not limited to:

- For physical abuse:
 - the injury necessitates some form of minor medical attention;
 - injury on torso, arms, or hidden place (such as arm pits);
 - use of tool that is associated with discipline such as a switch or paddle; or
 - exposure to the production or sale of methamphetamine or other drugs and the child may not be able to self-protect.
- For neglect situations:
 - the condition would be one where the child's minimal needs are sporadically met for food, clothing, shelter, supervision, or medical care; or

- a pattern or one-time incident related to lack of supervision caused or could have caused moderate harm.
- For mental abuse or neglect:
 - the situation would be one where the child's emotional needs are rarely met; or
 - the child's behavior is problematic at home or school.
- For sexual abuse:
 - minimal or no physical touching but could be exposure to masturbation, exhibitionism, etc.;
 - caretaker makes repeated sexually provocative comments to the child; or
 - child is exposed to pornographic materials.
- For medical neglect:
 - the situation is one in which a doctor has prescribed care to eliminate pain or remedy a condition but the caretaker has not followed through with appointments or recommendations; or
 - the child's condition is not acute or life threatening but could be detrimental to the child's mental or physical health.

For non-organic failure to thrive, the syndrome is considered to be a form of physical or emotional maltreatment. (refer to physical or mental abuse or neglect above)

5.7.2.3.3 Level 3

([22VAC40-705-110 D3](#)). Level 3. This level includes those injuries or conditions, real or threatened, that result in minimal harm to a child.

Examples of injuries or conditions that resulted in or were likely to have resulted in minimal harm include but are not limited to:

- For physical abuse:
 - the situation requires no medical attention for injury;
 - minimal exposure to the production or sale of methamphetamine or other drugs.

- For physical neglect:
 - child's minimal needs inconsistently met for food, clothing, shelter, supervision, or medical care; or
 - supervision marginal which poses a threat of danger to child.
- For mental abuse or neglect the situation would be one where the child's emotional needs are met sporadically with evidence of some negative impact on the child's behavior.
- For sexual abuse:
 - there was no or minimal physical touching;
 - exposure to sexual acts such as masturbation, exhibitionism, etc.; or
 - caretaker's actions or behavior, such as making sexually suggestive comments to the child, causes or creates a threat of minimal harm to the child.
- For medical neglect, the situation may be one in which the child's life is not in danger, the child is not experiencing discomfort at this time, but the medical authority reports medical treatment is needed to avoid illness or developmental delay.
- For non-organic failure to thrive, the syndrome is considered to be a form of physical or emotional maltreatment. (refer to physical or mental abuse or neglect above)

5.8 Concerns for other children in the care of the alleged abuser/neglector

In certain OOF investigations, the type or extent of abuse or neglect may increase the concern for other children in the care of the alleged abuser or neglector including children in the alleged abuser or neglector's household or other workplace or OOF setting.

If the information gathered during the investigation gives the LDSS a concern for the safety of other children in the care of the alleged abuser, then the LDSS may wish to consult with legal counsel to determine what additional actions may be needed and permitted. These could include, but are not limited to, new referrals for investigations/assessments, voluntary family service cases, notification to other OOF settings, referral to the regulatory agency, and consultation with law enforcement.

5.9 Notifications for OOF investigations

Refer to [Part 4, Family Assessment and Investigation](#), for notification requirements for all CPS investigations. There are additional notifications required in OOF investigations in designated settings.

5.9.1 Release of information in joint investigations with law enforcement

(§[63.2-1516.1](#))B. In all cases in which an alleged act of child abuse or neglect is also being criminally investigated by a law-enforcement agency, and the local department is conducting a joint investigation with a law-enforcement officer in regard to such an alleged act, no information in the possession of the local department from such joint investigation shall be released by the local department except as authorized by the investigating law-enforcement officer or his supervisor or the local attorney for the Commonwealth.

5.9.2 Consult with regional consultant

([22VAC40-730-60](#)) C. At the conclusion of the investigation the local agency shall contact the department's regional CPS coordinator to review the case prior to notifying anyone of the disposition. The regional coordinator shall review the facts gathered and policy requirements for determining whether or not abuse or neglect occurred. However, the statutory authority for the disposition rests with the local agency. This review shall not interfere with the requirement to complete the investigation in the legislatively mandated time frame.

The CPS worker and supervisor shall consult with the regional consultant to review the investigation finding before notifying anyone of the disposition. Although the LDSS is responsible to make the investigation disposition, the regional consultant shall review the investigation and provide technical assistance if needed to ensure the LDSS has conducted the investigation according to CPS regulations and guidance. This may be done by sending an e-mail and including a brief case summary and justification for the final disposition.

5.9.3 Notification to Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC)

When applicable, at the conclusion of all investigations, regardless of disposition, notify [Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children](#) (ICPC) of the results. The CPS worker shall document this notification in the state automated data system.

5.9.4 Written notification to alleged abuser/neglector

See [Appendix D](#) for sample letters of notification to the alleged abuser or neglector.

5.9.4.1 Unfounded disposition

([22VAC40-705-140 B1](#)) When the disposition is unfounded, the child protective services worker shall inform the individual against whom allegations of abuse or neglect were made of this finding. This notification shall be in writing with a copy to be maintained in the case record. The individual against whom allegations of abuse or neglect were made shall be informed that he may have access to the case record and that the case record shall be retained by the local department for one year unless requested in writing by such individual that the local department retain the record for up to an additional two years.

The alleged abuser or neglecter shall be notified in writing that the complaint was determined to be unfounded. A copy of the notification shall be filed in the record and documented in the automated data system. The notification shall include the length of time the CPS report will be retained in the automated data system; the individual's right to request the record be retained for an additional period; and the right to access information about himself in the investigative record.

Although verbal notification of an unfounded investigation is not required by regulation, CPS workers are encouraged to discuss the outcome of the investigation as well as any services the family may need or request.

5.9.4.2 Founded disposition

The written notification to the abuser or neglecter of the founded disposition(s) must be in a letter and a copy must be included in the case record.

The letter must include:

- Summary of the investigation and an explanation of how the information gathered supports the disposition.
- A clear statement that the individual is the abuser and/or neglecter.
- The category of abuse or neglect.
- The disposition, level, and retention time, including statement about effect of multiple complaints on retention.
- The name of the victim child or children.
- A statement informing the abuser of his or her right to appeal the finding and to have access to the case record.

- A statement informing the abuser that pursuant to § [63.2-1505 \(7\)](#) of the Code of Virginia, if the abuser is a teacher in a public school division in Virginia, the local school board shall be notified of the founded disposition.

The abuser or neglector must be informed of his right to appeal the founded disposition. This must be done verbally and in writing as soon as the disposition is reached. In addition, the abuser or neglector must be given a brochure, "[Child Protective Services Appeals and Fair Hearings](#)" that outlines the administrative appeal process. The LDSS must document in the automated data system that the abuser or neglector was given the appeal brochure and was informed verbally of his or her appeal rights.

LDSS are encouraged to send the disposition letter by certified mail as further documentation of the notification to the abuser or neglector.

5.9.4.2.1 Additional notification to alleged abuser in certain founded sexual abuse investigations

The Code of Virginia § [63.2-1514](#) A requires that all records related to founded cases of child sexual abuse involving injuries or conditions, real or threatened, that result in or were likely to have resulted in serious harm to a child shall be maintained by the LDSS for a period of 25 years from the date of the complaint. All investigation records founded on or after July 1, 2010 for sexual abuse investigations level 1 shall be maintained by the LDSS 25 years from the date of the complaint. This retention timeframe will not be reflected in the Central Registry past the purge dates set out in [22 VAC 40-705-130 B3](#).

For all sexual abuse investigations founded level 1 on or after July 1, 2010, the written notification shall include a statement informing the alleged abuser that the investigation record shall be maintained by the LDSS for 25 years past the date of the complaint pursuant to § [63.2-1514](#) A of the Code of Virginia; however, this retention time will not be reflected in the Central Registry past the purge date of 18 years as set out in [22 VAC 40-705-130 B4](#).

5.9.4.2.2 Notify abuser or neglector verbally

The verbal notification to the abuser or neglector of the founded disposition(s) should include the disposition, level, and retention time, including effect of multiple complaints on retention and inform the abuser of his or her right to appeal to finding and to have access to the case record. The worker must document in the automated data system, the date the verbal notification took place. If the verbal notification did not occur, the CPS worker should document the reasons in the automated data system.

