



Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance

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Administrative Directive Memorandum

Section 1

Transmittal:	25-ADM-02
To:	Social Services District Commissioners
Issuing Division/Office:	Division of Child Support Services
Date:	April 16, 2025
Subject:	Domestic and Gender-Based Violence Screening in the Child Support Program
Suggested Distribution:	Child Support Program Coordinators Support Collection Unit Supervisors Temporary Assistance Directors Foster Care Supervisors IV-D Attorneys DSS Attorneys Domestic Violence Liaisons Staff Development Coordinators
Contact Person(s):	Child Support Services – County Representative: otda.sm.dcse.bpo@otda.ny.gov
Attachments:	Attachment 1 - LDSS-5291 Family Safety Screening Form Attachment 2 - LDSS-5228 Getting Child Support Safely: What You Should Know

Filing References

Previous ADMs/INFs	Releases Cancelled	Dept. Regs.	Soc. Serv. Law & Other Legal Ref.	Manual Ref.	Misc. Ref.
98-ADM-03 99-ADM-05 03-ADM-05 23-ADM-11		18 NYCRR §§ 351.2(1); 347.5; 347.19(a); 369.2(b)	SSL § 459 a-g; 45 CFR 303.21(e)		<i>Dear Colleague Letter</i> issued: March 7, 2025, <i>Family Safety Screening Process</i>

Section 2

I. Summary

This Administrative Directive Memorandum (ADM) introduces a new domestic violence (DV) screening form, LDSS- 5291, *Family Safety Screening Form (Attachment 1)*, and informational flyer, LDSS-5228, *Getting Child Support Safely: What You Should Know (Attachment 2)*, for use by child support staff to screen individuals for domestic violence safety concerns. The LDSS-5291 and LDSS-5228 are to be used in conjunction with the LDSS-5258, *Child Support Enrollment Form*, but may also be used independent of the LDSS-5258 where the custodial or noncustodial party screened is part of an established child support services case.

The LDSS-5291 was designed to screen child support customers for domestic violence safety concerns and create opportunities for them to talk privately with child support staff about steps that can be taken to help keep them and their children safe while enrolling in or receiving child support services.

The LDSS-5228 *Getting Child Support Safely: What You Should Know* flyer aims to provide information about the standard activities that occur when working with the Child Support Program while highlighting the importance of safety to assist survivors in making informed decisions about whether to proceed with child support services.

When a safety concern is identified, child support staff will place a family violence indicator (FVI) on the appropriate case or account and utilize the process described herein for offering a referral to a domestic and sexual violence service provider and/or a social services district domestic violence liaison (DVL). All staff working for the Child Support Program are required to complete foundational training prior to implementing the new screening process.

II. Purpose

The purpose of this ADM is to provide Child Support Program staff with guidance as to their responsibilities relating to a new process and documents for screening child support services enrollees and recipients for domestic violence safety concerns. This ADM also introduces a new process for referring survivors to local domestic and sexual violence service providers, as well as mandatory training for all child support staff.

The screening process will be implemented statewide so child support staff in every district across the state are able to better identify victims/survivors of domestic violence and offer safety resources. Warm referrals to local domestic and sexual violence service providers can lead the survivor to receive support from trained professionals.

III. Background

In 2022, New York was one of 13 sites nationwide to receive funding through a U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families' Safe Access for Victims' Economic Security (SAVES) Demonstration grant.

At its core, the SAVES Demonstration aims to make child support services more accessible to victims/survivors of domestic and gender-based violence. This five-year demonstration (September 1, 2022 – August 31, 2027) aspires to increase safety associated with

receiving child support services and, by doing so, improve economic outcomes for victims/survivors and their children. SAVES seeks to accomplish this by strengthening the capacity of the Child Support Program to provide survivor-centered, trauma-informed, and culturally responsive assessments and interventions.

It is estimated that on average 30% of New Yorkers experience a form of domestic violence in their lifetime.¹ Through enhanced screening and educating the public about the child support process there is an opportunity to ensure the proper identification of child support cases having safety concerns.

