

Hotline - Sensitive Referrals

(Revised 03/21/25)

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Related Policies

Additional information can be found in the following policies:

- Child Fatality and Near Fatality Protocol
- Confidentiality - General
- Critical Incident Protocol
- ERMS and Record Management
- Hotline – Child Fatality/Near Fatality
- Registered Sex Offender (RSO) Referrals
- Processing DOJ Form BCIA 8583

Forms

The following forms are referenced in this policy:

- 04-51A Child and Family Well-Being – Critical Incident Report
- BCIA 8583 Child Abuse or Severe Neglect Indexing Form
- 07-315 ERMS Request Form

Definition

A referral will be marked as “sensitive” when the suspected **perpetrator, victim, non-protecting parent/ caregiver** or a **witness** is a:

- Person well known by the general public, or
- Child and Family Well-Being (CFWB), HHSA, or law enforcement employee, or
- Relative, friend or neighbor of CFWB or law enforcement employee
- Person involved in [Registered Sex Offender \(RSO\) Referrals](#)

Referrals regarding suspicious or inflicted trauma fatalities will also be marked sensitive. For additional information regarding fatalities, see [Child Fatality and Near Fatality Protocol](#) and [Hotline - Child Fatality/Near Fatality](#).

Differences From Other Referrals

The handling of “sensitive” referrals differs from regular referrals in the following areas:

- Referrals are made sensitive in CWS/CMS by the Hotline PSS and/or Hotline SW when sensitivity is known at the time of the referral.
 - If sensitivity is discovered later, the assigned SW is responsible for notifying the CWS/CMS Support Team (AKA HelpDesk) and having them make the referral sensitive.
 - Whoever makes the referral sensitive in CWS/CMS will complete the Limit Access frame and must complete the dropdown for “Reason” of sensitive assignment, along with the comment text box indicating specifically why the referral is being made sensitive. This comment section will allow the user to enter up to 254 characters (10 full lines).
 - The SW must have sensitive privilege in order to see this frame. It will not be visible to the assigned SW unless they have this privilege.
- A non-identifying reason for sensitive assignment should also be included within the “Location of Children” box in the ID page of the CWS/CMS referral. See [Procedure For Hotline PSS Or Hotline SW When Referral Is Received](#). All case information and documents should be handled and delivered only by PSS, senior clerks, and the assigned SW.
 - All documentation should be stored in locked cabinets prior to entry into ERMS.

Procedure For Hotline PSS Or Hotline SW When Referral Is Received

When a referral is determined to be sensitive, the Hotline PSS will make the referral sensitive in CWS/CMS. After this has occurred, the following steps will be taken for documenting and assigning the sensitive referral:

Step	Action
1	Provide the non-identifying reason for sensitive assignment in the Location of Children section within the referral in CWS/CMS (ie. sensitive to South, media involvement, etc). Do not include demographic information regarding parties involved, but instead indicate if a specific office/unit/staff should not be assigned due to confidentiality.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Notify the Centralized Assignment Team (CAT) regarding a new sensitive referral that needs assignment via phone call/ e-mail.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Provide only the following information with the CAT notification:<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ CWS/CMS Referral #▪ Assignment zip code▪ Primary language spoken by family▪ Number of children involved▪ Name of active SW, if applicable

**Procedure For
Hotline PSS Or
Hotline SW When
Referral Is Received
(Cont.)**

Step	Action
2 (cont.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If a sensitive referral is received outside of normal business hours (8am – 4pm), assign Secondary to the designated sensitive inbox in CWS/CMS (MC8) and notify all Hotline PSSs/SPSWs via e-mail about the need for assignment. Hotline PSS/SPSW will reach out to CAT the next business day to determine assignment. Include the same information that would be relayed to the CAT team: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ CWS/CMS Referral # ○ Assignment zip code ○ Primary language spoken by family ○ Number of children involved ○ Name of active SW, if applicable
3	<p>If the suspected perpetrator or non-offending parent is a CFWB employee or employee's relative, friend or neighbor, do not assign the referral to the office where the employee works.</p> <p>NOTE: If the suspected perpetrator or non-offending parent/ caregiver is a CFWB employee refer to the Critical Incident Protocol.</p>
4	<p>Telephone law enforcement to make a cross report, if appropriate.</p> <p>NOTE: If the suspected perpetrator is a law enforcement employee, the cross report must be handled via direct contact with the Sergeant of the appropriate Child Abuse Unit (e.g. SDPD for central locations). Hotline staff can e-mail copy of Emergency Response Document (ERD) to Hotline Law Enforcement Liaison. Liaison can forward the information to the relevant Sergeant via fax or e-mail.</p>

