



State of Florida
Department of Children and Families

Charlie Crist
Governor

George H. Sheldon
Secretary

DATE: December 1, 2009

TO: Regional Directors

THROUGH: Pete Dore, Assistant Secretary for Operations
David L. Fairbanks, Assistant Secretary for Programs

FROM: Alan Abramowitz, State Director, Family Safety Program Office
Robert Anderson, State Director, Adult Protective Services

SUBJECT: Prevention Referral Guidance
ACTION REQUIRED: Amend Local Process to Implement Guidelines
DUE DATE: December 7, 2009

PURPOSE: The purpose of this memorandum is to provide statewide guidance on the processing and handling of prevention referrals for children and vulnerable adults.

BACKGROUND: In 2007 the Florida Abuse Hotline (Hotline) began to implement new procedures related to calls that do not meet the criteria for a report but that good judgment indicates a family needs help. These calls are accepted as 'prevention referrals'. The expectation was for the Circuit to utilize local resources to assist the family or individuals and prevent a child or vulnerable adult from being placed at risk.

A prevention referral involves situations that do not statutorily meet the criteria for an intake, but the family or individual may need services. The intent is to prevent future maltreatment by helping families or individuals through a family and/or community-centered approach before that occurs.

Currently, each Circuit is handling these prevention referrals differently; ranging from sending an information letter to completing a home visit for a full assessment of needs.

In order to ensure consistency the following will be effective for all prevention referrals statewide:

- Prevention referrals will be reviewed and assessed for action within 24 hours of being accepted at the Hotline. They will be directed to an operations manager or other professional approved by the Assistance Secretary for Operations (ASO).
- Prevention referrals will be triaged by child or adult protection professionals.

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- Action will be initiated no later than 48 hours from acceptance at the Hotline.
- The action taken will be at least one of the following:
 - 1) a call back to the Hotline (if new or additional information is gathered that meets the criteria as an abuse investigation or if the case was wrongly screened),
 - 2) a call to the family to determine needs followed by a letter stating what services are available and how to access them; or,
 - 3) an onsite response by child or adult protection staff to determine service needs and connecting families or individuals to the services. An onsite response is required when there is evidence of possible significant risk to the well being of a child or vulnerable adult if such action is not taken and addressed. The response may be made by Department employees and/or their qualified providers, sheriff's CPI's, CBC providers or community services council providers.
- Document the rationale for the action taken.
- If services are referred, the worker must ensure services are engaged and documented prior to closure of the prevention referral.
- If there is an open or closed 'case' on the family in the Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN), documentation of the prevention referral, assessment and action taken must be documented in a FSFN 'case' note.

Beginning January 1, 2010 child prevention referrals will be captured in FSFN using the service referral functionality completed at the Hotline. Additional information related to this process will follow.

ACTION REQUIRED: Please disseminate this guidance to all adult and child protection staff. This guidance shall supersede previous directives related to prevention referrals and shall be fully operational on January 1, 2010. However, your implementation process should begin immediately. Please review the procedures that you have recently submitted to make the necessary adjustments to comport with these guidelines and resubmit to Pete Digre by December 7, 2009.

CONTACT INFORMATION: For additional information please contact Chris Compton at (850) 443 6646 or via email at chris_compton@dcf.state.fl.us .

cc: Walt Cook, Director, Florida Abuse Hotline
Mary Cagle, Director, Children's Legal Services
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