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Changing Response Times, Evaluating Out, and Re-Mapping Emergency Response Referrals by Regional Staff

0070-515.10 | Revision Date: 03/11/19

Overview

This policy reviews the process of downgrading, upgrading, evaluating out, or re-mapping referrals for child abuse and neglect allegations.

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Version Summary

This policy guide was updated from the 08/14/17 version to include additional guidelines for evaluating out referrals and considerations for referring families to Prevention & Aftercare services.

POLICY

Downgrading Referrals

- Referrals with immediate response times may be downgraded to five-day response times with SCSW and ARA approval.
- Downgrades must occur before the assigned response time elapses and cannot be done after a face-to-face contact has been made or entered in CWS/CMS.
- Downgrades are authorized only when there is documentation in the referral that there is a reasonable probability that the referred child(ren) will be safe during the time that elapses between the initial and revised response time.
- Previous referrals should be reviewed before downgrading the current referral.
 - If previous referrals lack complete documentation or appear to have been assessed based on inadequate data, the current referral must not be downgraded.

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Upgrading Referrals

- Response times may be upgraded by the assigned SCSW if the referral meets the criteria for an immediate response time but was given a five-day response time by the Child Protection Hotline.
- Upgrading is also appropriate when the clients on a referral have an open case with our Department and given the risk factors described in the referral and risk factors known to exist within the open case, the child's safety is at greater risk than was originally estimated at the Child Protection Hotline.
- An upgrade from a five-day response time to an immediate response time must be done on the same calendar day that the referral was created.
 - An SCSW has the discretion to require the CSW to respond to a referral upon receipt or prior to the fifth day even if the referral has a five-day response time.
- A referral that was previously evaluated out may be upgraded to a five-day response time within 5 days of the referral date; otherwise, a new referral must be generated.

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Evaluating Out Referrals

Most referrals that do not meet the criteria for an in-person response time will be [evaluated out](#) at the Child Protection Hotline (CPH). This occurs when the allegations in and of themselves, do not constitute appropriate child abuse referrals. In some instances they should be directed to other agencies e.g. law enforcement and Student Attendance Review Boards (SARBs) for investigation.

For the harm or injury to a child to be classified as abuse, neglect or exploitation, the action or lack of action must meet the definition of abuse, neglect, or exploitation found in Penal code section 11165.1 through 11165.6. The parent, legal guardian, or out-of-home caregiver must have been alleged to have:

- Personally and seriously harmed the child or committed an act that places the child at risk of serious physical harm; or
- Permitted, or should have known that, another individual committed an act that seriously harmed a child; or
- Was unable or unwilling to protect the child from serious harm or injury.

If a regional SCSW receives an evaluated out referral on an open case or referral, the SCSW may assign the CSW to address the issues in the referral during the next contact with the case clients. If the SCSW or CSW has additional information about the case which, combined with the information from the evaluated out referral, lead to a reasonable suspicion of abuse or neglect, the SCSW must upgrade the referral and designate a response time on CWS/CMS.

Referrals that may be Evaluated Out by the Regional ARA

The regional office ER ARA may evaluate out referrals when:

1. The same allegation(s) regarding the same incident(s) has previously been or is currently being investigated and the current referral offers no new information.
Or
2. After the ER CSW/SCSW [gathers more information](#) via telephone, it is determined that the referral should be evaluated out.
3. The assigned response time does not meet the criteria for an in-person response time because:
 - It is an allegation listed under referrals that should have been evaluated out by the CPH.
Or
 - The regional ER ARA does not agree with the referral decision.

Evaluated Out Referral Log

All referrals that are evaluated out by regional offices must be documented on the evaluated out log on LA Kids, as well as in CWS/CMS. On the 15th and 30th of each month, the regional office Emergency Response ARA is to submit the log to their Regional Administrator (RA). RAs are to submit their logs to the CPH RA and copy their respective Deputy Director.

