

Title: Child Welfare Manual  
Section 2: Intake  
Chapter 3: County Protocol: Review And Assignment Of Reports  
Effective Date: March 27, 2006

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## **Section 2 Overview**

Section 2 focuses on intake, or the point of entry for a family. The information in this section will assist staff in understanding the procedures throughout the entire intake process, from initial contact with the Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline Unit (CANHU), through the process of an investigation or family assessment. Completing a thorough family assessment or investigation will help staff identify the service needs of the family.

## **Chapter 3 Overview:**

This chapter covers information pertaining to child abuse and neglect reports received at the county office, determining the most appropriate response by the Children's Service Worker (CSW), and assignment of reports is explained.

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## **Memoranda History:**

[CS03-51](#), [CD05-35](#), [CD05-40](#), [CD05-67](#), [CD05-72](#), [CD06-34](#)

### 3.1 Reports Received At The County Office

The definitions of abuse and neglect have not changed. However, decisions must be made in regard to how Children's Division (CD) will respond to a report of child abuse or neglect.

Reports of child abuse and neglect received by Child Abuse/Neglect Hotline (CANHU) staff will be screened and assigned to an initial response track, classifying them as either an Investigation or a Family Assessment, and assigned a response priority level according to structured decision making (SDM) protocol, based on information provided to them by the reporter. The report will then be forwarded to the respective county office following the normal process.

The county office may occasionally receive hotline reports directly by phone calls, letters or walk-ins. When this occurs, staff shall interview the reporter and collect enough information to determine if the allegations might be categorized as the following:

- A report of child abuse or neglect;
- Mandated reporter referral;
- A physician/health care provider requests a "Newborn Crisis Assessment"

Related Subject: Section 2, Chapter 6.2 Newborn Crisis Assessment

- A non-caretaker referral; or
- A possible preventive services referral.

Staff should advise the reporter to contact CANHU to register the report.

NOTE: The ANME screen may be checked to determine if the call was received by CANHU. If a call was not made, the Children's Service Worker (CSW) should contact CANHU as soon as possible the same day of the report to register the report. This will eliminate the potential for duplicate reports.

If reporter refuses to call CANHU, county staff should collect all information regarding the alleged abuse/neglect, then call the Hotline Unit as soon as possible the same day of the report to register the report.

#### 3.1.1 Procedure for "Field Reports"

Field Reports are reports made to the CANHU by Children's Division staff after initial contact with the family or the victim has already been made. Many situations arise which require Division staff to initiate contact with a family or

victim prior to a call being made to CANHU. Examples may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Walk-in office visit from non-custodial/non-perp parent asking for help for their abused child;
- Law enforcement calls staff to the scene of an emergency prior to calling CANHU;
- Law enforcement or other multi-disciplinary team member forgets to call in the report in a timely manner because the division has responded;
- Worker observes an injury to the child at the office and must initiate protocol to assure safety.

When workers are required to make a call to CANHU regarding suspected child abuse/neglect **and** initial contact has been made and safety assured as per policy, the workers will:

1. Contact CANHU and inform them of the need to make a **“Field Report”**;
2. Inform CANHU of the report date/ time of the initial contact/notification;
3. CANHU will adhere to CANHU protocol to screen and classify the information according to CAN report criteria, response priority and track assignment;
4. Information given to CANHU *will not be accepted automatically as a CA/N* report/referral as with “From” reports prior to CA/N automation.
5. CANHU will use report date/time of the initial contact/notification given by the field staff.

NOTE: The county office shall investigate the report received at the county office within the specified time frames. The County Office does **not** have to wait for CA/N Hotline Unit's contact back to the County Office before investigating the report.

NOTE: Mandated reporters are required by law to report all abuse or neglect to the CANHU regardless of whether the alleged perpetrator has care, custody or control. All reports alleging abuse of a child under 18 years of age where there is no care, custody or control are classified as N-Referrals.

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## **3.2 Review Of Report**

County Staff will review all reports immediately upon receipt from the Child Abuse Neglect Hotline Unit (CANHU).

