## ORANGE COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES AGENCY PDU DISPATCH

Effective Date: November 15, 2006 Number: A-0206-D

Use of At Risk, Sibling Abused Allegation

## **PURPOSE**

Current Orange County Children & Family Services (OC CFS) policy states that, "During the course of every ER investigation, all children must be interviewed face-to-face and alone without the parent(s) or caregiver present," (refer to the Child Contacts Section of CFS P&P <u>Abuse Investigations-Practice Guidelines [A-0412]</u> for additional information). In keeping with that policy and the agency's primary concern and responsibility to ensure child safety, the purpose of this Dispatch is to announce a change in policy for assigning allegations to siblings of alleged victim children.

## **POLICY**

**Effective November 15, 2006,** the allegation of At Risk, Sibling Abused is to be used for all siblings of alleged victim children who are not alleged to be abused or neglected but may be at risk. The following criteria are to be utilized by CAR and ER staff to determine whether the allegation of At Risk, Sibling Abused is appropriate:

- Does the sibling reside in the alleged victim's home?
- Has the alleged perpetrator had access to or contact with the sibling?
- Sibling's age
- Type of allegation to alleged victim

When a CAR Senior Social Worker (SSW) becomes aware of siblings while taking a child abuse report, the CAR SSW or CAR clerical staff is to add an allegation of At Risk, Sibling Abused when appropriate on each sibling not identified as a victim. When an ER SSW becomes aware of siblings who were not initially known or listed on the CAR referral, the ER SSW is to add an allegation of At Risk, Sibling Abused when appropriate on each sibling not identified as a victim. If, during the course of the ER investigation, the SSW obtains information that supports an allegation of abuse or neglect to a sibling, the SSW is to unfound the allegation of At Risk, Sibling Abused and add the appropriate allegation.

Allegations of At Risk, Sibling Abused are to be investigated per standard ER procedure, as outlined in CFS P&P <u>Abuse Investigations—Practice Guidelines (A-0412)</u>. As a part of that process, the ER SSW is to inform the parents of all allegations and all allegation dispositions, including the At Risk, Sibling Abused allegation. Referral response timelines outlined in the Response Times section of the P&P noted above apply to children who are identified as primary victims. However, whenever possible, children identified as At Risk, Sibling Abused, are to be seen within the designated response time frames.

At the conclusion of the ER investigation, the ER SSW is to provide a disposition for each allegation, including At Risk, Sibling Abused. The disposition of the At Risk, Sibling Abused allegation is to be identified after determination of the disposition of the primary victim's allegation. The At Risk, Sibling Abused allegation is to be unfounded unless the primary victim's allegation is determined to be inconclusive or substantiated and related concerns regarding risk to the sibling have been identified.

Regardless of disposition, allegations of At Risk, Sibling Abused are not reported to the Department of Justice (DOJ) and are not cross reported to law enforcement. Allegations of At Risk, Sibling Abused do not negatively impact recurrence in Outcome Measures. The use of the allegation At Risk, Sibling Abused also does not affect risk level when following the Strategic Decision Making (SDM) protocol.

At Risk, Sibling Abused and Substantial Risk are not the same and are used for different purposes. The At Risk, Sibling Abused allegation is to be used when there is concern that a sibling of an alleged victim may be at risk for abuse or neglect. In contrast, when a referral is being promoted to a case for ongoing service and there is no substantiated allegation for each child, the allegation of Substantial Risk is to be utilized to support promotion to case status for provision of Voluntary Family Services.

The ER SSW and clerical staff are to ensure that each victim child and siblings who have been determined to be at risk have an allegation and a disposition prior to submission for supervisory approval of the referral. The assigned ER SSW will be responsible for adding this information when necessary.

With this change in CFS policy, entries into CWS/CMS will more accurately reflect workload activities and move towards automation of ER statistics. Further, this policy change aligns OC CFS with other Southern California child protective agencies that have reported the practice of assigning At Risk, Sibling Abused allegations to siblings of victim children on referrals when the sibling did not have another allegation.