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Correcting the Erroneous Assignment of Referrals

A referral is considered to have been assigned in error when it does not meet the referral assignment criteria described in the [Referral Assignment Criteria](#). If the referral is assigned in error to a Regional office, the receiving office must do the following:

- If the referral has an immediate response time, e-mail the CPH Re-Map Liaison (RML) for reassignment within one (1) hour of the original receipt of the referral.
- If the referral has a five-day or five-day by date specified, email the CPH RML for reassignment within four (4) business hours of the original receipt of the referral.

The original receipt time is determined by the date and time of assignment to the Regional office shown on the Assignment Page of the CWS/CMS referral. If the referral was generated manually, the date and time of the fax transmission to the Regional office will determine the date and time of receipt. If the receiving office does not e-mail the CPH RML for re-assignment within the specified time frames, the receiving office must assign the referral to a CSW in the office to initiate the investigation or request a courtesy home call from the Regional office that serves the area where the family is located.

Making an Accurate Re-Mapping Decision

- In order to make an accurate re-mapping decision and reduce the chances of having the request denied, the "Request for Re-map" form must be completed in its entirety and the reason for re-map must be thorough and detailed.
- The CPH RML will respond to the re-mapping request within two (2) hours for an immediate response referral and within four (4) hours for a five-day or five-day by date specified response referral.
 - CPH RML will give priority to immediate and five-day by date specified referrals.
 - If a response is not received from the CPH RML within the specified time frame, the Regional office must respond to the referral or collaborate with the Regional office that should have been assigned the referral to request a referral re-assignment or a courtesy response.
- In order to ensure children and families are seen as determined by the referral response time, the CPH RML will not accept any re-mapping requests.
 - For immediate response referrals after 4:00PM.
 - For a five-day or five-day by date specified response referrals after 5:00PM.
- When a request for a re-assignment on an immediate response referral is sent at 4:00PM, the requesting Regional office must ensure staff remains in the office to respond to the referral, in the event the re-mapping request is denied.
- When a re-map request involving subsequent information is received, the following factors will be considered:
 - Date of the referral
 - Response time
 - Time frames
 - Child safety

Re-Mapping Disagreements or Concerns

When SCSWs have a disagreement or concern with a re-mapping decision, they are to advise their ARA of the disagreement or concern immediately. If the ARA agrees that the referral was assigned incorrectly, and it is in the best interest of the child to re-map the referral, ARAs are to e-mail the CPH ARA to request a referral re-mapping. If the referral was correctly assigned, or it is not in the best interest of the child to re-map the referral, or the CPH ARA does not accept the request for re-mapping, the Regional ARA is to assign the referral to a CSW in the office to initiate the investigation.

Best Practice and Best Interest of the Family

It is strongly recommended Regional offices collaborate with each other to initiate the investigation as determined by the response time, under the following circumstances:

- When a re-map is denied
- When a re-map request is not made within the time frame specified
- When a response is not received from the CPH RML within the specified time frame, and
- When an immediate response referral is received after 4:00PM.

This may require, but is not limited to the following:

- Telephone the Duty ER SCSW of the office the referral should have been assigned to
- Request a courtesy visit from the office that serves the area where the family is located
- Regional offices should accept a referral to be transferred after the requesting office has:
 - Completed an initial face-to-face visit with the family within required time frames.
 - Confirmed that the family does not reside in the area of the assigned office.
 - It is likely the family will need to be linked to services, and
 - Completed a transfer within 2 business days of the initial receipt of the referral.