5.9.5 Notification to facility administrator and regulatory staff

([22 VAC 40-730-110](#)). Report the findings. Written notification of the findings shall be submitted to the facility administrator or designee and the regulatory staff person involved in the investigation, if applicable, at the same time the alleged abuser or neglector is notified.

If the facility administrator is the abuser or neglector, written notification of the findings shall be submitted to his superior if applicable.

The CPS worker shall provide a verbal notification of the disposition and a written report of the findings to the facility administrator and, if applicable, to the involved regulatory staff person, the local approval agent and/or the Superintendent in a public school, as soon as practicable after the disposition is made.

This report of the findings shall include:

- Identification of the alleged abuser or neglector and victim, the type of abuse or neglect, and the disposition.
- A summary of the investigation and an explanation of how the information gathered supports the disposition.

5.9.6 Notification to parent, guardian, or custodial agency of victim child

([22 VAC 40-705-140 C2](#)). When the disposition is founded, the child protective services worker shall inform the parents or guardian of the child in writing, when they are not the abuser or neglector, that the complaint involving their child was determined to be founded and the length of time the child's name and information about the case will be retained in the Central Registry. The child protective services worker shall file a copy in the case record.

The mother and father, guardian or custodial agency of the child shall be notified in writing of the disposition of the complaint involving their child. Verbal notification and explanation of the findings are also required. The worker may use discretion in determining the extent of investigative findings to be shared; however, sufficient detail must be provided for the child's custodian to know what happened to his child and to make plans for any needed support and services.

The Code of Virginia [§ 63.2-1515](#) requires that when the child has been abused in certain OOF settings the parental notification must advise the parents that the child's name will only be retained in the Central Registry if the parent or guardian grants permission within 30 days of the supervisory approval of the findings.

The notification letter to mother and father, guardian or custodial agency must include the following information:

“If you want your child’s name to remain in the Central Registry for as long as the record of the investigation is retained, send a letter to the CPS Unit, Virginia Department of Social Services, 801 East Main Street, Richmond, Virginia 23219. Include your child’s name, date of birth, address, and description of the relationship of the abuser to the child.”

When the mother, father, guardian or custodial agency requests the child’s name to be retained, the disposition level will determine the purge date for the identifying information on the child.

See [Appendix D](#) for sample letters of notification to parents, guardian or legal guardian.

5.9.7 Document all notifications in the automated data system

Each written notification shall be documented in the automated data system, identifying all recipients, and identifying where a copy of each written notification can be found.

5.9.8 All other inquiries referred to facility administrator

The CPS worker must refer any inquiries about the findings to the facility administrator or his superior and, when applicable, to the regulatory authority.

5.9.9 Notify Family Advocacy Program

The Code of Virginia § 63.2-1503 N establishes the authority for the LDSS to share CPS information with family advocacy representatives of the United States Armed Forces.

(§ 63.2-1503 N of the Code of Virginia) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the local department, in accordance with Board regulations, shall transmit information regarding reports, complaints, family assessments, and investigations involving children of active duty members of the United States Armed Forces or members of their household to family advocacy representatives of the United States Armed Forces.

*Effective July 1, 2017: at the conclusion of **all** investigations (founded and unfounded dispositions), the LDSS shall notify the Family Advocacy Program representative and provide the final disposition, the type(s) of abuse or neglect, the identity of the abuser or neglecter and any recommended services. These notifications allow for coordination between CPS and the Family Advocacy Program and are intended to facilitate identification, treatment and service provision to the military family. For additional information about the Family Advocacy Program,*

contact information for a particular branch of the military or a specific installation, click [here](#).

- Written notification to Family Advocacy shall be made upon completion of an investigation resulting in an unfounded disposition.
- The Family Advocacy Program representative shall be notified in writing **within 30 days** after all administrative appeal rights of the abuser or neglector have been exhausted or forfeited for all investigations with a founded disposition.
- Written notification to abuser or neglector.

The abuser or neglector shall be advised that this information is being provided to the Family Advocacy Program and shall be given a copy of the written notification sent to the Family Advocacy Program. These notifications shall be documented in the automated data system.

5.9.10 Founded disposition on a foster parent

([22 VAC 40-705-140 B2](#)). When the abuser or neglector in a founded disposition is a foster parent of the victim child, the local department shall place a copy of this notification letter in the child's foster care record and in the foster home provider record.

5.10 Conduct investigations involving public school employees

The Code of Virginia sets out special conditions when investigating complaints of abuse or neglect by public school employees in their official or professional capacity.

([§ 63.2-1511](#)). A. If a teacher, principal or other person employed by a local school board or employed in a school operated by the Commonwealth is suspected of abusing or neglecting a child in the course of his educational employment, the complaint shall be investigated in accordance with [§§ 63.2-1503](#), [63.2-1505](#), and [63.2-1516.1](#). Pursuant to [§ 22.1-279.1](#), no teacher, principal or other person employed by a school board or employed in a school operated by the Commonwealth shall subject a student to corporal punishment. However, this prohibition of corporal punishment shall not be deemed to prevent (i) the use of incidental, minor or reasonable physical contact or other actions designed to maintain order and control; (ii) the use of reasonable and necessary force to quell a disturbance or remove a student from the scene of a disturbance that threatens physical injury to persons or damage to property; (iii) the use of reasonable and necessary force to prevent a student from inflicting physical harm on himself; (iv) the use of reasonable and necessary force for self-defense or the defense of others; or (v) the use of reasonable and necessary force to obtain possession of weapons or other dangerous objects or controlled substances or paraphernalia that are upon the person of the student or within his control. In determining whether the actions of a

teacher, principal or other person employed by a school board or employed in a school operated by the Commonwealth are within the exceptions provided in this section, the local department shall examine whether the actions at the time of the event that were made by such person were reasonable.

B. For purposes of this section, "corporal punishment," "abuse," or "neglect" shall not include physical pain, injury or discomfort caused by the use of incidental, minor or reasonable physical contact or other actions designed to maintain order and control as permitted in clause (i) of subsection A or the use of reasonable and necessary force as permitted by clauses (ii), (iii), (iv), and (v) of subsection A, or by participation in practice or competition in an interscholastic sport, or participation in physical education or an extracurricular activity.

C. If, after an investigation of a complaint under this section, the local department determines that the actions or omissions of a teacher, principal, or other person employed by a local school board or employed in a school operated by the Commonwealth were within such employee's scope of employment and were taken in good faith in the course of supervision, care, or discipline of students, then the standard in determining if a report of abuse or neglect is founded is whether such acts or omissions constituted gross negligence or willful misconduct.

5.10.1 Additional requirements

CPS allegations against public school employees have additional considerations which go beyond the normal procedures and requirements for CPS investigations. See [Appendix A: Guide for Assessing Applicability of § 63.2-1511 in CPS Out-of-Family Investigations of School Employees](#) for further information.

5.10.1.1 Establish additional validity requirement

In addition to the four validity criteria for all CPS complaints or reports, pursuant to Code of Virginia [§ 63.2-1511.B](#), the LDSS shall consider whether the school employee used reasonable and necessary force to maintain order and control. The use of reasonable and necessary force does not constitute a valid CPS report.

5.10.1.2 “Gross negligence” or “willful misconduct” for founded disposition

When the investigation is completed, the standard to make a founded disposition in addition to the preponderance of the evidence is whether such acts or omissions constituted “gross negligence” or “willful misconduct.” Otherwise, such acts should be considered within the scope of employment and taken in good faith in the course of supervision, care or discipline of students.

The Supreme Court of Virginia defines “gross negligence” as “that degree of negligence which shows indifference to others as constitutes an utter disregard of prudence amounting to a complete neglect of the safety of [another]. It must be such a degree of negligence as would shock fair minded [people] although something less than willful recklessness.”²

The term “willful misconduct” is not commonly used, rather the most common term is “willful and wanton conduct,” which the Supreme Court of Virginia defines as follows:

In order that one may be [found to have committed] willful [sic] or wanton conduct, it must be shown that he was conscious of his conduct, and conscious, from his knowledge of existing conditions, that injury would likely or probably result from his conduct, and that with reckless indifference to consequences he consciously and intentionally did some wrongful act or omitted some known duty which produced the injurious result.³

The term “willful misconduct” is most often used in Workers’ Compensation cases. It refers to the behavior of the injured employee and usually means that the employee violated a rule or directive of the employer and that action led to the injury.

