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September 2025 | OAS-25-01-011

West Virginia Did Not Comply With Intake, Screening, Assessment, and Investigation Requirements for Responding to Reports of Child Abuse and Neglect



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Why OIG Did This Audit

- Abuse and neglect against a child by a parent, caregiver, or another person can have a long-term impact on the child's health, opportunity, and well-being. Abuse can be physical, sexual, or emotional in nature. Neglect is a failure to meet the child's basic needs, such as housing, food, clothing, education, and access to medical care.
- This audit is part of a series that examines States' compliance with the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act's requirements for the intake, screening, assessment, and investigation of reports of child abuse and neglect. Based on our risk assessment and West Virginia news outlets that reported the high-profile death related to child neglect of a teenager, we selected West Virginia for audit.

What OIG Found

On the basis of our sample results, we estimated that 91 percent of the 100 screened-in family reports for our audit period were not in compliance with 1 or more requirements related to the intake, screening, assessment, and investigation of child abuse and neglect.

Number of Reports	Deviation from Requirements	Number of Reports	Deviation from Requirements
74	A written notification letter was not sent to maltreaters, parents or caregivers.	41	Mandated reporters did not receive notification of whether the referral had been accepted for assessment or screened out.
61	Initial assessments were not completed within 30 days of receiving a referral.	9	Safety plans were not completed.
41	Interviews with children or adults were not completed.	8	Impending safety threats (risk assessments) were not always completed.

What OIG Recommends

We made four recommendations, including that West Virginia take the appropriate steps to ensure that child welfare workers perform all required procedures, provide training, develop a system edit, and develop written policies and procedures. The full recommendations are in the report. West Virginia concurred with all four recommendations, and outlined actions that it has taken and plans to take to address our recommendations.

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INTRODUCTION

WHY WE DID THIS AUDIT

Abuse and neglect of a child under the age of 18 by a parent, caregiver, or another person in a custodial role can have a long-term impact on the child's health, opportunity, and well-being. Abuse can be physical, sexual, or emotional in nature. Neglect is a failure to meet the child's basic needs, such as housing, food, clothing, education, and access to medical care. Without effective State oversight to ensure that all reports of child abuse and neglect are responded to in accordance with policies and procedures, the safety of children cannot be assured.

The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) provides funds to assist States in child abuse and neglect prevention, assessment, investigation, prosecution, and treatment activities. In federal fiscal year 2024, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) awarded \$103.2 million in CAPTA State grant funding to 50 States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico to improve their child protective services.

This audit is part of a series that examines States' compliance with CAPTA requirements for the intake, assessment, screening, and investigation of reports of child abuse and neglect.¹ To identify high-risk States, we conducted a risk assessment and compared several factors including the percentage of population in poverty, rate of child fatalities, and percentage of reoccurrence of maltreatment. Based on our risk assessment and West Virginia news outlets that reported the high-profile death related to child neglect of a teenager, we selected West Virginia for audit. In addition, according to various news articles, the state's Child Protective Services (CPS) workforce is overburdened with the child welfare system and have for years failed to investigate around half of child abuse reports in the required timeframe.² Our audit focused on the reports of child abuse and neglect that occurred within a family in which the suspect is the primary caregiver, or third-party perpetrator.³

¹ OIG, [Maine Did Not Comply With Screening, Assessment, and Investigation Requirements for Responding to Reports of Child Abuse and Neglect \(A-01-23-02500\)](#), Nov. 2024. Separately, OIG conducted a prior study to assess how ACF ensures that all child victims of abuse and neglect have their best interests represented in court, as required: OIG, [ACF Cannot Ensure That All Child Victims of Abuse and Neglect Have Court Representation](#) (OEI-12-16-00120), Feb. 2021.

² *News From The States*, "[Justice: Child Protective Services didn't know about Boone girl found dead in a 'skeletal state'](#)," April 23, 2024. Accessed on Oct. 24, 2024.

³ Third-party perpetrator refers to a person who abuses or neglects a child whose care and supervision is not their responsibility.

OBJECTIVE

Our objective was to determine whether the West Virginia Department of Human Services, Bureau for Social Services (BSS), complied with requirements for the intake, screening, assessment, and investigation of reports of child abuse and neglect.

BACKGROUND

CAPTA Grants to States

CAPTA was enacted in 1974 at a time of growing awareness and concern about abuse of children in their homes. The law has been reauthorized and amended several times, most recently being reauthorized in December 2010, and amended in January 2019.⁴ The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 included \$100 million in supplemental CAPTA State grant funding with a 5-year project and expenditure period from October 1, 2020, to September 30, 2025.⁵ Within ACF, the Children's Bureau administers CAPTA State grants. To apply for CAPTA grant funding, a State must submit a plan describing the activities that the State will carry out using this funding. This State plan must include an assurance signed by the Governor of the State certifying, among 30 other requirements, that the State has in effect and is enforcing a State law, or has in effect and is operating a statewide program, related to child abuse and neglect that includes provisions and procedures requiring the immediate screening, risk and safety assessment, and prompt investigation of reports of child abuse and neglect.⁶ West Virginia's CAPTA plan included the required certification, signed by the Governor on September 29, 2011, certifying that it has in effect and is enforcing a State law or has in effect and is operating a State program that includes procedures for the immediate screening, risk and safety assessment, and prompt investigation of reports of child abuse and neglect.

West Virginia Department of Human Services, Bureau for Social Services

Within the West Virginia Department of Human Services (the Department), BSS is the designated State entity for the CAPTA State Grant. Within the BSS Child Protective Services

⁴ CAPTA was originally enacted Jan. 31, 1974 (P.L. 93-247), and was last reauthorized on Dec. 20, 2010, by the CAPTA Reauthorization Act of 2010 (P.L. 111-320). It was amended in 2015, 2016, and 2018, and most recently certain provisions of the act were amended on Jan. 7, 2019, by the Victims of Child Abuse Act Reauthorization Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-424). CAPTA is codified at 42 U.S.C. §§ 5101–5115.

