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## **POLICY 204 – SERIOUS INJURY/CHILD DEATH REPORTS**

### **A. POLICY**

Tracking child serious injury and deaths informs implementation of child welfare best practice models for child safety and well-being through continuous quality improvement.

### **B. PROCEDURES**

1. For purposes of this policy, a serious injury is defined as a non-accidental injury, caused as a result of either abuse or neglect by a caregiver or adult household member having care, custody, or control, which requires hospitalization due to medical necessity.
2. Any child death reported to be the result of a non-accidental injury by a caregiver or adult household member having care, custody, or control also falls under the purview of this policy. Hospitalizations for observation of the child or for social holds are excluded from this definition. Any allegation of neglect in which the caregiver or adult household member is indirectly responsible for the child’s hospitalization (e.g., failure to protect) will need to be discussed on a case-by-case basis with the Division of Family Services’ (DFS) region 5 administrator and the receiving region to determine if it meets criteria for the SI/SA (Serious Injury/Sex Abuse) unit. These types of cases do not require a Serious Injury Report.
3. The Office of Children’s Services (OCS) Administrator will be immediately notified of all reported serious injuries and/or deaths.
4. The Division must make an immediate report of all serious physical injuries and/or deaths to the appropriate law enforcement jurisdiction and to the Department of Justice, per the Memorandum of Understanding for the Multidisciplinary Response to Child Abuse and Neglect. This contact must be documented in FOCUS (For Our Children’s Ultimate Success – automated information system
5. A Serious Injury/Child Death Report (SIR) will be completed within 24 hours of the hotline receiving notice. The initially responding worker/supervisor will be responsible for completing the report and submitting it via e-mail to the SIR distribution list, located on the U drive.
6. If a SIR has been completed for a child who has been hospitalized due to injuries related to abuse or neglect, and that child later succumbs to his or her injuries and dies, the original SIR should be amended to include information about the child’s death and redistributed to the SIR distribution list.
7. A copy of the Serious Injury/Child Death Report will be scanned into FOCUS as an attachment to the investigation.

8. New reports of serious injuries and child deaths, utilizing the definition in Procedure 1, will be assigned to one of the Division's Serious Injury/Sexual Abuse Investigation Units. The following additional categories of Physical Abuse, Neglect, and Death of Child will also be assigned to these specialty units, without the requirement of hospitalization:
  - a. Child age 3 or younger with bone fracture
  - b. Sudden, unexpected, and unexplained death of child age 3 or younger
  
9. When a child death occurs on an active investigation, the investigation will be transferred to one of the Serious Injury/Sexual Abuse Investigation Units. The sending worker/supervisor is responsible for documenting all case activity that occurred prior to the child death.
  
10. An internal review may be conducted at the DFS Director's discretion on any serious injury/child death case; however, the Division shall conduct an internal review of any death in which the child was active with the Division at the time of death. The internal review panel will consist, at a minimum, of the OCS Administrator, Investigation Program Manager, other Program Managers as applicable, Regional Administrator, Assistant Regional Administrator, supervisor, and worker. The panel review should address the following points:
  - a. Reason for the review
  - b. Date and circumstances of current incident
  - c. Chronology of events and Division involvement
    - Background information
    - Dates and nature of prior reports, including any findings
    - System involvement (e.g., police/criminal history, Family Court activity, medical/mental health issues)
    - Services offered
  - d. Other relevant information (e.g., alleged abuser was in foster care as a child)
  - e. Summary and findings
  
11. If a child death occurs on a case that was closed within one year, a paper review addressing the points listed in Procedure 9 will be completed by the Regional Administrator or his/her designee.

**C. FOCUS**

SIR Reports are scanned into FOCUS as a file on the DFS investigation case.

**D. FORMS** Use the DFS policy website to access any forms:

<https://kids.delaware.gov/policies/dfs-policies>

Serious Injury Report