



State of Florida  
Department of Children and Families

Charlie Crist  
Governor

George H. Sheldon  
Secretary

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**DATE:** September 11, 2009

**TO:** Regional Directors

**THROUGH:** Pete Digre, Assistant Secretary for Operations *Markus for*  
David L. Fairbanks, Assistant Secretary for Programs *Digre*

**FROM:** Alan Abramowitz, State Director, Office of Family Safety *AA*

**SUBJECT:** Department of Children and Families Operating Procedure 175-28: A  
Redesign of the Allegation Matrix

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**PURPOSE:** This memorandum outlines plans for the updating and revision of the Allegation Matrix in Department of Children and Families Operating Procedure 175-28.

**BACKGROUND:** The "Official" Allegation Matrix dated May 1, 1998 is memorialized in Children and Families Operating Procedure 175-28 (CFOP 175-28) and contains 49 separate maltreatments. The allegation matrix is used to define specific types of abuse, neglect or abandonment; guides staff in determining whether abuse, neglect or abandonment has occurred; and assists in ensuring that all factors are considered when assessing each type of maltreatment. Within the past few years the maltreatments have been consolidated and currently number twenty. There have been updates to the allegation matrix that impact both Hotline and child protective investigative (CPI) staff. These various changes have resulted in separate, and at times, somewhat disparate documents being used by Hotline and CPI staff. Additionally, the changes made to these documents were never officially incorporated into CFOP 175-28.

There have been great strides and innovations in the understanding of maltreatment in the child welfare community both nationally and within Florida. As such, it is imperative that the allegation matrix contains the most up-to-date information that is necessary to guide Hotline counselors and child protective investigators in critical decision making. It is equally critical that the allegation matrix provide consistency in judgments to ensure individuals are treated with fairness during the receipt of reports and throughout the investigative process.

The Department has recently partnered with Hornby Zeller Associates, Inc. to assist with the critical redesign of the allegation matrix. This project is expected to last from September 1, 2009 through December 31, 2009. The project timeframes are outlined below:

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Mission: Protect the Vulnerable, Promote Strong and Economically Self-Sufficient Families, and Advance Personal and Family Recovery and Resiliency

- September – conduct background research and literature review from both a Florida perspective and from other states around the country with demonstrated success with similar matrices.
- October - will consist of field data collection. Live meetings will be held in at least six areas around the state to derive feedback from both internal and external stakeholders on current and proposed changes. These stakeholders include Hotline staff, child protection staff, Children's Legal Services, Sheriff's Office staff, the Child Protection Team and other relevant stakeholders.
- November - development of the matrix based upon, law, rule, policy, best practice and the feedback obtained from stakeholders.
- December - incorporate updates based upon additional feedback and finalize the matrix.

The Family Safety Program Office had previously requested and received statewide feedback to the matrix through email. The feedback had been compiled and will be reviewed and considered during the course of this project.

**REQUIRED ACTION:** Please disseminate this memo to all internal and external staff that may wish to provide input into this process.

Chris Compton, with the Family Safety Program Office, will be contacting each Region Family Safety Program Manager within the next two weeks to begin scheduling on-site visits to solicit input from staff.

Site visits will be in Pensacola, Tallahassee, Jacksonville, Orlando, Tampa and the Miami area. These visits will be throughout the month of October.

**CONTACT INFORMATION:** Should you have any questions, please contact Chris Compton at 850-443-6646 or via e-mail at [chris\\_compton@dcf.state.fl.us](mailto:chris_compton@dcf.state.fl.us) .

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