⁵ P.L. 117-2 (Mar. 11, 2021), § 2205.

⁶ 42 U.S.C. § 5106a(b)(2)(B)(iv). State plans remain in effect for the duration of the State's participation in the CAPTA program. States are required to periodically review and revise the Plan as necessary to reflect changes in State strategies and programs. States are required to inform the Children's Bureau of any substantive changes to its laws or regulations related to child abuse and neglect that may affect their eligibility for CAPTA State funding (42 U.S.C. §§ 5106a(b)(1)(B) and (C)).

Policy, sections 2 and 3 outlines the requirements for Child Protective Services.⁷ Specifically, BSS referrals accepted for assessment must be transmitted promptly to the appropriate district by the Centralized Intake Unit (CIU). BSS is responsible for the investigation of reports of child abuse and neglect and must assess the safety of all children in the home, choose suitable treatment plans, and continually evaluate the effectiveness of those plans. As outlined within West Virginia's CPS policy, an effective intake assessment depends on successfully gathering sufficient and relevant information that reveals whether there is reasonable cause to suspect that child abuse or neglect exists. The Department provides a toll-free number for child abuse and neglect reports and operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, including weekends and holidays. Reports can also be received via email or fax, which is only available for mandated reporters (i.e., medical and healthcare providers, educators, etc.). Walk-ins are directed to use the hotline telephone at the office.

Intake Assessment

In West Virginia, the "intake assessment" is the first assessment within CPS. When the CIU receives a report of child abuse and neglect that occurred within a family in which the suspect is the primary caregiver, or third-party perpetrator, the intake child welfare worker is responsible for gathering information from the reporter, such as whether there is reasonable cause to suspect that child abuse or neglect exists, indicate the alleged category (abuse or neglect) and type of maltreatment (physical injury or mental or emotional injury, sexual abuse, etc.). The CIU worker will then provide the referral report to the supervisor for review and decision making regarding acceptance (screened-in report)⁸ and determining a response time.⁹ If the report is accepted, the CIU supervisor will electronically transmit the referral report to the appropriate initial assessment supervisor to be assigned to a child welfare worker as soon as possible, but no later than the next working day. The CIU supervisor is also required to ensure that all mandated reporters receive notification of whether the referral has been accepted for assessment or screened out.

If a suspected act of serious physical injury, sexual abuse, or sexual assault to a child is alleged, the CIU supervisor must forward a copy of the referral to the appropriate law-enforcement

⁷ The Child Protective Service policies are located in [Section 2, Intake Assessment](#) and [Section 3, Initial Assessment](#). Accessed on Nov. 6, 2024.

⁸ A screened-in report is a referral or report alleging child abuse or neglect by a parent, guardian, or custodian that meets the definition of abused or neglected child according to W.V. Code, chapter 49.

⁹ The response time is measured from the date and time the report is received at the CIU, until face-to-face contact with the alleged child victim and is the maximum amount of time that the child welfare worker has to assess immediate safety threats and gather information to complete the initial assessment. A 24-hour response time is required if an immediate safety threat is identified unless the child is with a protective caregiver. A 72-hour or 14-day response time indicates that face-to-face contact must be made with the children within that timeframe (CPS Policy, § 2.5 Response Times).

agency, prosecuting attorney, coroner, or medical examiner's office. The referral must be forwarded regardless of the screening decision.

Initial Assessment

In West Virginia, the "initial assessment" is the second assessment within CPS and encompasses the risk and safety assessments and investigations that focus on addressing the allegations of abuse and neglect with a family centered approach. Sufficient information is collected during this time to make necessary initial assessment decisions. Once the report is assigned to a child welfare worker within the district where the alleged abuse occurred, the child welfare worker must conduct interviews with all parents and caregivers, children, and other adults residing in the home. Specifically, individual, in-person, and private interviews must be conducted with all children in the home within the response time designated at intake (i.e., 24 or 72 hours, or 14 days). If verification of all children residing in the home cannot be obtained and all efforts have been exhausted, the child welfare worker must document those efforts made, sources contacted, and information reviewed. In addition, individual, in-person, and private interviews must be conducted with all parents and caregivers in the home. The caregivers should be contacted the same day, or as soon as possible, as the child victim unless contact will jeopardize the safety of the child or if extenuating circumstances exist.

Immediate safety threats may be identified during the initial assessment and, if identified, a temporary protection plan must be implemented prior to leaving the family or situation. When considering and identifying any impending safety threats, the child welfare worker will use 11 standardized impending safety threats to assess the child's safety. The identification of any one of the 11 impending safety threats (risk assessment) means that a child is in a state of danger and is unsafe. (See Figure 1 on the next page.)

Figure 1: West Virginia's 11 Impending Safety Threats

1	Living arrangements seriously endanger a child's physical health.
2	Family does not have resources to meet basic needs.
3	One or both caregivers intend to hurt the child.
4	Child is perceived in extremely negative terms by one or both caregivers.
5	The caregiver is unwilling or unable to perform parental duties and responsibilities, which could result in serious harm to the child.
6	One or both caregivers fear they will maltreat their child and/or are requesting placement.
7	One or both caregivers lack parenting knowledge, skills, or motivation which affects child safety.
8	The caregiver's drug and/or alcohol use is pervasive and threatens child safety.
9	One or both caregivers are violent; this includes domestic violence or general violence.
10	One or both caregivers cannot control behavior.
11	Child has exceptional needs which the caregivers cannot or will not meet.

Evaluating the child's safety is separate from determining whether child abuse or neglect has occurred. The safety decision must be based upon the findings of impending safety threats. Determining whether children are safe or unsafe and whether there needs to be ongoing child protective services is documented in the safety evaluation conclusion (safety assessment) and must be completed in all initial assessments. The following determinations may be made:

- **Safe:** The children are safe because no impending safety threats were identified. Based on currently available information, there are no children that are likely to be in danger of serious harm. No safety plan is needed at this time.
- **Unsafe:** The children are unsafe because one or more impending safety threats were identified that threaten the children's safety.