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PROCEDURE

Downgrading a Referral

ER/ERCP CSW Responsibilities

1. Upon receipt of the new referral and before a face-to-face contact has been made, review the referral and any prior child welfare history on CWS/CMS.
2. If the CSW reasonably determines that the child will be safe for the next five days, consult with the SCSW to downgrade the referral.
 - Do not downgrade referrals in any of the following circumstances:
 - If the referral alleges the existence of a situation in which a child is in imminent danger of physical pain, injury, disability, severe emotional harm or death is likely
 - when law enforcement states that the child is at immediate risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation
 - when the social worker determines that the child referred by law enforcement is at immediate risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation

ER/ERCP SCSW Responsibilities

1. Review the current referral and the previous referrals in CWS/CMS, including the Screener Narrative and Contact Notebooks.
2. Determine if the information presented by the CSW provides a reasonable certainty that the child will be safe for the next five days.
 - If you do not agree with the CSW's assessment, return the referral to the CSW for immediate investigation.
 - If you agree with the CSW's assessment, document the information that supports a reasonable certainty determination that the child will be safe for the next five days and your approval for the downgrade in the Screener Alert section of the referral.
3. Consult with the ARA and request approval of the downgrade.
 - If the ARA does not approve the downgrade, instruct the CSW to respond to the referral immediately.
 - If the ARA approves the downgrade, approve the new response time in CWS/CMS.
 - i. Change the Determine Response of the referral on CWS/CMS and print out the new Emergency Response Referral that reflects the new response time.
 - To create a new Emergency Response Referral, you must delete the original Emergency Response Referral created by the Child Protection Hotline (CPH).
 - ii. Obtain the signature of the ARA on the front page of the new Emergency Response Referral that reflects the new response time.

ER/ERCP ARA Responsibilities

1. Review the current referral and the previous referrals in CWS/CMS.
2. Determine if the information presented by the SCSW provides reasonable certainty that the child will be safe for the next five days.
 - If you agree with the SCSW's assessment, sign the new Emergency Response Referral that reflects the new response time.
 - If you do not agree with the SCSW's assessment, return the referral for corrections and/or assignment for investigation.

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Upgrading a 5-Day Referral

Regional SCSW

1. Review the current referral and any previous referrals, if applicable.
2. Determine if the referral meets an immediate response time based on the child's safety.
3. If the referral meets the criteria for an immediate response time or if there are other safety factors that significantly jeopardize the child's safety, document the reasons for the upgrade in the Screener Alert section of the referral.
 - Upgrade and approve the response time.
 - Change the Determine Response Time of the referral on CWS/CMS and print out the new Emergency Response Referral that reflects the new response time.
 - To create a new Emergency Response Referral, you must delete the original Emergency Response Referral created by the Child Protection Hotline (CPH).
4. Assign the referral to the CSW.

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Upgrading a Referral that was Previously Evaluated Out

Regional SCSW Responsibilities

1. Review the new referral and the current open referral or case.
2. Determine if the new referral meets the criteria for an in-person response time based upon the safety factors to the child.

3. If the referral meets the criteria for an in-person response or if there are other safety factors that significantly increase the child's risk, upgrade the referral by completing the necessary steps on CWS/CMS.
 - Document the reasons for the upgrade in the Screener Alert section of the referral.
 - Upgrade and approve the response time (this will reopen the referral. Any text entered in the Rationale field is retained).
 - Print out the new Emergency Response Referral that reflects the new response time.
 - To create a new Emergency Response Referral, you must delete the original Emergency Response Referral created by the Child Protection Hotline (CPH).

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Responding to a Referral Already Under Investigation

Assigned ER CSW Responsibilities

1. Upon receipt of the new referral and prior to making a face-to-face contact, review the previous referral(s) in CWS/CMS
2. Compare the Screener Narratives and the Contact Notebooks to see if the current allegation(s) describe the same incident(s) that the child was previously assessed for.
 - If the same allegations regarding the same incident are being made, immediately consult with the SCSW to evaluate out the referral.
 - If the allegations are different, respond according to the assigned in-person response time.

SCSW Responsibilities

1. Review the current referral and the previous referrals. Ensure that the Screener Narratives and the Contact Notebooks in the prior referrals and the new referral describe the same allegation(s) and same incident(s).
 - If the current referral and previous referral(s) describe different allegation(s) or incident(s), do not downgrade the referral.
 - i. Return the referral to the assigned CSW for an in-person response.
 - If the previous referral describes the same allegation(s) and same incident(s), assess to determine if the documentation is adequate enough to ensure that a thorough investigation of the allegation(s) was conducted including the SDM tools used.

