

Chapter 1

INVESTIGATIONS INVOLVING MULTIPLE COUNTIES

1-1. Purpose. When the child, alleged maltreating caregiver, parent/legal guardian or other household members are located in different counties and there are investigators from multiple counties involved in conducting one investigation, **it is imperative** all parties exercise due diligence in closely coordinating investigative activities and sharing essential information. All staff involved must exercise the utmost professionalism in coordinating and communicating across jurisdictions to ensure a potential child victim receives the benefit of a quality assessment and protective actions in the following situations:

a. "Concurrent Intake Assignment" means that two counties are assigned to the intake because at the time the intake is screened in and accepted as a report by the Hotline **it is known that the alleged child victim's location is outside the county of the focus household**.

b. "Focus Household" per CFOP 170-1, paragraph 2-3c, means the home in which children and significant caregivers are assessed in a Family Functioning Assessment.

c. "Investigation Transfer" means a concurrent intake assignment was not designated by the Hotline at the time of assignment and that the county initially assigned the intake is not the county in which the focus household is located and the investigation needs to be transferred to the county with appropriate jurisdiction.

d. "Out of Town Inquiry" (OTI) means a concurrent intake assignment was not designated by the Hotline at the time of assignment but an investigator subsequently receives a request from another investigator in a different county for assistance with participant (family or collateral) interviews, completion of a home study for emergency placement purposes, or requests for a local criminal history background check.

1-2. Concurrent Intake Assignment. The Hotline will assign child intakes based upon the location of the focus household – **where the alleged maltreating parent resides** – at the time the report is accepted. When the alleged perpetrator is unknown, the focus household will initially be considered to be in the county where the child resides until an alleged perpetrator is identified.

a. Child victims located outside the county in which the focus household is located at the time the report is accepted by the Hotline will have both a primary and "Out of County" assignment to the intake.

b. The initial Hotline response priority will be "Immediate" for both primary and Out of County assignments.

1-3. Concurrent Assignment Procedures. Prior to commencing their respective parts of the investigation, the primary and Out of County investigator shall make telephonic contact to discuss and coordinate the following aspects of the investigation:

a. Pre-Commencement Activities.

(1) Review of Records. Both the primary and Out of County investigator are mutually responsible for a thorough review of all criminal and child welfare histories prior to commencing their respective aspects of the investigation.

(2) Reporter Contact. Contacting the reporter is generally the responsibility of the primary investigator. Based upon a review and discussion of the specific information contained in the allegation narrative, consensus should be reached regarding which investigator will contact the reporter prior to the Out of County investigator interviewing or observing the child victim.

(3) Notification of Law Enforcement. The responsibility for notifying law enforcement of possible criminal conduct and the potential need to coordinate a concurrent criminal investigation is assigned to the investigator in the county in which law enforcement has jurisdiction to investigate. If the maltreatment did not occur in either investigator's county, then it is the responsibility of the primary investigator to notify law enforcement in the appropriate jurisdiction.

b. Commencement of the Investigation.

(1) The investigation is commenced by the Out of County investigator where the alleged child victim is located at the time of the concurrent assignment.

(2) The primary investigator should not initiate contact with members of the focus household until he or she has had the opportunity to discuss the information obtained by the Out of County investigator making initial contact with the child victim. The Out of County investigator will also interview other members of the focus household (e.g., sibling, non-maltreating caregiver, maltreating caregiver, etc.) when these individuals are at the child victim's out of county location.

(3) The primary and Out of County investigator may only initiate concurrent contact with family members **when there are multiple alleged victims in both counties and present danger is suspected**.

c. Investigation Procedures.

(1) Exchange of Critical Information. The Out of County investigator shall contact the primary investigator to share information or observations about the child victim and statements obtained from other family members, if present, as soon as possible but no later than one hour after the interviews or observations are completed.

(2) Child Protection Team (CPT) Consultations. If the child victim is hospitalized or at a hospital emergency room, the Out of County investigator will contact CPT to determine the need for an immediate on-site medical evaluation. The primary investigator will have responsibility for scheduling any follow-up CPT medical evaluations or CPT services which are not arranged by the Out of County investigator during the initial contact with the child.

