

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

CHILDREN'S DIVISION

P.O. BOX 88

JEFFERSON CITY, MISSOURI

July 27, 2012

<p>What's Inside: Parental Notice and Interviewing in CA/N Investigations</p>
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MEMORANDUM

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

FROM: CANDACE A. SHIVELY, DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: PARENTAL NOTICE AND INTERVIEWING IN CHILD ABUSE/NEGLECT (CA/N) INVESTIGATIONS

DISCUSSION:

The purpose of this memorandum is to inform staff revisions have been made to the Child Welfare Manual to further clarify the process staff should adhere to when providing parental notice and completing interviews in a CA/N Investigation. The primary purpose of the Division's response to any CA/N Investigation is to establish children's safety and well-being. Once established, the focus of the interviewing process in a CA/N Investigation should be:

- to collect enough information about the allegations to conclude by a preponderance of evidence whether or not a child was the victim of child abuse or neglect
- to gather sufficient information to complete a thorough family-centered assessment of the family's strengths, needs, and presenting elements of risk
- to take appropriate action based upon the information gathered.

Interviewing is an essential component of the investigative process utilized by the Children's Service Worker to establish children's safety, collect evidence, and complete a thorough assessment of the family system. Although children's safety and well-being is paramount, staff should respect the rights and roles of parents, whether custodial or non-custodial, and ensure they are provided notice at the earliest possible opportunity.

The Division is required by [§210.145 RSMo](#) to notify at least one parent prior to staff interviewing a child unless:

- one of the parents is the alleged abuser; or
- the child is in the Division's legal custody; or
- the child is in danger of serious physical harm or threat to life.

- Examples of this form of danger include, but are not limited to:
 - Alleged abuse occurring at the time of the call;
 - Alleged injuries or symptoms of injuries or illness that require immediate medical care;
 - Allegations of a child in need of immediate psychiatric care in conjunction with a child abuse or neglect report; and,
 - Allegations of child sexual abuse in which the alleged perpetrator has access to the child within the next twenty-four (24) hours.

Notice to a parent or legal guardian should include:

- Providing the Description of the Investigation Process, CS-24, as written notice to the parent or legal guardian; or,
- Providing initial notice through oral communication with a parent or legal guardian if it is deemed necessary to ensure children’s safety within required timeframes; and,
- Informing the parent or legal guardian that the Division must directly observe and/or interview their child(ren) in conjunction with a reported concern.

Outside of alleged victim and household children, informed consent must be obtained from a parent or legal guardian prior to Division personnel interviewing a child witness, unless he/she is in the legal custody of the Division.

Notification may be made in writing or given verbally. Verbal notification must be documented in the CA/N Investigation or Family Assessment narrative.

Division staff should document all attempts to notify a parent, such as telephone calls, mail correspondence, home visits, etc. Division staff should utilize supervisory consultation in circumstances where a Children’s Service Worker is unsure whether or not parental notification is necessary prior to interviewing a child. Unless one of the above listed exceptions applies, staff must make good faith efforts to provide notice.

Best practice for CA/N investigations also involves:

- minimizing the number of interviews a child has to undergo;
- making certain investigative interviews are conducted by competent or forensically trained interviewers who create a clear record; and,
- assessing whether an in-depth interview is appropriate at the point of initial contact with an alleged victim child, or if it would be more appropriate to make arrangements for a forensic interview through a Child Advocacy Center (CAC).

NECESSARY ACTIONS:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 and directed to: 	
PDS CONTACT Scott B. Montgomery,MSW, PDS 573-526-5408 Scott.B.Montgomery@dss.mo.gov	PROGRAM MANAGER Dena Driver 573-522-8024 Dena.D.Driver@dss.mo.gov

CHILD WELFARE MANUAL REVISIONS	
Section 2 Chapter 4.1.4 Interviewing	
FORMS AND INSTRUCTIONS	
N/A	
REFERENCE DOCUMENTS AND RESOURCES	
N/A	
RELATED STATUTE	
RSMo 210.145	
ADMINISTRATIVE RULE	
N/A	
COUNCIL ON ACCREDITATION (COA) STANDARDS	
N/A	
CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW (CFSR)	
N/A	
PROTECTIVE FACTORS –N/A	
Parental Resilience	
Social Connections	
Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development	
Concrete Support in Times of Need	
Social and Emotional Competence of Children	
FACES REQUIREMENTS	
N/A	