

Initial Contact Guide

- ☐ Give an appropriate greeting
Say "hello," "good morning," or "good afternoon," etc.
- ☐ Identify yourself
Say your first and last name and the Department that you are there representing. Do not use acronyms (e.g. ODHS). Be sure to show your ID and provide the person with your business card.
- ☐ Make sure you are speaking with the correct person
Ask the person to verify their first and last name. For example, "I need to speak with Judith Rich, are you Ms. Judith Rich?"
- ☐ State the reason you are there
Use clear, concise, non-threatening language to briefly state the reason for your visit. Avoid using terms such as 'abuse,' 'neglect,' and 'child abuse hotline.' For example: "I am here to talk with you about a report of concern regarding your children playing unattended in the parking lot." or "A report was made to our department regarding the condition of your home."
- ☐ Ask permission to enter home
Obtain permission to enter the home. For example: "May I come in to talk with you about the report we received?" Make sure to get permission before entering. Once in the home, ask the person how they prefer to be addressed (i.e., Ms., Mr. by their first name, etc.)
- ☐ Ask if anyone else is present in the home
Ask who else is in the home at that time. This is important for several reasons: 1) personal safety; 2) client confidentiality; and 3) knowing if there is someone else in the home whom you will need to talk with.

□ Address any reactions presented

Strategies to address reactions include:

- Empathy – “I can see you are upset. I would be upset too if someone showed up at my house unannounced.” “I can see you are upset. I can understand that this might be upsetting to you.”
- Asking questions – “May I take a few minutes to explain my role a little more and what you can expect from this visit?” “What are you most worried about?” “What can I do to make this easier for us to talk?” “What can I do for you that will make this easier for you?”
- Provide information – “You do have rights in this process. I would like to be able to share with you the information I have received and hear your perspective.”
- Present options – “If you don’t want me to come in, would it be alright if we talked on the porch for a few minutes?” Or “Is there a better time today that we could talk?”
 - Note: Only use this option if there is not a concern of present danger. Always consider your contact requirements; you must make diligent efforts to meet your required contact timelines in order to ensure child safety.

If an individual does not want to engage in a conversation or if you feel unsafe at any time, it is okay to remove yourself from the situation. Call your supervisor as soon as you return to your car to get further guidance. Depending on the concern, your supervisor may want you to call law enforcement for assistance.

Keep in mind that most reactions can be navigated successfully when we treat people with respect and empathy and provide information about the process. Ask yourself: “Why are we at their doorstep?” “What are their rights in this process?” and/or “What will we do with the information they provide us?”

☐ Provide and review the DHS 1536

Prior to leaving the home, provide the parent with a copy of the 1536 and spend time going through the pamphlet with the parent to ensure they are aware of their rights. Be transparent with the parents about what they can expect from you during the CPS assessment. Confirm that parents are provided with your contact information and the contact information for your supervisor.

☐ Inquire about ICWA, share why we ask this question and complete the CF 1270

Ask parents about any American Indian or Alaskan Native ancestry as well as tribal affiliation.