

Annex A – Child Abuse and Neglect CD Emergency Operations Plan

**Primary Staff: CA/N Hotline Unit
CA/N Investigators Statewide**

Support Staff: All staff with investigative training

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this annex is to provide direction to Children’s Division staff statewide regarding how to provide statutorily required Child Abuse and Neglect (CA/N) investigative services during the course of an emergency.

II. SITUATION AND ASSUMPTIONS

A. SITUATION

1. State law requires the Children’s Division to provide a 24-hour child abuse and neglect reporting system – the CA/N hotline -- and to respond to any reports of child abuse or neglect reported to the hotline.

B. ASSUMPTIONS

1. The State of Missouri is susceptible to emergency events, as outlined in the risk analysis of this plan, so an emergency will occur requiring use of this plan.
2. Staff will be personally impacted, to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the emergency situation and other staff members will need to fill critical roles.
3. Direction will come through the regular chain of command – including executive staff in Central Office, regional directors and field support managers.

III. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

A. CHILD ABUSE/NEGLECT HOTLINE UNIT PROCEDURES

1. There must be a place for hotline calls to come in.
 - a. Preference is to maintain hotline at the Knipp Building in Jefferson City. To that end, a generator has been installed.

- b. If Knipp Building is not available, hotline phones can be transferred to other state phones.
 - I. Requires telephone and, optimally, computers and access to Missouri's electronic data system FACES.
 - II. Phones can possibly be transferred to cell phones if landlines are unavailable
 - III. Hotline staff could make use of laptops, if available
- 2. Staffing procedures are in place
 - a. If there are coverage issues, supervisors can take calls
 - b. Unit managers and supervisors can adjust work schedules, as necessary, to ensure coverage
 - c. Staff who report to work during a weather event, e.g., ice/snow storm, should be prepared to shelter at hotline if conditions make leaving dangerous
- 3. Current call-out procedures are in place
 - a. In emergency situations, staff in circuits are accustomed to call-out procedures for situations where there is no power
 - b. Field support managers are accustomed to ensuring staff from one circuit can respond to another circuit in need.
 - c. The Child Abuse/Neglect Hotline Unit (CANHU) knows the on-call procedure when a county goes down. The CANHU has a back-up paper copy with some names and numbers.
- 4. Triaging/prioritizing will be necessary in large-scale disasters
 - a. Lower priority given to:
 - I. Referrals that do not contain allegations of abuse or neglect (i.e., non-caretaker, preventive services)
 - II. Educational neglect
 - III. Calls with no immediate threat (72-hr. response)
 - b. Screening may need to be done on a local level or regional level with support from Central Office
 - c. Callers should be notified of the impact of the disaster on their call with a recording (or message relayed from hotline worker). For example, callers might hear "*Due to conditions in the southwest area of the state, calls will be responded to according to the severity of the issue. Your call is important and someone will respond in the next _____ days.*"
- 5. Responding under a curfew
 - a. If a curfew is imposed, local staff will work with local law enforcement regarding the response to hotline calls.

Hotline workers should be notified through Central Office, if staff are asked to observe a curfew, so they can relay that information to callers and direct them to call law enforcement.

6. Responding to incidents in shelters
 - a. Calls involving incidents in shelters will be responded to by local investigative staff. If CD staff are residing in the shelter, they need ensure safety of children if their own needs will allow. If CD staff are staffing the shelter, they need to mitigate the situation immediately if it is safe for them to do so.
7. Obtaining hotline history
 - a. If hotline unit doesn't have capacity, local staff can pull up history from their offices. They can be notified to do this during call-out process. Other staff can also assist with providing history – e.g. regional staff, staff in another circuit or central office.
 - b. Return to past, pre-computer procedures -- workers determine safety as best they can. If paper copies of records are destroyed, recreate them as best they can be.

B. CIRCUIT RESPONSE PROCEDURES

1. Safety of children must be ensured
 - a. Basic safety assurance is the top priority
 - b. Acceptable standards may have to be relaxed as lack of running water, no electricity, etc., becomes a community standard.
 - c. Outcomes of investigations need to take into consideration the level of resources available and the length of time the conditions continue.
 - d. Atypical living conditions (tent cities, FEMA trailers, etc.) will need to be evaluated. To be considered will be the trauma of moving them away from family to an unaffected area vs. leaving them in less-than-optimal conditions with their family.
 - e. Consult Out-of-Home Care annex (Annex B) for discussion of temporarily relaxing current standards regarding number of children in a foster home in an emergency.
 - f. When locating or reaching a child in a report is an issue, work closely with partner agencies to ensure safety without duplicating effort and/or putting worker safety in jeopardy. Ask for assistance from another circuit if practical.

- g. **If you cannot ensure safety personally, assume responsibility for assuring it is done by someone else.**
 - h. Work within the parameters of the emergency response structure. Follow directives of officials on the scene.
 - i. Co-locate with emergency management personnel if feasible/advisable. For instance, does it simplify matters to co-locate temporarily with law enforcement or the court?
2. Consider the safety of responding workers
 - a. In a disaster, the expectation is that staff will perform job duties, with necessary accommodations and precautions, unless they are instructed not to report or are personally affected by the disaster.
 - b. Implement precautions similar to those used in meth lab response.
 - c. Working within your chain of command, implement flexibility in allowing staff to work from other locations. Regional staff and/or central office will be active in making those decisions.
 - d. Watch for notification of implementation of the hazardous travel policy (see, [DSS Administrative Policy 2-303.](#))
 3. **DOCUMENTATION WILL BE CRITICAL!!**
 - a. Document carefully what is possible to accomplish in light of the disaster and what is impossible.
 4. Unaffected areas can assist areas affected
 - a. Staff can be relocated to cover another circuit where staff are personally impacted or overwhelmed
 - b. Local leadership can provide support and/or help supervise in other circuits as appropriate
 - c. Use members of the multi-disciplinary team to ensure child safety if appropriate.

C. AFFECTS TO NORMAL PROCESSES

1. If Intensive In-Home Services cannot occur, and safety cannot be ensured, immediate removal may be necessary.
2. Family Centered Services cases will likely increase in the recovery phase
3. Critical Event Reports (CS-23s) are to be completed for critical events, based on capacity, by any available staff. Notification of critical events to Central Office should be accomplished by some means, even informally, as soon as information is collected.

4. Child fatality review board meetings will be determined by local protocols.
5. Child placing may be accomplished by looking outside of typical resources for other congregate placements if residential facilities are down.
6. Work with hospitals, law enforcement and courts to secure emergency medical treatment for unaccompanied minors.

D. PREPARING WITH PARTNERS BEFORE THE EMERGENCY

1. How do we engage our partners in these discussions?
 - a. Share emergency plans with courts, hospitals, contractors, community partners, and local emergency management staff.
 - b. Encourage local discussions about how stakeholders will work together to meet the needs of children who are in state custody and unaccompanied children immediately following a disaster.
 - c. Link to local emergency management officials through contacts with local FSD county and unit managers, as they have established relationships.
 - d. Communicate with contractors about these expectations and how they compare with their own emergency plans.

IV. LOGISTICS

- A. Maintain a current list of cell phone numbers for all Regional Directors, Field Support Managers, Program Managers, Circuit Managers, and Central Office Management. This information should be updated and printed on a regular basis. Staff should be available at the hotline at all times.