A finding of the SAVES work in New York is that the single safety question on the LDSS-5258, and past versions of the application/referral forms, has limitations effectively screening individuals enrolling in child support services. Feedback received from child support staff and survivors in pilot districts during the first year of the SAVES demonstration indicated the question is often misunderstood and/or left unanswered.

To help bridge that gap and encourage victims/survivors who engage with the Child Support Program to disclose safety concerns, the SAVES *Family Safety Questions Pilot Program* (“pilot”) was created. This pilot engaged nearly 6,000 applicants for child support services, almost 40% of whom disclosed safety concerns—a figure that more closely aligns with national DV data. The answers provided to each question were collected throughout the pilot, then the data was analyzed. Questions with the highest rate of “yes” responses were compiled to create the new statewide screening form. The SAVES Advisory Council, comprised of twenty (20) community stakeholders, and survivors from across the State reviewed the selected questions prior to finalization. Their insights were instrumental in developing a unified, survivor-centered screening process for child support staff aimed at better identifying and addressing the needs of victims/survivors.

IV. Program Implications

Beginning Monday, June 2, 2025, the domestic violence screening and referral process used by child support staff will include:

1. Using the LDSS-5291 to help identify safety concerns. This form must be used by child support staff and, until further notice, is to be used in addition to the safety question included in the LDSS-5258 (refer to Section V.B., below) or any available automated version thereof.
2. Providing the LDSS-5228, or an approved local equivalent, to child support services customers as described in Section V. B., below.
3. Offering customers who indicate a safety concern assistance with connecting immediately and directly (i.e., a warm referral) to a domestic and sexual violence service provider (refer to Section V. E., below).

¹ It is estimated 31.7% of New York women and 29% of New York men experience intimate partner physical violence, intimate partner sexual violence and/or intimate partner stalking in their lifetimes. National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (2019). The national intimate partner and sexual violence survey: 2010-2012 State Report. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/NISVS-StateReportBook.pdf>

4. Explaining available safety options for accessing and receiving child support services to ensure survivors can make informed decisions that prioritize their safety and well-being.

V. Required Action

A. Staff Training and Technical Assistance

Child support staff will be provided with the necessary training and technical assistance to facilitate the transition to the new safety screening and referral process. All child support staff are required to complete the following mandatory online training modules emphasizing trauma-informed practices and the complexities of domestic violence:

1. *Understanding Gender-Based Violence and Child Support* (2.0 hours)
2. *Impacts of Gender-Based Violence and Trauma on Customers* (1.0 hour)

The trainings became available on the Human Services Learning Center (HSLC) on Friday, March 7, 2025. Both trainings must be completed by all current child support staff no later than **Monday, June 2, 2025**. Child Support Coordinators must notify the Bureau of Program Operations by email to otda.sm.dcse.bpo@otda.ny.gov once they are able to certify that all appropriate child support staff (i.e., all such staff employed before June 2, 2025, or prior to the date the district gives notice, whichever is earlier) have completed the required trainings. **All SAVES pilot district staff employed as of September 30, 2024, are deemed to have completed this foundational training requirement.**

Thereafter, all newly hired child support staff must complete the required trainings **within 30 (thirty) days of hire and prior to working directly with individuals enrolling in or receiving child support services**. Districts are strongly encouraged to incorporate these required trainings along with other staff on-boarding requirements. Each year by December 31st, Child Support Coordinators must provide written confirmation by email to the BPO mailbox that the trainings have been completed by all new staff. District management must track completion of the required trainings by current and future child support staff for audit purposes.

B. Safety Screening Document Distribution

The LDSS-5291 and LDSS-5228 can be distributed in-person, by mail, or email. Child support staff must provide these documents to:

1. Individuals who apply for child support services by:
 - requesting or returning a *Child Support Enrollment Form* (LDSS-5258), or any available automated version thereof; or
 - signing and filing with the court a support petition or other document, such as the Form 4-3b, *Support Petition Addendum to Request Child Support (IV D) Services*, containing a request for child support services.
2. Custodial parents (CPs), noncustodial parents (NCPs), or other parties when any significant interaction occurs between child support staff and the parent/party. Substantive questions regarding, or actions to advance, original or supplemental petitions, court proceedings, or enforcement actions (e.g., adding a child to the account, concerns regarding a notice received, questions about missing payments) are generally “significant” interactions for purposes of sharing the two documents.

