

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

CHILDREN'S DIVISION

P.O. BOX 88

JEFFERSON CITY, MISSOURI

What's Inside:
Revised Differential
Response
Policy

September 12, 2013

MEMORANDUM

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

FROM: CANDACE A. SHIVELY, DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: REVISED DIFFERENTIAL RESPONSE POLICY

DISCUSSION:

The purpose of this memorandum is to inform staff revisions have been made to differential response policy. These revisions were made to clarify the parameters of the differential response used by the Children's Division when receiving and responding to various types of Child Abuse/Neglect (CA/N) hotline reports. The Children's Division (CD) utilizes protocols based on Structured Decision Making (SDM) principles in order to:

- Obtain and classify information provided by the hotline reporter
- Give priority to ensuring the safety and well-being of children.

CA/N Investigations

An Investigation is a classification of response by the Division to a report of child abuse or neglect when there is an identified need to collect physical and verbal evidence to determine if a child has been abused or neglected.

Family Assessments

A Family Assessment is a classification of response by CD to provide for a prompt assessment of a child who has been reported to CD as a victim of abuse or neglect by a person responsible for that child's care, custody or control and of that child's family, including risk of abuse and neglect and, if necessary, the provision of community-based services to reduce the risk and support the family.

The factors considered when making a determination to classify a hotline as an investigation or an assessment can be found in [Section 2 Chapter 1](#) of the Child Welfare Manual.

Determining Whether or Not to Change the Initial Response Track Assignment

While any report may be investigated, some reports must be completed as investigations pursuant to [§210.145 RSMo.](#) Other reports may require discretionary decisions to be made by field staff and supervisors in order to determine the most appropriate response track when a report does not clearly meet the requirements for a CA/N Investigation. Children's Service Workers should seek supervisory guidance in order to determine whether or not hotline reports of this nature should be completed as CA/N Investigations or Family Assessments.

The following must be completed as CA/N Investigations:

- All reports which involve child fatality resulting from initially alleged or subsequently suspected child abuse/neglect
- All reports which involve any allegations of child sexual abuse, regardless of alleged or subsequently suspected severity or type
- All reports which involve allegations of serious physical injury resulting from alleged abuse, including but not limited to:
 - Intentional burns and scalding
 - Skull fractures
 - Internal Injuries caused by a blow
 - Broken skin caused by an instrument
 - Likelihood of permanent scarring
 - An injury which requires stitches
 - Broken bones
 - Temporary or permanent damage to hearing or sight
 - Abusive head trauma
 - Physical confinement which impairs circulation or breathing
 - Cigarette burns
 - Intentional submersion in water
 - Defensive injuries
 - Spiral fractures, dislocations
 - Subdural hemorrhages/hematomas
- All reports which involve allegations of serious neglect resulting from parental/caretaker omission including but not limited to:
 - A child left without appropriate supervision and in a dangerous environment
 - Lack of food/nurturance resulting in a failure to thrive
 - Abandonment of a child under the age of eight years-old
 - Lack of medical care which results in a life threatening condition
 - Lack of care which results in hospitalization of a child
 - A child who has been seriously injured due to the inactions of the parent/caretaker
- Reports which if true would constitute a suspected violation of [§210.145](#) enumerated felonies or other crimes pursuant to [Chapter 566.](#), when the alleged perpetrator is twenty-one (21) years of age or older.

- All reports in which a law enforcement officer, physician, or juvenile officer has taken custody of a child in conjunction with a report which also alleges child fatality, sexual abuse, serious physical injury, or serious neglect
- All reports which allege a child in danger at the time of the report and law enforcement is needed
- All reports which involve a non-familial, non-relative, or non-household member as an alleged perpetrator

Reports which may result in a response track change on the basis of discretionary decisions should be guided by additional information either obtained by or known to the local office. This may include, but may not be limited to:

- Reporter contact which provides more detail regarding the alleged severity or type of perpetrated child abuse/neglect
- Law enforcement contact which provides additional information or prior concerns specific to the family
- A review of the family's prior history with the Division
- Contacts with multidisciplinary team members or other collaborative partners within the community who may have additional information specific to the severity of alleged child abuse/neglect or prior family history
- At least one of the following indicating a clear and present concern:
 - Violent activities on the part of household members
 - Two or more prior reports received for similar CA/N behavior
 - Substance abuse and/or mental illness resulting in bizarre behavior
 - Children under the age of five and/or unable to protect themselves
 - The report indicates an intent of harm by the parent/caretaker
 - High likelihood of child(ren) needing placement

Changing Response Track Assignment

FACES must be updated by a Children's Service Supervisor, or above level administrator, when the local office makes a decision to change the initial response track assignment. When track changes are made, staff should:

- Clearly document the reason(s) which support the determination to change track assignment
- Ensure all involved parties are served the appropriate written notice (e.g., CS-24 or CS-24A) specific to the current track assignment
- Ensure priority is given to the safety and well-being of the child(ren)
- Minimize disruptions and/or service delivery interruptions

Reference Documents and Resources

Visual applications of the enumerated felonies pursuant to [§210.145 RSMo.](#), CANHU's initial response track assignment and an overview of the Division's field-based differential response have been added to [Section 2.1.1 Child Abuse/Neglect Reports](#) and E-forms.

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 and directed to:	
PDS CONTACT Scott B. Montgomery, MSW 573-526-5408 Scott.B.Montgomery@dss.mo.gov	UNIT MANAGER Christy Collins, MS 573-751-9603 Christy.Collins@dss.mo.gov
CHILD WELFARE MANUAL REVISIONS Section 2.1.1 Child Abuse/Neglect Reports Section 2.2.3 Response Track Section 2.3.4 Track Change Section 2.4.4 Change to Family Assessment Section 2.5.4 Change to Investigation	
FORMS AND INSTRUCTIONS N/A	
REFERENCE DOCUMENTS AND RESOURCE Differential Response Track Assignment Flowchart Differential Response Process Flowchart	
RELATED STATUTE Chapter 210 RSMo.	
ADMINISTRATIVE RULE 13 CSR 35-20.010	
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	