



State of Florida
Department of Children and Families

Rick Scott
Governor

David E. Wilkins
Secretary

DATE: May 3, 2012
TO: Regional Managing Directors
FROM: *Patricia Badland for*
John K. Cooper, Assistant Secretary for Operations
SUBJECT: Policy Directive re: Child Protection Teams
DUE DATE: Effective Immediately

The purpose of this memorandum is to:

- 1) Set forth documentation requirements for Child Protective Investigator (CPI) supervisors to ensure proper referral of cases to CPT, pursuant to law:
- 2) Provide policy direction as to when a CPI will accompany children to a CPT appointment; and
- 3) Convey the expectation for professional collaboration and teamwork at all levels.

BACKGROUND:

Pursuant to Chapter 39.303(2), Florida Statutes, the child abuse, abandonment, and neglect reports that must be referred to the CPT by CPIs includes cases involving:

- a) Head injuries, bruises to the neck or head, burns, or fractures in a child of any age.
- b) Bruises anywhere on a child 5 years of age or under.
- c) Any report alleging sexual abuse of a child or a sexually transmitted disease in a prepubescent child.
- d) Reported malnutrition, medical neglect or failure of a child to thrive.
- e) A child who is pronounced dead on arrival at a hospital or facility, or who has been injured and later died, as a result of suspected abuse, abandonment, or neglect, and another child remains in the home.
- f) Symptoms of serious emotional problems in a child when emotional or other abuse, abandonment, or neglect is suspected.

ACTION REQUIRED:

Family and Community Services Director

Regional Managing Directors will enlist the assistance of their Family and Community Services Director to work jointly with department and CPT leadership to assess local working relationships and current protocols to identify opportunities for strengthened collaboration.

1317 Winewood Boulevard, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0700

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

Protective Investigations Supervisors

At the time of initial supervisory review, the CPI Supervisor shall determine whether the CPI appropriately identified that a child meets the criteria for a mandatory CPT referral in accordance with law. The CPI Supervisor shall document their determination in FSFN and whether the referral was completed. If the referral was not completed and transmitted to CPT, the CPI Supervisor shall set a due date and follow-up to verify it was completed.

When a CPI Supervisor grants an exception to the requirement for a CPT medical evaluation, the CPI Supervisor shall complete an exception form at the time the exception is granted. If no other CPT assessments are needed, the CPT case will be closed and CPT will provide an intake report documenting the referral and rationale for closure without CPT services to the CPI for their records.

Child Protective Investigators

It is essential that CPI's prioritize their attendance at CPT medical exams and / or forensic interviews. There are many benefits when CPIs accompany children to these key investigative events:

- The CPI can share with the CPT Coordinator what has been learned thus far in the investigation – prior reports, current situation – and can convey specific areas of concern and learn more about a child's health or medical condition.
- CPI and CPT can debrief on site and as appropriate, engage the parent or caregiver in a discussion about the CPT findings.
- The CPI can receive a written "take away" from the examining physician or practitioner for use in consultation with supervisors, Children's Legal Services or at critical decision-making junctures.

In addition, please adhere to the following communication standards when opinions differ on investigative findings:

- 1) When CPI staff does not agree with a CPT finding and/or recommendation, the CPI must notify their CPI supervisor and CPT staff for follow up discussion.
- 2) When a finding of child death maltreatment is not verified by child protective investigation staff and is contrary to the CPT finding, the child protective investigation staff must notify CPT for follow up discussion.

Please disseminate to all CPIs and CPI Supervisors.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

For additional information please contact Charles Scherer at Charles_Scherer.dcf.state.fl.us or John Harper @ John_Harper@dcf.state.fl.us.

cc: Pat Badland, Director of Operations
Patricia Armstrong, Director, Office of Child Welfare
Sheriff's Offices
Dr. Randell Alexander, Child Protection Team Statewide Medical Director
Peggy Scheuermann, Chief, Child Protection Team Program Office