



# Practice Points

## MANDATORY REFERRAL TO THE FIRST STEPS PROGRAM FOR ALL CA/N VICTIMS UNDER 3 YEARS

The purpose of this Practice Point is to remind staff of the requirement to make a referral to the First Steps program for any child under the age of three (3) years who has been determined abused or neglected by a preponderance of evidence in a child abuse/neglect investigation. This requirement is pursuant to the federal mandate of the [Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act \(CAPTA\)](#) (42 U.S.C. 5101 et seq.), and is a collaborative effort to facilitate early intervention services for children in need.

Referrals can be made electronically on the First Steps website or by submitting a paper referral via mail, fax, or email. Submitting a paper referral is especially helpful when attaching supporting documentation. Supporting documentation can expedite the First Steps intake and eligibility process. If referring by paper form, staff must indicate **CAPTA** under "Reason for Referral."

If referring online, staff will:

- Access the referral form at <https://www.mofirststeps.com/>. All fields denoted with a red asterisk must be completed.
- Select **Refer a Child**.
- On the screen **Select a Referral Source**, select CAPTA.
- Complete the **Child** section with requested identifying information.
- Complete the **Primary Contact** section using information for the person with whom the child is residing and with whom First Steps will make contact.
  - Select this individual's relationship to the child in the **Relationship** field.
- The **Alternate Contact** section is optional, but may be used to identify CD staff or another individual who could assist First Steps in locating the Primary Contact, if needed.
- The **Referral** section is completed using contact information for the staff making the referral.
  - The **Source** drop-down box selection must be CAPTA.
- The **Reason for Referral** section should again indicate this is a CAPTA referral. If there are concerns for the child's development, include those in this section.
- Press **Save**. A green message bar will appear at the top of the screen indicating the referral has been successfully saved and received by First Steps.

If completing a paper referral, the CD-21c cover letter must be included and can be accessed on E-Forms. For both referral methods, it is imperative staff signify, where indicated, the referral is being made pursuant to CAPTA requirements.

First Steps staff will review the paper or electronic referral and notify the primary contact to initiate the intake and evaluation process.

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