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**ORANGE COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES AGENCY  
CFS OPERATIONS MANUAL**

**Effective Date: July 29, 2003**  
**Revised: July 25, 2006**  
**Revised: December 23, 2014**

**Number: A-0101**

## **Abuse Investigations—Foster Care**

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<b>Purpose</b>	To provide guidelines for staff when investigating allegations of child abuse and neglect in licensed foster care and group home placements.
<b>Approved</b>	This policy was approved by Gary Taylor, Director of CFS, on December 23, 2014. <i>Signature on file.</i>
<b>Most Recent Revision</b>	This revision of the Policy and Procedure (P&P) provides updated terminology and policy guidelines for investigation of child abuse and neglect referrals of children in licensed foster care and group home placements.
<b>Background</b>	<p>The function of investigating child abuse and neglect allegations of children placed in foster care facilities is assigned to Senior Social Workers (SSWs) designated as Foster Care Investigators (FCIs).</p> <p>The FCI conducts joint investigations with other agencies including law enforcement, Community Care Licensing (CCL), Children and Family Services (CFS) Foster Care Licensing (FCL) program, and the assigned SSW.</p> <p>Allegations that do not meet the legal definition of child abuse or neglect may be investigated as a licensing complaint by the appropriate licensing agency, per guidelines set forth in the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Evaluator Manual.</p>

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## Definitions

For the purpose of this P&P, the following apply:

**Foster Care Facilities:** Placement homes to include County-licensed Foster Family Homes (FFHs), Foster Family Agency (FFA) certified homes, or Group Homes (GHs).

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## POLICY

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### Investigation Assignment

Per Children and Family Services (CFS) policy, the Foster Care Investigator (FCI) will investigate allegations of abuse or neglect of children placed in foster care facilities when the alleged perpetrator is any of the following:

- A licensed or certified foster parent
- A member of the licensed or certified foster parent's household
- A GH staff member
- An unidentified person who resides or is employed in an FFA, FFH, or GH

Referrals alleging abuse or neglect to both the foster and biological children of a licensed or certified foster parent will be coordinated between the Child Abuse Registry (CAR), Emergency Response (ER), and the FCI's Senior Social Services Supervisor (SSSS) for investigation assignment.

Referrals alleging abuse or neglect to a child placed in a foster care facility outside of Orange County will be assigned and investigated in accordance with County Welfare Directors Association Southern Counties Memorandum of Understanding Regarding Cross County Emergency Response Referrals (see [Attachment 1](#) of CFS P&P [Abuse Investigations—Open Case \[A-0402\]](#)).

Referrals alleging abuse or neglect to a child by a staff member at Orangewood Children and Family Center (OCFC) will be assigned and investigated in accordance with CFS P&P [Abuse Investigations—Orangewood Children's Home \(A-0103\)](#).

Referrals alleging abuse or neglect to a dependent child by a parent, relative caregiver, or non-relative extended family member (NREFM) will be assigned and investigated in accordance with CFS P&P [Abuse Investigations—Open Case \(A-0402\)](#).

## Referral Notification

Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) § 11166.1(a)(1), the FCI will immediately report allegations of abuse or neglect of a child placed in a foster care facility to the licensing agency with jurisdiction over the facility.

Per CFS policy, upon receiving a new referral of abuse or neglect to a child in a foster care facility, the FCI worker will immediately provide notification to the following CFS staff depending on the child's placement:

- **FFH**
  - Licensing SSW, SSSS, and Program Manager (PM)
  - Placement SSSS and PM
  - Assigned SSW, SSSS, and PM
  - FCI SSSS and PM
  - Diversion SSSS
  
- **FFA**
  - Placement SSW, SSSS, PM and Information Processing Technician (IPT)
  - Assigned SSW, SSSS, and PM
  - FCI SSSS and PM
  - FFA Liaison
  - Diversion SSSS
  
- **GH**
  - Placement SSSS, and PM
  - Assigned SSW, SSSS, and PM
  - FCI SSSS and PM
  - GH Liaison, SSSS, and PM
  - GH Placement Liaison, SSSS, and PM

The FCI will utilize the Foster Youth Information (FYI) database system to send the above mentioned notifications.

## FCI Responsibilities

Per CFS policy, the FCI will:

- Conduct the investigation in accordance with CFS P&P [Abuse Investigations—Practice Guidelines \(A-0412\)](#) and CFS P&P [Abuse Investigations—Findings, Documentation, and Cross Reporting \(A-0305\)](#)
  
- Offer the appropriate licensing agency the opportunity to team during the investigation

- Complete the investigation within 30 calendar days of the initial investigation date, pursuant to California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Manual of Policies and Procedures (MPP), Division 31 § 101.5. Any delay beyond 30 calendar days requires approval by the FCI SSSS or program Officer of the Day (OD) SSSS
- Send advisement of investigation findings to CFS staff listed in the “Referral Notification” section above via the Foster Youth Information (FYI) database system
- Provide a copy of the investigation narrative to the appropriate licensing agency pursuant to PC § 11166.1(a)(1)

**Structured Decision Making (SDM)**

Per CFS policy, the FCI will utilize the Structured Decision Making (SDM) Substitute Care Provider Safety Assessment tool to identify safety threats and determine the appropriate safety intervention that will ensure the safety of the child. Refer to CFS P&P [Structured Decision Making \(D-0311\)](#) for further guidelines.

