

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

CHILDREN'S DIVISION

P. O. BOX 88

JEFFERSON CITY, MISSOURI

June 16, 2010

<p><u>What's Inside:</u> Concepts of Chronic Neglect & Accumulation of Harm</p>
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M E M O R A N D U M

TO: REGIONAL EXECUTIVE STAFF, CIRCUIT MANAGERS, AND CHILDREN'S DIVISION STAFF

FROM: PAULA NEESE

SUBJECT: CHRONIC NEGLECT AND ACCUMULATION OF HARM

DISCUSSION:

The purpose of this memorandum is to review with Children's Division staff the concepts of **Chronic Neglect and Accumulation of Harm**, and how we may work with families that come to our attention with an extensive history of Child Abuse and Neglect hotline calls. The Child Welfare Manual has been revised to reflect current information and best practice activities in regards to Chronic Neglect and Accumulation of Harm.

Chronic Neglect

Chronic neglect cases, where families are repeatedly reported with minimal sustainable change resulting from multiple interventions, are very challenging for the traditional practice of a child protection agency. A holistic approach to chronic child neglect is best practice and each child in the home must be considered regardless of which child is listed as the "victim" child. What distinguishes chronic neglect from situational neglect or sporadic neglect is the ineffectiveness of working with chronic families in a typical, problem-solving way. A lack of protective capacities in these families is often an indicator of underlying, serious parental impairments such as substance abuse, mental illness, or low cognitive functioning. There are a significant number of families for whom this approach is effective, as all neglect is not chronic neglect. However, with chronically neglectful families, this approach is not sufficient.

Accumulation of Harm

Chronic Neglect, as defined by American Humane, is *an ongoing, serious pattern of deprivation of a child's basic physical, developmental, and/or emotional needs by a parent or caregiver resulting in **accumulation of harm** to the child*. Accumulation of harm can have long term effect on the child's overall physical, mental, or emotional development.

In most Child Protective systems the criteria for identifying neglect focuses on recent, distinct, verifiable incidents. This is also called "incident based" focus. Instead of

focusing on individual incidents as they occur, one should look at an “accumulation of experience”, or the cumulative effect on children of repeated incidents, when determining whether neglect exists.

Other Facts about Chronic Maltreatment

- More than half of all child maltreatment fatalities can be attributed either solely to neglect (35.6%) or neglect co-occurring with other types of maltreatment (25.2%) (US DHHS 2002).
- 55.5% of families reported to Child Protective Services had subsequent reports within five years, but new reports were more often for a *different* report type or reason than that of the initial report (Loman, 2007).
- Cost of chronically neglecting families is seven times that of a non-chronic family: about \$39,452 compared to \$5,630 (Loman & Siegel, 2004).
- Neglect and particularly chronic neglect are highly associated with poverty. Yet, poverty does not cause neglect; an estimated 97 percent of those living in poverty do *not* neglect their children (Gaudin, 2009).
- Gaudin (2009) and other researchers noted the importance of early family engagement – understanding the family’s needs from the family’s point of view.
- The importance of informal family supports—relatives, neighbors, churches, and other non-professionals cannot be overemphasized in working with families who chronically neglect their children. Such people may be able to offer support to the family when professionals aren’t available and after the case is closed.
- Maternal depression is often a key factor in cases of chronic child neglect. It is important that parental depression be identified and addressed with evidence-based treatments.
- Chronic neglect issues are serious and can lead to child fatalities.

A [Protocol for Handling Chronic Neglect Cases for Children’s Service Workers & Supervisors](#) has been posted on the Intranet. This document is a best practice guide for working with families identified as potential chronic neglect cases. It will also help to ensure that workers are recognizing chronic neglect and accumulation of harm when working with a child and family.

NECESSARY ACTION	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review this memorandum with all Children’s Division staff. 2. All questions should be cleared through normal supervisory channels and directed to: 	
PDS CONTACT Melody Barker (573) 751-0311 Melody.L.Barker@dss.mo.gov	PROGRAM MANAGER Amy Martin (573) 751-3171 Amy.L.Martin@dss.mo.gov
CHILD WELFARE MANUAL REVISIONS Section 7: Glossary/Reference, Chapter 10: Chronic Neglect	

FORMS AND INSTRUCTIONS N/A
REFERENCE DOCUMENTS AND RESOURCES Protocol for Handling Chronic Neglect Cases for Children's Service Workers & Supervisors
RELATED STATUTE N/A
ADMINISTRATIVE RULE N/A
COUNCIL ON ACCREDITATION (COA) STANDARDS N/A
CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW (CFSR) N/A
PROTECTIVE FACTORS (Link applicable factors and enter N/A if not applicable.) Parental Resilience Social Connections Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development Concrete Support in Times of Need Social and Emotional Competence of Children
FACES REQUIREMENTS N/A