The courts have used the term “willful misconduct” in discussing cases of gross negligence. This definition of “willful and wanton conduct” is used to define “willful misconduct” in this manual. See [Appendix A: Guide for Assessing Applicability of § 63.2-1511 in CPS Out-of-Family Investigations of School Employees](#) for further information.

See [Appendix E](#) for a sample format for documenting a founded dispositional assessment. [Section 5.17.7](#) provides additional information to be included when making a finding on a school employee.

5.10.1.3 Mandatory timeframe to make disposition

Effective July 1, 2015, [§ 63.2-1505](#) mandates the LDSS to make the final disposition of any report involving a public school employee within the established timeframes. The finding must be completed and approved in the automated data system and notification made to the alleged abuser or neglecter according to the timeframes outlined in [§ 63.2-1505 B5](#).

² Ferguson v. Ferguson, 212 Va. 86, 92, 181 S.E.2d 648, 653 (1971); see also Meagher v. Johnson, 239 Va. 380, 383, 389S.E.2d 310, 311(1990).

³ Infant C. v. Boy Scouts of America, 239 Va. 572, 581, 391 S.E.2d 322, (1990).

(§ [63.2-1505 B5](#)). 5. Determine within 45 days if a report of abuse or neglect is founded or unfounded and transmit a report to such effect to the Department and to the person who is the subject of the investigation. However, upon written justification by the local department, the time for such determination may be extended not to exceed a total of 60 days or, in the event that the investigation is being conducted in cooperation with a law-enforcement agency and both parties agree that circumstances so warrant, as stated in the written justification, the time for such determination may be extended not to exceed 90 days. If through the exercise of reasonable diligence the local department is unable to find the child who is the subject of the report, the time the child cannot be found shall not be computed as part of the total time period allowed for the investigation and determination and documentation of such reasonable diligence shall be placed in the record. In cases involving the death of a child or alleged sexual abuse of a child who is the subject of the report, the time during which records necessary for the investigation of the complaint but not created by the local department, including autopsy or medical or forensic records or reports, are not available to the local department due to circumstances beyond the local department's control shall not be computed as part of the total time period allowed for the investigation and determination, and documentation of the circumstances that resulted in the delay shall be placed in the record. In cases in which the subject of the investigation is a full-time, part-time, permanent, or temporary employee of a school division who is suspected of abusing or neglecting a child in the course of his educational employment, the time period for determining whether a report is founded or unfounded and transmitting a report to that effect to the Department and the person who is the subject of the investigation shall be mandatory, and every local department shall make the required determination and report within the specified time period without delay;

5.10.2 Additional procedures for investigations involving public school employees

In addition to the investigation procedures and requirements for other OOF investigations noted in this chapter and in [Chapter 4, Family Assessment and Investigation](#), there are additional procedures applicable to reports involving public school employees.

(§ [63.2-1516.1](#)). Investigation procedures when school employee is subject of the complaint or report.

A. Except as provided in subsection B of this section, in cases where a child is alleged to have been abused or neglected by a teacher, principal or other person employed by a local school board or employed in a school operated by the Commonwealth, in the course of

such employment in a nonresidential setting, the local department conducting the investigation shall comply with the following provisions in conducting its investigation:

1. The local department shall conduct a face-to-face interview with the person who is the subject of the complaint or report.
2. At the onset of the initial interview with the alleged abuser or neglector, the local department shall notify him in writing of the general nature of the complaint and the identity of the alleged child victim regarding the purpose of the contacts.
3. The written notification shall include the information that the alleged abuser or neglector has the right to have an attorney or other representative of his choice present during his interviews. However, the failure by a representative of the Department of Social Services to so advise the subject of the complaint shall not cause an otherwise voluntary statement to be inadmissible in a criminal proceeding.

5.10.3 Additional notifications

- (§ [63.2-1516.1](#)). 4. Written notification of the findings shall be submitted to the alleged abuser or neglector. The notification shall include a summary of the investigation and an explanation of how the information gathered supports the disposition.
5. The written notification of the findings shall inform the alleged abuser or neglector of his right to appeal.
6. The written notification of the findings shall inform the alleged abuser or neglector of his right to review information about himself in the record with the following exceptions:
 - a. The identity of the person making the report.
 - b. Information provided by any law-enforcement official.
 - c. Information that may endanger the well-being of the child.
 - d. The identity of a witness or any other person if such release may endanger the life or safety of such witness or person.

5.10.3.1 Notify local school board when abuser is an employee

Pursuant to § [63.2-1505](#) of the Code of Virginia, if the abuser is a full-time, part-time, permanent, or temporary employee in a school division located within the Commonwealth, the LDSS shall notify the local school board of the founded disposition made after July 1, 2013 at the same time the subject is notified of the founded disposition. This includes in home investigations when the employee is the subject of the founded investigation involving his own children. Any information exchanged for the purposes of this subsection shall not be considered a violation of §§ [63.2-102](#), [63.2-104](#) or [63.2-105](#).

The LDSS may send a copy of the disposition letter to the subject of the complaint to the local school board to meet this notification requirement.

This notification/referral shall be documented in the automated data system.

5.10.3.2 Notify Superintendent of Public Instruction, Department of Education

Pursuant to [§ 63.2-1503 P](#) of the Code of Virginia, the LDSS shall notify the [Superintendent of Public Instruction](#), Department of Education (DOE) when an individual holding a license issued by the Board of Education is the subject of a founded complaint of child abuse or neglect and shall transmit identifying information regarding such individual if the LDSS knows the person holds a license issued by the Board of Education. This notification shall be made after all rights to any appeal provided by [§ 63.2-1526](#) of the Code of Virginia have been exhausted up to and including appeals to the circuit court. Any information exchanged for the purpose of this subsection shall not be considered a violation of [§§ 63.2-102](#), [63.2-104](#), or [63.2-105](#) of the Code of Virginia.

The Board of Education issues licenses to instructional personnel including teachers and other professionals and administrators. Refer to [Licensure Regulations for School Personnel](#) in the VAC.

The Board of Education does not license teacher aides, janitorial staff, and administrative support staff.

This notification requirement applies to all individuals holding a license even if that person is not currently employed by a local school board.

5.11 Interagency agreements with local school division for CPS complaints that require coordination

([§ 63.2-1511 D](#) of the Code of Virginia) Each local department and local school division shall adopt a written interagency agreement as a protocol for investigating child abuse and neglect reports. The interagency agreement shall be based on recommended procedures for conducting investigations developed by the Departments of Education and Social Services.

LDSS shall *adopt a written* interagency agreement for complaints of child abuse and neglect that require coordination between local departments and local school divisions to facilitate the investigation or family assessment. The LDSS shall no longer be required to report annually on the status of the interagency agreement to the Board of Social Services unless the interagency agreement is substantially modified. *When substantial modifications are made to an interagency agreement, the LDSS must notify the CPS Program Manager.*

A model agreement has been developed by the Virginia Department of Education and VDSS with participation of local school divisions and LDSS and can be found on the [interagency website](#) and in [Appendix B](#): Recommended Procedures for Local Agreements between Schools and Local Departments of Social Services.

5.12 Services to abuser/neglector in an OOF investigation

Services can be provided to an abuser/neglector in a founded OOF investigation when the risk assessment is high or moderate for the victim child or to other children to whom the abuser/neglector may have access.

Open the CPS on-going case in the name of the abuser/neglector in the automated data system.

