



**Minnesota Department of Human Services**  
**Child Safety and Permanency Division**  
**P.O. Box 64943**  
**St. Paul, MN 55164-0943**

February 1, 2018

Dear County and Tribal Social Service Agency Director:

This letter is to share guidelines regarding time frames for responding to reports of child maltreatment. During Minnesota's federal Child and Family Service Review (CFSR) in August 2016, questions were raised regarding the department's interpretation of state statutes that define time frames for responding to reports of child maltreatment. As a result, a legal review of Minn. Stat. 626.556, subd. 10 (j), was completed, which reads:

(j) Upon receipt of a report, the local welfare agency shall conduct a face-to-face contact with the child reported to be maltreated and with the child's primary caregiver sufficient to complete a safety assessment and ensure the immediate safety of the child. The face-to-face contact with the child and primary caregiver shall occur immediately if sexual abuse or substantial child endangerment is alleged and within five calendar days for all other reports. If the alleged offender was not already interviewed as the primary caregiver, the local welfare agency shall also conduct a face-to-face interview with the alleged offender in the early stages of the assessment or investigation. At the initial contact, the local child welfare agency or the agency responsible for assessing or investigating the report must inform the alleged offender of the complaints or allegations made against the individual in a manner consistent with laws protecting the rights of the person who made the report. The interview with the alleged offender may be postponed if it would jeopardize an active law enforcement investigation.

For several years, department staff has interpreted "upon receipt of a report" as when a decision is made to screen in a report as meeting criteria for a child protection response and assigned to a Family Assessment or Family Investigation response path. However, the legal review concluded that "upon receipt of a report" is the time at which an agency first receives information pertaining to alleged maltreatment. Based on this conclusion, the time frames for determining when face-to-face contact is required with an alleged victim starts from the point at which an agency receives a report of alleged maltreatment, not when a report is screened in. Reports that include allegations of substantial child endangerment or sexual abuse require face-to-face contact with an alleged child victim immediately (within 24 hours) of an agency receiving a report; all other reports require face-to-face contact with a victim within five days of receipt of a report.

Guidance regarding the new time frames is included in the revised Minnesota Child Maltreatment Intake, Screening and Response Path Guidelines; the updated version was published and became effective yesterday.

Department staff recognizes the challenges this change poses to agencies, particularly in cases requiring a 24-hour response; however, the conclusion of the legal review cannot be ignored. To provide agencies with time to

incorporate the revised guidelines, the department will continue to measure an agency's overall performance on timeliness of contact with alleged child victims using the current methodology, i.e., starting from the point of screening. Effective July 1, 2018, the department will adjust how performance data is queried, and measure performance based on the date and time a report was received versus the date a report was screened.

Technical assistance is being sought from the Capacity Building Center for States to review, in partnership with stakeholders, Minnesota's existing safety model and guidance. The need to review, adjust and propose legislative changes on how time frames for responding to reports of child maltreatment are defined in statute will be a subject of this technical assistance. Department staff will be requesting participation of county and tribal staff in this process, and look forward to discussing other possible frameworks for defining response time frames.

Contact Rebecca Wilcox, Manager of the Safety and Prevention Unit, at 651-431-4699 or [rebecca.wilcox@state.mn.us](mailto:rebecca.wilcox@state.mn.us) with policy related questions. Direct questions related to performance measurement to Lori Munsterman, Quality Assurance Manager at 651-431-4705 or [lori.munsterman@state.mn.us](mailto:lori.munsterman@state.mn.us), or Nikki Kovan, Research and Evaluation Unit Supervisor at 651-431-3873 or [dhs.csp.research@state.mn.us](mailto:dhs.csp.research@state.mn.us).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jamie Sorenson". The signature is stylized and somewhat cursive, with the first name "Jamie" and last name "Sorenson" clearly visible.

Jamie Sorenson

Director

CC: County and tribal social agency managers and supervisors