

Hotline - Priority of Referrals

(Revised 03/10/23)

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Overview

The Child Abuse Hotline processes all reports of abuse, neglect, and/or exploitation for Child Welfare Services. The Hotline Social Worker (SW) utilizes the Hotline Structured Decision Making (SDM) Tool to determine if an in-person response is needed.

This policy details the different response times that a referral can be designated by the Hotline SW. Per State Regulations Manual of [Policies and Procedures \(MPP\)](#) Section 31-110, when it is determined that an in-person investigation is necessary, a SW will conduct an in-person investigation immediately (within 24 hours) or within 10 calendar days after receipt of a referral, as appropriate. In addition, San Diego County has a 5-Day differential response, which indicates that the SW will initiate an investigation within 5 business days.

Note:

- For additional information on generating referrals and cross reporting refer to Hotline – Function and Procedure.
 - For additional information/criteria for determining if an in-person response is needed refer to Hotline - Referral Screening Criteria.
 - For additional information on what program or region a referral should be assigned to refer to Hotline - Assignment of Referrals.
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Referral Date

The referral date, for purposes of compliance with the [California Division of Social Services \(CDSS\) Division 31 Regulations](#), is the date a referral is received by CWS by phone, mail, or fax. Based on the criteria below, if the Hotline SW assessed that an in-person investigation is necessary, an assigned Emergency Response SW is required to make the in-person investigation immediately, within 5 business days, or within 10 calendar days, as appropriate. If a referral is mailed or faxed in, the “referral date” will be the date CWS receives it. The referral date is **not** the date the referral is generated.

**Priority -
Response Time**

Hotline SW will assign referrals based on the SDM Hotline Tool recommendation after assessing all factors listed in the table below and any special county specific policies and protocols. If any overrides are applied or there is a disagreement with the SDM Hotline Tool recommendation then the SW will consult with the PSS. The Hotline SW will classify the referral according to the following definitions:

Classification	Criteria	Response Time/Procedures
24-Hour/Immediate Response Services (IRS)	<p>SDM Hotline Tool recommends a 24-Hour response. Consider any applicable overrides and the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • death of a child and circumstances may be suspected of abuse and/or neglect even when there are no other children in the home • current severe injury, that if left untreated, would/may cause permanent physical disfigurement, permanent physical disability, or death • injuries/marks/bruises on non-ambulatory children/youth • substance-exposed newborn that will be discharged within 5 days, AND caregiver(s) appear unwilling and unable to provide for the child upon discharge OR there are reasons to believe the caregiver(s) will remove the child against medical advice • DEC referral where law enforcement requests a response AND there is current evidence of substances in the home OR illegal drug production (i.e. methamphetamine lab, honey oil lab, etc.) • diagnosed malnutrition by a qualified medical professional due to inadequate or unbalanced diet 	<p>Initiate investigation within 24 hours from the time referral is received by CWS.</p> <p>Note: For infants 0 – 12 months, when the SDM Hotline Tool response decision tree recommends an IRS response is needed, the Hotline SW will not downgrade or evaluate out (EO) the referral.</p> <p>Note: A referral on a youth with an open case should be assessed like any other referral and is NOT an immediate override to a 24-hour response.</p>

**Priority -
Response
Time
(cont.)**

Classification	Criteria	Response Time/Procedures
24-Hour/Immediate Response Services (IRS) (cont.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> child requires immediate medical/mental health care, where the child's health and well-being will be seriously affected, and parents refuse and/or are unable to provide the care the child needs child is at risk of sexual abuse or has been sexually abused and perpetrator continues to have access infant born to incarcerated mother if child is ready to be released from medical facility and there is no identified caregiver who can care for the child. 	
5 Day as IRS – 24-Hour response for next business day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> child of any age who is determined to warrant an immediate response investigation, as determined by 24hr criteria mentioned above/SDM Hotline Tool, but the child/investigation can best be served by holding the initial contact until the next business day. It may be in the best interest of the child to see him/her/them in a neutral setting (e.g., at school or away from home.) 	<p>Within 1 business day (24 hours) from the date referral is received by CWS Hotline.</p> <p>Hotline procedures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> determine the response in CWS/CMS as a "5-Day" enter "24-Hour" after the referral name on the ID page, AND the month and day of the next business day enter the recommendation/reason for next business day response in the screener alerts box/narrative and rationale box in the Determined Response section; i.e., "due to the nature of the allegations, need to interview child at school."

**Priority of
Response Time
(cont.)**

Classification	Criteria	Response Time/Procedures
Court Intervention (CI)/Hospital Holds	Hospital Hold referrals placed after hours, between Friday evening and Sunday evening or on a holiday, will have their first face-to-face contact on the first business day following the date the referral was received.	<p>Within the first business day (24 hours) from the date referral is received by CWS Hotline.</p> <p>Hotline or PCC procedures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> determine the response in CWS/CMS as a “5-Day” enter Court Intervention “CI” after the referral name on the ID page, and the month and day of the next business day enter that a Hospital Hold was placed in “Location of Children” box of the ID page, and the reason for the need for next business day response (e.g., “Hospital Hold placed between Friday evening and Sunday evening or on a holiday”) <p>Note: See Hotline - CWS Hospital Holds for more information on Hospital Holds and Hotline Procedures.</p>

Priority of
Response Time
(cont.)

Classification	Criteria	Response Time/Procedures
CI - after hours/holidays	When a child is taken into custody and brought directly to PCC by law enforcement or someone other than CWS staff after hours, between Friday evening and Sunday evening or on a holiday, the first face-to-face contact with child and siblings, regardless if siblings are in custody, will be the first business day following the day the child was entered into PCC.	<p>Within the first business day (24 hours) from the date referral is received by CWS Hotline.</p> <p>PCC Intake procedures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • during the hours of 4 PM to 11 PM, the PCC PSS will consult with the Hotline Standby PSS to evaluate for possible immediate assignment for siblings at risk • if a child is brought to PCC during the hours 11 PM to 8 AM, when Standby response is not available, the PCC PSS will flag the referral for PCC staff to call the Hotline PSS (Standby Hotline PSS if weekend or holiday) in the morning to evaluate for possible immediate assignment for siblings at risk, and • determine the response in CWS/CMS as a "5-day, and enter "CI" after the referral name in the ID page in the Referral Name box, and the month and day of the next business day on the ID page, and • enter the reason for the need for next business day response (e.g., "Evaluate if siblings at risk").

**Priority of
Response
Time (cont.)**

Classification	Criteria	Response Time/Procedures
CI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child in custody where a petition may be needed for the protection of the child • Judicial Permission to Treat • Inter-County Transfer requests • Referral from Juvenile Court. 	Within 24 hours
5 Day	<p>After completing all required decision trees of the SDM Hotline Tool AND considering any applicable overrides, the response priority recommends a 10 Day consider upgrading to a 5 day when there are children under 5 with allegation(s) of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • excessive discipline with no injury • sexual abuse with no perpetrator access • physical abuse • unmet basic needs • emotional abuse and/or exploitation. 	<p>Within 5 business days from the date referral is received by CWS Hotline.</p> <p>NOTE: The SDM Hotline Tool does not have a 5 Day response therefore the Hotline SW will enter rationale for 5 Day responses in SDM and the screener narrative.</p> <p>In case of holidays, the response time is never to exceed 10 calendar days from date of receipt by the Hotline.</p>
10 Day	<p>After completing all required decision trees of the SDM Hotline Tool, AND considering any applicable overrides, the response priority recommends a 10 Day.</p>	<p>Within 10 calendar days from the date the referral is received by CWS (day 1 being the date referral is received by CWS Hotline).</p> <p>Hotline SW will enter any override rationales in the SDM Hotline Tool comment box.</p>
Evaluated Out (EO)	<p>Children not assessed to be at risk for abuse, neglect, or exploitation. (See Hotline - Referral Screening Criteria).</p>	EO referrals are not assigned.

NOTE: If the Hotline Screening Tool indicates a 10-day response, there will not be an automatic override to 24-hour if the only additional factor is that the child is already in an open case.