Safety analysis and planning must be completed in all situations with which the children are identified as unsafe and in need of protection. The safety analysis will determine the level of CPS involvement with the family in order to manage the impending safety threats and ensure that the child is safe. The safety plan must be implemented the same day that children were identified as in need of protection because of the safety evaluation conclusion.

The maximum timeframe to complete the initial assessment is within 30 days from when the referral came into the CIU. To conclude the initial assessment, the child welfare worker will electronically submit the case to the supervisor for review and approval. If extenuating circumstances have prevented the completion of the initial assessment within the timeframe, the child welfare worker must request approval of an extension from the supervisor.

Upon supervisory approval of the initial assessment, a notification letter is completed and mailed to the parties and documented within the system. If the finding of maltreatment of abuse or neglect was unsubstantiated, the notification letter will be completed and mailed to the parties. If the finding of maltreatment of abuse or neglect was substantiated, a notification letter will be printed and signed by the child welfare worker.¹⁰ Each individual maltreater listed in the intake or assessment will receive a separate notification letter via certified mail. This must also include a return receipt for each individual letter requested within 15 days of the substantiated maltreatment. In addition, if the child has been maltreated or is determined to be unsafe, the parent who is not subject of the initial assessment must be notified, by either calling or making face-to-face contact, to discuss the safety of the child, unless the information would be seriously detrimental to the best interest of the child. If the worker is unable to contact this parent, a letter should be sent to notify the parent that the child is unsafe and provide contact information for the child welfare worker and supervisor. All attempts to contact and completed contacts should be documented in the system.

HOW WE CONDUCTED THIS AUDIT

We obtained and reviewed data from West Virginia's Child Welfare Information System, known as People's Access to Help (PATH), for 23,759 screened-in family reports of child abuse and neglect for the period of October 1, 2023, through September 30, 2024 (audit period). We selected a simple random sample of 100 screened-in family reports of child abuse and neglect received during our audit period and reviewed related case information from PATH. For each sample item, we determined whether BSS complied with the requirements for the intake, screening, assessment, and investigation of reports of child abuse and neglect.

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

¹⁰ An unsubstantiated finding lacks evidence of abuse or neglect through an initial assessment/investigation against a parent, guardian, or custodian, according to the W.Va. Code, chapter 49, definition of abused or neglected child. A substantiated finding means there is evidence of abuse or neglect through an initial assessment/investigation against a parent, guardian, or custodian, according to W.Va. Code, chapter 49, definition of abused or neglected child.

Appendix A contains the details of our audit scope and methodology, Appendix B contains our statistical sampling methodology, and Appendix C contains our sample results and estimates.

FINDINGS

BSS complied with requirements for the intake, screening, assessment, and investigation of reports of child abuse and neglect for 9 of the 100 screened-in family reports in our sample but did not comply with all State requirements for the remaining 91 reports.

The BSS State plan includes a certification that its CAPTA program has procedures for the intake, screening, assessment, and investigation of reports of child abuse and neglect. However, BSS officials stated these procedures were not always followed because child welfare workers, who were carrying higher caseload due to staffing shortages, prioritized conducting child interviews over administrative functions such as sending out notification letters to parents or caregivers. Failure to comply with requirements places the children's health and safety at risk. In addition, BSS stated that it is difficult to retain staff and fill vacant positions, which contributed to the higher caseloads.

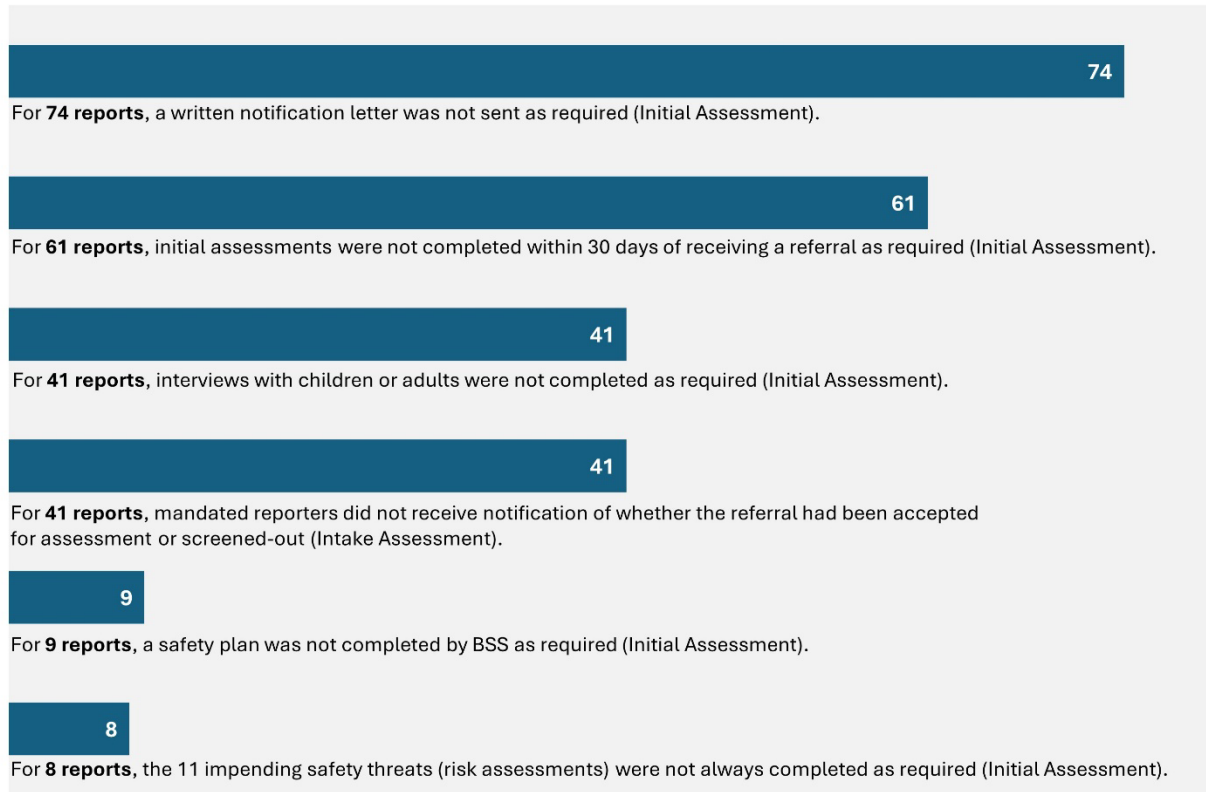
On the basis of our sample results, we estimated that 21,621 of the 23,759 (91 percent) screened-in family reports for our audit period were not in compliance with 1 or more requirements related to the intake, screening, assessment, and investigation of child abuse and neglect.

