

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
CHILDREN'S DIVISION
P. O. BOX 88
JEFFERSON CITY, MISSOURI

August 27, 2007

MEMORANDUM

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

FROM: PAULA NEESE, DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Senate Bill 3 Relating to Vulnerable Persons

DISCUSSION:

During the 2007 legislative session, Senate Bill 3 was passed imposing a legal responsibility upon various individuals, including all employees of the Missouri Department of Social Services (DSS), to report suspected abuse or neglect of a "vulnerable person". This new law goes in to effect August 28, 2007.

A "vulnerable person" is defined in Section 630.005 (34), RSMo, as any person in the custody, care or control of the Department of Mental Health (DMH) receiving services from an operated, funded, licensed, or certified DMH program. The law provides that any person who knowingly fails to make a report is guilty of a class A misdemeanor. This legislation does not change requirements pertaining to DSS employees who are mandated reporters of child abuse within their agencies (e.g., Children's Division employees, etc.).

Procedures have been put into place for staff at the Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline Unit (CANHU) to notify DMH if alleged abuse/neglect on a vulnerable person is made available when taking calls from the public.

Field staff, in following up on CA/N reports and in working with families in general, need also to immediately report any instance in which staff have reasonable cause to suspect that a vulnerable person has been subjected to abuse or neglect or staff observe a vulnerable person being subjected to conditions or circumstances that would reasonably result in abuse or neglect.

Reports from field staff may be made as follows:

- For persons less than 18 years of age, contact the CANHU at (800) 392-3738, as you would normally report any instance to suspected CA/N.
- For persons over 18 years of age and older, contact the DHSS Elder Abuse Hotline at (800) 392-0210.

The respective hotlines will then contact DMH per established protocols.

I hope you will keep this new law in mind as you interact with children and families within your communities. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

NECESSARY ACTION:

1. Review this memorandum with all Children's Division staff.
2. All questions should be cleared through normal supervisory channels.

PN/JCH