WIC §329 Referrals

All WIC §329 requests received at the Hotline will be screened by a Senior Protective Services Worker (SPSW) or Protective Services Supervisor (PSS).

WIC §329 requests CANNOT be evaluated out (EO'd) and must be assigned for investigation.

The Hotline SPSW or PSS will follow the steps below when a WIC §329 request is received:

Step	Action
1	<p>Review WIC §329 Request Fax Coversheet and "Application to Commence Proceedings by Affidavit and Decision by Social Worker" (JV-210).</p> <p>NOTE: Not all WIC §329 requests will have a Coversheet attached. Any JV-210 received at the Hotline will be considered a WIC §329 request.</p> <p>If information is incomplete, proceed to STEP 2. If information is complete, proceed to STEP 3.</p>
2	<p>If information is incomplete, return to applicant requesting complete information. Advise applicant that a referral for investigation cannot be generated until all information is received.</p>
3	<p>Evaluate level of assignment using SDM Hotline Tool and if the Hotline Tool determines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• a 24-Hour response, the SW will assign the referral as a 24-Hour.• a 10-Day assignment then the SW will assign the referral as 5-Day.
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Generate the referral based on information provided in the JV-210.• In "Referral Name" field, include "329" after the actual referral name.• Note at the beginning of the narrative: <i>"*****THIS IS A WIC 329 INVESTIGATION. DO NOT EO***** This is a WIC §329 Investigation. As the active SW, you are responsible for responding on behalf of the Agency. Response must be submitted to the applicant no later than 3 weeks from the date the original request was received by the Hotline."</i>
5	<p>Assign referral based on the Hotline - Assignment of Referrals policy.</p>

WIC §331 Referrals

The Hotline will be notified by court if a WIC §331 Hearing is scheduled. Hotline SW will follow the steps below.

Step	Action
1	Review WIC §331 Request from Juvenile Court.
2	Generate referral to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">In “Referral Name” field, write “331” after actual referral name. <p>Note: At the beginning of the narrative enter the following: *****THIS IS A WIC 331 HEARING REFERRAL. DO NOT EO***** <i>This is a WIC §331 Hearing referral. A hearing is scheduled <date> at 1:30pm in Dept. 1 at Meadowlark Juvenile Court. Assigned SW must attend this hearing or contact County Counsel if unable to attend.</i></p>
3	Evaluate level of assignment using SDM Hotline Tool and if the Hotline Tool determines: <ul style="list-style-type: none">A 24-Hour response, the SW will assign the referral as a 24-Hour.A 10-Day assignment.

Review/Transfer Process

The chart below explains the steps that will be taken after a Hotline SW has classified a referral as 24hr/IRS, 5 Day, 10 Day, or Evaluated Out:

Determine Response Decision	Who	Action
Evaluate Out (EO)	Hotline PSS	Review and <ul style="list-style-type: none">Change classification to 24-Hour, 5 Day or 10 Day ORApprove
24hr/IRS and 5 Day as 24hr/IRS (24-Hour response for next business day)	Hotline SW	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Assign to Region ANDForward ERD to Standby PSS to assess for standby response

**Review/Transfer
Process (cont.)**

Determine Response Decision	Who	Action
24hr/IRS and 5 Day as 24hr/IRS (24-Hour response for next business day)	Standby PSS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Assess ERDs to determine if standby response is required.
Hospital Hold/CI	Hotline SW	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Follow Hotline - CWS Hospital Holds Procedures ANDForward to Region
CI - Entered into PCC after hours/ weekends/holidays)	Hotline SW/PCC Intake	Forward to Region
5 Day/10 Day	Hotline SW	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Assign to Region

NOTE: It is very important that the Hotline PSS only approve the CWS/CMS Evaluate Out Determine Response Requests on referrals assigned primary to them by the Hotline Screener. The ER PSS will complete CWS/CMS approvals on all other referrals.

**Alignment with
SET**

This policy aligns with the SET Practice Framework by supporting the following SET values:

[Value 1](#) by recognizing that enhancing safety for children and youth in the home is a top priority.

[Value 6](#) by providing structure for a proactive workplace culture of responsiveness and shared responsibility.
