DATE: March 23, 2011

TO: SunCoast Region Circuit Administrators

THROUGH: Mike Carroll, SunCoast Regional Director

FROM: Lisa Mayrose, Family Safety Program Administrator

SUBJECT: The Utilization of Collateral Contacts in Protective Investigations

ACTION REQUIRED: Dissemination to Field Staff

Effective Date: Upon Receipt

PURPOSE: This memorandum provides guidance to child protective investigators and child protective investigator supervisors on the need for relevant and pertinent collateral contacts during the course of a child abuse investigation.

BACKGROUND: Per 65C-30.001(28) “collateral contact means face to face, telephonic, or written communication with those persons who provide relevant information for a child protective investigation but who are not subjects of the report. These persons include school personnel, service providers, neighbors, other relatives, and any other significant person in the child’s life or in the caregiver’s life.” In Addition, CFOP 175-21 requires “The protective investigator supervisor will assure that relevant collateral contacts are made and that protective investigators document the contacts in the investigative file. To be relevant, this person(s) needs to have had contact with the child, alleged perpetrator or the family. The person(s) contacted must have had direct knowledge or information regarding the family’s situation.”

While a specific number of contacts are not required, the relevancy of completed collateral contacts is critical in assessing child safety as well as assessing the need for services.

Collateral contacts include professionals and other individuals who have existing information about the family and can assist in making assessments. Examples of such contacts may include:

- Relatives, neighbors, or friends
- Teachers and school personnel
- Non-custodial parents
- Adult siblings who no longer reside in the home
- Service providers, community members
- Law enforcement; the reporter; and other agency personnel

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Law Enforcement (LE) and the reporter must be considered a relevant collateral contact only if they have additional information regarding the family different from the current situation (i.e. law enforcement has responded to the home previously/dealt with the family). **It is imperative that when the reporter is from an agency or institution (such as a child’s school or daycare), that the individual who has the most knowledge about the child’s situation is the person contacted during the investigative process (child’s teacher, guidance counselor, etc.).**

In the event a family is offered services, but refuses those services, a contact with a relative must be made for discussion.

Other collateral contacts must include previous CPIs, current or past service providers, Case Managers, and other professionals who have been or are involved with the family. If there was an active case when the intake was received, you must have evidence of notification and meaningful communication with the Case Manager.

Information from collateral contacts must be documented in the case notes and must be used in the decision-making process regarding the child’s safety and family needs. It is critical to document how the information obtained from collateral contacts was used to assess the overall safety of the child, the need for services, and in determination of findings and an appropriate disposition.

**If collateral contacts provide conflicting information, documentation must support the reasoning for considering one contact more credible than the other.**

Please refer to the attached Collateral Matrix for recommended relevant collaterals by maltreatment.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Please share this information with appropriate staff.

**CONTACT INFORMATION:** If you have any questions, or for additional information, please contact the Family Safety Program Office, Kimberly Williams, Family Safety Specialist, at (813) 558-5629

Attachment