

**INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES
ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

Policy Number: EA-5

Effective Date: July 1, 2011

Version: 3.0

POLICY TITLE: CONSTITUENT CORRESPONDENCE

OVERVIEW: All correspondence shall receive a professional and timely response that addresses the specific needs outlined in the original communication. Any correspondence addressing issues that are technical in nature, including but not limited to, Department of Child Services (DCS) policy, Indiana Code, Federal law and/or legislation, must be forwarded to the Constituent Services Representative for processing.

I. DEFINITIONS

- A. Correspondence: Any communication addressed to or received by DCS. Correspondence may come from the Governor's Office, a Legislator, another State or non-governmental agency, or a constituent. Correspondence may be in the form of a letter, an email, a fax, or a telephone call.
- B. Constituent Services Representative: The Central Office Representative responsible for overseeing the process of responding to correspondence.
- C. Subject Matter Expert: A staff person identified as being knowledgeable of a specific DCS program and/or procedure.
- D. Constituent: Any individual who is not an employee of DCS who communicates an inquiry or concern to DCS staff.

II. REFERENCES

- A. [DCS Communication with Legislators Policy](#)
- B. [DCS Media Contact Policy](#)
- C. [IC 5-14-3: Access to Public Records](#)

III. POLICY

- A. Any and all correspondence received by DCS that is received by the DCS Director, Central Office, or the Governor's Office will be tracked by the Constituent Services Representative. This correspondence may be in the form of a letter, email, fax, or a telephone call. All correspondence received from the media shall be addressed in accordance with the [DCS Media Contact Policy](#).
- B. Correspondence received at the program or DCS local office level that is general in nature may be answered by the Program or DCS Local Office Director. Examples include but are not limited to, local service overviews and programmatic questions from local service providers. These types of correspondence are considered routine business communications and do not need to be reported to the Constituent Services Representative. The only exception to this reporting requirement is communication with Legislators and media, which should be handled in accordance with the [DCS Communication with Legislators Policy](#) and [DCS Media Contact Policy](#).
- C. All correspondence addressing issues that are technical in nature, including but not limited to, DCS policy, Indiana Code, Federal law and/or legislation, must be forwarded within three (3) business days to the Constituent Services Representative for processing.

- D. All correspondence shall be responded to in the same format as the original communication, unless otherwise instructed. Example: an emailed inquiry will receive an emailed response. All individuals carbon copied (cc'd) on the original communication should be included on the response.
- E. All written responses must be developed in a manner consistent with the guidelines provided by the Office of the Governor.
- F. The Communications Director must approve all responses written for the Governor's signature prior to submission to the Office of the Governor.

IV. PROCEDURE

- A. **[REVISED]** Field Operations (Field Ops)
 - 1. Upon receipt of correspondence the Constituent Service Representative will determine the county and region of origin of the issue discussed in the correspondence. The Constituent Service Representative will assign the correspondence to the proper DCS Local Office Director for a response within five (5) business days. The Regional Manager will be copied on all correspondence. The DCS Local Office Director and/or Regional Manager (RM) will send a copy of their response to the constituent in the same form as it was originally received within five (5) business days. For example, a letter is returned with a letter and an email with an email.
 - 2. Upon receipt of a telephone complaint, the Family Case Manager (FCM) will attempt to resolve the complaint. If the constituent is dissatisfied and requests to speak to a Supervisor, the FCM will advise the constituent of DCS internal protocol for handling such complaints. Unresolved internal calls received by the FCM's should be referred to a Supervisor.
 - 3. If still unresolved or dissatisfied, the constituent will be given the DM's information (if applicable) then the Local Office Director (LOD) and continue up the chain of command to the RM.
 - 4. The DCS Local Office Director and/or Regional Manager will send a copy of the response in form of an email to the Constituent Service Representative and carbon copy (cc) the RM. The Constituent Services Representative will log the response into the state's database for tracking purposes.
- B. Constituent Services Representative
 - 1. The Constituent Services Representative will develop a system for processing correspondence, assigning subject matter experts, tracking response details, and assuring local concerns have followed the appropriate chain of command.
 - 2. The Constituent Services Representative will distribute a written copy of the above mentioned process to all staff involved in responding to correspondence.
 - 3. The Constituent Services Representative will produce a bi-weekly report summarizing all correspondence-related activities.
 - 4. The Constituent Services Representative will maintain a record of all constituent correspondence.
 - 5. The Constituent Service Representative will send a follow-up letter to the constituent advising them that DCS has received the inquiry and confirm a reply to the inquiry was sent by the DCS Local Office Director and/or Regional Manager. The follow-up letter will offer the constituent a mailing address, telephone number and the main Constituent Service email address if they are in need of additional assistance.

DATE: 6/17/11
James W. Payne, Director
Department of Child Services

A signed copy is on file.

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