**Considerations For
Assigned SW**

If substantiating an allegation that will be reported to the Department of Justice, the assigned SW will:

- Maintain confidentiality per [Confidentiality – General policy](#).
- Hand-carry file documentation when transferring or closing.
- Maintain any case records in a locked cabinet until they are processed via ERMS.
- SW or the clerical supervisor will send form [BCIA 8583](#) for distribution. See [Processing DOJ Form BCIA 8583](#) for additional information.

Referral Not Assigned

When a sensitive referral will not be assigned, follow these steps:

Step	Who	Action
1	Hotline PSS or Hotline SW	Follow Steps 1 and 4 of the Procedure for Hotline PSS or Hotline SW when referral is received . Approve the Evaluate Out Response Request. NOTE: If the suspected perpetrator or non-offending parent/ caregiver is a CFWB employee refer to the Critical Incident Protocol .
2	Clerical Supervisor	Store case records in a separate locked cabinet. NOTE: Hard case files for all sensitive referrals (assigned or not) are hand delivered between clerical supervisors and locked in a separate file cabinet.

Sensitivity Discovered After Assignment - Referrals and Cases

When the assigned SW discovers during the investigation or open case that it should be classified as sensitive, the SW will follow these steps:

Step	Who	Action
1	SW	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hand-carry any relevant documents to Senior/Supervising OA who has ERMS sensitive access.• Complete ERMS request form and ensure that the sensitive box is marked on that form.• Complete the 04-51A Child and Family Well-Being - Critical incident Report, if appropriate.
2	PSS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Call /E-mail the CWS/CMS Support Team (AKA HelpDesk) to request to mark the referral as "Sensitive" in CWS/CMS.• Complete the 04-51A Child and Family Well-Being - Critical incident Report, if appropriate.

Removing Sensitive Assignment

When new information indicates that a current referral or case no longer meets the [definition](#) for sensitive assignment, responsibility for removing sensitive assignment must be handled by either the Hotline staff or CWS/CMS Support Team, dependent on when the new information is learned. When removing sensitive access on a current case or referral, sensitive assignment from prior referrals/cases will not be removed. Use the table below when considering removing sensitive assignment from an active referral or case:

If	Then
Hotline has a new referral/case to assign AND new information indicates no further need for sensitive assignment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Hotline staff will consult with Hotline PSS to ensure that removing sensitive assignment is appropriate.If approved, Hotline SW will use the Limit Access selection in the Action drop down in CWS/CMS to change the Access Rights to Non-Limited Access to Case/Referral.Enter the current date and document the reason for removing sensitive assignment in the Comments box. Note the name of the approving PSS in the documentation.If the reason for sensitive assignment is documented in the Location of Children section on the ID tab, delete the reasoning on the current referral/case only.Save to database
Referral/case has already been assigned and new information indicates sensitive access is no longer needed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Assigned SW will call/E-mail the CWS/CMS Support Team and provide the following:<ul style="list-style-type: none">referral #(s)PSS approvalreason for removing sensitive assignment.CWS/CMS Support Team will use the Limit Access selection in the Action drop down in CWS/CMS to change the Access Rights to Non-Limited Access to Case/Referral.Enter the current date and document the reason for removing sensitive assignment in the Comments box.Save to database

Alignment with SET

This policy aligns with [SET Value 6](#) by supporting a proactive workplace culture of reflection, responsiveness, and shared responsibility.
