* Whether working with families during CPS investigations, in-home case work or when children are placed in foster care, building relationships with the various schools in your county will make your job much easier. Once staff get to know you and trust you, partnering to help children becomes more automatic and removes barriers. School staff may know information about the victim and other children residing in the household. If the SSW is responsive to the school staff’s needs, they will be more responsive to the needs of the agency.
* When conducting an investigation and a child is school aged, it is important to have a face to face interview with school personnel, when school is in session. If the school is the referral source, they **must** be interviewed to ensure as much detailed information as possible is collected. When writing up the assessment, list the school personnel as a collateral contact, not the referral source.
* School staff who have an ongoing, continuous relationship with the child may receive **basic** information contained in the report. These staff have a legitimate interest in the child(ren) named in the CPS report and may be able to offer important information to assist in the investigation. Help them understand how a typical assessment/investigation is handled. They are invested with their children and want to ensure their safety as much as the agency does.
  + **An example:** At the beginning of an investigation or assessment, when the child is a victim of alleged abuse or neglect, you may share with a teacher counselor or other appropriate personnel, that DCBS has received a report. Specific details in the report cannot be shared. You may request that school personnel report if they notice any injuries to the child, changes in the child’s behavior,or if the child says anything about being hurt.When interviewing children, who are collaterals, and are not the alleged victim of abuse or neglect, the SSW does not share information about the report.
  + **An example:** When closing a case, you may inform school personnel DCBS is concluding its work with the family; however you cannot share that the case will be closed.
* **An example:** When a child is placed in out of home care, and school is in session, the school is notified within two (2) working days of the child’s entry into care. A school counselor, principal or designee may receive notification. Notification may be in person, verbally, or through email. In addition, provide a list of people who can contact the child at school and who may pick up and drop off the child. If the child’s custody status changes as a result of court, notify the school as soon as possible.
* Teachers are with children eight (8) hours a day, children trust teachers and talk to them about many different things; this makes teachers excellent collaterals. The SSW should ask the teacher questions such as:
  + Is the child developmentally on target?
  + What observations have they made about the child?
  + Has the teacher noticed anything concerning in regard to the child’s appearance or hygiene?
  + Has the teacher seen unexplained injuries on the child?
  + Is the parent engaged in their child’s education?
  + What are the child’s behaviors?
  + Does the child have any special needs?
* Family resource staff are also excellent collaterals. They can share information about whether they have worked with a family to refer them to resources or if they have made home visits. Their observations are critical as are any attempts they have made to help the family.
* Guidance counselors and principals may also have critical information. They should be interviewed if the teacher indicates they have been working directly with the child (ren).
* Develop a relationship with the local Director of Pupil Personnel (DPP). They can assist in locating children in the county school system, inform the SSW what attempts they have made to contact the family and what the family’s response is to truancy or enrollment issues.
* When going to the school to interview a child, if unable to speak with certain personnel during your visit, leave a note for each school personnel you would like to speak with asking that he/she call you back, or provide your email address in order to arrange a time to speak with them.
* Obtain attendance information. This may be critical information regardless of whether or not educational neglect is the issue. Tardiness and absences may indicate additional issues in home.
* If the Prevention Plan negotiated states that the parents are not to have contact with the child(ren), inform the school about this item on the plan. Ask the school to contact the police and then DCBS if a parent comes to the school to pick up the child. Provide the school with the FSOS’s name in case you are not available. If the school requests something in writing about this issue, provide the information on agency letterhead or provide a copy of a court order that indicates no contact.
* Obtain a signed release of information from the parents to obtain copies of a child’s individual education plan (IEP) if this is relevant information to the investigation. Even though KRS 620.030(4) allows the agency to have information necessary to an investigation, federal educational laws (FERPA) can sometimes make this more difficult depending on how the school has interpreted the law. Keep a copy of this statute with you to show the school or other community partners as needed.
* When providing in-home or out of home care services to a family, obtain a release of information from the parents so you can speak to the school about the child’s educational issues.