5.13 Appendix A: Guide for Assessing Applicability of § 63.2-1511 in CPS OOF Investigations of School Employees

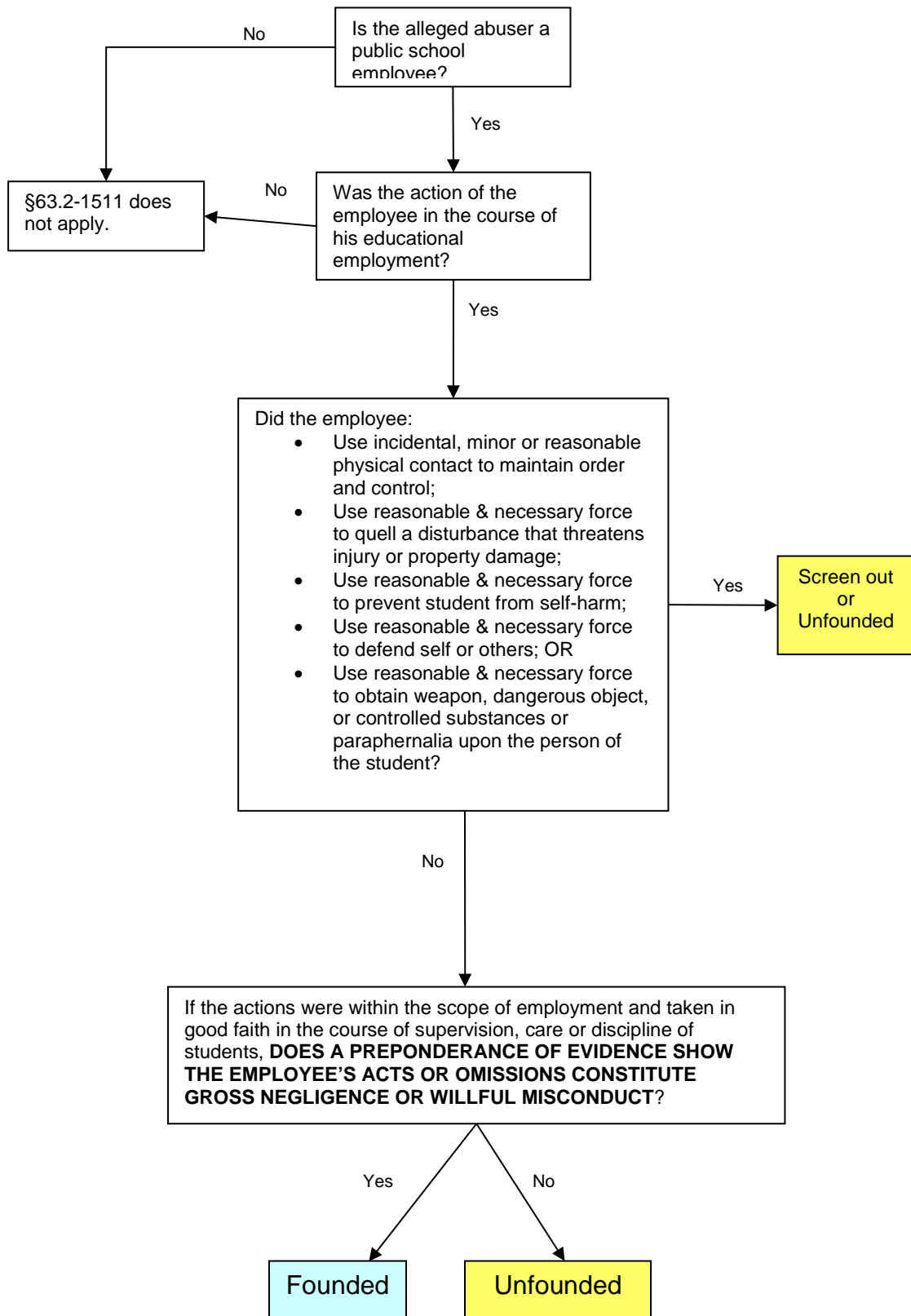
This document is intended as a guideline for CPS OOF investigations involving school personnel in order to review the requirements of [§ 63.2-1511](#) of the Code of Virginia which apply to screening validity and dispositional assessments. Section 5 of the CPS chapter provides additional guidance for LDSS in conducting CPS investigations in OOF settings including schools.

CPS allegations against public school employees have additional considerations which go beyond the normal procedures and requirements for CPS investigations. Obtaining a preponderance of evidence to support the standard of gross negligence and willful misconduct for school complaints is difficult considering that there are many players (e.g., school administrators, licensing/regulatory inspectors, law enforcement, parents, or the community) involved in the process. The statutory standard looks at the behavior of the alleged abuser/neglector which must rise to the level of gross negligence or willful misconduct. While this may not “feel” right for the parent, alleged victim, or others who may be impacted by the incident, this standard is set in statute.

In the flow chart that follows, at each decision point there is a list of corresponding discussion questions for consideration pertaining to [§ 63.2-1511](#) moving through the CPS decision process from validity through disposition for allegations against school employees. This is not an exhaustive list of questions (as there are always infinite facts/possibilities to consider in CPS), but a starting point to examine the unique circumstances of each allegation and investigation. Please note that in many circumstances, the answers to each question may not be clear until the investigation has been initiated and more information is needed to proceed through the decision tree, while the answer to other questions may become clear once the investigation comes to a close and an analysis is made.

As with any CPS report or investigation, it is critical to document the facts and evidence gathered to support assessment decisions. Dispositional documentation must address the unique requirements of [§ 63.2-1511](#) of the Code of Virginia related to public school employment, reasonable and necessary force, and gross negligence or willful misconduct.

ASSESSING APPLICABILITY OF §63.2-1511 FOR CPS INVESTIGATION



IS THE ALLEGED ABUSER/NEGLECTOR A PUBLIC SCHOOL EMPLOYEE?

If a teacher, principal or other person employed by a local school board or employed in a school operated by the Commonwealth is suspected of abusing or neglecting a child then proceed under § 63.2-1511. § 63.2-1511 does not apply to private schools or their employees who are solely licensed by the Commonwealth and not operated by the Commonwealth. When in doubt, verify with the Monitoring Specialist, Department of Education-State Operated Programs at (804)786-0581. Listings of private schools that are solely licensed by the state can be located at <http://www.vcpe.org/>.

(IF NO, § 63.2-1511 does not apply.)

IF YES,

WAS THE ACTION OF THE EMPLOYEE IN THE COURSE OF HIS EDUCATIONAL EMPLOYMENT?

Information to gather and consider may include, but is not limited to:

- Was the alleged abuser/neglector acting within the scope of his employment regarding supervision, care or discipline of students?
- What are the job duties, role and responsibilities of the alleged abuser/neglector? (As indicated by the alleged abuser, administrator, or collaterals?)
- Where did the incident occur and under what circumstances?
- Was the alleged abuser/neglector acting on an assignment as part of his employment?

(IF NO, § 63.2-1511 does not apply.)

IF YES,

DID EMPLOYEE USE INCIDENTAL, MINOR OR REASONABLE PHYSICAL CONTACT TO MAINTAIN ORDER AND CONTROL; USE REASONABLE AND NECESSARY FORCE TO QUELL A DISTURBANCE THAT THREATENS INJURY OR PROPERTY DAMAGE; USE REASONABLE AND NECESSARY FORCE TO PREVENT STUDENT FROM SELF-HARM; USE REASONABLE AND NECESSARY FORCE TO DEFEND SELF OR OTHERS; OR USE REASONABLE AND NECESSARY FORCE TO OBTAIN WEAPON, DANGEROUS OBJECT, OR CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES OR PARAPHERNALIA UPON THE PERSON OF THE STUDENT?

(§ 63.2-1511(A) "...prohibition of corporal punishment shall not be deemed to prevent (i) the use of incidental, minor or reasonable physical contact or other actions designed to maintain order and control; (ii) the use of reasonable and necessary force to quell a disturbance or remove a student from the scene of a disturbance that threatens physical injury to persons or damage to property; (iii) the use of reasonable and necessary force to prevent a student from inflicting physical harm on himself; (iv) the use of reasonable and necessary force for self-defense or the defense of others; or (v) the use of reasonable and necessary force to obtain possession of weapons or other dangerous objects or controlled substances or paraphernalia that are upon the person of the student or within his control.")

Information to gather and consider may include, but is not limited to:

- Was there a disturbance where the situation was out of control or going to get out of control?
- Did the alleged abuser use incidental, minor or reasonable physical contact or other actions designed to maintain order and control?
- Were there real or potential threats of physical injury to anyone or damage or potential damage to property?
- Was any student in danger of inflicting physical harm on himself? Were there any weapons, dangerous objects, controlled substances or paraphernalia involved in the incident?
- Was the level of force necessary? Were there any less restrictive or less forceful options used or available to control situation?
- If alleged abuser felt the need for self-defense, what was the perceived threat? What was said by victim, alleged abuser, or others? Were there other options available to the alleged abuser to defend himself before resorting to the use of force? Did the alleged abuser say anything to de-escalate or incite the situation? What explanation did the alleged abuser provide for behavior?
- What did victim and collaterals say about behavior of the alleged abuser/neglector?
- What are school policies regarding discipline, training, restraint, and escalating action?