BSS DID NOT COMPLY WITH REQUIREMENTS FOR RESPONDING TO REPORTS OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

BSS did not comply with all requirements for the intake, screening, assessments, and investigations of reports of child abuse and neglect for 91 of the 100 screened-in family reports in our sample.¹¹ The different requirements with which West Virginia did not comply and the associated number of reports are shown in Figure 2 on the next page.

¹¹ A single report may be noncompliant with one or more requirements.

Figure 2: Number of Sampled Screened-in Family Reports That Did Not Comply With One or More Requirements



Notification Letters Were Not Sent as Required

Upon supervisor approval of the initial assessment, a notification letter is completed and mailed to the involved parties and documented in the system.¹² If there is not a substantiation of maltreatment of abuse or neglect in the finding of the initial assessment, the notification letter will be completed and mailed to the involved parties. If there is a substantiation of abuse or neglect in the initial assessment, a notification letter will be printed and signed by the child welfare worker. The child welfare worker will send a separate notification letter addressed to each individual maltreater listed in the intake and assessment via certified mail, including a return receipt, within 15 days of the maltreatment substantiation. If the child has been maltreated or is determined to be unsafe, the parent who is not subject of the initial assessment must be notified unless there is good cause documented in the case file to show that the information would be seriously detrimental to the best interests of the child (CPS Policy, § 3.5 Notifications).

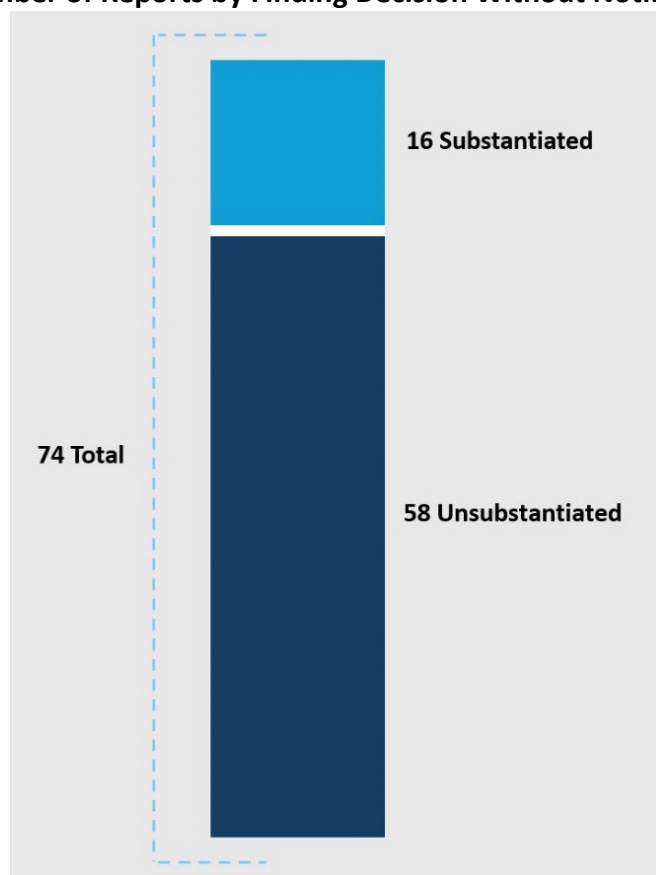
For 74 of the 100 screened-in family reports in our sample, BSS did not maintain documentation within its system to support that notification letters were sent to each parent or caregiver. (See Figure 3 on the next page.)

¹² "Involved parties" include the alleged maltreater(s) and parents who are not subject to the initial assessment.

Specifically, we found that:

- 58 notification letters were not sent to the individuals subject to the initial assessment for unsubstantiated reports, and
- 16 notification letters were not sent to each individual maltreater via certified mail within 15 days for substantiated reports (for one of these substantiated reports, the parents, who were not subject to the initial assessment, were not notified that their child had been maltreated or determined as unsafe).

Figure 3: Number of Reports by Finding Decision Without Notification Letters



BSS officials stated that notification letters were not sent to parents or caregivers because staff didn't follow its policies and procedures. In addition, due to staffing limitations, conducting face-to-face child interviews was more important than sending out notification letters to parents or caregivers. BSS officials also informed us that in March 2025 they initiated a backlog strike team to address staffing capacity, backlog caseload, and other contributing factors. As a result, we will not make recommendations to address staffing limitations.