Each event presents a new opportunity for a check-in to monitor for a change in circumstances impacting safety.

3. Any individual, including a *prospective* recipient of services, for whom the circumstances at hand suggest the information on the documents will be helpful.

Note: The LDSS-5291 must be provided to all individuals enrolling in child support services, regardless of how the safety question on page 3 of the LDSS-5258 or any available automated version thereof is answered.

Additionally, upon implementation of the new screening process, the NYS Child Support Processing Center will begin including the LDSS-5291 and LDSS-5228 when mailing the LDSS-5258 to individuals requesting the enrollment form.

C. Family Safety Screening Form Completion

A completed LDSS-5291 should be returned with each LDSS-5258, *Child Support Enrollment Form*, received by the Child Support Enforcement Unit/Support Collection Unit (hereafter “CSEU”), and from other CPs or NCPs who were provided the form at the time of significant interactions. The form can be returned to the CSEU in-person, by mail, or email. If an intake interview occurs, whether in person, by phone, or virtually, child support staff may review the form with the customer and fill in the responses provided. The worker must initial on the bottom of the form to indicate that they have filled it out on the individual’s behalf. All completed forms must be kept in the case file. Responses to the questions are to be kept confidential from the other party and, like all other case-related documents (e.g., court orders, notices), a completed form is part of the child support case record. The standard confidentiality rules for child support information apply to the LDSS-5291 and any notations or remarks on the system concerning the form.

Completion of the LDSS-5291 is **not** required to receive child support services. However, districts must promote completion as it is an important information tool for child support staff, assisting in the identification of the next appropriate action on a case. When communicating with customers, child support staff should explain why this form is used broadly with all customers rather than focusing on the “voluntary” nature which pilot districts learned tends to discourage completion.

If the form is not returned or is returned blank, a district may wish to encourage their child support staff to contact the customer. Staff should ensure the customer is aware of the form and inquire whether they intended to not complete the form, or if the worker may now assist them in completing the form. Where a choice has been purposefully made by the customer to not complete the form, a note must be placed in the case remarks indicating that choice (e.g., CP/NCP declined LDSS-5291). If staff is unable to reach the customer a note can be placed on the Automated State Support Enforcement and Tracking System (ASSETS) *Respondent Remarks* record indicating the inability to confirm customer choice (e.g., unable to contact CP/NCP regarding LDSS-5291). See the Survivor Safety and Privacy, Section VII, below, for helpful information regarding outreach.

For districts in which the child support staff are not directed to contact the customer regarding the screening form, please be advised that districts must attempt to conduct the screening at the next significant interaction with the customer. See Section B.2 Safety Screening Document Distribution, above.

Note: Public Assistance (PA) applicants/recipients (A/R) **cannot** be reported as non-cooperative based solely on the failure to complete the LDSS-5291. As a reminder, 03-ADM-5, *Child Support and the Family Violence Option*, provides that PA A/Rs must cooperate with the Child Support Program to establish parentage, and establish, modify, and enforce orders of support. To satisfy this requirement, all PA A/Rs must complete the LDSS-5258, *Child Support Enrollment Form*, and provide any needed supporting documentation to child support staff. If deemed necessary by the Child Support Program, the A/R must appear—in person, telephonically, or virtually—for an interview.

For all customers, when the LDSS-5258 safety question is returned with a “yes” response, through online enrollment or otherwise, or the LDSS-5291 is received with one or more “yes” responses, child support staff must take the following actions:

1. Discuss safety options with the survivor (refer to Section D, below);
2. Obtain and record a safe way to contact the survivor (call, email, text, mailing) and best time to call (see also Section VI, below);
3. Update the FVI (refer to Section F, below); and
4. Offer a warm referral to the local DV and sexual violence service provider (refer to Section E, below). PA A/Rs must also be referred to the social services district DVL after offering a warm referral.

