

DSS Policy and Procedure Guide

Division 03: Child Welfare

Chapter 02: General Administration

Item 007: Staff Response to Suicidal Statements/Gestures

Suggested changes send to: [DSS PSOA](#) Mailbox

Issued: **December 13, 2013**

References: [Welfare and Institutions Code 5150](#);
Fresno County Department of [Behavioral Health](#)

Replaces Issues: New

Preamble

Child Welfare Policy and Procedure Guides are meant to be used as tools to relay best practice and staff expectations. It is understood that specific case scenarios may not always align themselves with the stated practices and that at all times what is of paramount importance is the Safety and Well-being of the children we are charged to protect.

Policy

Department of Social Services (DSS) Child Welfare staff shall ensure that clients suspected of being a danger to themselves or others will be evaluated pursuant to Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) 5150.

Purpose

To inform DSS Child Welfare staff of the procedure when clients – adults or minors – become a potential threat to themselves or others.

Definitions

WIC 5150 states, “When any person, as a result of mental disorder, is a danger to others, or to himself or herself, or gravely disabled, a peace officer, member of the attending staff, as defined by regulation, of an evaluation facility designated by the county, or other professional person designated by the county may, upon probable cause, take, or cause to be taken, the person into custody and place him or her in a facility designated by the county and approved by the State Department of Health Care Services as a facility for 72-hour treatment and evaluation.”

Note: DSS staff are **not** designated by Fresno County to place a WIC 5150 hold.

Probable cause is defined as facts known to the authorized person that would lead a person of ordinary care and prudence to believe, or to entertain a strong suspicion, that the person detained is mentally disordered and is a danger to himself or herself, or others, or is gravely disabled. *People v. Triplett (1983)144Cal.App.3d 283*

Possible Warning Signs

- Making statements about wanting to die such as, “You won’t be seeing me again,” “it’s no use, “I feel rotten inside,” etc.
- Change in eating or sleeping patterns.
- Withdrawal from friends, family and regular activities.
- Violent actions, rebellious behavior or running away.
- Use of alcohol or other drugs.

- Unusual neglect of personal appearance or hygiene.
- Marked change in personality.
- Loss of interest in pleasurable activities.
- Persistent boredom, difficulty concentrating or a decline in the quality of schoolwork.
- Frequent complaints regarding physical symptoms often related to emotions, such as stomachaches, headaches, fatigue, etc.
- Giving away favorite possessions, throwing away important belongings, etc.
- Suddenly cheerful after a period of depression.
- Bizarre thoughts, seeing or hearing things that are not there.
- Hyperactivity, extreme hostility, aggressiveness, serious risk taking and promiscuous sexual behavior can all “mask” depression.
- Overwhelming guilt or self-hate.
- Self-injury: scratching, cutting, biting, hitting, head banging, burning, etc.

Procedure

Upon determining that a client may be a danger to themselves or others, DSS Child Welfare staff will attempt to complete the following steps:

- Attempt to calm the client.
- If the client says they are suicidal, attempt to determine if they have a plan, a means, and a timeframe.
- Inform and seek assistance from their Supervisor and/or other Child Welfare staff.
- If the client is on the telephone, attempt to get as much information as possible (location, telephone number, medications, substance abuse, etc.).
- Contact law enforcement at 9-1-1 to ask for assistance in evaluating the client for a possible WIC 5150 hold. If possible, delegate this to other Child Welfare staff so that you are able to remain with the client in person or on the telephone.
- If the situation is occurring in a Fresno County Building, contact Fresno County Security at 452-7102. If possible, delegate this to other Child Welfare staff so that you are able to remain with the client.
- If the situation is occurring in a Fresno County Building, notify reception of your exact location so that this information can be passed on to law enforcement and Fresno County Security upon their arrival. If possible, delegate this to other Child Welfare staff so that you are able to remain with the client.
- When speaking with the client; be yourself, listen, and be sympathetic, non-judgmental, patient, calm and accepting. The right words are unimportant. Your concern will be apparent in your voice and manner.
- If possible, stay with or on the telephone with the client until law enforcement and/or other emergency responders have arrived.
- Provide all available information to law enforcement and/or other emergency responders.
- Once the situation has stabilized, complete and send out an [Incident Report](#) form.
- Update the client’s case alerts and Health and Education Passport (HEP), as needed.

Children's Mental Health Resources

Children's Crisis Assessment Intervention Resolution Center (CCAIR)

CCAIR is an outpatient crisis intervention program that provides treatment to prevent hospitalization. CCAIR services include assessment, crisis intervention and resolution for minors who have been determined to be a serious danger to themselves (suicidal), to others (homicidal) or are gravely disabled (unable to make use of food, clothing and shelter). CCAIR is open 24 hours a day/7 days a week.

3147 N. Millbrook
Fresno, CA 93703
559-600-6760

National Youth Crisis Helpline

1-800-999-9999

National Hopeline Network

1-800-784-2433

Sanctuary Runaway Hotline

1-800-820-4968

Adult Mental Health Resources

Intensive Services

These programs are open 24 hours, seven days per week to Fresno County residents needing crisis mental health services, including crisis assessment, stabilization and inpatient services.

Crestwood Psychiatric Health Facility (PHF)

Provides 24-hour INPATIENT hospitalization services for adults with severe mental illness.
4411 E. Kings Canyon Road
Fresno, CA. 93702
(559) 453-5199

Exodus Crisis Stabilization Center

Provides 24-hour OUTPATIENT services for adults with severe mental illness in crisis.
4411 E. Kings Canyon Road
Fresno, CA. 93702
(559) 453-1008 or (559) 453-1014