


Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families Department Operating Procedure			
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	Version #:4	Revision History: July 7, 1984 V.1 January 2, 2001 V.2 December 9, 2011 V.3	Director:
Section: Child Abuse/Neglect Investigations		Title: Response Priorities - Priority 1, Priority 2, and Priority 3	
Legal Authority:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rhode Island General Law §40-11-2 • Rhode Island General Law §40-11-7 			
Related DOPs:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criteria for a Child Protective Services Investigation, DOP: 500.0010 • Police Involvement in Child Protective Investigation, DOP: 500.0065 			
Related Forms:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • n/a 			

I. PURPOSE

Call Floor and Investigative staff must respond appropriately to each report or allegation of child abuse or neglect. The Department utilizes a standardized screening tool for each report to determine if the report or allegation meets the criteria for an investigation (refer to [DOP: Criteria for a Child Protective Services Investigation](#)), and if so, the child abuse and neglect report is screened in and assigned a response priority level of 1, 2, or 3. Response priorities are determined by information received in the child abuse or neglect report and are based on harm or risk of harm to the child. The time limit for the Call Floor to process the report, and a time limit for the initiation of the investigation, vary depending on the priority response assigned to the report or allegation of child abuse or neglect. If there is any uncertainty about response priority, the more urgent priority is utilized.

II. TERMS DEFINED

CPI - Child Protective Investigator
CPS - Child Protective Services

III. PROCEDURE

- A. If a call comes in reporting that a child is in immediate danger and immediate police assistance is required, the Call Floor worker:
 1. Instructs the caller to notify the police and after terminating the call, notifies the police; or
 2. Puts the caller on hold and notifies the police; or
 3. Places a three-party call with the police and the reporter.
 4. The call floor supervisor follows up with law enforcement to ensure the immediate safety of the child.
- B. The Call Floor worker utilizes a standardized screening tool to determine the response priority for each report of child abuse or neglect that is screened in for

an investigation. The Call Floor worker searches RICHIST for prior agency involvement. Response priorities delineate the time limit for the Call Floor to process the CPS report and for the initiation of an investigation.

- C. CPI's make every effort to respond to each assigned investigation as quickly as possible, however, response priorities allow the CPI's and/or supervisor to triage assignments within the response priority categories when a subsequent report is assigned requiring a timelier response. All assigned investigations must commence within the timeframe of the designated response priority.
1. Priority 1 Response – The Call Floor worker immediately notifies the Call Floor Supervisor. The supervisor reviews the report and forwards the report to the Investigative Unit within 30 minutes after the call is terminated. The case is assigned to a Child Protective Investigator and the CPI responds to the report within four hours of creation of the investigative protocol. Priority 2 Response – The Call Floor worker must process the CPS report within two hours after the call is completed. The case is assigned to a Child Protective Investigator and the CPI responds to the report within 12 hours of the creation of the investigative protocol.
 2. Priority 3 Response – The Call Floor worker must process the CPS report within four hours after the call is completed. The case is assigned to a Child Protective Investigator and the CPI responds to the report within 48 hours of the creation of the investigative protocol.
- D. Response priorities reflect the level of harm or risk of harm to the child.
1. Priority 1 response criteria include:
 - a. Child in imminent danger of physical harm.
 - b. Child abandoned and in imminent danger.
 - c. Child unsupervised and in imminent danger.
 - d. Family may flee or child may disappear.
 - e. Child at hospital for examination/parents present and awaiting questioning.
 - f. Child death due to alleged child abuse or neglect/other children in family.
 - g. Child held by police/physician/nurse practitioner on a 48 hour hold for DCYF placement.
 - h. Other circumstances of the case constitute an emergency.
 2. Priority 2 response criteria include:
 - a. Alleged abuse or neglect in which the child is not in imminent danger but other risk factors are present.
 - b. Child abandoned but not in imminent danger.
 - c. Child unsupervised but not in imminent danger.
 - d. Child hospitalized on a 72-hour hold.
 3. Priority 3 response criteria are used for all other reports in which there is minimal risk of harm to the child.
- E. While certain reports clearly mandate the response priority to be used, other reports are less detailed and require a certain level of training, judgment and expertise on the part of the worker/supervisor. Certain factors specific to the case situation, when applied to the allegations, may more clearly define risk to the child, including:
1. The child's age, physical, and mental condition.
 2. The mental and physical condition of the caretaker(s).
 3. The mental and physical condition and/or location of the alleged perpetrator(s).
 4. Any history of prior incidents/harm to the child.

5. The need for medical attention for the child.
 6. The nature and condition of the physical environment (safety/health).
- F. Upon review of the data by the Call Floor supervisor, the investigative supervisor, and/or the assigned CPI, a decision may be made to change the response priority.
1. For good cause, a response priority can be upgraded at any time.
 2. At no time can a response priority be downgraded without prior administrative approval.
 3. Any change in response priority must be indicated in a Case Activity Note. If downgraded, this change must be documented in a Case Activity Note by the approving administrator.
- G. If a child or children are left unattended and an emergency priority 1 response is required, the Call Floor worker asks local police to respond. If the police find a caretaker present and appropriate:
1. The Call Floor worker who contacts and receives the return call from the police notes directly on the CPS report the information that was reported and the name of the officer who responded.
 2. If there are no other allegations, the case is not assigned as an investigation.
- H. Investigative Unit functions include:
1. The completed CPS report is reviewed by the investigative assignment supervisor.
 2. The referral is assigned to a CPI within the guidelines of the specific response priority.
 3. An investigation is initiated within the specified response priority time frames.