(3) Present Danger Assessment in FSFN. After obtaining significant input from the Out of County investigator, the primary investigator will have responsibility for completing the present danger assessment. If the investigators cannot reach consensus about the identification of present danger, both parties shall immediately initiate their respective escalation process for resolution of the issue. An essential element of discussion is that sufficient information was obtained by either or both parties to complete the present danger assessment.

(4) Present Danger Safety Planning. After obtaining significant input from the Out of County investigator, the primary investigator will have responsibility for completing a present danger safety plan in FSFN to control for identified danger threats. If the investigators cannot reach consensus about the protective actions required to control for the danger threats identified, both parties shall immediately initiate their respective escalation process for resolution of the issue.

(5) Judicial Intervention. When the primary and Out of County investigators discuss and reach consensus for the need for a shelter hearing, each investigator should consult with their respective legal counsel to determine which county is best suited to conduct the shelter hearing. If the respective legal counsel differ on the appropriate venue (or need for a shelter hearing) the managing attorneys should initiate their respective escalation process to reach consensus on the matter.

1-4. Investigation Transfer Procedures.

a. When an investigator initially assigned to the investigation determines that the focus household is located in another county outside the investigator's jurisdiction, an investigation transfer should be promptly initiated after the following actions have been completed:

(1) The investigator confirms the home residence of the alleged maltreating caregiver.

(2) The investigator documents all activities, interviews, observations, and assessments in FSFN. Documentation must be accurate and complete.

b. After the transfer has been completed (i.e., re-assigned), the investigator initially assigned to the investigation shall coordinate follow-up investigative activities with the assigned investigator via telephonic communication no later than the next business day after the investigation transfer. The follow-up communication and collaboration between investigators should include, but not be limited to:

(1) A discussion of the most relevant information obtained from interviews and firsthand observations.

(2) An assessment of the credibility of the information obtained from family and collateral sources.

(3) Recommendations regarding gaps and additional interviews needed.

(4) Coordination of any further interviews and investigative activities needed.

(5) Exchange contact information for all professional parties (e.g., child protective investigators and supervisors, CLS staff, medical and law enforcement personnel, etc.) involved in the investigation.

1-5. OTI Procedures.

a. A collaborative and consultative approach will be used between investigators requesting and responding to Florida-based and out-of-state OTI requests.

b. OTI requests for home studies within Florida for relative/non-relative emergency placements must be initiated as soon as possible but no later than 4 hours. Out-of-state placement requests are required to follow the regulations of the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) and are not eligible for the OTI process.

c. OTI requests for **initial** child victim interviews will be commenced within four (4) hours from the time of the OTI request.

d. OTI requests for follow-up (i.e., not initial contacts) victim interviews, sibling, adult family members and all other collateral contact requests must be commenced within 24 hours of the request, unless the circumstances warrant an immediate response, and completed within five business days from the time of the OTI request.

e. Requests for local criminal history background checks must be submitted to law enforcement within 72 hours from the time of the OTI request.

f. Problems or issues in coordinating the investigation, particularly involving delays in obtaining requested information within the timeframes established should immediately be referred to each

respective circuit, county or agency 'OTI Point of Contact' for resolution. The OTI contact list in FSFN shall be kept up to date with current contact information for all point of contacts.

1-6. Supervisor. When initiated, supervisor consultations involving multi-county case coordination should affirm:

a. Investigators have demonstrated timely and robust communication and collaboration to achieve well-coordinated investigative activities.

b. Investigators have successfully resolved challenges impeding a coordinated investigation or appropriately followed local protocol to involve management in addressing unresolved issues.

1-7. Documentation.

a. The investigators will document all investigative activities conducted and inter/intra agency contacts related to multi-county case coordination in case notes within 48 hours.

b. The supervisor will document the consultation, if conducted, in FSFN using the supervisor consultation page hyperlink in the investigation module.