

Voluntary Agency Access to the CPS Investigation Stage
Build 18 9 3_FAQ_All_Forums_Final
Questions and Answers

Common Abbreviations used in this Q and A:

- CPRS – Child Protective Record Summary – the tabbed presentation within the CONNECTIONS CPS Investigation stage (INV) in which CPS staff document activities associated with a CPS investigation
- CPS – Child Protective Services
- DC/FC – Day Care/Foster Care Investigation (investigations involving children in day care or family foster care homes, including supervised independent living programs and agency operated boarding homes)
- FSS – Family Services Stage (the component in CONNECTIONS in which staff document work in ongoing foster care or preventive services cases)
- Implied role – see first question, below
- IAB – Institutional Abuse Investigation (investigations involving children in congregate care)
- INV – Investigation Stage (see CPRS)
- LDSS – Local Department of Social Services
- PID – Person Identifier (the unique number associated with a person in CONNECTIONS)
- VA – Voluntary Agency (including preventive services/contract agency)

HOW THE SYSTEM WORKS

Can you explain what is meant by “implied role”?

If a stage you have a role in shares a person in common (has the same Person Identification) with another stage or case, you have an implied role in the related stage or case. Implied role means that you have a person in a stage on your Assigned Workload in common with a stage that is not on your workload. Although you do not have an *assigned* role in the other stage, a role is *implied* by virtue of the shared person. Implied role provides view-only access to these other stages.

Will CPS have access to view CPS history for stages that are in other local districts?

Yes, as has been the case since the beginning of CONNECTIONS, if the CPS worker has an implied role in the other district’s stage.

Will the information VA workers now have access to be "read only"?

Yes, VA workers will be able to view, but not modify information for a familial under investigation stage or familial indicated INV stage.

Will Person Search allow VA workers access to INV information?

No, VA workers will access INV information through an implied role path from the workload of the FSS stage that has the person in common with the INV.

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Will VA workers be able to view the CPS Intake stage?

No.

Will VA workers be able to view the Intake Narrative in the INV stage?

No, the Intake report narrative and the Miscellaneous Information will not be enabled for VA workers who access an INV stage.

Will VA workers be able to see a history of unfounded investigations?

No, VA staff will not be able to see any unfounded investigation stages, however, CPS staff may identify specific information from an Unfounded INV stage that is relevant to the current investigation, such as establishing a pattern of neglect that could not be substantiated previously, and make the determination that it is appropriate to include such information from the prior unfounded investigations into a current under investigation stage. VA workers will be able to see that information.

Will VA workers have historical access to an INV stage after their case is closed?

No. VA workers that access a closed case through historical access will not be able to use the implied role to access the INV stage.

Are VA unit approvers/supervisors able to view/access the CPS investigation?

Yes, VA unit approvers or supervisors that have access to a worker's workload will access the workload of their staff and use the implied role to view the INV stage.

How much history will VA workers see?

VA staff with an implied role will be able to view indicated or open Familial INV stages that were initiated on or after January 1, 2006.

Why go back only to January 1, 2006?

This limitation is necessary to secure the identity of the reporter/source in these investigations. With Build 18, CONNECTIONS was enhanced to include a specific location and progress note value within the INV stage progress notes to record the contact a CPS worker has with the source of the report. That data field is now secure (inaccessible to VA staff) and will enable the CPS worker to appropriately document their contact with the source but also protect the identity of the reporter/source. With the full statewide implementation of Build 18 in October, 2005 all CPS staff were trained on how to correctly use new progress notes values and to minimize the risk of unauthorized access to reporter/source information. All CPS investigation stages effective 1/1/2006 should have all identifying information related to the reporter/source appropriately documented and safeguarded.

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Are VA workers able to see INV stage progress notes?

Yes, with the exception of those progress notes where CPS workers select the “Reporter/Source” value in the “Other Participant” field.

Can VA workers document progress notes in the INV stage?

No, VA workers only have view access to an INV. VA workers may not be assigned a role in an INV stage.

Will VA nurses that have a role in the FSS have access to the INV?

Yes, they will have access to the INV. Agencies should review their security and determine if it is appropriate to provide health staff with a role in a case or modify their security access to support “Maintain Health” and/or “View Health” only. These staff may get all necessary access to the Health Services tab in the FSS through the “Maintain Health” or “View Health” business function instead of giving them a role in the case.

Should there be a limit on the number of role assignments an agency makes in order to enhance security?

An LDSS or VA should be judicious in the assignment of roles in order to limit access to CONNECTIONS stages based on a given staff person’s “need to know” discrete types of confidential information and their specific job duties.

Is there a report to identify who is accessing the CPRS?

No, there is no report to tell someone who went through implied role to view a CPRS.

Will VA workers be able to view an INV stage if it is marked sensitive?

