

STRTP Investigations

(Revised 05/03/24)

[Forms](#)

[Related Policies](#)

[Introduction](#)

[Policy](#)

[Types of Allegations](#)

[Roles and Responsibilities](#)

[Assessing Safety and Risk](#)

[Concluding an STRTP Investigation](#)

[Alignment with SET](#)

Forms

The following forms are referenced in this policy:

- 04-51 A Critical Incident Report
- 04-184 Suspected Child Abuse Report Referral Form
- 04-310 Inter-Departmental Correspondence STRTP Complaint and Feedback Form
- 04-277cc Congregate Care Safety Plan

Related Policies

- Case Consultation
- Child Victim Witness Protocol
- Critical Incident Protocol
- ER - Investigations
- ER - Open Case Investigations
- Foster Youth Bill of Rights
- Hotline - Assignment of Referrals
- Hotline - Non-Hotline Staff Takes Referral
- Injuries to Children in Open OCS Cases or Investigations
- Institutions Evaluation Unit (IEU)
- Protocol for Working with Indian Families, Children and Tribes
- Safety Plan

Introduction

This policy describes the action steps involved in the investigation and follow-up of child abuse and neglect allegations when a child is placed in a San Diego County Short Term Residential Therapeutic Program (STRTP) and the alleged perpetrator is an STRTP staff person, including the operator/owner.

Policy

All allegations of abuse and neglect screened by the Hotline as meeting criteria for an in-person response, follow the investigation process as outlined in the ER - Investigations.

When the alleged victim is placed in an STRTP and the alleged perpetrator is a staff member of the facility, many agencies and CFWB staff may be involved in the investigation including:

- Child Abuse Hotline (Hotline)
- Community Care Licensing (CCL)
- Institutions Evaluation Unit (IEU)
- Open Case Investigations (OCI)
- Law Enforcement (LE)
- Placing SW or Probation Officer, and/or Residential Services (RS) -SW

The Institutions Evaluation Unit (IEU) Monitor is responsible for coordinating the investigation on STRTPs when the alleged perpetrator is a group home or STRTP staff.

The table below describes what a SW will do if there are concerns about an STRTP during an investigation or routine visit to the facility, after first assessing the immediate safety of the youth in consultation with PSS:

If...	Then...
The concern is regarding suspicion of abuse and/or neglect	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Per Hotline - Non-Hotline Staff Takes Referral, submit an 04-184 via email Consult with IEU
The concern is not suspected abuse and/or neglect, but is a complaint regarding facility standards or practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attempt to resolve the concern directly with the facility; then• Consult with PSS who will also attempt to resolve the concern directly with the facility; then• If the SW and PSS cannot resolve the concern, send an 04-310 to the IEU PSS.

If a Critical Incident Report (CIR) is needed:

- The Hotline will follow the Critical Incident Protocol and generate a CIR when applicable.
- The OCI worker will complete a CIR if one was not completed by the Hotline.
- The Office of the Ombudsman (OOO) will receive the CIR, per Critical Incident Protocol and complete required noticing.

The Hotline will cross report all allegations against the facility to CCL. No CFWB staff shall inform the facility that IEU or CCL will be involved in the investigation.

Types of Allegations

Types of allegations include:

- **Child Abuse/Neglect** –all referrals for service which allege that a child is endangered by abuse, neglect, or exploitation.
- **Other concerns/complaints:**
 - Care and supervision
 - Personal rights – (i.e., not letting child have enough clothes or own clothes, not letting child call SW)
 - Any non-criminal act or omission that infringes upon the basic rights of a child
 - Punishment or discipline in violation of the Foster Youth Bill of Rights (ie. withholding visitation, removing contact with providers or permanent connections, etc.)
 - Complaints about the quality of care other than abuse or neglect.

NOTE: If a youth is found with an injury during an investigation where physical abuse was not alleged, the SW will reference Injuries to Children in Open OCS Cases or Investigations policy for details on how to assess the injuries and identify next steps.

