

# How to Engage a Reporter



*This job aid will give ideas on how to put the reporter at ease and explain the CPS process.*

## Interview with Reporter

### Steps to start and end the conversation

- Establish positive contact
- Address the reporter's emotional needs
- Explain the function of access
- Interview to gather additional information
- Formulate and describe next steps
- Close the conversation

The tips below remind you what to do before and during the interview to support a positive and productive experience. Next, a script is suggested for a standard Access interview. Each step is highlighted above the text so the reader can see the sequence.

### Tips

- ✓ Start by answering with a smile, convey warmth, and security in your tone
- ✓ Count to 10 (silently) after asking a question, this gives the reporter time to think and respond
- ✓ Remember to soften your face and relax it during the call so that your voice has inflection and isn't tense or flat

## Establish positive contact

*"Hello! You have reached \_\_\_\_\_ Child Protective Services, or CPS. Do you have a concern about a child or children?"*

*Ok, you've reached the right place. To ensure your concern is heard, I will ask you a series of questions that will help us make a sound decision about what to do next.*

*The interview typically takes \_\_\_\_\_ minutes from start to finish. Will that work with your schedule?"*

When reporters do not have the time it will take, prioritize and ask information about Present Danger. Let the reporter know you will prioritize the questions and ask the most important ones right away (Maltreatment, Injury/Condition, and Child Functioning sections of the report).

## Address the reporter's emotional needs

*"It's common for people to experience a wide range of emotions during the interview. When someone is concerned about a child's safety it is typical to feel disappointed, frustrated, and relieved. Sometimes people feel all three at once. It's also common for people to tell me they feel guilty for calling or guilty for not calling sooner. All these feelings are ok.*

*During the interview, please feel free to tell me what you need. For example, I've been asked to slow down, restate a question, or explain the reason for my question. Please don't hesitate to let me know what I can do. It's my job to support the most productive use of our time."*

## Explain the function of Access

*"I want to provide some general information about CPS before we get started. Next, I'll share what to expect during and after our interview.*

*First, Child Protective Services (CPS) is a specialized field of the Child Welfare System. My job today is to gather enough information to identify if a child may be unsafe, abused or neglected, or be at risk of abuse or neglect.*

*Once I gather the information, I'll advance it to a CPS supervisor. The supervisor reviews the information and makes the decision about what to do next. For that reason, I will not be able to provide you with a decision at the end of the interview."*

## Explain how to gather their information and what happens next

*"Now, I have some questions to ask you that will help us better understand your concerns and what is going on with the family. I may need to stop you or ask for clarification on my end. If I do that, I intend to gather complete information for our decision, not to interrupt you!"*

### Tips

- ✓ Allow the reporter time to describe the situation or reason for the contact
- ✓ Ask questions to clarify information
- ✓ Give the reporter space to speak freely, identify them as a partner, don't leave them feeling like they made a mistake or were a part of an interrogation

## Formulate and describe next steps



*“Thank you for taking the time to answer my questions. Like I mentioned earlier, it is my job to gather enough information to identify if a child may be unsafe, abused or neglected, or be at risk of abuse or neglect.*

*Your job of notifying CPS of your concern is done; however, I’d like to gather some final information on what you think should happen next.*

*Thank you for your ideas. Like I mentioned earlier, I will now advance the information to a CPS supervisor for review. The CPS supervisor decides within 24 hours of this interview, sometimes sooner when the situation is urgent. If I need additional information from you to help us decide, what is the best phone number to reach you at?”*

## Close the conversation



*“Ok, before we end the interview, what remaining questions do you have for me?”*

*Thank you for your concern for the children. We appreciate your call.”*