

Section: Family and Children's

Subject: Alternate Care – Allegations of Child Maltreatment

Title: Allegations of Child Maltreatment by Foster Parents

I. PURPOSE: Pursuant to Chapter 48, when an allegation of child maltreatment by a foster parent(s) has been reported to the agency, an independent investigation must be conducted by another county human service agency. The process for assuring safety of all children in the home, as well as the procedure for the independent investigation is outlined in detail in the following procedure section.

II. APPLICABILITY: This policy applies to all foster homes and respite providers who are licensed by La Crosse County Human Services Department.

III. DEFINITIONS:

- 1.) "E-Day" or "Emergency Day" Initial Assessment worker or supervisor means the Initial Assessment worker or supervisor assigned to deal with emergencies during the 8:30 – 5 work days, M-F.
- 2.) CPS- Child Protective Services
- 3.) MOU- Memorandum of Understanding

IV. POLICY/PROCEDURE:

- 1.) Report is received and recorded on a **Protective Services (PS) report**.
- 2.) Report is routed to **CPS Supervisor** scheduled for E-Day.
- 3.) **E-day Supervisor** reviews information, and immediately notifies **Alternate Care Supervisor** and contacts available county agency, as outlined in Independent Investigation MOU (see attached) for screening decision.
- 4.) **The E-day Supervisor** will assign the case for an immediate safety assessment of all children in the home in coordination with the investigating agency (if possible) to one of the following:
 - a.) CPS on-call or E-day Social Worker;
 - b.) Social Worker of the alleged victim
 - c.) Any available social worker supervising a placement in the home.
If deemed necessary, a protective plan will be implemented to control for any safety issues in the home.

- 5.) After assigning for safety evaluation, the **E-day Supervisor** will notify the **Alternate Care Supervisor** and the **Supervisor** of the **Social Worker** for the alleged **victim** of the allegations and pending action.
- 6.) If the safety evaluation indicates the **foster children and/or birth/adoptive children** should be **removed**, the **CPS social worker** (or who ever conducted the safety evaluation) should immediately consult with the **E-day Supervisor**. The **E-day Supervisor** shall notify the **Alternate Care Supervisor** and all other supervisors and workers involved with the family and children in the home of the decision.
- 7.) The **CPS Social Worker** assigned for safety will notify law enforcement if necessary. The social worker will take whatever action is necessary, upon supervisory consultation, to ensure that all children in the home are safe.
- 8.) The **CPS Social Worker conducting the safety evaluation** will notify the supervising **Social Workers**, of children in the foster home, the results of the safety evaluation, e.g. were children removed. The **Alternate Care Supervisor** will place the foster home on **“Hold”** status for new placements and respite care and notify **Adult Family Home Supervisor** and **Child Care Certification Specialists** if appropriate.
- 9.) **The CPS Social Worker assigned for safety will notify the parent or guardian of the foster child(ren) affected by the allegation and on the status of the placement (s).**
- 10.) Upon completion of the safety evaluation, the **E-day Supervisor** notifies the **Investigating Agency** and provides a copy of these documents to the **Alternate Care Supervisor**. The **Investigating Agency** will start the initial assessment within the assigned time frame (response time cannot exceed three days in cases of maltreatment within a licensed facility) and will complete and route a final written report to this agency within 60 days of receiving the above noted documents.
- 11.) The **Alternate Care Supervisor** will collaborate with the **Investigating Agency** to notify the foster parent(s) named in the report as soon as possible at the onset of the investigation. The **Alternate Care Social Worker** will ensure that the foster parent(s) understand the procedure for independent investigations, that their home has been placed on **“hold” status**, and advise the foster parents of available support services.
- 12.) If the CPS referral is **screened out** by other county agency, the **E-day Supervisor** will immediately verbally notify the **Section Manager** and **Alternate Care Supervisor**. *If a verbal report is not possible, the decision should be communicated via email.* The **Alternate Care Supervisor** will share this information with the **Alternate Care Social Worker** assigned to the foster home. *The Alternate Care Social Worker is responsible for contacting the foster parent and following up on the incident. Documentation of the incident and subsequent action would be reviewed by the Alternate Care Supervisor and then filed in the foster family’s file.*
- 13.) Within **72 hours** (excluding weekends and holidays) of receiving the **final report** from the assessing agency, the **worker from the investigating agency and the Alternate Care Social Worker** for the foster home should collaborate if possible. They will notify the foster parents of the findings of the investigating agency and of any action planned by La Crosse County Human Services Department. The **Alternate Care Social Worker** will notify the ongoing social workers with children placed or formerly placed (if applicable) in the foster home of the results of the assessment.

- 14.) The **Investigating Agency** shall notify the **foster parents** of any decision resulting from the assessment(substantiated or unsubstantiated) no later than 15 days after decision has been approved. This notice shall include information about how the foster parents can appeal a substantiated maltreater finding.
- 15.) If safety concerns are identified in the investigating agency's report, La Crosse County Human Services Department shall be responsible for treatment planning and service delivery.
- 16.) The **Social Worker(s)** supervising the child(ren) in placement shall notify the parent or guardian upon completion of the independent investigation of any action planned by the department. The **Investigating agency Social Worker** will also notify in writing any mandated reporters.
- 17.) The **Alternate Care Social Worker** will schedule a meeting with the foster parent (s) within 30 days after receiving the findings to discuss the results of the assessment and the status of their foster care license.

V. METHOD OF REVIEW: This policy will be reviewed annually in February.

EFFECTIVE: 2/1/01
REVISED: 11/6/2008
APPROVED: