



# Practice Alert

## **REASSIGNMENT OF PENDING CHILD ABUSE/NEGLECT (CA/N) REPORTS**

The purpose of this Practice Alert is to inform staff all CA/N reports and referrals must be reassigned to other personnel if a Children's Service Worker leaves the employment of the Children's Division prior to the completion of any CA/N reports or referrals assigned to him or her, or when staff are on extended leave from the Division with open CA/N reports or referrals assigned to them. There are many legal reasons and an underlying accountability for decision making that require the reassignment of CA/N reports. They include, but are not limited to the following:

- A former employee of the Division has no legal authority to complete a hotline call or send correspondence on behalf of the Division;
- It creates an inaccuracy within the Division's record to leave the name of a former employee as the assigned worker on an open CA/N report or referral;
- If the CA/N was completed by another worker or supervisor, after the initial worker left the agency or is on leave, then the actual conclusion and/or determination of service needs were made by the worker or supervisor who concluded the investigation, not the former employee of the Division;
- The only name that should appear on any disposition notice (e.g., CS-21, CS-21A, etc.) should be the investigator or supervisor who actually made the final decision to substantiate or unsubstantiated the report;
- The Division's findings may be overturned by a court on the basis of improper notice given to the alleged perpetrator, which includes sending unsigned disposition forms and/or identifying a former employee as the finder of facts related to a CA/N Investigation as these may be challenged as a matter of law because they show that they were issued by a person who had no legal authority to conclude the CA/N Investigation; and,

- The reassignment of open CA/N reports assigned to a staff member who goes on extended leave, enhances the Division's ability to:
  - Assure children's safety and well-being;
  - Offer services in a timely manner if/as needed; and,
  - Conclude the CA/N report in a timely manner as prescribed by law.

Local protocols should be developed to ensure all CA/N reports and referrals are assigned to a current and active employee of the Division. Local protocols should also account for ensuring the integrity and quality of all reassigned CA/N reports and referrals. This may require additional work to be completed prior to concluding a CA/N report or referral. Additional work may include, but not be limited to:

- Contacting the reporter;
- Contacting and/or coordinating work with law enforcement;
- Assuring children's safety;
- Making additional follow-up calls or home visits with family members;
- Making essential collateral contacts;
- Contacting the School Liaison;
- Documenting the record in FACES;
- Referring the family to services within the Division or community; and/or
- Providing disposition notices.

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