IF YES, SCREEN OUT / UNFOUNDED: The use of reasonable and necessary force when acting to maintain order and control, quell a disturbance etc. does not constitute a valid report pursuant to [22VAC40-730-115 B1](#). Information to make this determination may not be available at initial intake; therefore, an investigation would be initiated. The investigation must be unfounded if after gathering evidence, the LDSS determines that the alleged abuser used reasonable and necessary force. **It is critical to document the facts and decision in the assessment of reasonable and necessary force.**

IF NO,

IF THE ACTIONS WERE WITHIN THE SCOPE OF EMPLOYMENT AND TAKEN IN GOOD FAITH IN THE COURSE OF SUPERVISION, CARE OR DISCIPLINE OF STUDENTS, DOES A PREPONDERANCE OF EVIDENCE SHOW THE EMPLOYEE'S ACTS OR OMISSIONS CONSTITUTE GROSS NEGLIGENCE OR WILLFUL MISCONDUCT?

Excerpt from CPS Manual Part V: "The Supreme Court of Virginia defines "gross negligence" as "that degree of negligence which shows indifference to others as constitutes an utter disregard of prudence amounting to a complete neglect of the safety of [another]. It must be such a degree of negligence as would shock fair minded [people] although something less than willful recklessness." In order that one may be [found to have committed] willful [sic] or wanton conduct, it must be shown that he was conscious of his conduct, and conscious, from his knowledge of existing conditions, that

injury would likely or probably result from his conduct, and that with reckless indifference to consequences he consciously and intentionally did some wrongful act or omitted some known duty which produced the injurious result.”

Information to consider may include, but is not limited to:

- Would behavior, action, or inaction of alleged abuser shock fair minded people?
- Should the alleged abuser know/suspect that outcome would occur? Was the alleged abuser aware that injury/threat of injury would likely occur based on evidence of similar incidents/history?
- Was there willful misconduct (deliberate, conscious decision to act or not act)?

IF NO = UNFOUNDED

IF YES,

FOUNDED

Analysis of preponderance of evidence clearly documents FACTS to support requirements of § 63.2-1511:

- Alleged abuser acting in good faith within the scope of employment as public school employee.
- Alleged abuser’s actions were not reasonable or necessary to quell disturbance etc.
- FACTS/EVIDENCE supports finding determination of gross negligence or willful misconduct.

It is critical to clearly document the assessment of these factors supported by evidence in the dispositional assessment.

5.14 Appendix B: Recommended Procedures for Local Agreements Between School Divisions and Local Departments of Social Services

The following model agreement has been developed by the Virginia Department of Education and the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) with participation from school divisions and local departments of social services (LDSS). This model offers recommended procedures to ensure the coordinated response to reports of child abuse and neglect that come to the attention of public school personnel. ([Revised August 2014](#))

5.14.1 Legal base

- The Code of Virginia § [63.2-1503](#) designates LDSS as the public agencies responsible for receiving and responding to complaints and reports of child abuse and neglect.
- The Code of Virginia §[63.2-1511.A](#) requires that complaints against teachers, principals or other local school board employees for child abuse and neglect be investigated in accordance with §§[63.2-1503](#), [63.2-1505](#) and [63.2-1516.1](#) of the Code of Virginia.
- The Code of Virginia §[63.2-1511.0](#) requires each local department of social services and school division to adopt a written interagency agreement as a protocol for investigation of child abuse and neglect reports.

5.14.2 School division employees' reports of suspected child abuse and neglect

5.14.2.1 Responsibilities of the school division

- The school division will provide information to its personnel regarding the child abuse and neglect requirements (Code of Virginia § [63.2-1509](#)) and local procedures for reporting suspected incidences of child abuse or neglect.
- The school division will identify one person to act as a liaison with the LDSS to facilitate communication and collaboration between both agencies.
- Pursuant to the Code of Virginia, § [63.2-1509](#), school division employees will report suspected child abuse and neglect within 24 hours of the first suspicion. School division employees shall have the following responsibilities:

- When a school division employee has information that a child under age 18 may be abused or neglected, the employee must immediately report such suspected child abuse or neglect to the LDSS or to the Virginia State Child Abuse Hotline, **1-800-552-7096**.
- The school division employee will inform his or her school's administrator or designee of the suspected child abuse or neglect according to the school division's policies and procedures.
- The school division employee will adhere to the school division procedures and policies as they pertain to documenting the submission of the CPS report of child abuse and neglect.

5.14.2.2 Responsibilities of the LDSS

- The LDSS will identify one person to act as liaison with the school division to facilitate communication and collaboration between both agencies.
- The LDSS will provide information to the school division about how to recognize and report suspected child abuse and neglect.

5.14.3 Investigation or family assessment involving a non-school employee

5.14.3.1 Responsibilities of the School Division

- The school site administrator, or designee, will cooperate with the CPS worker during an investigation or family assessment of child abuse and neglect by a non-school employee by providing the following resources:
 - Documentation and/or information relative to the complaint;
 - Pertinent directory information, such as the child and family's contact information;
 - A room or space to interview children and/or staff that ensures privacy and is free from interruptions. Pursuant to the Code of Virginia, [§ 63.2-1518](#), consent of the parent, legal guardian or school personnel to conduct the CPS interviews at school is not required.
- The [Federal Education Rights and Privacy Act](#) (FERPA) prohibits the sharing of student information without explicit parental consent unless the CPS worker has a court order to review the record. However, in an emergency or health/safety situation, the school could provide access to

the record. It is the responsibility of the school division to determine what constitutes an emergency.

5.14.3.2 Responsibilities of the LDSS

- The LDSS shall provide information to school division employees about the role and function of the LDSS in responding to reports of suspected child abuse and neglect.
- The LDSS shall have the capability of receiving reports on a 24-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week basis.
- The Code of Virginia, [§ 63.2-1503.1](#), requires the LDSS to determine the validity of all CPS reports. The Code of Virginia, [§ 63.2-1508](#) establishes the following elements for a valid report:
 - the alleged victim is under the age of 18 at the time of the report;
 - the alleged abuser is the alleged victim child's parent or other caretaker;
 - the local department receiving the report has jurisdiction; and
 - the circumstances describe suspected child abuse or neglect as defined in the Code of Virginia [§ 63.2-100](#).
- If the report is determined to be valid, the LDSS will conduct a family assessment or investigation.
- Upon receipt of the complaint, the LDSS CPS worker will conduct an immediate investigation or family assessment based on the assessed response time as determined by the CPS Intake Unit. The assigned CPS worker will contact the school site administrator or designee to:
 - Secure further information and/or documentation relative to the complaint;
 - Obtain the child and family's contact information;
 - Arrange to see and interview the child and siblings at school when necessary. Pursuant to the Code of Virginia, [§ 63.2-1518](#), consent of the parent, legal guardian or school personnel to conduct the CPS interviews at school is not required.
- The CPS worker may take photographs of the alleged child victim at school. Consent of the parent or other person responsible for such child

to take photographs is not required pursuant to [§ 63.2-1520](#) of the Code of Virginia.

- If the initial report was made by a school employee, that individual shall receive a written communication from the LDSS informing them that the investigation or family assessment has been completed and a description of the actions taken.
- Pursuant to the Code of Virginia, [§ 63.2-1505.B7](#), if the abuser is a full-time, part-time, permanent or temporary employee in a school division located within the Commonwealth, the LDSS shall notify the relevant school board of the founded disposition. This includes founded dispositions in investigations involving the employee's own children or children in the care of the employee.

5.14.4 Investigation of child abuse or neglect by a school employee in the course of his/her employment

5.14.4.1 Responsibility of school division

- During an investigation of child abuse or neglect by a school employee in the course of his/her employment, the school site administrator or designee will determine if he or she will participate in the planning of a joint investigation or if there is a conflict of interest.
- The school site administrator or his or her designee will provide logistical support and information to the CPS worker to assist in the investigation to include:
 - A room or space to interview children and/or staff that ensures privacy and is free from interruptions;
 - An escort for the CPS worker to the site of the alleged abuse or neglect;
 - Pertinent policies and procedures, such as those related to the use of reasonable force and the use of appropriate restraining techniques;
 - Records and written statements pertaining to the alleged abuse or neglect;
 - Names, functions and roles of the involved parties;
 - Work schedules and contact information of staff;

- Contact information of non-victim children's parents/guardians in order to obtain permission for the CPS worker to interview them.