FSS stages marked sensitive will be able to be seen but only by the VA worker with a role. VA workers will not have access to INV stages that have been marked sensitive.

Can a foster care agency view an INV stage that is made on an agency licensed foster parent?

No, unless there is familial INV stage involving the foster parent’s birth/adopted child who is in an FSS in which the agency has a role, and the foster child is listed on that report.

Will VA workers have access to an INV on a person for whom they conducted a database check?

No, unless the VA worker has a role in an open FSS that includes that person.

Will LDSS foster care workers have access to DC/FC stages?

No, FAD and foster care workers will continue to receive alerts, but will not be able to access the stages.

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Will the DC/FC cases display on the person list?

Yes, the cases will be returned to the case list, however, when the Summary button is selected a message will be displayed to the user stating that “Case cannot be viewed by Voluntary Agency staff.”

Will LDSS workers get access to IAB stages?

No.

Will VA workers be able to view DC/FC or IAB reports that involve their agency?

No, VA workers will only be able to view familial INV stages in which they have an implied role.

When will VA workers get an alert about CPS cases?

Workers with an implied role in a new familial INV will receive an alert notifying them of the existence of a new report. An alert will be sent regarding each “person in common” in the new report. When a report is determined any worker assigned to a FSS that is within the same case number as the INV will receive an alert regarding the outcome of the investigation. VA workers who have a role in the FSS stage will also receive an alert when an INV is merged into the case in which the FSS is also a stage.

When a report has been unfounded are VA workers informed it has been unfounded?

Yes. They will no longer be able to access the stage but if they had an implied role in the case and the INV and FSS stages have the same case number, one of the following two alerts is generated: “INV Stage <Stage ID> has been determined as Indicated in Case <Case Number>” or “INV Stage <Stage ID> has been determined as Unfounded in Case <Case Number>”

Under what circumstances would VA workers fail to receive an alert if person in an FSS is named in a new CPS report?

Possibly the person has a separate PID in the new INV. CONNECTIONS only recognizes an individual contained in different stages as a “person in common” if that person the same PID.

Will the alert of a new INV and the determination go to Case Planner’s supervisor and all caseworkers on the case?

An alert will go to all workers with a role in a stage within the same case umbrella. The unit approver/supervisor will not receive an alert.

What alerts will VA workers get with DC/FC stages?

VA workers will get the same alerts that they do now. If the VA worker has an implied role in the INV, the worker will get an alert but will not have access to the INV information.

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Will the LDSS Case Manager's supervisor get the alert in the CM's absence?

No.

Will the new alert look the same as other alerts?

Yes, the alerts will look the same as they do now. VA workers will see a new disclaimer window when they open an INV stage through implied role that reminds them of the protected information contained in the stage. OCFS will explore whether it is possible to make these alerts more visible.

Can events be searched and sorted-to help identify a specific event?

The only events VA workers will see are the CPRS, the 24 Hour Fatality Report and the 30 Day Fatality Report. Event Search is disabled.

Are progress notes in the FSS stage for Foster Care or Preventive Service cases expunged when a case is unfounded?

No, the FSS is not affected if an INV stage that involves a person in common with that FSS is unfounded.

Who will tell VA workers to expunge or amend a record?

This should be not applicable; VA workers should not maintain records related to the INV stage, so there should be no electronic or printed materials that need to be expunged.

Why is having a single PID for a person important? Whose responsibility is it to make sure it is accurate?

Associating all of the information pertaining to a given person under a single person identifier (PID) is necessary to best protect the safety of children and most appropriately address the service needs of family members. The ability of staff serving the family to receive alerts and have access to current and historical information pertinent to their work with the family will be impeded if persons are known by different PIDs in CONNECTIONS. There will be no access via implied role if the person is known by another PID. Generally, it is the responsibility of the LDSS to merge persons, although who specifically within a LDSS is responsible will vary.

Can VA workers print any of the parts of the CPS investigation stage?

Not while the investigation is in process. After the investigation has been indicated, VA workers may print specific tabs (e.g., progress note tab). OCFS recommends that indicated INV stage information not be printed in general. The Generate Report button, which CPS workers use to print an entire CPRS, is not enabled for VA workers. . If any information is printed, it should be shredded when the involvement for the case ends.

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Should a VA worker print a copy of the CPS investigation for agency records?

No. VA workers should not print material from INV stages. The information is available in CONNECTIONS and there is no reason for the VA to maintain a hard copy record.

How will differential response (dual track) CPS reports impact VA worker's access to INV stages?

Unknown at this time as that process has not been developed yet.

SOURCE INFORMATION

How do CPS workers securely document the reporter/source information?