Child support staff must also complete the fields at the bottom of each returned form, i.e., Party (CP/NCP), Date completed, and District initials (see Section V.C., above, for information regarding initialing the form).

D. Safety Discussions

The LDSS-5291 was designed to create opportunities for the customer to talk privately with child support staff about steps that can be taken to help keep them and the children safe while enrolling in and receiving child support services. See Section VII.C, below, for more information about creating private settings for sensitive discussions.

When a customer answers “Yes” to one or more of the safety questions on the LDSS-5291, the LDSS-5258, *Child Support Enrollment Form*, or any available automated equivalent, the child support worker must:

1. Explain the purpose of the FVI to the customer. Setting the FVI in ASSETS indicates that the disclosure of the customer’s location information will put them at risk of harm and will prevent such information from being shared with other states. Location information, present or future, can include residential address, employer name, employer address, county of residence or employment, or other information identifying an employer, educational institution, or residence of an individual. See Section VI, below, for more information regarding the implications of setting the FVI on an individual.
2. Discuss the safety options available to them (e.g., Address Confidentiality Affidavit, [NYS Address Confidentiality Program](#), telephonic/virtual hearings, separate appointments for genetic testing to establish parentage).

If staff is unable to contact the customer to discuss the FVI and safety options a note can be placed on the ASSETS *Respondent Remarks* record indicating such (e.g., unable to discuss LDSS-5291 options with the CP/NCP).

As a best practice, it is recommended that child support staff check-in with the victim/survivor periodically to determine if their situation has changed. (i.e., new or additional safety concerns) and whether additional safety resources are needed.

The following resources are available to assist with these conversations:

- The [Get Child Support Safely brochure \(Pub-5194\)](#) can be provided to the customer.
- The [Get Child Support Safely poster \(Pub-5194A\)](#) can be displayed in the lobby, waiting room, and/or interview room.
- The customer can be directed to the [New York State Child Support website](#) for additional information regarding family violence and accessing child support services safely.

Additional technical assistance materials will be forthcoming.

Note: All PA A/Rs subject to PA program requirements are screened for domestic violence prior to being referred to the Child Support Program. At times, the PA A/R may not raise a safety concern until they speak with child support staff. When a PA A/R indicates the presence of domestic violence to the child support worker, that worker must refer the customer to the social services district DVL for screening and assessment using locally developed procedures. The following scenarios explain exceptions to a referral to the DVL:

- If the PA A/R already has an appointment scheduled with the DVL because of the PA screening, then there is no need for the child support worker to refer the individual back to the DVL. The child support worker should still offer a referral to a local domestic violence or sexual assault service provider as described in Section V.E., below. However, all child support activities must be suspended during the DVL assessment process until a waiver decision is made by the DVL.
- If the PA A/R indicates to the child support worker that they have already met with the DVL but have new safety concerns, then the child support worker must refer the individual back to the DVL, except if the individual explicitly declines to be referred to a DVL or refuses to meet with one.

An interactive process also presents an opening for staff to provide customers with helpful information to assist families with housing, transportation, employment, and other supports. Keep these resources in mind for helping survivors connect with other systems:

- The [Domestic Violence Resource Guide](#) includes contact information for domestic violence, sexual assault, and crime victims service providers and advocates, and agencies that provide families with the following types of assistance: legal services, housing, health, basic needs (food, transportation), childcare, financial management, and child welfare.
- The [Approved Domestic Violence Service Providers](#) list includes contact information for the NYS Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Hotline, the New York City Domestic Violence Hotline, the New York City Rape and Sexual Assault Hotline, and local DV service providers for each county. Domestic and sexual violence service providers can offer more than advocacy and shelter. They may also offer culturally specific trauma-informed services, referrals for safe and affordable housing, support and education for children who have witnessed domestic violence, long-term housing assistance, help with transportation, access to food and other necessities, and accompaniment to medical and legal appointments.