- i. If the previous investigation was not thoroughly documented or the disposition appears to have been based on inadequate data, do not downgrade the referral. Return the referral to the assigned CSW for an in-person response.
2. If it is determined that the previous referral did describe the same allegation(s) and same incident(s), and
 - The referral is currently under investigation, consult with the ARA to obtain permission to evaluate out the referral, or
 - If the referral is closed, verify that the documentation is adequate to ensure that a thorough investigation of the allegation(s) was previously conducted, and consult with the ARA to obtain permission to evaluate out the referral.
3. If approved by the RA and ER ARA to evaluate out the referral, complete the following steps in CWS/CMS:
 - Document the reasons for the downgrade in the Screener Alert section of the referral. Include the prior referral number, date and allegations in this rationale.
 - Go to the Determined Response Decision and select "evaluated out" from the drop down menu then send for pending approval.
 - Go to the Rationale box and clearly document the factual basis why the referral is being evaluated out.
 - Go back to Determined Response Decision and give final approval to evaluate out the referral (this action will blue out the referral) and then save to database.

ER ARA Responsibilities

1. Review the referral.
 - If you agree with the SCSW's assessment,
 - i. Document approval of the downgrade in the Screener Alert of the on-line CWS/CMS referral.
 - If you disagree with the SCSW's assessment, return the referral for corrections and/or assignment for investigation.
2. Document the referral on the Evaluated Out Referral Log. The log is to be submitted to the RA on the 15th and 30th of each month.

RA Responsibilities

1. Review the Evaluated Out Referral Log and forward to you Deputy Director.

Evaluating out a Referral Based on New Information

ER CSW Responsibilities

- If new information is obtained that supports a referral being evaluated out, document the information as a contact in the Contact Notebook and consult with SCSW to determine if the referral can be evaluated out. It is best practice, whenever possible, to contact any known, pertinent collateral contact who may be a professional and/or mandated reporter (e.g., teachers, doctors, therapists, etc.) to gather additional information with consideration given to:
- The length of time that the professional has known or worked with the family.
- The quality of interactions the professional may have had with the family.
- Whether the professional has expertise or experience to comment on the family's safety or risk from abuse and neglect.

ER SCSW Responsibilities

1. Review the current referral and the new information obtained to determine if the referral can be evaluated out.
 - If the referral can be evaluated out based on the new information, obtain ARA approval.
 - If the referral cannot be evaluated out based on the new information, return the referral for corrections and/or assignment for investigation.
2. If approved by the RA and ER ARA to evaluate out the referral, complete the following steps in CWS/CMS:
 - Document the reasons for the downgrade in the Screener Alert section of the referral. Include the prior referral number, date and allegations in this rationale.
 - Go to the Determined Response Decision and select "evaluated out" from the drop down menu then send for pending approval.
 - Go to the Rationale box and clearly document the factual basis why the referral is being evaluated out.
 - Go back to Determined Response Decision and give final approval to evaluate out the referral (this action will blue out the referral) and then save to database.

ER ARA Responsibilities

1. Review the current referral and the new information obtained.
 - If approved,

- i. Document approval in the Screener Alert of the on-line CWS/CMS referral.
 - ii. Determine if this family would benefit from Prevention & Aftercare services, and if so, email the Child Protection Hotline ARA to refer the family.
- If not approved, return the referral for corrections and/or assignment for investigation.
2. Document the referral on the Evaluated Out Referral Log. The log is to be submitted to the RA on the 15th and 30th of each month.

