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MEMORANDUM FOR REGIONAL DIRECTORS AND CIRCUIT MANAGERS

FROM: JIM HARRISON, DEPUTY DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: RESEARCH PROPOSALS

As you are aware, the Children's Division (CD) has its own Research Committee that reviews proposals to conduct research. The Committee reviews completed applications, determines whether studies will be done in accordance with legal requirements, corresponds with applicants to request further information and/or to approve or deny the proposals, and arranges for the release of data. Commonly, proposals that are submitted are targeted to children in the child welfare system.

Occasionally but less typically, we receive inquiries regarding research that targets children in the general population which may potentially include wards of the state. An example of such a study is as follows: St. Louis Children's Hospital is conducting research on congenital cardiac catheterization outcomes which is an observational study posing minimal risk to the study participant. In this example, a specific foster child has not been pre-identified as a study subject, but rather, a child enters the hospital, meets the criteria for the study, and it is learned that the child happens to be a ward of the state. St. Louis Children's Hospital has sought the Division's permission to allow wards of the state to participate in the catheterization study and in similar studies that are targeted to the general population that could potentially include wards of the state.

The Research Committee is not accustomed to giving advance blanket approval for this type of research (depicted in the example). Often in studies like this, when an eligible child does present as a potential participant, a swift decision must be made, and it can take several weeks for the Research Committee to render a decision.

The following guidelines have been established that apply to the study described and to similar scenarios:

We will provide the research entity with the CD contact list for Regional Directors and Circuit Managers and ask the entity to seek permission directly from local CD staff for a ward of the state to participate. Hence, the decision lies with local staff whether to approve or deny these types of requests. We will inform the research entity with whom we share this protocol and contact list that the decision may not rest solely with local staff – that it is our practice to consult with the child’s parents, the Family Support Team, and in some instances, it may be necessary to seek court approval as well.

Thank you for your cooperation in our efforts to afford equal opportunities for Missouri’s foster children to be included in research studies that may benefit them medically and/or help to advance child welfare practice.

JCH/LKM

cc: Paula Neese
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