Roles and Responsibilities

The following table describes the roles and responsibilities of each responding agency and unit staff if a referral meets criteria for in-person response to investigate abuse and/or neglect:

Who	What
Hotline SW	Hotline SW will complete intake and assignment of referral as outlined in Hotline - Assignment of Referrals.
OCI/ER SW	<p>For all STRTP investigations, in addition to ER - Investigations policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assigned primary on the referral• Coordinate investigation with assigned IEU worker to respond to the allegations as outlined in ER - Investigations.• Follow Child Victim Witness Protocol .• Assist IEU and CCL as requested.• Interview only the victim child at the facility. IEU will interview other residents and staff as needed to assess the allegations.• Interview parents as either perpetrators, non-protecting parents, or collaterals based on the allegation. <p>NOTE: Do not contact parents if their parental rights have been terminated, unless they are a witness, collateral, or alleged perpetrator to the allegation incident.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attend Child Protection Team (CPT) meetings.• Attend any additional forensic services.• Determine risk/safety of the child (see Assessing Safety and Risk section of this policy).

**Roles and Responsibilities
(cont.)**

Who	What
OCI/ER SW (cont.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generate companion referrals if needed for other youth who may have experienced or be at risk of abuse or neglect in the facility • Consult with IEU when reaching a decision about the disposition on the child abuse allegation to ensure concurrence regarding the assessment. • Verify that IEU has completed their investigation prior to closing the referral in CWS/CMS. • Update the perpetrator's name in the Client Notebook once the perpetrator is identified, regardless of the outcome of the investigation. The Allegation Notebook must indicate perpetrator type as "SCP/Res. Facility Staff" if the perpetrator is employed by the facility. <p>If the referral is on a youth with an open case, per ER - Open Case Investigations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notify CLS of investigation and any Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTMs). • Attend any CFT meetings with the case carrying SW. • Coordinate Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) meeting with case carrying SW, as needed or required by Case Consultation. • Make any placement decisions under exigent circumstances in consultation with the assigned case carrying SW and the CFT. <p>If ICWA applies, coordinate the investigation, assessment, and interventions with the youth's tribal representatives. Please see the Protocol for Working with Indian Families, Children, and Tribes for additional information.</p>
IEU Monitor	<p>Contact the following to coordinate the investigation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigating SW • Case carrying SW (if applicable) • CCL • LE (as applicable) • Probation (if applicable) <p>NOTE: It is <u>highly recommended</u> that all interviews be done jointly.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview facility staff, including the alleged perpetrator and any other staff with information regarding the allegation and facility functions. • Review Special Incident Reports (SIRs) related to the allegation incident and the youth involved. • Provide investigating and case carrying SWs with information needed to assess safety, risk, and placement needs of the youth involved. • Assess the facility's compliance with their contract and youths' rights.

Roles and Responsibilities (cont.)

Who	What
CCL	<ul style="list-style-type: none">In coordination with IEU, investigate the facility's compliance with STRTP licensing requirements

NOTE: Verbal and written information are to be shared among all staff involved in the investigation, as appropriate.

Assessing Safety and Risk

It is the role of the investigating ER/OCI SW to assess the immediate safety of the youth involved in the allegation incident. The SW will use the Congregate Care Safety Assessment in Structured Decision Making (SDM) to assess for safety threats. If safety threats are present at any time during the investigation, the SW will utilize the Congregate Care Safety Plan (04-277cc) to create a safety plan with the facility and the youth. Please see Safety Plan policy for detailed steps in safety planning in congregate care.

Risk Assessments are not completed on referrals where there is already an open CWS case or the youth is placed in a congregate care setting. Reference the Structured Decision Making (SDM) policy for further information on risk assessments that may be required, such as a Risk Reassessment, based on specifics of each investigation.

Concluding an STRTP Investigation

After completion of interviews, information gathering, and assessment, the investigating SW will:

- ensure that IEU has completed their investigation. Do not close the CWS/CMS referral until IEU has completed their investigation.
 - consult with IEU to ensure there is an agreement with the disposition on the abuse allegation. If there is a disagreement, elevate to the manager.
 - follow closing and next steps procedures, outlined in the ER-Investigations and OCI policies.
 - update the allegations and alleged perpetrators to reflect investigation information. update the "Occurrence Information" field on the ID tab of the Allegation Notebook for all substantiated referrals
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Alignment with SET

This policy supports SET [Values 1](#), [3](#), and [4](#) by working together with agency and community partners to ensure the safety of youth in congregate care settings.