Failure to notify the parent or caregiver of the initial assessment results could increase the risk or recurrence of abuse or neglect to children. For example, the risk could increase in circumstances in which the parent or caregiver, who is not an alleged abuser, is living outside of the home and may be unaware of the reported incident or the results of a completed

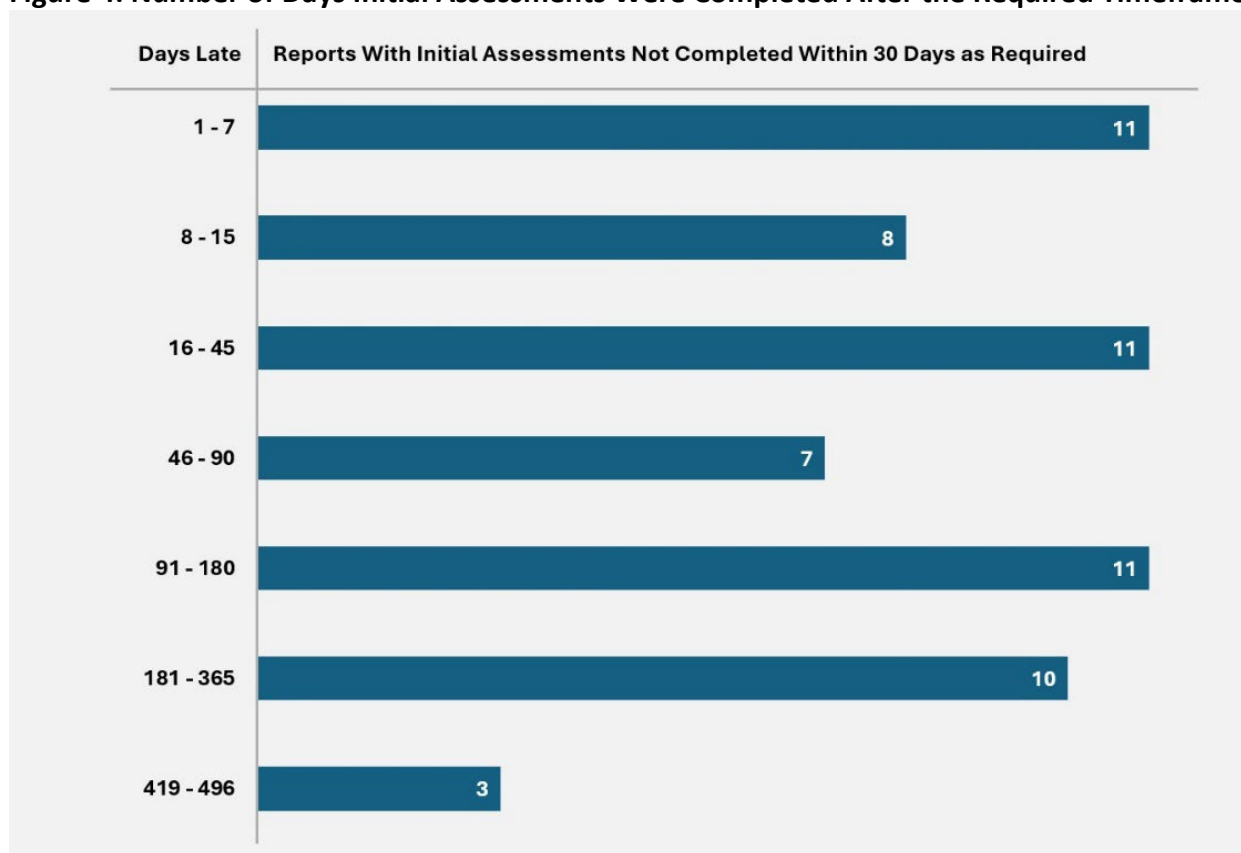
investigation and sends the child back to spend time with the abuser. In addition, in cases in which the parent or caregiver has a substantiated finding, the individual would not be aware of their rights, such as the right to appeal.

Initial Assessments Were Not Completed Timely

The maximum timeframe for completion of the initial assessment is within 30 days from receipt of the referral. If extenuating circumstances have prevented the completion of the initial assessment within the timeframe, the child welfare worker must request the approval of an extension from the supervisor. The supervisor will document their consultation and approval (CPS Policy, § 3.14 Completion of the Initial Assessment).

For 61 of the 100 screened-in family reports in our sample, we found that: (1) BSS did not complete the initial assessments within 30 days of receiving a referral as required; and (2) in extenuating circumstances, the child welfare worker did not request approval of an extension from the supervisor. Specifically, for 61 reports, initial assessments were between 1 and 496 days late. (See Figure 4)

Figure 4: Number of Days Initial Assessments Were Completed After the Required Timeframe



Initial assessments were not completed timely due to multiple reasons. BSS officials indicated that during our audit period, staff retention, staffing shortages, and child welfare workers

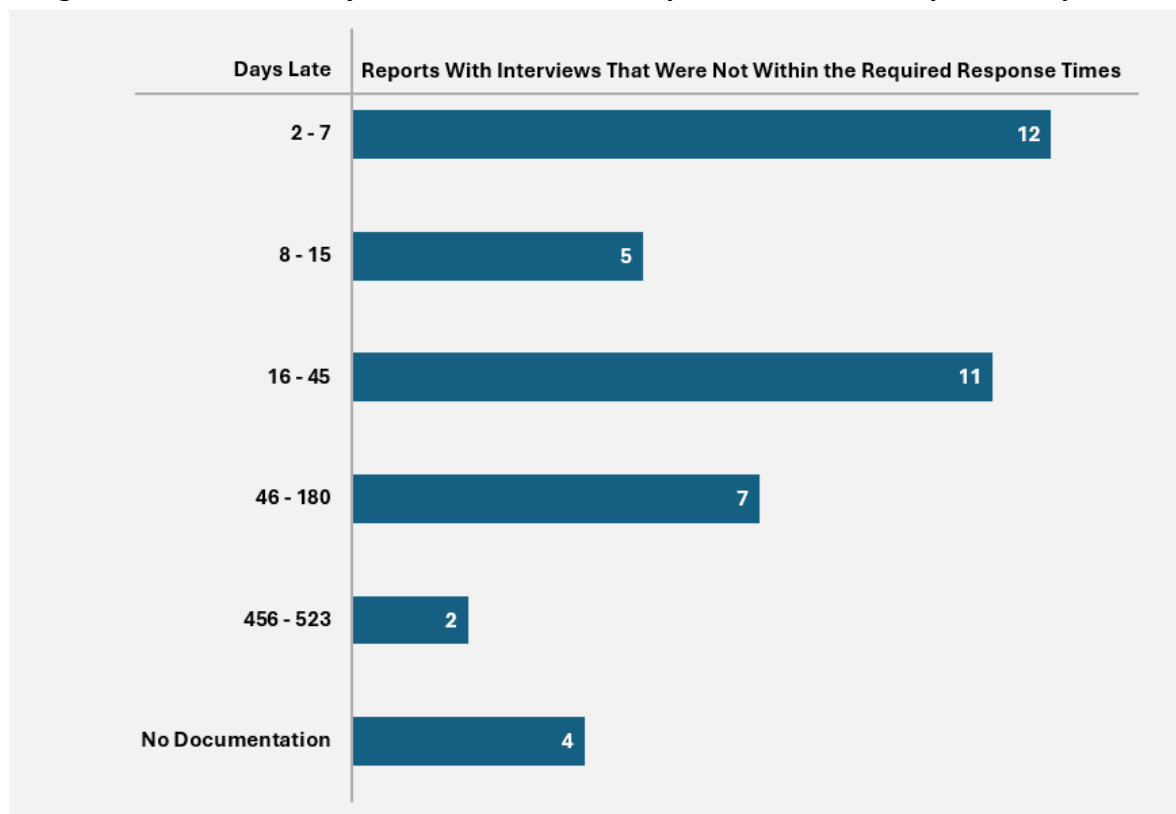
having to manage high caseloads contributed to not completing initial assessments timely. Failure to complete initial assessments within the 30-day required timeframe could place children at risk. Reports that take too long to investigate may result in continued child abuse or neglect of the victim.

