
**ORANGE COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES AGENCY
CFS OPERATIONS MANUAL**

Effective Date: August 23, 2004
Revised: November 16, 2010

Number: D-0510

Substance Abuse Services for Children

Purpose To provide guidelines for assessing, providing intervention, and documenting for substance abuse by children who are the subject of Children and Family Services (CFS) intervention.

Approved This policy was approved by Gary Taylor, Director of CFS, on November 16, 2010. *Signature on file.*

Background Research shows a correlation between trauma exposure and substance abuse in adolescents. The National Survey of Adolescents found that teens who had experienced physical or sexual abuse/assault were three times more likely to report past or current substance abuse than those without a history of trauma.

Children who are the subject of CFS intervention, including open child abuse investigation referrals, Voluntary Family Services (VFS) cases, and open cases subject to Juvenile Court proceedings, may engage in the use or abuse of drugs or alcohol or be at higher risk of doing so due to the traumatic childhood experiences that resulted in CFS intervention, including possible exposure to drug and alcohol related behavior by their parents. Such activity may pose additional risk to a child's physical and emotional well being, negatively impact a parent/other adult caregiver's ability to provide care for the child, and jeopardize family safety.

It is the responsibility of CFS social work staff to assess for substance use/abuse issues and, as necessary, provide intervention and document the assessment of the behavior and the services provided to address it.

Legal Mandates [California Family Code Section 6929 \(b\)](#) mandates that children 12 years of age or older may consent to medical care and counseling related to the diagnosis and treatment of drug or alcohol abuse. However, children are not authorized to consent for replacement narcotic abuse treatment (e.g., methadone). (**Note:** This section does not restrict or eliminate the right of a parent/other adult caregiver[s] to seek medical care and counseling for a substance abuse issue when the child does not consent to the medical care or counseling.)

Definitions None.

POLICY

- Assessment**
- A. **Emergency Response (ER):**
During an ER investigation completed pursuant to CFS P&P [Abuse Investigations—Practice Guidelines \(A-0412\)](#), the assigned ER Senior Social Worker (SSW) will interview children 12 years and older regarding whether they have used/abused drugs or alcohol and/or engaged in the abuse of prescription medication. If so, the assigned ER SSW will ask questions to determine:
- Type of substance used/abused
 - Age of initial use/abuse
 - Duration of use/abuse
 - Amount of drug/alcohol consumed per use/abuse
 - Source of illegal drugs, alcohol, or prescription medication (e.g., friends, classmates, a drug dealer, a parent/other adult caregiver)
 - Whether child has observed their parent(s)/other adult caregiver to abuse drugs, alcohol, and/or prescription medication
 - Adult caregiver’s awareness of use/abuse
 - Whether child is receiving treatment to address substance abuse
- B. **Dependency Intake/Investigations:**
During an investigation regarding a child placed in protective custody/detained by the Orange County Juvenile Court, the Dependency Intake/Investigations SSW will ask a child 12 years of age or older who disclosed substance use/abuse during the ER investigation whether they have engaged in any further use/abuse since their initial disclosure and whether

there is further information regarding their history of substance use/abuse that they did not disclose during the ER investigation. If so, the assigned Dependency Intake/Investigations SSW will ask questions as outlined above.

C. **Continuing Services/VFS:**

During at least one monthly contact every six months and/or if there is a suspicion or concern that the child has engaged in substance use/abuse, the assigned Continuing Services or VFS SSW will ask a child 12 years and older whether they have used/abused drugs or alcohol or abused prescription medication. If so, the assigned SSW will ask questions to determine specific information regarding the history of substance use/abuse as outlined above.

The assigned ER, Dependency Intake, Investigations, Continuing Services, or VFS SSW will also interview the child's parent(s)/other adult caregiver(s) to obtain information regarding whether the child is known to have engaged in substance use/abuse or behaviors that could be indicative of substance use/abuse (e.g., observed by a credible source to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol or in possession of alcohol, drugs, or drug paraphernalia).

Assessment Factors

The assigned SSW will consider the following factors when assessing a child regarding substance use/abuse issues:

A. **Problems at School:**

- Sudden decline in performance or attendance
- Forged notes
- Forgetfulness or difficulty paying attention

B. **Problems at Home:**

- Increased secretiveness or heightened sensitivity to inquiry
- Defiance (i.e., refusal to do chores, obey curfew, etc.)
- Changes in friends and reluctance to talk about new friends
- Money missing from parent's purse, wallet, and/or valuables missing from home
- Unusual sleeping habits
- Loss of interest in hobbies, sports, or other activities
- Running away
- Changes in physical appearance (e.g., poor hygiene, unusual style changes)

C. **Emotional Problems:**

- Mood changes (e.g., irritability, depression, anxiety, unexplained euphoria)
- Hostile, aggressive outbursts
- Paranoia
- Suicidality

D. **Physical Problems:**

- Sudden, unexplained weight loss
- Binge eating
- Frequent accidents, injuries
- Dilated pupils
- Tremors
- Chronic cough
- Looking “spacey”

E. **Behavioral Problems:**

- Fighting
- Lying
- Blaming attitude
- Self mutilation (e.g., cutting)
- Activities that could have legal repercussions (e.g., stealing, shoplifting, vandalism, prostitution)

Note: The existence of one or some of these behaviors is not necessarily an indication of substance use/abuse and should be evaluated within the context of a child’s typical behaviors.