5.14.4.2 Responsibilities of the LDSS

- The LDSS shall provide information to the school division about the role and function of the LDSS in responding to reports of suspected child abuse and neglect by employees of the school division.
- The LDSS will investigate a complaint of suspected child abuse or neglect involving a teacher, principal or other public school employees pursuant to §§ [63.2-1503](#), [63.2-1505](#) and [63.2-1516.1](#) of the Code of Virginia.
- The LDSS will conduct an immediate investigation upon receipt and validation of a report about suspected incidents of child abuse or neglect by a school employee.
- The LDSS will keep the school site administrator or designee apprised of the investigation's status.
- The LDSS will make a disposition within 45 days, or 60 days when an extension is documented to be necessary, or 90 days if the investigation is being conducted with law enforcement pursuant to § [63.2-1505](#) of the Code of Virginia.
- The Code of Virginia, § [63.2-1511.C](#), requires the CPS worker to determine that there was willful misconduct or gross negligence by the school employee in addition to the standard requiring a preponderance of the evidence for a founded disposition.
- The CPS worker shall provide both verbal and written notification of the findings to the site administrator and the school division's superintendent ([22VAC 40-730-110](#)). The written notification must include:
 - The identity of the abuser/neglector and victim, the type of abuse/neglect and the disposition;
 - A summary of the investigation and how the disposition is supported.
- If the initial report was made by a school employee, that individual shall receive a written communication from the LDSS informing them that the investigation has been completed and a description of the action taken.

- Pursuant to [§ 63.2-1503.P](#) of the Code of Virginia, the LDSS shall notify the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Virginia Department of Education, when an individual holding a license issued by the Board of Education is the subject of a founded complaint of child abuse or neglect and shall transmit identifying information regarding the individual to the Board of Education after all rights to any appeal provided in Code of Virginia, [§ 63.2-1526](#) have been exhausted.

5.14.5 Information sharing and confidentiality

- Information shall be shared between the CPS Unit of the LDSS and the school division that is accurate, complete, timely, and pertinent so as to ensure fairness in determination of the disposition of the complaint.
- All information gathered as a result of a child abuse and neglect investigation or family assessment shall be treated confidentially, in accordance with applicable social services and education requirements.
- The [Federal Education Rights and Privacy Act](#) (FERPA) prohibits the sharing of student information without explicit parental consent unless the CPS worker has a court order to review the record. However, in an emergency or health/safety situation, the school could provide access to the record. It is the responsibility of the school division to determine what constitutes an emergency.

5.14.6 Execution of agreement

- The LDSS and school division shall report annually on the status of this agreement to the State Board of Social Services and to the Board of Education, respectively. Once this interagency agreement is adopted, an annual report is not necessary unless the agreement has been substantially modified.
- This Agreement shall become effective immediately upon signature of both parties. Signature of both parties shall constitute acceptance of this Agreement as well as assurance of the distribution and implementation of the procedures described herein. This Agreement shall be reviewed by both parties on a periodic basis or as needed.

5.15 Appendix C: Checklist for OOF investigations

	CPS RESPONSIBILITY	DATE	CONTACT INFORMATION
1.	Receive report and enter into OASIS.		
2.	Report to Commonwealth Attorney and law enforcement all class 1 misdemeanors /felonies, as per local guidelines.		
3.	Contact CPS Program Consultant (plan investigation strategy).		
4.	If report involves school personnel, refer to Appendix A: Guide for Assessing Applicability of § 63.2-1511 in CPS OOF Investigations of School Employees for guidance on these investigations.		
5.	Contact Regulatory agency, obtain name of staff who will investigate report jointly.		
6.	Contact that regulatory staff person to coordinate strategy of investigation.		
7.	Contact facility administrator to inform of impending visit (or announce presence to administrator upon arrival to facility).		
8.	Meet the licensing or regulatory person, if possible, at facility and go together to meet the administrator. Explain differing roles and expectations.		
9.	Advise administrator (or designee) of the allegations in the complaint. Invite their input for preliminary plans.		
10.	Request of administrator the following resources, as appropriate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private room/space to interview staff and children • Accompaniment to site of alleged abuse • Pertinent policies, records, guidelines • Names, function, roles of all involved parties • Work schedules of alleged abuser/neglector and other staff witnesses • Phone numbers of staff witnesses • Phone number and address for the alleged abuser 		

	CPS RESPONSIBILITY	DATE	CONTACT INFORMATION
11.	<p>Interview the victim child(ren).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The parent, guardian or agency holding custody should be notified in advance; when not practical shall notify as soon as possible. • CPS determines who can be present during this interview. • Record interview. 		
12.	<p>Determine immediate Safety (if unsafe and child needs to be removed then the parent, guardian or agency holding custody shall be notified to mutually develop a safety plan).</p>		
13.	<p>Interview collateral children.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before interviewing collateral children, consent of the child's parent, guardian, or agency holding custody should be obtained. 		
14.	<p>Interview alleged abuser/neglector.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer electronic recording and provide written notification. 		
15.	<p>Interview collateral staff witnesses.</p>		
16.	<p>Interview victim's parent, guardian or agency holding custody.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They should be informed early in the process about the report. The investigative process should be explained. Obtain information about their knowledge of the allegations and the facility. They should be kept involved in the planning and support of the victim child. 		
17.	<p>Keep the facility administrator apprised of the progress of the investigation. If working jointly with regulatory agency, CPS may decide who will perform these progress reports.</p>		
18.	<p>Although statutory authority for the disposition rests with the local agency, at the conclusion of the investigation the CPS worker shall contact the CPS Program Consultant to review the case prior to notifications being sent. This review should include supervisor if possible.</p>		

	CPS RESPONSIBILITY	DATE	CONTACT INFORMATION
19.	Notifications of disposition made to all parties. The alleged abuser/neglector and facility administrator should be verbally notified promptly. The alleged abuser should be notified first or at least at same time the facility administrator is notified.		
20.	Written report of the findings shall be submitted to the facility administrator and the involved regulatory staff person or school superintendent. This report shall include identification of the alleged abuser and victim as well as a summary of the investigation with an explanation of how the information supports the disposition. A copy of this report shall be sent to the abuser/neglector along with the letter of notification and rights of appeal.		
21.	Written notification of findings sent to the parent, guardian or agency that has custody. A verbal follow up is also encouraged. Parents should be advised that the victim (s) names will be purged after 30 days unless they make a request to keep listed in OASIS.		
22.	Notify the Superintendent of Public Instruction when the subject of founded investigation holds a license issued by the Board of Education. This notification is to be sent only after all administrative and judicial appeals have been exhausted.		
22.	Post-investigative treatment services may be provided as needed by local agency to the child, family or abuser. Post-investigative corrective action follow up with the facility is the responsibility of the regulator and facility administration.		
23.	ALL contacts are documented in OASIS.		

5.16 Appendix D. Sample Letters of Notification for OOF Investigations

5.16.1 Founded, abuser

DATE

**ALLEGED ABUSER
ADDRESS**

Dear **ALLEGED ABUSER**:

Thank you for your cooperation during the recent investigation. We are writing to inform you of the disposition of the investigation in which you were named as the alleged abuser/neglector. The report was made in reference to **CHILD(REN) NAMES**. After a thorough investigation and review with my supervisor, we have made a disposition of Founded, (**pick one**) **LEVEL ONE, TWO or THREE** for (**pick all that apply**) **PHYSICAL ABUSE; PHYSICAL NEGLECT; MEDICAL NEGLECT; SEXUAL ABUSE; OR MENTAL ABUSE/NEGLECT. (IF MORE THAN ONE TYPE OF ABUSE/NEGLECT OR DIFFERENT LEVELS, ADD SENTENCE FOR EACH; CAN ALSO INCLUDE ANY UNFOUNDED DISPOSITIONS IN SAME LETTER)** "Founded" means that a review of the facts shows by a preponderance of the evidence that child abuse or neglect has occurred.

