

Title: Child Welfare Manual
Section 1: Roles and Responsibilities of Team Members
Chapter 4: Roles and Responsibilities of Community Partners
Effective Date: June 13, 2006
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Section 1 Overview

The role of the Children's Division (CD) is to assure the protection of children by assisting their caregivers in providing a safe and nurturing environment in which children can develop. To accomplish this task, CD partners with families and the community to assure child safety and well-being. This section will explore the role and responsibilities of CD staff, families, and community partners as we work together to protect children from abuse and/or neglect, promote child well being, and achieve permanency.

Chapter 4 Overview

This chapter pertains to the role and responsibilities of community partners in the prevention and protection of children from child abuse and neglect. Community resources and Children's Division (CD) are to collaborate in providing support, assistance, and services to children and families. This collaboration is to result in the comprehensive identification of local services and assure access to those services for children and families where there is a risk of abuse or neglect.

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Memoranda History:

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4.1 Roles and Responsibilities of Law Enforcement

Law enforcement plays several roles in the community response to child abuse and neglect. Law enforcement may:

- Detect and report suspected child abuse and neglect;
- Take the lead when completing a co-investigation with CD;
- Gather physical evidence and conduct interviews during the assessment process;
- Offer support to CD staff if the worker is visiting an isolated or dangerous location or dealing with an alleged perpetrator who is known to be dangerous, mentally unstable, or substance-controlled;
- Assist the Children's Service Worker to gain access to the child if the parents refuse to allow such access;
- Be available 24-hours a day and often able to react to emergency situations more quickly than CD investigators;
- Perform investigations of possible criminal activity;
- Arrest individuals believed to have committed a crime against a child;
- Take protective custody of a child, if necessary;
- Offer victim support in terms of preparing children for trial; and
- Assist in raising community awareness through prevention and advocacy programs, such as the DARE program offered in many schools;
- Testify in court, as necessary;
- Enforce the orders of the court.

Chapter Memoranda History: (prior to 01-31-07)

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4.2 Roles and Responsibilities of Juvenile or Family Courts

Juvenile and Family Courts:

- Assure that the legal and constitutional rights of both parents and children are considered and protected;
- Are presided over by a judge or commissioner who has received specialized training in child welfare and juvenile matters and is specially assigned to hear such cases regularly;
- Appoint specially trained Guardians ad Litem and/or Court-Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) to represent the best interests of the child;
- Appoint an attorney for the parents, if they are unable to afford one;
- Coordinate the court proceedings with those in other courts that involve the child who is under the jurisdiction of the court and minimize the trauma to a child who is involved in multiple court actions; and
- Expedite custody and termination of parental rights hearings, where indicated, so that the child can gain permanency.

Related Subject: 211.032.7(2), Section 1, Chapter 3.3, Roles and Responsibilities of Placement Resources, Section 4, Chapter 7.2, Family Support Team Meeting, Section 7, Chapter 13, Juvenile Court/Legal Information
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4.3 Roles and Responsibilities of Schools and Institutions of Higher Learning

Elementary and Secondary Schools may:

- Provide opportunities for parents to participate in the educational development of their children;
- Identify children who have been or are being abused or neglected and report their concerns to the appropriate authorities.
- Support families by providing or making their facilities available for after-school programs, parenting classes, child safety classes, and other educational and recreational programs;
- Allow for the use of their facilities for other activities within the community that support families and children; and

Institutions of Higher Learning may:

- Provide volunteer services such as research, clinical social work, community development expertise, and consultation;
- Educate students and practitioners in all related fields on current issues regarding child abuse and neglect;
- Provide pre-service and in-service training to child protective services staff and community partners;
- Collaborate with the child protection agencies in preparing graduates for working with abused and neglected families in the community.

Related Subject: 211.032.7 (2), Section 1, Chapter 3.3, Roles and Responsibilities of Placement Resources, Section 4, Chapter 7.2, Family Support Team Meeting
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4.4 Roles and Responsibilities of Community Agencies and Service Organizations

Community Agencies and Service Organizations may:

- Offer advocacy, support, and treatment services to families who have experienced child abuse or neglect;
- Provide parenting education;
- Provide information about the prevention of child abuse and/or neglect;
- Collaborate with CD and other community agencies and individuals committed to preventing child abuse and neglect and providing support services to children and their families.

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4.5 Roles and Responsibilities of Health and Mental Health Care Professionals

Health and Mental Health Care Professionals may:

- Work with individual families and assist them in meeting the safety and well being needs of their children;
- Collaborate with members of the community to provide care and support , and to prevent child abuse and neglect;
- Assist in assuring temporary protective custody of children (physicians);
- Identify children who have been or are being neglected and report their concerns to the appropriate authority.

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4.6 Roles and Responsibilities of the Faith Community

The Faith Community may:

- Advocate for support for adequate family assistance programs, such as housing, child care, and medical/mental health care;
- Train staff on the indicators of abuse and neglect;
- Provide support to families; and
- Participate in planning with CD for full range of services and supports.

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4.7 Roles and Responsibilities of the Medical Examiner/Coroner

Missouri Revised Statutes, Chapter 58 -452, requires the County Coroner to report the death of any child to the Children's Division, pursuant to section 210.115, RSMo.

The coroner will collaborate with the local child fatality review panel and the Department of Social Services State Technical Assistance Team (STAT) in reviewing suspicious fatalities.

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