- Additional domestic violence resources, including information about the New York State Address Confidentiality Program and creating a safety plan, are available on the [NYS Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence website](#).
- The NYS HEARS (Help, Empower, Reassure, and Support) Family Support Line assists parents and families by providing resources and referrals to a variety of services. Caring representatives guide families to services including food, clothing, housing, medical and behavioral health care services, parenting education and child care. 1-888-55HEARS (1-888-554-3277)
- The NYC Administration for Children's Services offers [Prevention Services](#) to promote safety, permanency, and well-being for children and their families in their own homes and communities.
- The [NYS Office of Victim's Services \(OVS\) Resource Connect](#) is a concern-based search engine designed to assist survivors with finding resources provided by Victim Assistance Programs from across New York State.

The customer may have concerns that Child Protective Services (CPS) will become involved if family violence is disclosed. It is important for staff to assure customers who express this concern that their focus is on obtaining child support and that CPS is not involved in any decisions to set or enforce child support. Advise the customer that child support staff are only required to make a report to CPS if they learn information to suspect a child is being harmed or in imminent danger.

E. Warm Referral to Domestic Violence or Sexual Violence Service Provider

A warm referral is a connection that is made, **with the permission of the survivor**, to a local domestic violence or sexual assault service provider that may be able to assist the survivor. When the survivor provides one or more affirmative answers in response to the *Family Safety Screening Form* questions, or an affirmative answer to the safety question on the LDSS-5258 or any automated version thereof, a warm referral to a domestic and sexual violence service provider **must** be offered immediately. If the survivor agrees to the warm referral, child support staff must connect the survivor directly with the provider in your district. This connection can be made in person, over the phone, via email or chat—whichever the survivor prefers. The connection can be made to an individual staff person at the domestic violence service provider or to an available hotline. Districts are strongly encouraged to discuss with local providers the most effective means for making a warm referral and develop a local procedure incorporating the critical information needed to conduct the referral. Your local provider's contact information is available on the [Approved Domestic Violence Service Providers](#) list available in the Domestic Violence section of the Electronic Resource System.

Note: In cases where a PA A/R provides a “yes” response to a safety concerns question, child support staff must also refer the survivor to the social services district DVL for screening and assessment using locally developed procedures. The child support worker must provide the DVL with information about the warm referral, including the result (e.g., offer of warm referral accepted/not accepted; survivor spoke with local DV service provider staff in private) using the LDSS-2859, *Information Transmittal* or an approved local equivalent. Notably, standard confidentiality rules for child support information apply for the storage, electronic or otherwise, of the LDSS-2859. Alternatively, districts may adopt a local practice where the immediate offer and conducting of the warm referral for PA A/R survivors is handled by the DVL rather than child support staff. In this instance the child

support worker must promptly connect the individual with the DVL so they may begin the warm referral process without delay.

CSEUs may choose to document the referral, or referral attempt, and result. These details may be useful in the event follow-up is necessary or to review prior to future interactions with the survivor. This information could be documented on a stand-alone log created by each district, noted on the *ASSETS Respondent Remarks*, or be recorded electronically.

A video is available on the Electronic Resource System (ERS) focusing on warm referrals to a local domestic and sexual violence service program and to a social services district DVL. This video provides practical guidance and real-life scenarios to assist child support staff in effectively connecting survivors with the necessary resources and supportive services.

The video:

- Illustrates both the incorrect and correct approaches to warm referrals in scenarios involving survivors of domestic and sexual violence.
- Highlights the importance of empathy, cultural sensitivity, and active listening to support survivors.
- Empowers child support staff with the knowledge and skills needed to make effective warm referrals and provide comprehensive support to survivors.

To accompany the video, a resource manual including additional information regarding warm referrals, tips for offering a warm referral, and conversation starters will be available on ERS in the coming weeks.

F. Update the Family Violence Indicator

The CSEU shall prohibit disclosure of location information by entry of a FVI, if requested by any person, where that person provides reasonable evidence of domestic violence or child abuse against a party or the child and that the disclosure of such information could be harmful to the party or the child (Title 18 New York Codes, Rules, and Regulations [NYCRR] § 347.19[a] and Title 45 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] § 303.21[e]). Prior to updating the value of the ASSETS FVI field, child support staff must have contacted, or attempted to contact, the customer to explain the purpose of the FVI, see Section D, above, to ensure survivors can make informed decisions that prioritize their safety and well-being.

