


Missouri Department of
SOCIAL SERVICES
Your Potential. Our Support.

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Dear School Administrator:

The Children's Division, like so many other state agencies, has recently had to eliminate staff in the field. As we are making these changes, we must look carefully at all of the functions we perform for the children and families in our state, examining our practices and narrowing our focus to our core functions.

At the heart of our statutorily defined mission is the safety of children through investigation of child abuse and neglect. For a number of years, we have taken many calls through the Child Abuse and Neglect (CA/N) toll-free number that do not meet the statutory definition of child abuse and neglect. We took those calls as non-CA/N referrals and directed field staff to respond to callers and help identify local resources for families.

As of July 1, 2010, we will no longer be able to dedicate our field staff resources to this referral process. Rather than referring calls that do not meet the statutory mandate of abuse and neglect to the field, hotline staff will document the concerns and, based on the topic of the call, will provide referral contact information, as available, directly to the caller. In short, callers will receive the referral contact information directly from the hotline worker, rather than being contacted with it later by someone in the field.

We will continue to refer to the field information and concerns regarding families with whom we have open cases. Also, please understand that hotline workers will continue to thoroughly screen the concerns presented by each caller to ensure it is fully documented.

School personnel are among our most valuable mandated reporters of child abuse and neglect and we encourage you to continue to place calls about vulnerable children. Those calls will continue to be thoroughly screened by hotline workers to determine if they meet the statutory criteria for abuse and neglect. We also want to assure you that calls handled through this new process will continue to meet the legal standards of your statutory requirement to report.

Moving this referral process from the field to the hotline will allow field staff to focus on the core function of ensuring safety of children through investigations and assessments. However, we also believe this new process will provide customer service benefits to callers by connecting them more immediately with referral contact information, when available.

Missouri school personnel are valued partners in the division's efforts to protect children. Often, you are the first line of sight for children who may be in danger of abuse or neglect. Therefore, we wanted you and your staff to be aware of this new process and ask that you share this information with all buildings in your district.

Sincerely,



Paula Neese, MA, LCSW
Director

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