Interviews With Children and Adults Were Not Always Completed as Required

The caregivers should be contacted the same day as the child victim unless contact will jeopardize child safety or extenuating circumstances exist. The child welfare worker must conduct individual, in person, private interviews with all children in the home within the designated response time at intake as well as individual, in person, private interviews with all parents and caregivers in the home (CPS Policy, § 2.5 Response Times and CPS Policy, § 3.6 Information Collective).

For 41 of the 100 screened-in family reports in our sample, we found that BSS did not: (1) conduct individual, in-person, private interviews with all children in the home within the designated response time or with all parents and caregivers in the home the same day as the child victim; and (2) maintain documentation that the interviews with children or adults were conducted. For 37 reports, the interviews with children or adults were between 2 and 523 days late. For the remaining four reports, there was no documentation provided showing that the required interviews were ever conducted with all children or adults. (See Figure 5).

Figure 5: Number of Days Interviews Were Completed After the Required Response Time



BSS officials did not provide us with specific reasons for each case, but in general, indicated that there are several reasons why interviews with children and adults could be late or not conducted at all. Specifically, child welfare workers may fail to follow existing policies and procedures for a few reasons, including the child welfare workers having high caseloads, the case may have been initially sent to the wrong county for action, or the child welfare worker was not able to locate the child or adult to be interviewed. We reviewed all 41 reports with which the interviews were not conducted in a timely manner, or were not conducted at all, and found no notes documenting why the interviews were not conducted as required, nor were there notes to indicate that there was an issue with locating the child or adult for the interview. In addition, there is no requirement for supervisors to review and approve child welfare worker documentation to ensure the timely completion of the interviews conducted with all children and adults.

Failure to conduct face-to-face interviews or to conduct timely face-to-face interviews with children and adults reduces a child welfare worker's ability to accurately investigate the reported allegation, which could place children at risk.

Mandated Reporters Were Not Always Notified

The supervisor must ensure that all mandated reporters receive notification of whether the referral has been accepted for assessment or screened out (CPS Policy, § 2.3 Intake Assessment Information Gathering).

For 41 of the 100 screened-in family reports in our sample that were referred by a mandated reporter, we found that BSS did not send a notification to the mandated reporter of whether a referral had been accepted for assessment or screened out. BSS officials stated that the centralized intake supervisor is responsible for sending out mandated reporter notifications, and the director is responsible for tracking the status in the mandated reporter log. Despite having this policy and tracking procedure, BSS officials stated that the staff did not follow the policy for notifying mandated reporters, likely because of higher priority work requirements. For example, a child welfare worker may prioritize conducting a face-to-face interview with a child over returning to the office and notifying a mandated reporter.

Failure to notify the mandated reporter of whether the referral was accepted for assessment or screened out reduces the assurance that actions have been taken by BSS to protect children of potential abuse and neglect.

Safety Plans Were Not Always Completed as Required

The appropriate safety plan must be implemented the same day that children were identified as in need of protection because of the safety conclusion (CPS Policy, § 3.12 Safety Analysis and Safety Planning).

For 9 of the 100 screened-in family reports in our sample with which BSS determined the child was unsafe and in need of protection, we found that BSS did not: (1) implement a safety plan the same day or (2) provide documentation that a safety plan was completed. Specifically, for five reports, the safety plans were completed; however, they were completed between 1 and 44 days late. For the remaining four reports, BSS did not provide documentation that a safety plan was ever completed. BSS officials indicated that the missing safety plans could be in a paper format, but the counties were unable to locate them. In addition, BSS officials indicated that the untimely safety plans were a result of child welfare workers having to manage a high caseload.

Failure to have a safety plan for the child who will remain in the care or custody of their parents may leave the child exposed to potential abuse or neglect with no specific plan to address or protect the child from further danger.

Impending Safety Threats (Risk Assessments) Were Not Always Completed as Required

BSS uses a checklist consisting of 11 standardized impending safety threats that guide child welfare workers in the assessment of a child's safety. Child welfare workers must conclude a child is unsafe if they identify that any of the 11 safety threats exist (risk assessment) (CPS Policy, § 3.10 Impending Safety Threats and Danger Threshold Criteria).

For 8 of the 100 screened-in family reports in our sample, we found the following:

- For six reports, child welfare workers identified the existence of one or more safety threats within the PATH system which allowed the child welfare worker to conclude that the child was safe, instead of unsafe as required. For three of these reports, the safety evaluation conclusion (safety assessment) was marked as safe when the child was unsafe according to BSS officials.
- For 2 reports, the child welfare worker made a safety determination without completing the 11 impending safety threats checklist.