The value of the ASSETS FVI field must be updated to a “Y” on the impacted party (i.e., CP or NCP) when:

- The customer answers “Yes” to Question #2 on the LDSS-5291, (i.e., “Do you have any safety concerns if the other party knows your current or future address, where you work, or how to contact you?”); **or**,
- The customer answers “Yes” to one or more of the other safety questions on the LDSS-5291, the LDSS-5258, *Child Support Enrollment Form*, or any available automated equivalent, **and** a discussion with the customer about the effect of the FVI, pursuant to Section D.1., above, indicates disclosure of their location information, present or future, could be harmful; **or**,
- The customer provides reasonable evidence of domestic violence or child abuse against themselves or the child, including, but not limited to, evidence of:

- Residing, or having resided, in a domestic violence shelter or is receiving non-residential domestic violence services;
- A temporary or final protective order has been entered;
- Being enrolled in an address confidentiality program;
- A domestic violence or child abuse incident report, or police report, which describes domestic violence or child abuse; or
- A court has determined that contact with the other party creates a risk of physical or emotional harm to the person or child.

Updating the FVI will request notification of family violence to the Federal Case Registry (FCR). The system will automatically update the “Y” to a “V” in the FVI field and place a red “FV” flag next to the appropriate party’s name.

For PA A/Rs, the FVI value should be updated to a “Y” regardless of whether the customer is being referred to a DVL, for an assessment interview to determine the credibility of their claim of domestic violence, or whether child support staff have contacted the customer to discuss the FVI. If the DVL grants a partial or full waiver from cooperation with child support requirements, the FVI must then be updated accordingly.

Note: The FVI should not be updated/changed at the time of reviewing the responses to the safety questions if there is already a value present in the FVI field of an existing case/account. The value indicates that the individual has previously disclosed a safety concern or that either a full or partial waiver issued by a DVL is already in place.

When a PA A/R indicates they no longer have a safety concern, the individual must be referred back to the DVL for assessment. For an existing child support services customer who is not in receipt of PA and no longer has a safety concern, the FVI may be removed upon request of the customer as their circumstances may have changed.

Additionally, the FVI shall not be updated on a case or account if an individual applying for child support services pursuant to Social Services Law § 111-g indicates they do not wish for the indicator to be placed.

As a reminder, the FVI is set on the victim/survivor of family violence. While it is usually set for a CP, it can be set for a NCP.

VI. Systems Implications

As described above, the FVI field in ASSETS is required to be updated as appropriate. Setting the FVI in ASSETS notifies the Federal Case Registry (FCR) that the state has reason to believe that the person(s) to whom the indicator is attached is at risk of physical or emotional harm if information regarding their location is released. See [ACF-OCSS-PIQ-25-01](#), titled *Policies to Promote Safety and Economic Stability for Survivors of Domestic Violence in the Child Support Program*, Question 1, for additional information about the significance of the FVI.

Each week a file is sent to the FCR with new FVI information and any changes to information previously sent, including the addition or removal of the FVI. When the FCR is notified of the FVI, release of all information from the Federal Parent Locator Service (FPLS) is prevented. Any information that might be used to locate a person at risk will not be shared by the FPLS across all states. When the FVI is placed for a CP, information will not be shared for that individual and any children associated with them. However, when the

FVI is placed for the NCP, only the information pertaining to that individual is prevented from release.

Refer to the *Dear Colleague* Letter dated August 10, 2007, titled [Family Violence Waiver Indicator Values](#), pages 3 and 4, and the [Setting the Family Violence Indicator instructional video](#), created January 2019, for further information regarding setting the FVI.

As provided in Section V.C., above, there are certain situations where a note may be placed in *ASSETS Respondent Remarks*. For record keeping purposes, districts may wish to also note the following information:

- Measures offered to the party to help ensure their safety (such as address confidentiality, appearing for court telephonically/virtually, security escort to and from courtroom, flagging case for FVI, and warm referral to a domestic and sexual violence provider); and
- Whether the party accepted or declined any of the measures.

