

DSS Policy and Procedure Guide	
Division 03: Child Welfare	Chapter 03: Initial Response/Detention
Item 006: Crisis Referral Control Guidelines	
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Preamble

Child Welfare Policy and Procedure Guides (PPG) 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) Child Welfare division will assure timely response and equitable assignment of all incoming crisis referrals.

Purpose

To provide guidelines to the Emergency Response (**ER**) Social Work Supervisor (SWS) governing assignment of crisis referrals and to provide consistency in assigning and prioritizing Crisis Referrals for the day. These procedures will be followed by the SWS assigned to the Crisis Board, known as the “Board Supervisor”.

Procedure

Identification of Available Staff

Based on information shared in the Daily Briefing, the Board Supervisor will determine how many crisis day shift staff are available for assignments that day. **All crisis day workers will be numbered regardless of their status (out sick, vacation, off rotation, etc.)** The Supervising Office Assistant (SOA) and/or a designated Office Assistant (OA) staff will create the “line-up” for the day based on the following factors and priorities:

- The first **priority** group to receive a referral for the day will be the Social Workers (SW) who were **not** in rotation for crisis assignments the previous day due to illness, vacation, training, scheduled day off, or other reasons approved by the SWS or Program Manager (PM).
- The second priority group to receive referrals will be SWs who were in rotation the previous day, but did **not** receive a crisis referral.

- The third **priority** group in the line-up shall be SWs that received a crisis referral the previous day that did **not** result in a protective hold. These staff will be placed in order according to their *position number* in the previous day's line-up rather than the time of the referral.
- The fourth priority group **to receive referrals** will be SWs that received crisis referrals on the previous day that resulted in protective holds or **executed a Protective Custody Warrant (PCW)**. This also includes SWs who had a hold issued the previous day in a pending referral. These staff will be placed in the order according to their position number in the previous day's line-up rather than the time of the referral.
- The last **priority group to receive referrals** will be SWs who received more than one crisis referral on the previous day.
- Dependency Investigation Unit (DIU) SWs shall not be included in regular crisis rotation.

Second Round Referrals

SWs who received a "follow-up" hold will be considered before those who had a "new" hold issued in a crisis referral or pending referral. A SW that is not marked on the board with having a hold, starting with #1, will be called to take a second referral if their first referral did not result in a hold.

Additional Considerations

Standby SWS are to advise the Board Supervisor the following day of the referrals and events of the previous Standby shift so that the Board Supervisor will be aware of any accommodations that may need to be made. For example, a Standby SW may have responded to a Critical Incident such as a media related child fatality. The Standby SW may have not completed their investigation until 630 a.m. Accommodations should be made, if possible, for that Standby SW in determining any crisis referral assignment that work day.

When a SW completes a Team Decision Making (TDM) meeting they are then considered to be available to take a crisis. If the SW is filing as a result of the TDM he/she will be given a two hour grace period **in order to complete the TDM narrative for court related purposes.**

The Board Supervisor will have the discretion to assign referrals out of the numbering line-up based on best practice, interest of the client, and current work activity. They will articulate to the SW and their SWS why the line-up was **not** followed (i.e. a SW is completing a safety plan with the family, waiting for law enforcement to jointly respond, and/or has determined that a Critical Incident Report is needed).

The Board Supervisor will consider crisis referrals "pending" to a SW as an assigned referral.

Expectations

The Board Supervisor should expect that a SW who is in rotation is available to take a first or second round of referrals unless advised otherwise by a SWS or PM.

By 8:45 a.m. all **ER** Supervisors (or their designee) will attend the Daily Briefing and provide the Board Supervisor of a SW's availability to respond to referrals. **Attending the Daily Briefing or sending a designee is mandatory.**

The Board Supervisor and all SWS present will review the Board numbering to ensure it's accuracy. At the conclusion of the Daily Briefing, the Board numbering is finalized for the day. Errors and corrections to the Board will not be made until the following work day.

Referrals to Swing Shift

Referrals that have been completed by the Hotline at or after 3:30 pm shall be assigned to Swing Shift staff. A referral will be considered complete after the Hotline SW has contacted the Board Supervisor or Swing Shift SWS and advised that a referral has been generated and all documentation has been completed. The Hotline SW will email all designated staff a synopsis of the referral. The subject line of the email will contain the time of assignment. The Board Supervisor or Swing Shift SWS will log the time of assignment as indicated in the Hotline SW's email.

When a SW on this shift is up for a crisis, and has not yet arrived at work, the SW shall retain their placement in the rotation, and be assigned a referral when they report to work.