BSS officials indicated that there is a lack of a system edit to prevent an impending safety threat from being incorrectly identified.

Failure to have a system edit in place to prevent an incorrect safety determination may allow the child welfare worker to conclude that a child is safe when, in fact, they are unsafe. In addition, failing to complete the 11 impending safety threats reduces the child welfare worker's ability to evaluate the conditions or behaviors indicating that a child may be at risk of harm and assess the likelihood of future maltreatment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that the West Virginia Department of Human Services, Bureau for Social Services:

- take appropriate steps to ensure child welfare workers perform all required procedures within the intake assessment and the initial assessment processes as required;
- provide training to supervisors on the requirement to notify mandated reporters of whether the referral was accepted for assessment or screened out;
- develop a new system edit to prevent an incorrect safety assessment decision based on the impending safety threats selected; and
- develop written policies and procedures that include a requirement for supervisors to monitor:
 - child welfare worker progress to ensure interviews with children and adults are conducted as required, and
 - aging reports on a weekly basis to promptly identify delays in closing out the initial assessment within 30 days as required.

WEST VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES, BUREAU FOR SOCIAL SERVICES COMMENTS

In written comments on our draft report, BSS concurred with our recommendations and described the actions that it has taken or plans to take to address them. For example, BSS stated the following:

- BSS has revised the CPS policy to include additional steps for supervisors to follow to ensure interviews and assessments are completed in a timely manner and has indicated that refresher training will be provided to intake assessment supervisors and initial assessment supervisors to ensure child welfare staff perform all required procedures.
- Training will be provided to supervisors on the requirement to notify mandated reporters of whether a referral was accepted or screened out.
- BSS has requested a new system edit to prevent an incorrect safety assessment decision based on impending safety threats selected. BSS noted that there has been no update on when this will be completed because of competing elements within the system.
- BSS has revised its policy to clearly outline specific requirements to ensure interviews with children and adults are completed timely and as required. Specifically, BSS has revised supervisor duties to include the use of system reports and supervisor logs to:

- track face-to-face contacts with children and caregivers to ensure that child welfare workers are meeting the initial face-to-face interview timeframes, and
- ensure the completion of initial assessments within 30 days, follow up with child welfare workers weekly, and identify delays in completing the initial assessment within the timeframe.

BSS's comments are included in their entirety as Appendix E.

We commend BSS for the actions it has taken and plans to take to address our recommendations.

APPENDIX A: AUDIT SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

SCOPE

We obtained and reviewed data from PATH for 23,759 screened-in family reports of child abuse and neglect for the period of October 1, 2023, through September 30, 2024. We assessed the reliability of the data and selected a simple random sample of 100 screened-in family reports that were received during the audit period. For each sample item, we determined whether BSS complied with requirements for the intake, screening, assessment, and investigation of reports of child abuse and neglect.

We did not assess BSS's overall internal control structure. Rather, we limited our review to BSS's internal controls related to the intake, screening, assessment, and investigation of reports of child abuse and neglect.

We conducted our audit from October 2024 through August 2025.

METHODOLOGY

To accomplish our objective, we:

- reviewed applicable requirements related to the intake, screening, assessment, and investigation of reports of child abuse and neglect;
- interviewed State officials to gain an understanding of the BSS process for intake and investigation of reports of child abuse and neglect;
- obtained data from the State's system representing 23,759 screened-in family reports of child abuse and neglect received during our audit period;
- selected for review a simple random sample of 100 screened-in family reports (Appendix B);
- evaluated and tested procedures for the intake, screening, assessment, and investigation of reports by reviewing case files for the selected screened-in family reports;
- estimated the number and percentage of screened-in family reports in the sampling frame not reported in accordance with requirements; and
- discussed the results of our audit with BSS officials.

See Appendix B for the details of our statistical sampling methodology, Appendix C for our sample results and estimates, and Appendix D for a summary of sample results and deficiencies for each sampled screened-in family report.

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

APPENDIX B: STATISTICAL SAMPLING METHODOLOGY

SAMPLING FRAME

The sampling frame consisted of 23,759 screened-in family reports of alleged child abuse and neglect received during the audit period.

SAMPLE UNIT

The sample unit was a screened-in family report.

SAMPLE DESIGN AND SAMPLE SIZE

We selected a simple random sample of 100 screened-in family reports of alleged child abuse and neglect.

SOURCE OF RANDOM NUMBERS

We generated the random numbers using the Office of Inspector General, Office of Audit Services (OIG/OAS), statistical software.

METHOD OF SELECTING SAMPLE UNITS

We sorted the items in the sampling frame by referral identification number in ascending order and consecutively numbered the items. After generating random numbers according to our sample design, we selected the corresponding frame items for review.

ESTIMATION METHODOLOGY

We used the OIG/OAS statistical software to estimate the number and percentage of screened-in family reports within the sampling frame that were not in compliance with requirements. Using this software, we calculated the point estimate and the corresponding two-sided 90-percent confidence interval.

APPENDIX C: SAMPLE RESULTS AND ESTIMATES

Table 1: Sample Results

Frame Size	Sample Size	BSS Did Not Comply With Intake Assessment Requirements	BSS Did Not Comply With Initial Assessment Requirements	Total Number of Reports That Either Did Not Comply With Intake or Initial Assessment Requirements or Both
23,759	100	41	85	91

Table 2: Estimated Number and Percentage of Reports in the Sampling Frame Not in Compliance with Requirements

(Limits Calculated at the 90-Percent Confidence Level)

	Number of Reports Not in Compliance with Requirements	Percentage of Reports Not in Compliance With Requirements
Point estimate	21,621	91
Lower limit	20,156	85
Upper limit	22,622	95