VII. Additional Information

A. Definitions

Gender-based violence is defined as “any harmful threat or act directed at an individual or group based on actual or perceived sex, gender, gender identity, sex characteristics, or sexual orientation. Gender-based violence encompasses, but is not limited to, physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, economic, and technological abuse or harm; threats of such acts; harassment; coercion; and arbitrary deprivation of liberty.”²

Domestic violence is defined as a pattern of behavior used by an individual to establish and maintain power and control over their intimate partner. The behavior includes abusive tactics, threats and actions that may or may not rise to the level of criminal behavior. The tactics may include physical, emotional, financial, and sexual abuse. A pattern means the repetition of something. With domestic violence, the pattern is the repetition of the use of tactics, not necessarily the same tactic.

Sexual violence includes sexual acts or activities that happen without consent. These acts may or may not be crimes. Sexual violence encompasses many different types of unwanted sexual contact. Some examples include rape, molestation, groping, harassment and sexual abuse.

B. Communicating with Survivors

Communicating with survivors comes with risks. Do not assume it is safe to call, email or text child support services customers. Three key risks are:

- **Personal Safety** - Communication via phone, text and email leaves a trail that could reveal the survivor is seeking help, as well as other details that could compromise safety.

² The White House. (2023). U.S. national plan to end gender-based violence: Strategies for action. OTDA 25-ADM-02 (Rev. 04/2025)

- Loss of Privacy - Beyond risks related to personal safety, a survivor may also have their privacy compromised by message threads. If someone sees these without their consent, the survivor loses control over their decision to disclose the abuse.
- Confidentiality - Conversation threads and other related records, such as voicemails, may include personally identifying information.

Below are some best practice approaches to use when interacting with individuals who are experiencing, may be experiencing, or have experienced, domestic violence:

- Attempt to make the initial contact via telephone.
- At the start of each conversation, email, or text, ask if it is a safe, or good, time to talk.
- Let the individual determine which available communication method is safest for them (call, email, text, or mail) and when it is safe to make contact.

Tips for leaving messages:

- Avoid providing any confidential information.
- If you have not been able to discuss safety concerns before leaving a message, leave a generic message.

The script below provides an example of a generic voice message:

This is [your name] calling from [County Name only, without reference to the Child Support Program or services]. I am calling to share some information with you. You can call me back between the hours of [business hours], Monday through Friday at [provide phone number]. Thank you.

C. Survivor Privacy

Privacy means creating an environment where the conversation cannot be overheard or interrupted by others, ensuring confidentiality and a sense of safety for the survivor. Best practices for maintaining privacy may include:

- Using a dedicated space: conduct the conversation in a separate, enclosed room with a closed door. Avoid shared or open spaces where others can listen and observe. If someone is with the survivor, offer the option to speak with them without their companion.
- Soundproofing: Choose a location where voices cannot be easily overheard outside the room. If this is not possible, use sound machines or other noise-canceling measures to protect confidentiality.
- Avoiding distractions or interruptions: ensure the space is free from interruptions by other staff, phone calls, or environmental noise. Use a “do not disturb” sign if necessary.
- Providing a welcoming, neutral, and trauma-informed environment. This could include an offering of different seating arrangements that allow the survivor to feel safe (e.g., not having their back to the door).
- For virtual/remote conversations, ensuring staff is in a secure location, using headphones and a private internet connection, and confirm with the survivor that they also have privacy on their end and that you can resume this conversation at another time if they do not have privacy.

VIII. Effective Date

This ADM is effective upon release. The required training must be completed by child support staff to permit each district to implement the new LDSS-5291 and warm referral process on June 2, 2025. SAVES pilot districts may opt to implement before June 2, 2025 provided the district certifies that any new staff commencing work for the Child Support Program after September 30, 2024 have completed the mandatory training.

Issued By:

Name: Eileen Stack

Title: Deputy Commissioner

Division/Office: Division of Child Support Services