CHOOSE ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:

A level ONE includes those injuries/conditions, real or threatened, that result in or were likely to have resulted in serious harm to a child. **OR** A level TWO includes those injuries/conditions, real or threatened, that result in or were likely to have resulted in moderate harm to a child. **OR** A level THREE includes those injuries/conditions, real or threatened, that result in or were likely to have resulted in minimal harm to a child.

The parents of the victim child(ren) if not you, have been informed of this disposition. The person who made the report has been advised it is complete and necessary actions have been taken.

CHOOSE ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:

As a result of this disposition, your name and the child's name will be placed in the Virginia Child Abuse and Neglect Central Registry based on the level that was assessed. For founded investigations, level one, names and records are kept for 18 years from the date of the complaint if there are no subsequent reports of child abuse/neglect regarding the same child(ren) or alleged abuser/neglector. **OR** For founded investigations, level two, names and records are kept for 7 years from the date of the complaint if there are no subsequent reports of child abuse/neglect regarding the same child(ren) or alleged abuser/neglector. **OR** For founded investigations, level three, names and records are kept for 3 years from the date of

the complaint if there are no subsequent reports of child abuse/neglect regarding the same child(ren) or alleged abuser/neglector.

OR IF THE INVESTIGATION WAS SEXUAL ABUSE, LEVEL ONE

For founded investigations, level one, names and records are kept for 18 years from the date of the complaint if there are no subsequent reports of child abuse/neglect regarding the same child(ren) or alleged abuser/neglector. Because this investigation involved serious sexual abuse of a child the investigation record shall be maintained by this agency for 25 years past the date of the complaint pursuant to §63.2-1514 A of the Code of Virginia; however, this retention time will not be reflected in the Central Registry past the purge date of 18 years.

Pursuant to §63.2-1526 of the Code of Virginia, you have the right to appeal this decision. A request to appeal this decision must be made in writing to the director of this agency within thirty (30) days of receipt of this notification. The enclosed brochure, entitled "Child Protective Services Appeals and Fair Hearings" explains the appeals process in more detail. Upon written request, you also have the right receive all information used in making this determination except the name of the complainant and any information that would endanger the safety of any child. Additionally, if you have been charged criminally for the same conduct involving the same child as in this investigation, the appeal process shall be stayed until completion of all criminal prosecution. Your right to access the records of this investigation is also stayed. A written request to appeal this decision must still be submitted within thirty (30) days of receipt of this notification even if there are criminal charges.

(SUMMARY OF INVESTIGATION)

Enclosed is a summary of our investigation and an explanation of how the information gathered supports the founded disposition. **(CAN INSERT SUMMARY HERE)**

As required, we are providing a copy of this notification and summary of findings to the facility administrator or designee and any regulatory agency staff involved in the investigation at the same time we notify you of the disposition.

IF ABUSER IS EMPLOYEE OF A SCHOOL DIVISION IN VIRGINIA, ADD:

Pursuant to §63.2-1505 of the Code of Virginia, if you are a full-time, part-time, permanent, or temporary employee in a school division located within the Commonwealth, we are required to notify the local school board of this founded disposition. If you hold a license issued by the Virginia Department of Education we are required to notify the Superintendent of Public Instruction after all rights of appeal have been exhausted.

INCLUDE IF NEEDED:

Pursuant to §63.2-1503(N) of the Code of Virginia, we are required to notify the family advocacy representative of the United States Armed Forces if *the investigation involved child(ren) of an active duty member of the United States Armed Forces.*

If you have any questions, please contact me at (____)____-____.

Sincerely,

CPS WORKER NAME
CPS SUPERVISOR NAME

Cc: Facility Administrator
Regulatory Staff

Enclosures: Child Protective Services Appeals and Fair Hearings
Summary of Investigation

5.16.2 Founded, parent, non-custodial parent or legal guardian

DATE

PARENT, NON-CUSTODIAL PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN
ADDRESS

Dear **PARENT, NON-CUSTODIAL PARENT, LEGAL GUARDIAN:**

Thank you for your cooperation during the recent investigation. We are writing to inform you of the disposition of the investigation in which **CHILD(REN) NAMES** were listed as the alleged victim(s). The allegation(s) investigated pertained to **(CHOOSE ALL THAT APPLY) PHYSICAL ABUSE; PHYSICAL NEGLECT; MEDICAL NEGLECT; SEXUAL ABUSE; MENTAL ABUSE/NEGLECT** by **ALLEGED ABUSER NAME**. After a thorough investigation of the facts and review with my supervisor, a disposition of founded, **LEVEL ONE , TWO, OR THREE** has been made. "Founded" means that a review of the facts shows by a preponderance of the evidence that child abuse or neglect has occurred. A level **ONE** includes those injuries/conditions, real or threatened, that result in or were likely to have resulted in serious harm to a child. **OR** A level **TWO** includes those injuries/conditions, real or threatened, that result in or were likely to have resulted in moderate harm to a child. **OR** A level **THREE** includes those injuries/conditions, real or threatened, that result in or were likely to have resulted in minimal harm to a child.

As a result of this disposition, the alleged abuser/neglector's name will be placed in the Virginia Child Abuse and Neglect Central Registry based on the level that was assessed.

CHOOSE ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:

For founded investigations, level one, names and records are kept for 18 years from the date of the complaint if there are no subsequent reports of child abuse/neglect regarding the same child(ren) or alleged abuser/neglector.

OR For founded investigations, level two, names and records are kept for 7 years from the date of the complaint if there are no subsequent reports of child abuse/neglect regarding the same child(ren) or alleged abuser/neglector.

OR For founded investigations, level three, names and records are kept for 3 years from the date of the complaint if there are no subsequent reports of child abuse/neglect regarding the same child(ren) or alleged abuser/neglector.

OR (IF THE INVESTIGATION WAS SEXUAL ABUSE, LEVEL ONE)- For founded investigations, level one, names and records are kept for 18 years from the date of the complaint if there are no subsequent reports of child abuse/neglect regarding the same child(ren) or alleged abuser/neglector. Because this investigation involved serious sexual abuse of a child the investigation record shall be maintained by this agency for 25 years past the date of the complaint pursuant to §63.2-1514 A of the Code of Virginia; however, this retention time will not be reflected in the Central Registry past the purge date of 18 years.

Your child's name will be retained in the Central Registry for **30 days**. If you want your child's name to remain in the Central Registry for as long as the record of this investigation is retained, send a letter to:

Virginia Department of Social Services- CPS Unit
801 East Main Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Include your child(ren)'s name(s), date of birth, address and description of your relationship to the child.

If you have any questions or if this agency can be of further assistance, please contact me at () _____- ____.

Sincerely,

CPS WORKER NAME
CPS SUPERVISOR NAME

5.16.3 Unfounded, alleged abuser

DATE

**ALLEGED ABUSER
ADDRESS**

Dear **ALLEGED ABUSER**:

Thank you for your cooperation during the recent investigation. We are writing to inform you of the disposition of the investigation in which you were named as the alleged abuser/neglector. The report was made in reference to **CHILD(REN) NAMES**. The allegation(s) investigated pertained to **(CHOOSE ALL THAT APPLY) PHYSICAL ABUSE; PHYSICAL NEGLECT; MEDICAL NEGLECT; SEXUAL ABUSE; MENTAL ABUSE/NEGLECT**. As a review of the facts did not show a preponderance of evidence that abuse or neglect had occurred, we have made a disposition of unfounded. The person who made the report, if known, has been informed of this disposition.

Records of unfounded investigations are kept for one year from the date of the complaint if there are no subsequent reports of child abuse/neglect regarding the same child(ren) or alleged abuser/neglector pursuant to §63.2-1514 B of the Code of Virginia. You may request in writing to have the records of this investigation maintained for a period of time not to exceed two years pursuant to §63.2-1514 B of the Code of Virginia.

You have the right to petition the court to obtain the identity of the reporter if you believe the report was made in bad faith or maliciously pursuant to §63.2-1514 D of the Code of Virginia. If the court determines the report was made maliciously, you may present court documents to this agency and request all case records regarding this report be purged immediately.