APPENDIX D: SUMMARY OF DEFICIENCIES FOR EACH SAMPLED SCREENED-IN FAMILY REPORT

Table 3: Deficiencies Identified for Each Sampled Screened-in Family Report

Sample Number	BSS Did Not Comply With Intake Assessment Requirements	BSS Did Not Comply With Initial Assessment Requirements	Total Number of Reports That Either Did Not Comply With Intake or Initial Assessment Requirements or Both
1	X	X	X
2	X	X	X
3	X	X	X
4	X	X	X
5		X	X
6		X	X
7	X	X	X
8	X	X	X
9	X	X	X
10	X	X	X
11	X	X	X
12		X	X
13			
14		X	X
15		X	X
16		X	X
17	X	X	X
18	X	X	X
19	X	X	X
20		X	X
21			
22		X	X
23		X	X
24	X	X	X
25		X	X
26		X	X
27	X	X	X
28	X	X	X
29	X	X	X
30	X	X	X
31	X	X	X
32		X	X
33		X	X
34	X	X	X
35			

Sample Number	BSS Did Not Comply With Intake Assessment Requirements	BSS Did Not Comply With Initial Assessment Requirements	Total Number of Reports That Either Did Not Comply With Intake or Initial Assessment Requirements or Both
36	X	X	X
37		X	X
38		X	X
39		X	X
40		X	X
41		X	X
42		X	X
43	X	X	X
44		X	X
45		X	X
46		X	X
47		X	X
48		X	X
49	X	X	X
50		X	X
51	X		X
52	X	X	X
53	X	X	X
54	X	X	X
55		X	X
56	X	X	X
57			
58		X	X
59		X	X
60		X	X
61		X	X
62		X	X
63	X	X	X
64	X	X	X
65	X	X	X
66	X	X	X
67	X	X	X
68		X	X
69		X	X
70		X	X
71	X		X
72		X	X
73			

Sample Number	BSS Did Not Comply With Intake Assessment Requirements	BSS Did Not Comply With Initial Assessment Requirements	Total Number of Reports That Either Did Not Comply With Intake or Initial Assessment Requirements or Both
74		X	X
75	X		X
76		X	X
77		X	X
78		X	X
79		X	X
80		X	X
81			
82		X	X
83		X	X
84		X	X
85	X		X
86			
87		X	X
88	X		X
89	X	X	X
90			
91	X	X	X
92	X	X	X
93	X		X
94		X	X
95		X	X
96			
97		X	X
98		X	X
99	X	X	X
100		X	X
Total	41	85	91

APPENDIX E: WEST VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES,
BUREAU FOR SOCIAL SERVICES COMMENTS



STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
BUREAU FOR SOCIAL SERVICES
Commissioner's Office

Alex J. Mayer
Cabinet Secretary

Lorie L. Bragg
Commissioner

September 9, 2025

Office of Audit Services, Region I
JFK Federal Building
15 New Sudbury Street, Room 2300
Boston, MA 02203

re: Report Number OAS-25-01-011

Dear Mr. Roy:

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Inspector General (OIG)'s audit of the West Virginia Department of Human Services, Bureau for Social Services (DoHS) regarding the intake, screening, assessment, and investigation of reports of child abuse and neglect. The DoHS responses to the OIG's recommendations are provided below.

OIG Recommendations

We recommend that the West Virginia Department of Human Services, Bureau for Social Services:

- take appropriate steps to ensure child welfare workers perform all required procedures within the intake assessment and the initial assessment processes as required;
 - Response: Concur. CPS policy has been revised to include additional steps for supervisors to follow to ensure interviews and assessments are completed timely; see the revisions below. Additionally, refresher training will be provided to intake assessment supervisors (see below) and initial assessment supervisors around ensuring child welfare staff perform all required procedures.
- provide training to supervisors on the requirement to notify mandated reporters of whether the referral was accepted for assessment or screened out;



- Response: Concur. The Centralized Intake Unit will provide specific training through their unit trainer to Centralized Intake Supervisors specific to the notification letter to mandated reporters regarding acceptance or screen out. The training curriculum specific to mandated report notifications is expected to be implemented by September 8, 2025.
- develop a new system edit to prevent an incorrect safety assessment decision based on the impending safety threats selected; and
 - Response: Concur. A ticket was entered and sent to wvtcc@optum.com, on June 17th stating the following to correct the system issue:
We need to add a new business rule to IV08.
For S12:
 - 1- If an impending safety threat is marked “yes” for the Family Environment or Parent/ Caregiver Details then the safety status cannot be "safe" for any of the children in the case. (Note - it could be "deceased", but cannot be safe.)
 - 2- If an impending safety threat is marked “yes” for the Child Functioning Details then that child's safety status cannot be "safe". (Note - the other children could be marked “safe” or “deceased”.)
 - For S14:
 - 3- The final case decision cannot = "close" if any impending safety threat was marked as "yes".
 - *Note: there is no update on when this may be completed due to competing elements within the system regarding IV-E claiming, NCANDs and AFCARS reporting, and other critical change requests.
- develop written policies and procedures that include a requirement for supervisors to monitor:
 - child welfare worker progress to ensure interviews with children and adults are conducted as required, and
 - Response: Concur. Policy has been revised to clearly outline specific requirements for ensuring interviews are completed timely with children and adults as required. The following revisions have been added to the supervisor duties: Utilize CCWIS reports and/or supervisor logs to track face-to-face contacts with children and caregivers to ensure that child welfare workers are meeting the initial face-to-face time frames for interviewing children and caregivers.
 - aging reports on a weekly basis to promptly identify delays in closing out the initial assessment within 30 days as required.
 - Response: Concur. Policy has been revised to clearly outline specific requirements for ensuring initial assessments are completed within the



required 30 day timeframe. The following revisions have been added to the supervisor duties: Use CCWIS reports and supervisor logs to monitor the assessment and due dates to ensure the completion of initial assessments within 30 days, follow up with child welfare workers weekly, and identify delays in completing the initial assessment within the time frame.

Sincerely,



Kendra F. Boley-Rogers
Deputy Commissioner



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Office of Inspector General
Public Affairs
330 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20201

Email: Public.Affairs@oig.hhs.gov