

DSS Policy and Procedure Guide	
Division 03: Child Welfare	Chapter 12: Staffings, MDIT's, Icebreakers, TDM's
Item 002: Multi-Disciplinary Interview Team (MDIT)	
Suggested changes send to: DSS PSOA Mailbox	Issued: May 1, 2017
References: Penal Code 11166.3 ; WIC 18951, 18965, 10850.1 and 830 ; Fresno County Superior Court Standing Order No. 03-01	Complete Revision Replaces Issue: July 7, 2004

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

The Department of Social Services (DSS) staff shall participate in the Multi-Disciplinary Interview Team (MDIT) and collaborate with other agencies for the prevention, identification, and treatment of child abuse. The MDIT process allows participating agencies to reduce trauma to child victims of physical and sexual abuse, neglect, and emotional maltreatment, and to increase the probability of conviction for child abusers. The MDIT reduces the number of interviews for individual child victims and enhances the fact-finding process in criminal and dependency cases by utilizing a coordinated multi-disciplinary interview approach.

MDIT agencies are contracted by local law enforcement agencies to conduct forensic interviews. The MDIT agencies employ a Child Forensic Interview Specialist and coordinate the scheduling of interviews. Interviews are scheduled only at the request of law enforcement.

Participating DSS staff assesses risks to the child victim (or witness to a crime) and take necessary steps to ensure protection of a child who cannot safely remain in the parent's or caretaker's home. Staff will also assess the child's and family's needs and make any necessary referrals for services or provide the family with information about access to available resources.

Purpose

This guide outlines roles and responsibilities of DSS staff in the MDIT, to minimize further trauma to children and assure maximum effectiveness of staff contribution to the process.

Procedure

Notification

Law enforcement contacts a contracted MDIT agency to schedule a forensic interview for a possible child victim of abuse or neglect (or witness to a crime).

The contracted agency notifies the DSS MDIT Liaison via email that a forensic interview has been scheduled.

Social Worker Role and Responsibilities

Open Referral or Case

If the child to be interviewed is in an **open** referral or case, the assigned Social Worker (SW) will be requested to attend. If the assigned SW is unable to attend, the MDIT Liaison will attend on their behalf.

No Open Referral or Case

Upon receipt of the email, the DSS MDIT Liaison will review the family's CPS history. This review is to include all past allegations of abuse or neglect.

The DSS MDIT Liaison will consult with law enforcement on interviews that do not have an active referral or case. If safety and risk issues are discovered during the consultation, the Liaison will generate a referral and assign to self as circumstances allow.

During pre-interview discussion among team members, the SW may disclose and share information relevant to the current investigation of abuse or neglect, pursuant to References above. The SW shall note any concerns about the child's protection from further abuse or neglect and advise the Interviewer of specific questions or issues that need to be addressed during the interview.

The SW shall narrate statements made by the child during the interview, and information provided by other agencies, that are indicators of whether the parent(s) or guardian(s) were aware of the abuse/neglect and whether they appear to be protective against further abuse or neglect. Specific details about the victim's experience need not be documented as they will be recorded during the interview.

The SW shall interview the parent(s)/guardians(s) to further assess the child's current and ongoing safety, and to assess the child's or family's needs, such as counseling services. The social worker should arrange to meet with the parent(s)/guardian(s) or other parties as soon as possible if additional contacts are needed to complete these assessments.

The SW should provide the family with a list of resources and offer to make referrals as needed, if the family has service needs for which arrangements have not already been made by other MDIT members, e.g. Rape Counseling Services.

The social worker must collaborate with law enforcement in assessing the need for a protective hold, if the parent or guardian is unwilling or unable to adequately protect the child or make an appropriate plan for the child's safety, AND there is an ongoing risk of further abuse or neglect. In the event that a protective hold is necessary, the social worker shall advise law enforcement that documentation of the MDIT may be used as evidence in Dependency Court proceedings.

New Allegations

The SW shall initiate a new non-crisis referral, if there is not already a referral regarding the incident which led to the MDIT interview. Information disclosed during the MDIT shall be documented in the referral by the SW who attended the MDIT. If the alleged perpetrator was a household member, they should be identified as the perpetrator in the corresponding abuse or neglect allegation.

Referral allegations shall reflect the safety and risk issues disclosed during the MDIT. The allegations should also address whether the parent/guardian is protective and if the alleged perpetrator was or was not a member of the household at the time of the incident. This referral should be assigned to the SW who attended the interview.

The SW shall obtain any identifying information available to generate a new referral, if, during the course of the interview, there are disclosures indicating other possible victims of abuse or neglect that are not members of this family.

- The SW shall request that the investigating law enforcement agency contact the Child Abuse Hotline (Careline) with the information as soon as possible, if there is not enough information known at that time. The identifying information should include, but not be limited to names, ages, birthdates, addresses, relationships, telephone numbers, school names, and any other relevant information.
- This new referral and its allegations will be reviewed in accordance with Structured Decision Making (SDM) and Emergency Response procedures and assigned for investigation. The MDIT DSS Liaison will consult with the Board Supervisor to determine the response time and assignment of the new referral.