

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

CHILDREN'S DIVISION

P.O. BOX 88

JEFFERSON CITY, MISSOURI

May 23, 2005

MEMORANDUMWHAT'S INSIDE:Investigations & Family Assessments:

- New policy allowing County Level Override of Response Priority
- Initiating an Investigation/ Family Assessment is better defined
- Initial face to face contact by Multi-disciplinary team members allowed
- Report conclusion date is better defined
- CA/N-1 code sheet revised

TO: REGIONAL EXECUTIVE STAFF, CIRCUIT MANAGERS AND CHILDREN'S DIVISION STAFF

FROM: FREDERIC M. SIMMENS, DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: RESPONSE PRIORITY OVERRIDE BY COUNTY STAFF; INITIATING AND CONCLUDING CA/N REPORTS; INITIAL FACE TO FACE CONTACT BY MULTI-DISCIPLINARY TEAM MEMBERS ALLOWED; CA/N-1 CODE SHEET AND INSTRUCTIONS REVISION.
*CHILD WELFARE MANUAL REVISION:
 SECTION 2; CHAPTER 3; Screening
 SECTION 2; CHAPTER 4; Investigation Response
 SECTION 2; CHAPTER 5; Family Assessment Response
 CA/N-1 CODE SHEET
 CA/N-1 INSTRUCTIONS*

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this memorandum is to introduce revised policy and procedures that:

1. Allows county office staff to override the response priority of Investigations and Family Assessments initially established by the Child Abuse/Neglect Hotline Unit (CANHU);
2. Better defines what it means to initiate and conclude an investigation or family assessment;
3. Clarifies initial contact timeframes and allows field staff to utilize multi-disciplinary team members for assuring initial safety of alleged victims through face to face contact; and
4. Revises the CA/N-1 code sheet to reflect such actions.

RESPONSE PRIORITY OVERRIDE

We recognize the shared responsibility between the Child Abuse/Neglect Hotline Unit (CANHU) and local county offices in determining and initiating appropriate and timely response to a report of Child Abuse or Neglect. We also recognize that additional information may be available at the county level which could result in a change of necessary response time. Accountability is crucial and will be assured through informed decisions made with supervisory approval and clear documentation.

These policy revisions will provide procedural responsibilities for local county staff in determining appropriate response priority based upon additional information available at the

local county. It reinforces and requires accountability through supervisory approval of the decision. Also, it requires documentation of any such decision made, and provides instruction for updating the related database screen (ATRU).

INITIATING A CA/N REPORT

This revision clarifies how an investigation or family assessment report is initiated, identifying clear steps taken by field staff after initial receipt of a CA/N report. The Children's Service Worker shall **initiate all CA/N reports by contacting the reporter** to verify information received is accurate, complete, and to assist in determining safety of the child(ren). Additionally, for all reports screened as investigations, staff shall next contact the appropriate law enforcement agency to begin co-investigation. If unable to contact the reporter or if reporter is unknown, the Investigation or Family Assessment shall be initiated by assuring face to face contact with the subject child within required response priority level timeframe, following contact with law enforcement as required. As there is no field currently available on the CA/N-1 that tracks the date and time of initiating the report, plans are underway to incorporate a new field within the enhanced data system, called State Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS).

INITIAL FACE-TO-FACE CONTACT WITH VICTIM CHILD

Multi-disciplinary team members play a crucial role in assisting in our investigations and assessments, and that their contact with the alleged victims in CA/N reports could at times be used for the initial face to face safety assurance, allowing Children's Division staff to follow up with 72 hour contact with all household children including the victim. The policy revision requires clear documentation of how the multi-disciplinary contact is appropriate in assuring initial safety, and emphasizes Children's Division accountability for the alleged victim's safety when choosing to use multi-disciplinary contact for such safety assurance. Please note **staff shall enter time the Children's Service Worker or appropriate multidisciplinary team member made initial contact with victim(s) on the CA/N-1** (located in the "Initial Inv. Date/Time" Field accessed via AUPD screen). This field is tracking the worker or appropriate multidisciplinary member's initial face-to-face contact with the victim.

CONCLUSION DATE

The conclusion date of a CA/N report is **now defined as the date the worker completes the evaluation of evidence gathered and completes the CPS-1 form and narrative**. If the supervisor agrees with the conclusion decision, the date the worker signed their finding is the date entered into the CA/N database system. If the supervisor does NOT agree with the worker's finding, the supervisor and worker shall conference, gather additional information, if necessary, and document all additional steps. The conclusion date entered then becomes the date the worker and supervisor agree on the conclusion.

CA/N-1 CODE SHEET AND INSTRUCTIONS

The CA/N-1 Code Sheet and Instructions were revised to add a Lower Priority delayed contact field expanded to include Response Priority Level 3; Conclusion Codes O,P and Q are indicated for OHI field use only; Reporter Description code B3 redefined as non-deceased household child.

NECESSARY ACTIONS:

1. Review this memorandum with all Children's Division Staff.
2. Review revised *Child Welfare Manual* chapters as indicated below.
3. All questions should be cleared through normal supervisory channels.

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CHILD WELFARE MANUAL REVISIONS:

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RELATED STATUTE:

Chapter 210 RSMo

ADMINISTRATIVE RULES:

N/A

COUNCIL ON ACCREDITATION (COA) STANDARDS:

S10.3.03

PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT PLAN (PIP):

S1.1.1; S1.1.2; S1.1.4

FMS/MS/cb