While the initial screening is determined by CANHU, each county office will be responsible for reviewing reports received from the Hotline and assessing whether the appropriate track and/or response priority level have been assigned or whether additional information received warrants a change. County staff may change tracks or may override Response Priority Level as appropriate; however, a change of Response Priority Level requires any such decision to be made within the timeframe of the initial Response Priority Level established by the Hotline.

The CPS Screening Classification Form (CS-27) and Protocol are to be utilized when reviewing reports and recording any track change made by county staff.

### **3.2.1 Checking Prior Reports, Other Systems, Reporters, And Collaterals**

The CA/N-1 form transmitted by CANHU will contain information regarding prior CA/N reports, as well as information from other systems, i.e., Income Maintenance, Food Stamps, Child Support Enforcement, etc. The data from CANHU may be based on limited information, therefore, county staff may do a more extensive search for information on any prior reports, including a review of the paper record as needed. County staff may determine it is necessary to contact the reporter, law enforcement, or other collateral to obtain additional information.

Review of prior involvement between CD and the family can be useful in assessing chronic problems as well as strengths within the family. The Children's Service Worker should consider the family's prior involvement with CD throughout the screening review, assessment/Investigation process, conclusion determination and treatment planning process.

Preliminary review of prior involvement shall be documented on the CS-27, in section III, "Additional Factors", in the "Explanation" box. During the assessment or investigation phase, more detailed information regarding the family's prior involvement with CD should be obtained by reviewing prior written reports and other information in the family's files.

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### 3.3 Response Priority Level Override

County staff may determine that emergency response is *not* necessary in certain circumstances on reports initially screened as an emergency by CANHU. If additional information is available to county staff that clearly indicates that the alleged victim(s) is/are immediately safe, the county may change (override) the Response Priority Level of the report. However, this determination may only be made after all safety factors have been considered and supervisory approval has been granted (within initial Priority Level Response timeframes).

Related Subject: Section 2, Chapter 2, Attachment B, Emergency Investigation Criteria
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Related Subjects: Section 2, Chapter 9.2 Assessment of Safety; and Section 2, Chapter 9 Safety Analysis and Risk Assessments
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A change of Response Priority from Level 1 to Level 2 or 3 requires documentation (including the date and time of the consultation with the supervisor, and specific details pertaining to the determination) in the narrative section of the Investigation record, and “priority level change” shall be noted on the CPS-1 in the “Description/Action Taken for Level 1” box on page 1.

#### 3.3.1 Entering Override Information in System

On the same, or the next working day, following receipt of a report, and after supervisory consultation and approval of the decision to override the original Response Priority as established by CANHU, information about the report assignment is to be entered in the CA/N database system on the CPS Screening Classification Update Screen (ATRU) by authorized county staff. The Circuit Manager is responsible for determining who in the Circuit will have authorization to update the ATRU screen.

The New Response Priority Level determined by the County will be entered as the **Current Response Priority Level**, and will reflect as such on the ATRU and ATRI screens. The originating Level that was determined by CANHU will also remain in the system, and will show up on the ATRU and ATRI screens as the **Initial Response Priority Level**.

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### 3.4 Track Change

In a small percentage of reports, it will be determined that a report screened for a Family Assessment would be more appropriately handled as an Investigation or vice versa. One of the primary goals of Child Protection Practice is to perfect the initial screening function to assure that this transfer is kept to an acceptable minimum. However, some reports will change tracks due to information obtained during the Investigation/Family Assessment. The statute requires reports to be transferred, as appropriate. When changes in the response are made they are to be done in the least disruptive way possible for the family and should minimize service delivery interruption.

#### 3.4.1 Entering Track Change In System

If a report is switched from one response track to another, the CPS Screening Classification Form (CS-27) is updated to reflect the change, including the reason for the change.

On the same, or the next working day, following the decision to change the response track, information about the track change is to be entered in the CA/N database system on the CPS Screening Classification Update Screen (ATRU) by authorized county staff. The Circuit Manager is responsible for determining who in the Circuit will have authorization to update the ATRU screen.