Upgraded Non-Crisis Referrals

Non-crisis referrals that are upgraded to a crisis response, on the same day they are submitted to the Daily Briefing, will be assigned by the Board Supervisor. The Board Supervisor will follow standard crisis referral assignment procedures.

Non-crisis referrals that are upgraded to either a "10 Day to the Board" or a "24 Hour" crisis referral, the day after submitted to the Daily Briefing and assigned to a specific Emergency Response unit, will remain in that unit. The unit supervisor will have discretion to assign the crisis referral to whichever unit member they believe to be appropriate.

Exceptions to Regular Rotation

SWs assigned to the **ER** division are expected to be available to take referrals except under the following circumstances:

- Incident Investigations
 - **Critical Incident:** Up to **three** days off of rotation at the discretion of the PM. A critical incident is defined as death of a DSS related minor, minor receiving critical care longer than 24 hours, extreme abuse of multiple DSS related children, media-related/high profile event, and kidnapping of or absconding with a dependent.
 - **Reportable Incident:** Up to **two** days off of rotation, at the discretion of the PM, for severe injuries as defined in PPG 03-11-001 as broken bones, burns, requiring

hospitalization, shaken baby, and hematoma. For all other types of reportable incidents, the SW remains in the regular rotation schedule.

- A PM may allow for additional time in extenuating circumstances such as activities pertinent to the investigation, for example court appearances or multi-disciplinary involvement. **A PM may also allow for additional time in recognition of the adverse emotional, physical and mental health effects of Secondary Trauma.**
- Vacation, Bereavement, Training, and Sick
 - **ER** SWSs shall not assign referrals, including 45 day returns, to a crisis or 10-day SW when they **will be out of the office for more than one day. This includes** Annual Leave (vacation, bereavement, **or** sick leave) **and a training that is longer than one day.** Such referrals shall be assigned to another SW in their unit, and upon the SW's return, they will be placed back on regular rotation and consult with the SW that responded to the referral. If additional follow up is required, the referral will be assigned to the original SW. (See PPG 03-03-020: Return Policy for Emergency Response Referrals).
 - SWs will be off of rotation for **three** days prior to a scheduled vacation of **five** or more days.
 - SWs will be off of rotation for **one** day prior to a scheduled vacation of **three to four** days.
 - Exceptions to these guidelines will be made during peak periods such as holidays in order to ensure coverage while allowing the maximum number of staff to have time off.
 - All **ER** Supervisors, or their designee, shall identify during the Daily Briefing, those workers which will not be on rotation due to vacation bereavement, training or sick leave.

Non-Crisis Staff Receiving Crisis Referrals and Crisis Staff Receiving Non-Crisis Referrals

In order to balance the workload fluctuations related to crisis and non-crisis referrals, crisis SWs may receive non-crisis referrals and non-crisis SWs may receive crisis referrals. Crisis SWs are to receive a minimum of three non-crisis referrals per month. Discretion to increase the number of non-crisis referrals to a crisis SW is at the discretion of the Unit Supervisor.

Crisis Board Overflow

Due to the increased number of crisis referral assignments on Monday morning and the Tuesday morning after a three-day weekend as the result of a holiday, the following **Crisis Board Overflow** procedure is to occur:

- Crisis workers are to be utilized first for crises needing assignment.
- Specialized workers will be utilized as needed. In the event that the number of referrals received by the time of the Daily Briefing is within three of the number of available crisis workers, the specialized workers will be given referrals out of the initial follow-up. Example: 13 follow-up referrals to the Board and 16 crisis workers are available, specialized workers will be utilized first.
- Once all crisis workers and specialized workers have received referrals, the status of the referrals received will be reviewed to determine if any crisis workers are available to take second round referrals.
- Non-crisis workers will then be used in order of their Board numbering.
- Non crisis workers who receive a crisis from the Crisis Board Overflow will be taken off of non-crisis rotation **that day and** the following day, for the first round of the day.
 - A non-crisis worker that receives a pending follow-up or a 24 hour crisis referral that does not result in a 300 protective hold being placed, will be taken off non-crisis rotation the following day, for the first round of the day.
 - A non-crisis worker that receives a pending follow up or a 24 hour crisis referral that does result in a 300 protective hold being placed, will be taken off non-crisis rotation for the following two **work days**.

The Crisis Board Overflow procedure can be invoked on any workday in which all crisis workers who are able to receive two crisis referrals go “double rounds”. The decision to invoke the Crisis Board Overflow procedure is made by the Board Supervisor and the backup Board Supervisor. A PM should be consulted as needed.

Workload and Staffing Issues

The Child Welfare Deputy Director (DD) and ER PM’s reserve the right to adjust crisis referral assessment and workload distribution at any time based on staffing resources and high referral volume.