The FCI will complete a Substitute Care Provider (SCP) Safety Plan if the SDM assessment indicates the child may remain safely in the placement home with appropriate safety interventions.

**Removal from Placement**

Per CFS policy, the FCI will consult with the FCI SSSS or FCI OD SSSS if immediate removal from placement is necessary due to imminent risk to the child. The removal will be coordinated in consultation with the assigned SSW and SSW’s SSSS, when possible.

The assigned SSW will complete the following if the child is removed from placement:

- Required court reports and associated documentation
- Placement Information Change (PIC) notice in accordance with CFS P&P [Placement Change Notification \(K-0209\)](#)

**Note:** Pursuant to CDSS MPP Division 31 § 440, the assigned SSW will provide advance notification to the caregiver of intent to remove the child from placement when

applicable (e.g., the child is allowed to remain in the home with safety interventions until another placement is located). Refer to CFS P&P [Out-of-Home Placement \(K-0208\)](#) for further information.

## **FCI SSSS Responsibilities**

Per CFS policy, the FCI SSSS will complete the following prior to approving and closing the referral:

- Verify all Child Welfare Services/Child Management System (CWS/CMS) documentation is accurate and complete
- Ensure no identifying information regarding the Reporting Party (RP) has been disclosed in the Investigation Narrative
- Confirm SDM assessment tool has been accurately completed and the outcome is congruent with the investigation findings

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## **REFERENCES**

### **Attachments and CWS/CMS Data Entry Standards**

Hyperlinks are provided below to access attachments to this P&P and any CWS/CMS Data Entry Standards that are referenced.

None.

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### **Hyperlinks**

Users accessing this document by computer may create a direct connection to the following references by clicking on the link provided.

- CFS P&P [Abuse Investigations—Open Case \(A-0402\)](#)
- CFS P&P [Abuse Investigations—Practice Guidelines \(A-0412\)](#)
- CFS P&P [Abuse Investigations—Orangewood Children’s Home \(A-0103\)](#)
- CFS P&P [Abuse Investigations—Findings, Documentation, and Cross Reporting \(A-0305\)](#)
- CFS P&P [Out-of-Home Placement \(K-0208\)](#)
- CFS P&P [Placement Change Notification \(K-0209\)](#)
- CFS P&P [Structured Decision Making \(D-0311\)](#)
- [County Welfare Directors Association Southern Counties](#)

[Memorandum of Understanding Regarding Cross County  
Emergency Response Referrals](#)

- [California Department of Social Services \(CDSS\)  
Evaluator Manual](#)

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**Other Sources**

Other printed references include the following:

- Foster Youth Information (FYI)

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**FORMS**

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**Online Forms**

Forms listed below may be printed out and completed, or completed online, and may be accessed by clicking on the link provided.

<b>Form Name</b>	<b>Form Number</b>
California Substitute Care Provider (SCP) Safety Assessment	Via SDM application

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**Hard Copy  
Forms**

Forms that may be completed in hard copy (including multi-copy NCR forms) are listed below. ***For reference purposes only***, links are provided to view these hard copy forms, where available.

<b>Form Name</b>	<b>Form Number</b>
<a href="#">Substitute Care Provider (SCP) Safety Plan</a>	F063-25-549
<a href="#">Substitute Care Provider (SCP) Safety Plan (Spanish)</a>	F063-25-549Sp

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**CWS/CMS  
Forms**

Forms that may **only** be obtained in CWS/CMS are listed below. ***For reference purposes only***, links are provided to view these CWS/CMS forms, where available.

<b>Form Name</b>	<b>Form Number</b>
None.	

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**Brochures**

Brochures to distribute in conjunction with this policy may include:

<b>Brochure Name</b>	<b>Brochure Number</b>
None.	

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## LEGAL MANDATES

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[Penal Code \(PC\) Sections \(§§\) 11165–11174.3](#) constitute the Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act (CANRA), which is intended to protect children from abuse and neglect.

[PC § 11166.1\(a\)\(1\)](#) provides guidelines for notifying the appropriate licensing office when an agency receives a report of child abuse, neglect or exploitation.

[California Department of Social Services \(CDSS\) Manual of Policies and Procedures \(MPP\) Division 31 § 101.5](#) specifies timeframes for investigation and closure of referrals alleging child abuse, neglect, or exploitation.

[CDSS MPP Division 31 § 115](#) provides guidelines for Immediate Response investigations.

[CDSS MPP Division 31 § 120](#) provides guidelines for 10 Day Response investigations.

[CDSS MPP Division 31 § 440](#) mandates caregivers receive advance notice of intent to remove a child from placement and right to request a grievance review.