DIVISION OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES
ADMINISTRATIVE MEMO # 6

Date: August 20, 2009

To: All Children and Family Services Staff

From: Edward H. Matney, Policy Section Administrator
Division of Children and Family Services

Approved by: Todd L. Reckling, Director
Division of Children and Family Services

Re: Contacting the Nebraska Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline

Effective Date: Immediately

Duration: Until revised

Contact: Lori Harder, Child and Adult Abuse and Neglect Administrator
402-471-9733 or lori.harder@nebraska.gov

Purpose: **Direction on calls made to CFS Staff concerning a child's well-being or a parent contact requesting foster care for their child and clarification on resources available for families requesting assistance due to individual circumstances of the child and/or family.**

Action Required: Occasionally, Children and Family Services ("CFS") staff may be contacted directly by family members or others voicing concerns for a child's well-being or may be contacted by a parent asking for help or that their child be placed in foster care. If this occurs, the CFS staff will link the caller to the Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline by transferring the call and staying on the line to ensure transfer of the call. This process will allow the necessary information to be gathered and reviewed to determine if the situation requires a safety assessment, if there is a need for assistance in making a voluntary placement or if there is a need for a referral to community services.

If unable to connect the reporting party to the Hotline directly, then the CFS staff will document the information reported on the "Alert to Hotline" form. When the CFS staff hits "send," an automatic e-mail will be sent to the Hotline for an Intake Specialist to review the information. Staff should take the following steps to create the "Alert to Hotline" icon on their desktop computers.

Click on the "Start" menu button in the lower left corner on your computer screen. Go to "All Programs" and select "Desktop Customizer." Then, click on the plus sign to the left of "Child Abuse Hotline" and an option will appear for you to "Create Alert Hotline Form." Click on the box beside that option. Then, click on "Create Shortcuts," which appears at the bottom of the dialog box. Finally, close the dialog box, and you will see the new icon on your desktop screen. Technical assistance is available, if you need it. Please contact the Help Desk at (402) 471-9069.

Then, to send information to the Hotline, select the "Alert to Hotline" icon on your desktop screen and a template within Microsoft Outlook will be displayed. The template contains fields in which information can be entered documenting the information. The template will also pre-populate the hotline e-mail address. Users may add recipients in the address field. Enter the requested information and send the document.

Please note that at this time, the "Alert to Hotline" functionality is only available for those staff using desktop computers. Work with Information Systems & Technology is continuing, and future direction will be provided to those of you that utilize remote access (i.e. home, laptop computer). Until this functionality is available for remote users staff must continue to call the Hotline or find a Desktop computer to use the "Alert to Hotline" icon to notify the Hotline.

The Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline staff will accept the form in the same manner as a direct call to the Hotline and will attempt to contact the reporting party for additional information. If Hotline staff is unable to make contact, then the following steps will be taken to ensure face-to-face contact by CFS staff or law enforcement.

1. If it is a CFS Specialist who receives the information and that CFS Specialist has a present or historical professional relationship with the reporting party and/or the family identified, a request will be made for that CFS Specialist to make contact within the next working day with the reporting party and/or the family identified to facilitate information exchange with the Hotline within the next working day.
2. If it is not a CFS Specialist who receives the information or if there is no previous relationship with the reporting party, an Intake Specialist will request that a local law-enforcement agency conduct a well-child check to assess the child's well-being.

Available Resources:

In addition to the above protocol, information on available community supports should be shared with individuals who express that a family or child has a specific need. Individuals in 39 counties in Nebraska can also be encouraged to call 2-1-1, an information and referral line which is an excellent source of information on a variety of services statewide. A list of the counties in which the 2-1-1 phone service is available is listed on the 2-1-1 website. Individuals in all counties can also access information about 2-1-1 at http://www.ne211.org/

Please remember that voluntary placement is also available through CFS as an option once it is determined that in-home services will not meet the needs of the family and no informal supports (non-custodial parent, grandparents, family or friends) are able or willing to provide a home for the child temporarily. Please refer to 390 NAC, Chapter 7-003.

Additional supports will be in place by January 1, 2010, through the Division of Behavioral Health. The Division of Behavioral Health will establish a 24-hour Helpline

(hotline) and Family Navigator Program as required by the Nebraska Legislature (LB 603, 2009) to respond to children's behavioral health needs. The Family Navigator Program will provide individuals trained to facilitate peer support and connection to existing services, including the identification of community-based services. This service will be available to families whose primary concern is their children's behavior, rather than safety concerns identified in the family. A protocol will be developed between the Division of Children and Family Services and the Division of Behavioral Health that will outline the process to ensure that families are connected to the appropriate resources. Information about the 24-hour Helpline and Family Navigator Program will be sent to you in the future.