RA Responsibilities

1. Review the Evaluated Out Referral Log and forward to your Deputy Director.

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Evaluating Out a Referral that does not Constitute an Appropriate Child Abuse Referral

ER SCSW Responsibilities

1. If a referral was received with an allegation that does not constitute an appropriate child abuse referral and should have been evaluated out at the CPH or if based on the information in the referral it appears that it is an appropriate referral, inform the ER ARA.
2. If approved by the ER ARA to evaluate out the referral, complete the following steps in CWS/CMS:
 - Document the reasons for the downgrade in the Screener Alert section of the referral. Include the prior referral number, date and allegations in this rationale.
 - Go to the Determined Response Decision and select "evaluated out" from the drop down menu then send for pending approval.
 - Go to the Rationale box and clearly document the factual basis why the referral is being evaluated out.
 - Go back to Determined Response Decision and give final approval to evaluate out the referral (this action will blue out the referral) and then save to database.

ER ARA Responsibilities

1. Review the referral and determine if the referral should have been evaluated out at the CPH.

- If the referral should have been evaluated out at the CPH, document approval to evaluate the referral in the Screener Alert, of the on-line CWS/CMS referral.
 - Determine if this family would benefit from [Prevention & Aftercare services](#), and if so, email the Child Protection Hotline ARA to refer the family.
2. If the referral is valid because there are child abuse issues that need to be investigated, return to SCSW for investigation.
 3. Document the referral on the evaluated out referral log. The log is to be submitted to the RA on the 15th and 30th of each month.

RA Responsibilities

1. Review the Evaluated Out Referral Log and forward to your Deputy Director.

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Requesting a Re-Map for an Immediate, Five-day, or Five-day by Specified Response Time Referral

Assignment Clerk Responsibilities

The following steps must be completed within one (1) hour of receipt for an immediate response referral and within four (4) hours of receipt for a five-day or five-day by date specified response referral.

1. Consult with the office Duty ER SCSW regarding the erroneous referral assignment.
2. If the ER SCSW agrees with the current referral assignment, process the referral per existing procedures.
3. If the referral has been assigned in error:
 - Complete and e-mail the "Request for Re-map" form to the CPH Re-mapping Liaison (RML) at referralremap@dcfs.lacounty.gov.
 - In the subject line of the e-mail, type "Immediate Referral or Five-day or Five-Day by Date Specified Referral-Referral Name-Office" (ex. Immediate Referral-John Doe-Vermont Corridor)
 - Document the following information on the request:
 - i. Date
 - ii. Office

- iii. Name of person requesting the re-map
- iv. Telephone number
- v. Fax number
- vi. Referral name, date, and number
- vii. Reason for the re-map
- viii. As many details as possible
- Cc the ER SCSW or ER ARA on the e-mail request, if necessary.

Duty ER SCSW/ER ARA Responsibilities

1. If the referral has been assigned in error:
 - Complete and e-mail the "Request for Re-map" form to the CPH Re-mapping Liaison (RML) at referralremap@dcfs.lacounty.gov.
 - In the subject line of the e-mail, type "Immediate Referral or Five-day or Five-Day by Date Specified Referral-Referral Name-Office" (ex. Immediate Referral-John Doe-Vermont Corridor)
 - Document the following information on the request:
 - i. Date
 - ii. Office
 - iii. Name of person requesting the re-map
 - iv. Telephone number
 - v. Fax number
 - vi. Referral name, date, and number
 - vii. Reason for the re-map
 - viii. As many details as possible
 - Cc the ER SCSW or ER ARA on the e-mail request, if necessary.
2. If the CPH RML does not approve the re-map request and there is no disagreement or concern with the decision made, immediately assign the referral to a CSW to initiate the investigation.
3. If the CPH RML does not approve the re-map and there is a disagreement or concern, immediately advise your ARA of the dispute.
 - Immediately assign the referral to a CSW to initiate the investigation if informed by the ARA that the referral was correctly assigned or that the referral re-map was denied by the CPH ARA.
4. If a re-map request has not been submitted via e-mail to the CPH RMP within the specified time frames:
 - Assign the referral to a CSW to initiate the investigation, or
 - Telephone the Duty ER SCSW of the office that should have been assigned to the referral to request a referral re-map or request a courtesy visit.

