

TO: DIRECTOR OF SCHOOLS 

FROM: DOUGLAS EARL DIMOND
General Counsel, Department of Children's Services

DATE: October 11, 2017

RE: Safety for DCS Staff

As you know, the Department of Children's Services (DCS) is the agency under state law with the duty to investigate child abuse and neglect pursuant to Tenn. Code Ann. §§ 37-1-401, et. seq and 37-1-601, et. seq. These investigations sometimes require DCS employees to visit children during the day while they are in school.

We have recently been made aware that when DCS employees visit schools to interview children, the way their contact information is sometimes being used may pose a threat to their safety. We are asking for your help addressing this matter in a way that keeps both DCS employees and school children safe.

Some schools have implemented a security practice for all individuals visiting a child at school, including DCS employees visiting a child as part of their job. The practice requires DCS workers visiting children at school to produce their driver's license, instead of their DCS Identification badge, prior to seeing the child. The DCS worker's driver's license is often copied or scanned and placed into the student's file, which may then be released to the parent or caregiver as part of the child's educational records. This causes grave safety concerns for the DCS worker as now their home address may be given to a parent or caregiver they are investigating or that may have had their child removed for abuse or neglect. We understand the need for schools to satisfactorily identify an individual before they are allowed to see a child. However, we ask that you make exceptions to the current safety procedures in all of your schools for DCS employees by allowing them to use their DCS Identification badge to accomplish this task in place of their driver's license. If a school official ever has concerns about the identity of a DCS employee we ask that they contact their local DCS office. A list of offices is available at <http://www.tn.gov/dcs/article/dcs-regional-offices>.

If you have questions please contact Douglas Earl Dimond, General Counsel for DCS, at 615-741-7236.