The CPS Screening Classification Update Screen (ATRU) is then updated to reflect the change, with the reason and date the decision is made. The reason for the change is entered on the Comment Screen accessed through the ATRU Screen. The Investigation/Assessment Information Inquiry (ATRI) Screen will reflect a history of the changes.

If it is decided to change the response before the first screening code is entered in the system, information regarding both shall be entered in the system for evaluation purposes.

If the investigation takes longer than 30 days to complete, due to a change in tracks, enter code "F" (Track Change) in the Delayed Conclusion field on the CA/N-1. **Under such circumstances, the investigation shall be completed and the CA/N-1 updated in no more than 45 days from the date of the initial report.**

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### **3.5 Assigning Reports For Investigation Or Family Assessment**

Assignment of reports to staff for investigations and family assessments shall be made based on local protocol. **Reports must be assigned in such a way that will ensure all investigations and family assessments are initiated within 24 hours of receipt of the report from the Hotline (or 72 hours in reports of educational neglect), and immediately in emergencies.**

Related Subject: Section 2, Chapter 4, Attachment C, Courtesy Requests
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#### **3.5.1 Things to Consider When Assigning Reports**

**When Reports Are Assigned, The Following Should Be Considered:**

- Type of report, i.e., should educational neglect reports be assigned to one staff person who has an on-going working relationship with the school district;
- Geographic considerations, i.e., based on school districts. This may assist in developing a good working relationship with school personnel and may also aid in conserving mileage;
- Whether particular staff has skills in certain areas;
- Staff's familiarity with local resources; Caseload size; and
- After-hour assignment.

#### **3.5.2 Transfer of Reports Between Counties**

**Reports Assigned To Child's Locale Or Assigned To Incorrect County**

Child Abuse/Neglect (CA/N) reports are assigned to counties by CANHU based on the location of the child at the time of the report. If a child will be in a county for at least 24 hours, even though their residence is in another county, the non-residence county will conduct the Investigation/Family Assessment. A frequent example is a child visiting a non-custodial parent for the weekend. The non-residence county is then responsible for completing the Investigation/Family Assessment, with the other county providing courtesy interviews, or ensuring that the other county is in agreement to accepting transfer of the report. This will assure more complete and timely Investigations/Family Assessments.

If it is found within the initial 24 hours that a report was assigned in error i.e., the child is in a different county or the address is incorrect, the county of assignment will contact CANHU to transfer the case. If a report is transferred, the county of assignment will request the CANHU to change the county of assignment.

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CANHU will verify the correct county of assignment and will transmit the report by sending an Alert to the new county.

The Out-Of-Home Investigation (OHI) Unit will follow the same transfer procedures as above. If, upon initial investigation, the report should be transferred from the county to OHI, or from OHI to the county, staff should confirm with staff in the other county/unit before requesting CANHU to transfer. If, during the middle of the investigation, staff become aware that the report should have been assigned differently, the person already investigating should complete the investigation. This will assure more complete and timely investigations.

#### **Family Moves to a Different County During Investigation/Family Assessment**

If a family moves from a county during an Investigation/Family Assessment, the county will conclude the Investigation/Family Assessment, with the new county of residence conducting courtesy interviews, if necessary.

Once Investigations/Family Assessments are completed, and are transferred to a county, they are handled the same as other “transfer in” reports, i.e., Family-Centered Services (FCS) are provided if a service need has been identified.

#### **3.5.3 CA/N Reports On Open Family-Centered Services (FCS) Cases**

Child Abuse/Neglect (CA/N) reports received on an open FCS case will be screened as either an investigation or a family assessment, as appropriate. The Children’s Service Worker assigned to the FCS case or another Children’s Service Worker can conduct the investigation/family assessment.

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### **3.6 Entering Worker/Supervisor Assignment Information In System**

On the same, or the next working day, following receipt of a report, information about the report assignment is entered in the CA/N database system on the CPS Screening Classification Update Screen (ATRU) by county staff, and shall include: employee numbers of the Children's Service Worker assigned to the report and their supervisor, and any change of Track Assignment or Response Priority Level as determined and approved by the Supervisor. However, this information will assist in evaluating the criteria upon which assignments are made, and the frequency with which changes in response are made.

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