ER ARA Responsibilities

1. When the SCSW disagrees or has a concern with the decision made by the CPH RML, determine if the referral was incorrectly assigned and if it is in the best interest of the child to re-map the referral.
2. If the referral was correctly assigned, return to the SCSW for assignment.
3. If the referral was incorrectly assigned and it is in the best interest of the child to re-map the referral, e-mail the CPH ARA to request a referral re-map.
 - If the CPH ARA accepts the referral, ensure the agreement is documented in the Screener Alert section of the ID page of the referral and request the CPH ARA have the CPH RML retrieve the referral from that Regional office and re-assign it to the appropriate office.
 - If the CPH ARA determined the referral was correctly assigned or does not approve the referral re-mapping, assign the referral to a CSW in the office to initiate the investigation.

CPH Re-Map Liaison Responsibilities

1. Review all incoming requests for re-mapping via e-mail as soon as possible.
2. If the re-map request is not approved, select "not approved" and provide a brief explanation as to why it was not approved.
 - Send the "Request for Re-map" form via e-mail to the sending office.
3. If the re-map request is approved, select "approved" and send the "Request for Re-map" form via e-mail to the sending office and complete the following on CWS/CMS:
 - Retrieve the referral from the assignment inbox;
 - Document in the screener alert of the referral that the referral has been re-assigned; and
 - Assign the referral to the new office within two (2) hours of receiving the "Request for Re-map" for an immediate response referral or within four (4) hours for a five-day or five-day by date specified response referral.

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Requesting a Re-Map for Expedited Response Referral

ER SCSW Responsibilities

The following steps must be completed within one (1) hour of receipt for an immediate response referral and within four (4) hours of receipt for a five-day or five-day by date specified response referral.

1. Contact the ER Duty SCSW of the office that the expedited response referral should be assigned to and inform them of the following:
 - an expedited response alert fax was received that should be assigned to their office
 - the new information obtained that indicates the referral is in their service area
 - whether or not that office can complete a courtesy response in order to comply with the time frame
2. If the office accepts the re-map, fax the Expedited Response Alert fax to the receiving office ASAP and forward the referral to their SAAMs unit once the referral is received online (CWS/CMS).
3. If the office does not accept the re-map within an hour of receiving the Expedited Response Alert fax, assign the referral to the offices law enforcement co-located CSW or an ER CSW, if applicable, otherwise go up the chain of command.

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APPROVALS

Supervisor Approval

- Downgrade a referral
- Upgrade a referral
- Evaluate out a referral

ARA Approval

- Downgrade a referral
- Evaluate out a referral

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HELPFUL LINKS

Forms

CWS/CMS

[Emergency Response Document](#)

[Emergency Response Referral Document](#)

[Screening Narrative](#)

Referenced Policy Guides

[0050-502.10, Child Protection Hotline \(CPH\)](#)

[0050-504.05, Referral Assignment Criteria](#)

[0070-548.00, Community-Based Resources](#)

Statutes

[Welfare and Institutions Code Section 16504\(a\)](#)-Sets the requirements for County welfare offices responsibility for responding to allegations of child abuse and neglect.

[Welfare and Institutions Code Section 16501\(3\)\(f\)](#)-Sets forth requirements for providing in-person response to reports of abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

[California Department of Social Services Manual of Policies and Procedures, Division 31 Regulations, Section 31-105.115](#)-Sets forth the decision criteria for determining whether or not an in-person investigation is necessary.

[California Department of Social Services Manual of Policies and Procedures, Division 31 Regulations, Section 31-105.116](#)-Sets forth criteria for the decision whether an in-person investigation is required or should be evaluated out.

[California Department of Social Services Manual of Policies and Procedures Division 31 Regulations, Section 31-105.117](#)-Sets forth criteria for evaluating out a referral.

[California Department of Social Services Manual of Policies and Procedures Division 31-101-125](#)-Emergency Response Protocol that includes the following: In-person investigations, in-person immediate investigations, and investigation requirements.

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