IF THE INVESTIGATION WAS A CHILD FATALITY, ADD:

This investigation involved the death of a child, therefore, the record will be retained for the longer of 12 months or until the State Child Fatality Review Team has completed its review of the case pursuant to § 32.1-283.1 D of the Code of Virginia.

INCLUDE IF NEEDED:

Pursuant to §63.2-1503(N) of the Code of Virginia, we are required to notify the family advocacy representative of the United States Armed Forces if the investigation involved child(ren) of an active duty member of the United States Armed Forces or a member of their household.

If you have any questions or if this agency can be of further assistance, please contact me at ()
_____ - ____.

Sincerely,

CPS WORKER NAME

CPS SUPERVISOR NAME

5.16.4 Unfounded, parent, non-custodial parent or legal guardian

DATE

**PARENT, NON-CUSTODIAL PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN
ADDRESS**

Dear **PARENT, NON-CUSTODIAL PARENT, LEGAL GUARDIAN:**

Thank you for your cooperation during the recent investigation. We are writing to inform you of the disposition of the investigation in which **CHILD(REN) NAMES** were listed as the alleged victim(s). The allegation(s) investigated pertained to **PHYSICAL ABUSE; PHYSICAL NEGLECT; MEDICAL NEGLECT; SEXUAL ABUSE; MENTAL ABUSE/NEGLECT** by **ALLEGED ABUSER/NEGLECTOR NAME**. As a review of the facts did not show a preponderance of evidence that abuse or neglect had occurred, we have made a disposition of unfounded.

Records of unfounded investigations are kept for one year from the date of the complaint if there are no subsequent reports of child abuse/neglect regarding the same child(ren) or alleged abuser/neglector pursuant to §63.2-1514 B of the Code of Virginia. The alleged abuser/neglector may request the record be maintained an additional year.

IF THE INVESTIGATION WAS A CHILD FATALITY, ADD:

This investigation involved the death of a child, therefore, the record will be retained for the longer of 12 months or until the State Child Fatality Review Team has completed its review of the case pursuant to § 32.1-283.1 D of the Code of Virginia.

INCLUDE IF NEEDED:

Pursuant to §63.2-1503(N) of the Code of Virginia, we are required to notify the family advocacy representative of the United States Armed Forces if the investigation involved child(ren) of an active duty member of the United States Armed Forces or a member of their household.

If you have any questions or if this agency can be of further assistance, please contact me at ()
_____ - ____.

Sincerely,

CPS WORKER NAME

CPS SUPERVISOR NAME

5.17 Appendix E: Dispositional Assessments (sample template)

The following information is provided as an optional template for information that should be included in the dispositional assessment for a founded disposition.

5.17.1 State the date of supervisory staffing and names of participants.

Example: On January 1, 2016, this investigation was staffed for disposition and approved by CPS Supervisor Walter.

5.17.2 State the disposition regarding by whom to whom.

Example: The disposition of this investigation is founded for Physical Neglect (Inadequate Supervision) of Johnny Doe by his mother, Jane Doe.

5.17.3 Cite the specific regulatory definition for the type of abuse or neglect.

Example: Physical Neglect is defined in regulation: (22 VAC 40-705-30 B). Physical neglect occurs when there is the failure to provide food, clothing, shelter, or supervision for a child to the extent that the child's health or safety is endangered. This also includes abandonment and situations where the parent or caretaker's own incapacitating behavior or absence prevents or severely limits the performing of child caring tasks pursuant to § 63.2 –100 of the Code of Virginia. This also includes a child under the age of 18 whose parent or other person responsible for his care knowingly leaves the child alone in the same dwelling as a person, not related by blood or marriage, who has been convicted of an offense against a minor for which registration is required as a violent sexual offender pursuant to § 9.1-902. Additionally: (22 VAC 40-705-30 B1). Physical neglect may include multiple occurrences or a one-time critical or severe event that results in a threat to health or safety.

5.17.4 Summarize the evidence/facts that support the founded disposition.

It is NOT necessary to restate the entire investigation. Use a list or paragraph format. Be sure to include first source evidence.

Example: The following evidence does show by a preponderance of the evidence that this is founded:

On December 10, 2015, two year old Johnny Smith was found by “LOCAL” law enforcement without any supervision in the car registered to Jane Doe in the parking lot of the “LOCAL” mall located at corner of Main and 8th Street.

According to the police report and statement of LOCAL law enforcement, the daycare provider, Jane Doe, did not arrive at the scene until 20 minutes after the police arrived and she stated that she had just run into the store to return an item. See full police report located in hard file.

The child, Johnny Smith, was examined by EMS and no further medical attention was required.

The daycare provider, Jane Doe stated to CPS worker that she had left the child in the car because he was asleep. She stated she had locked the doors and left the windows cracked open. She stated she did not think she was going to be gone for very long.

5.17.5 State the level for the founded disposition and cite the regulation.

Example: This was determined to be a level 2 finding for physical neglect (inadequate supervision). A level 2 is defined in regulation: (22 VAC 40-705-110). Level 2. This level includes those injuries/conditions, real or threatened, that result in or were likely to have resulted in moderate harm to a child.

5.17.6 Summarize the rationale for the assessed level.

Example: CPS guidance suggests that for neglect situations, a level 2 is indicated when “the child’s minimal needs are sporadically met for food, clothing, shelter, supervision or medical care; or there is a pattern or one-time incident related to lack of supervision that caused or could have caused moderate harm”. The rationale for assessing as level 2 includes that this was a one-time incident where a two year old child was without any supervision or care and while the child was not actually harmed, the potential for harm existed. This two year old child was unable to protect himself or make any decisions regarding his safety and well-being.

5.17.7 Other considerations.

When applicable add additional definitions and how the evidence supports the definition.

- Documentation- (required for certain findings such as emotional abuse)

Example: CPS guidance (Section 2.6.3 of the VDSS Child and Family Services Manual, Chapter C. July 2017) “when making a founded disposition of mental abuse or mental neglect, the CPS worker must obtain documentation supporting a nexus between the actions or inactions of the caretaker and the mental dysfunction demonstrated by the child or the threat of mental dysfunction.” Ms. Eckstein, LCSW, stated in a letter to DSS dated 1-10-2016 that the victim child is exhibiting significant signs of post-traumatic stress syndrome due to the chronic exposure to domestic violence between the parents. See hard copy file for complete letter.

- Credibility- (suggested when the credibility of the child victim could be questioned)

Example: The victim child’s statements about the incidences of sexual abuse were determined to be credible and believable due to the advanced level of details provided. Additionally, the child included in her disclosure that the alleged abuser told her this would be their “own private secret game” and that she should not tell anyone else about it.

- Caretaker- (particularly important to clarify if the role of caretaker is not obvious)

Example: Mr. Jones was determined to be a caretaker in this incident because not only did he reside in the family home; he was left in charge of the children on numerous occasions when the parents went to work.

- Jurisdiction- (important if there is any question as to where the abuse or neglect occurred, more important for criminal proceedings)
- Threat of Harm- If there is no actual injury, it is helpful to explain what a threat of harm constitutes. Remember, case law supports that an actual injury does not need to occur.

Example: The fight between the victim child and the involved caretaker included a time when the caretaker pointed a loaded gun at the victim child and said “everyone would be better off if they were just dead” however, it did not result in a physical injury. If the caretaker had followed through with pulling the trigger, the child could have died. This is considered threat of harm as defined in CPS guidance (Section 2.2 of the VDSS Child and Family Services Manual, Chapter C. October 2016) which states “The CPS worker must consider the circumstances surrounding the alleged

act or omission by the caretaker influencing whether the child sustained an injury or whether there was a threat of an injury or of harm to the child. The evidence may establish circumstances that may create a threat of harm.”

- *Out of Family- Employees of Public Schools.*

*In addition to the required elements of a founded disposition, in all investigations involving public school employees, the local agency must document the evidence that supports that the employee acted with **gross negligence** or **willful misconduct**. These two elements are crucial when making a finding on any investigation that involves a school employee in the course of their employment. Local agencies must have detailed documentation that correlates the actions of the employee with injury or knowledge that the action will result in an injury.*

Example: Ms. Smith, victim child’s teacher, acted with gross negligence when she failed to provide proper supervision by allowing the five year old victim child to leave the rest of the class to go to the restroom alone, while on a field trip to the zoo. The victim child was found approximately thirty minutes later by security wandering around the zoo crying.