

# DSS Policy and Procedure Guide

Division 03: Child Welfare

Chapter 03: Initial Response/Detention

## Item 020: Return Policy for Emergency Response Referrals

References: N/A

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Revisions are in red

Replaces Issue: **January 25, 2013**

### 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

New referrals about abuse or neglect of children who were alleged victims in a prior referral and investigation closed within the previous 45 days shall be assigned to the same Social Worker (SW) whenever possible. Additionally, the prior referral and its outcomes shall be reviewed by the social work supervisor for strengths and weaknesses.

### Purpose

To provide guidelines for assignment of “return” referrals and to outline expectations for a review of the prior referral.

### Definition

**45 Days Return Referral** - a new Emergency Response (ER) referral that includes allegations on behalf of a child for whom a referral allegation had been closed within 45 calendar days prior to the date the new referral is assigned to a supervisor’s inbox.

### Procedure

#### Assignment of New Return Referrals

- The new referral will be assigned to the ER SW who responded to a prior referral for the child(ren) according to the following guidelines:
  - The SWs supervisor has the discretion to assign it to another worker within the unit should the worker be unavailable to respond to the referral within the designated timeframe.
  - The new referral assignment will follow the SW even if they have changed assignments within ER response units. If the SW is no longer an ER response worker the referral will go to their former unit **and the unit will get credit for the referral.**

- Return referrals to Swing Shift
  - “Return” referrals designated for crisis (2-hour) response AND received after the daytime SWs cut-off time will be assigned to a Swing Shift SW up next on rotation. If follow-up is required, it will be transferred to the daytime ER SW who had the prior referral. If the prior SW is no longer in ER, the follow-up will be assigned a SW in their former unit.
- The “Return” policy will still apply even if the prior referral was promoted to a case. However, if the prior referral was promoted to a court ordered case and the new allegation is in regards to a Substitute Care Provider (SCP), the referral would be assigned to the Dependency Investigations Unit (DIU) regardless if it is within the 45 days. In addition, if a 45-day referral is received and the child(ren) have been arraigned in the parent’s care, the referral will be assigned to the original responding ER SW or a SW in their unit if they are no longer in ER.
- When a SW responds to a “needs more information” (NMI) referral (completing at least one face to face contact) and determines the return policy would have been applicable, the referral will remain assigned to that SW. The referral will only be reassigned per this policy if a Social Work Supervisor (SWS) identifies a compelling reason why it would be in the best interest of the child(ren).

#### Review of Prior Referrals

- The SWS will review the referral and history with the assigned SW. The items to be reviewed and documented in a CWS/CMS contact will include referral dates, referral allegations, determined response times, and allegation conclusions.
- Other items for review should include, but not be limited to:
  - Structured Decision Making (SDM) Assessments – Were they done correctly? What was the final risk level? Was the referral disposition at variance with the SDM recommendation? Was the variance recognized, documented, explained, and justified in writing?
  - Were there any children without a face-to-face contact? Why?
  - Were contacts not made with reporting parties or other collateral contacts that could have been beneficial?
  - Were there any identifiable risk issues or safety factors in addition to the allegations that could have been addressed?
  - Were there services that would have been beneficial to the family, but either not offered or not accepted?
  - Would a staffing, Team Decision Making (TDM) meeting or Safety Mapping been appropriate? Was it considered or offered to the family per documentation or narrative?
- If the “return” referral was not assigned to the same SW, the information from the review should be shared with the prior SW and their supervisor as this may be a useful training tool.

#### ER Clerical Responsibilities

- Clerical staff who online referrals and assign them into rotation will identify “return” referrals according to the guidelines above.

- Monthly charts for calculating the return cut-off dates will be maintained by the ER Supervising Office Assistant and/or a designated ER SWS. These charts will be available to the clerical and social work staff as needed.