



State of Florida  
Department of Children and Families

Charlie Crist  
Governor

George H. Sheldon  
Secretary

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**DATE:** July 7, 2009

**TO:** Regional Directors

**THROUGH:** John Cooper, Acting Assistant Secretary for Operations  
David L. Fairbanks, Assistant Secretary for Programs

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

**SUBJECT:** Acceptance and Handling of Child on Child Reports and Critical Information of Children Under Department Supervision that Otherwise Would be Screened Out

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**PURPOSE:** To provide policy clarification on the acceptance and handling of child on child reports and critical information of children under Department supervision that otherwise would be screened out.

**BACKGROUND:** Currently, incidents of child on child sexual abuse reported through the Hotline on children under the Department's supervision that do not result in the acceptance of an abuse, neglect, or special conditions intake (including child-on-child and foster care referrals) are screened out.

On May 8, 2009, two memos were sent to the Regional Directors asking for feedback related to the acceptance of reports through the Hotline involving child on child incidents and critical information. All six Regions are in agreement on the acceptance of child on child reports and critical information involving children under the Department's supervision that otherwise would have been screened out. However, the state was split on the acceptance of this information as a prevention referral or foster care referral.

The Department has recently contracted with the Justice Research Center to assist in identifying evidence-based approaches for working with youth involved in the dependency system who are either victims or perpetrators in incidents of child on child sexual abuse. The intent of this group is to evaluate current practices and assist Florida's child welfare system in developing the framework for a comprehensive policy and practice approach. This approach will effectively integrate evidenced based strategies to address the needs of children who are victims or perpetrators of child on child sexual abuse when either in out-of-home care or residing with their family or relatives. The Justice Research Center is scheduled to have their work completed by September 30, 2009.

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

Memo re Acceptance and Handling of Child on Child Reports  
And Critical Information of Children Under Department  
Supervision that Otherwise Would be Screened Out  
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**ACTION REQUIRED:** Beginning June 22, 2009, the Hotline will begin a new process for handling incidents of child on child sexual abuse involving children under the Department's supervision. The Hotline will implement a new call type of "COC Referral" which will have similar functionality as Prevention Referrals.

When the Hotline receives a call alleging an incident of child on child sexual abuse and the allegations do not meet current criteria for acceptance as an intake, child on child special conditions report or a foster care referral, the Hotline will generate a "COC Referral" through the phoenIX system. An automated e-mail will be sent to the circuit contact person designated to receive prevention referrals alerting them of the COC Referral. The associated phoenIX document number can then be accessed by circuit staff via the on-line phoenIX system. While similar to the prevention referral, the COC Referral is designated specifically for child on child incidents involving at least one subject who is in the Department's care.

In order to ensure that our most vulnerable children are protected and getting the services they need, the designated person receiving these referrals locally, will be responsible for contacting the child's primary case manager or supervisor and communicating the information obtained through the COC Referral. After notifying the case manager or supervisor, the designated person receiving the referral locally will enter a note in the child's Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN) case record. The note is intended to document notification to case management staff.

Case management staff will ensure the information communicated is addressed and service provision provided based upon each individual circumstance.

The COC Referral process will be reevaluated after the review and recommendations of the Justice Research Center's final report which is due September 30, 2009.

Critical information received through the Hotline on children under the supervision of the Department that does not involve child on child incidents and is not accepted as an intake will continue to be sent to the field using the prevention referral functionality. The designated person receiving these referrals locally will be responsible for contacting the child's primary case manager or supervisor and notifying them of the critical information received through the Hotline. Notification will be documented in the child's FSFN case record.

Please disseminate this memo to all Family Safety staff within the Circuits and Regions for review and immediate implementation.

**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).