CPS workers are required to enter any identifying information related to contacts with the reporter/source in the INV stage progress notes only; using the "Reporter/Source" value in the "Other Participant" field. VA workers do not have access to this type of progress note. CPS workers should not record any reporter/source identifying information in any other narrative field within the INV. Identifying information includes, the name, address, telephone number, organization, etc. that could potentially identify the source of the report.

Can VA workers see the reporter/source progress note?

No.

If the source is mistakenly identified in a frozen note, field or other narrative, is there a way to go back and correct this? What should the agency do?

VA workers should notify the LDSS and report the matter to the Help Desk.

The VA worker should not re-disclose this information to any other party.

Can the source be mentioned if it has already been revealed by a third party (i.e. police) or by the source itself (i.e. relative)?

No, CPS and VA workers are still bound by the requirements not to re-disclose the identity of the source.

Are law enforcement staff bound the same rules of confidentiality of the reporter/source?

Yes, law enforcement personnel are bound by the same requirement not to identify the reporter/source of a CPS report.

How do VA workers document contacts with the source (i.e. school nurse, relative) in the FSS progress notes or other narratives if the source is known to us?

VA workers should document contacts with the person who is the reporter/source without specifying that the person is the source.

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In the role as mandated reporters, VA workers may advise the clients that they have filed a report. Is that revealing the source?

It is revealing a source, however, the source can give consent to release the information thus, VA workers may discuss with clients that they have made a report without violating confidentiality requirements.

Should VA workers document in CONNECTIONS that they have made a report?

Yes, workers should document in a progress note that they made a report, including instances where the State Central Register does not accept the report. This note remains in progress notes even if the report is subsequently unfounded since the fact that the worker fulfilled a legal mandate should be preserved in the record.

PRACTICE

A VA may receive physical custody of a child before VA workers are assigned a role in a case. How will the workers access the INV stage information?

Traditional communication (telephone, conference) is still necessary. This is a reason to assign VA staff a role as soon as possible. When VA workers are assigned a role in the case, they can review the INV stage using the implied role at that point

How do CPS workers differentiate what type of information is put into a concurrent FSS stage progress note or narrative?

Contact information that pertains to changes in the provision of services to the family should be recorded in the FSS. Contact information that pertains to the conduct of the CPS investigation should be recorded in the INV stage.

Can VA workers refer to and discuss allegations from the CPS investigation with clients?

VA workers should focus on the facts underlying their assessment of family needs and the delivery of services to the family without specific reference to the existence of allegation in a CPS report.

How do VA workers record that they reviewed a CPS report and reviewed and developed a safety plan?

The VA worker should record a review of safety issues without specific reference to the existence of a CPS report. It is also appropriate to document conversations with CPS workers, including information received, again, without specific reference to the existence of a report. Workers should note their own activities in a case, such as joint contacts, but not record the CPS worker's activities.

Should the VA workers document if they accompany a CPS worker on a visit?

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Yes, but just address issues and the substance of the contact, not the existence of a CPS report.

What information can the VA worker share with other program areas (i.e. Independent Living, Medical staff, etc.) that do not have a role in CONNECTIONS?

To the extent that information contained in an INV stage is important to the provision of services, it should be shared with program staff within the agency. The standard for sharing information is “need to know,” that is, the information a co-worker in your agency need to know in order to perform their duties to provide services and support the child and family effectively.

Do VA workers have to testify to the information found in the CPS investigation, since now it is known to them?

Generally, VA workers testify in court to their record, as opposed to the LDSS CPS record. VA workers should consult their agency’s counsel for direction on specific cases.

In NYC, are Preventive Services contract agencies allowed to stop recording progress notes online in a FSS once an INV stage tied to the FSS is unfounded?

If the case is an ADVPO, Preventive Services contract agencies are allowed to discontinue recording progress notes on line after the unfounded determination has been approved and the case is not open with a choice of Protective or Placement. If the case is a CWS, they should continue to record progress notes online until the case becomes an ADVPO FSS stage. The reverse is also true; if an ADVPO case is open and the worker receives an alert that there is an open investigation, the worker MUST immediately begin doing progress notes online in CNNX.

IMPLEMENTATION

Will training/technical assistance be provided to VA workers regarding the Child Protective Record Summary?

A video conference targeted to line staff was held on September 12, 2007. A CD of this video conference is available by contacting the CONNECTIONS regional office representative for your LDSS or VA. In addition, the SUNY Training Strategies Group will release a job aid that contains information concerning the contents of the CPRS on or about October 15, 2007.

What topics of discussion should occur between LDSS and voluntary agencies? Should districts establish written agreements with their agency partners?

LDSS’s are encouraged to meet with VA staff to develop local protocols for the handling of open service cases when there is a new CPS report, as well as define their expectations of how VA staff use the CPS information to which they now have access. OCFS has no position relative to whether an LDSS should enter into a written agreement with its contract agencies regarding this access.