Notification to Parent/Other Adult Caregiver

When a child discloses substance use/abuse, the assigned SSW will inform the child that their parent(s)/other adult caregiver(s) will be immediately notified of the disclosure and ask the child whether they want to participate in the discussion with their parent(s)/other adult caregiver(s).

Regardless of whether a child chooses to participate in the discussion, the assigned SSW will immediately notify the child’s parent(s)/other adult caregiver(s) when a child discloses use/abuse of drugs, alcohol, and/or prescription medication.

Intervention

The assigned SSW will provide referrals for substance abuse treatment services if a child and/or the child's parent(s)/other adult caregiver(s) disclose substance abuse and the child is not already receiving substance abuse treatment services.

Substance abuse treatment resources may be accessed on the Social Services Agency (SSA) Internet by clicking on this link: [Substance Abuse Resources](#).

Consent for Treatment

The assigned SSW will inform a child 12 years of age or older who requires substance abuse treatment and the child's parent(s)/other adult caregiver(s) of the child's right to consent for their own substance abuse treatment.

The assigned SSW will also inform the child and their parent(s)/other adult caregiver(s) of their right to consent for medical care and counseling related to the diagnosis and treatment of a child's substance abuse problem, even if the child refuses to do so.

Documentation

The ER SSW will document any information regarding a child's history of substance use/abuse and substance abuse treatment referrals provided in the Investigation Narrative, which is to be completed pursuant to CFS P&P [Abuse Investigations—Findings, Documentation, and Cross Reporting \(A-0305\)](#), regardless of whether protective intervention will be taken.

The assigned Dependency Intake, Investigations, Continuing Services, or VFS SSW will document any information regarding a child's history of substance use/abuse and substance abuse treatment referrals provided:

- In a CWS/CMS contact pursuant to CFS P&P [Case Compliance Contacts and Documentation \(E-0105\)](#)
- Under the "Mental and Emotional Status" subheading of the "Evaluation of Child" section of the following, as appropriate:
 - Jurisdictional/Dispositional Hearing Report (refer to CFS P&P [Jurisdictional/Dispositional Hearing Report \[G-0310\]](#))
 - Family Maintenance Six Month Review Report (refer to CFS P&P [Family Maintenance Six Month Review Report \[G-0315\]](#))
 - Family Reunification Status Review Report (refer to CFS P&P [Family Reunification Status Review Reports \[G-0317\]](#))

Case Plan

The assigned SSW will incorporate into the child’s case plan any substance abuse treatment and drug/alcohol testing for a child who is the subject of Juvenile Court proceedings.

REFERENCES

Attachments and CWS/CMS Data Entry Standards

Hyperlinks are provided below to access attachments to this P&P and any CWS/CMS Data Entry Standards that are referenced.

None.

Hyperlinks

Users accessing this document by computer may create a direct connection to the following references by clicking on them.

- CFS P&P [Abuse Investigations—Practice Guidelines \(A-0412\)](#)
 - CFS P&P [Abuse Investigations—Findings, Documentation, and Cross Reporting \(A-0305\)](#)
 - CFS P&P [Case Compliance Contacts and Documentation \(E-0105\)](#)
 - CFS P&P [Jurisdictional/Dispositional Hearing Report \(G-0310\)](#)
 - CFS P&P [Family Maintenance Six Month Review Report \(G-0315\)](#)
 - CFS P&P [Family Reunification Status Review Reports \(G-0317\)](#)
 - [Orange County Social Services Agency website for Substance Abuse Resources](#)
-

Other Sources

Other printed references include the following:

None.

REQUIRED FORMS

Online Forms

Required forms listed below may be printed out and completed, or completed online, and may be accessed by clicking on the link provided.

	Form Name	Form Number
	None.	

Hard Copy Forms

Forms listed below must be completed in hard copy (including multi-copy NCR forms). ***For reference purposes only***, links are provided to view these hard copy forms, where available.

	Form Name	Form Number
None.		

CWS/CMS Forms

The following required forms may **only** be obtained in CWS/CMS. ***For reference purposes only***, links are provided to view these CWS/CMS forms, where available.

	Form Name	Form Number
None.		

Brochures

Brochures to distribute in conjunction with this procedure include:

	Brochure Name	Brochure Number
None.		