

<i>Child Protection Act R.S.P.E.I. 1988, Cap. C-5.1</i>	Program	Child Protection	
	Subject	After Hours Emergency Child Protection Service	Policy # 1.11
Effective Date: July 5, 2010		Authorized by:	
Revised Date: June 1, 2018		Deputy Minister	

1.0 PURPOSE

1.1 Child Protection Services is a mandated 24/7 service that assesses and responds to reports of child abuse and neglect. The After Hours Emergency Child Protection Service provides a specific response to a child protection report or a concerns for children in care, received outside regular business hours.

2.0 POLICY STATEMENT

2.1 Social workers are available across the province to receive child protection reports or concerns for children in care during after hours.

2.2 The After Hours Emergency Child Protection Service is staffed with delegated social workers who are contacted by a designated message centre upon receipt of a child protection report, or concern for a child in care, to the After Hours Child Abuse Line.

2.3 Through a provincial roster, a Child Protection Supervisor is available to: support social workers; provide case management direction; and, consult on decisions required during the delivery of After Hours Emergency Child Protection Service.

3.0 PROCEDURE STATEMENT

3.1 Social workers, during regular business hours, are responsible for providing the After Hours social worker with notification for any situations that may be high-risk or that may require a specific after hours response. Notifications are to be sent to the After Hours email account and a copy placed on the parent or child's electronic file record. The After Hours social worker is responsible for reviewing notifications and information in the electronic management system upon receipt of a child protection report.

Where regular casework extends beyond regular business hours and it is considered necessary for the After Hours social worker(s) to be aware of the situation, the social worker will ensure the alert information is sent to the After Hours email account. In high-risk situations, the social worker may be instructed by a supervisor to call the After Hours social worker directly to provide an update by phone.

- 3.2 The After Hours social worker may, upon supervisory approval, be required to respond to the following exceptional circumstances, to include but not limited to:
- where evidence is not available during regular business hours and there is reason to believe the specific evidence related to the identified risk factors may be available after regular business hours;
 - when reasonable attempts have been made to address immediate child protection concerns during regular business hours and the risk has been unable to be assessed or mitigated (i.e. unable to locate the family);
 - where a social worker, working beyond regular business hours, experiences illness or a family emergency; or
 - where a social worker, working beyond regular business hours, requires additional assistance to provide child protection services.
- 3.3 The After Hours social worker is responsible for reviewing email and voice mail messages at the end of each regular business day to ensure all notifications have been reviewed.
- 3.4 Prior to beginning standby, the After Hours social worker and supervisor are responsible to email the message centre at info@medacomatlantic.com to confirm contact information.
- 3.5 Upon receipt of a call through the Child Abuse Line, the message centre will contact the After Hours social worker for the appropriate region by cell phone then pager, and will try again every five minutes. If the message centre is unable to reach the social worker after ten minutes, the message centre will contact the After-Hours supervisor, who will immediately contact the caller.
- 3.6 In the event the After Hours social worker is unable to contact the caller for any reason, the After Hours social worker will take all reasonable steps to ensure accuracy of the information and contact the caller. This may include:
- reviewing call records from the message centre to gather any additional information
 - reviewing recent after-hours calls
 - reviewing alerts, electronic data system, foster parent list, group homes, etc for similar contact information
 - consulting with the After Hours Supervisor

If the caller is unable to be identified, the After Hours social worker will notify the message centre. All available information will be provided to the Intake Assessment Unit the next regular business day.

Documentation

- 3.7 It is the responsibility of the After Hours social worker to complete all required documentation during the after hours shift and to email documentation to the appropriate social worker, supervisor, and/or administrative assistant. The After Hours social worker is responsible to confirm that documentation has been received by the appropriate team

for assessment and/or follow up.

- 3.8 All documentation is to be completed electronically. In exceptional circumstances, handwritten documents may be required. All handwritten documentation is to be written clearly and legibly.
- 3.9 Where the appropriate service line is available on the electronic filing system, the After Hours social worker will complete all documentation, other than the Child Protection Report Record, under the note topic "Emergency Duty"; the Child Protection Report Record will be completed on a word document. Where the appropriate service line is not available, all documentation will be completed electronically on the Emergency Duty Record Sheet. This information is to be entered by the receiving Child Protection team into the electronic file system when the service line is opened.
- 3.10 All documentation for open files will be forwarded electronically to the social worker, the supervisor, and the team administrative assistant. Where documentation has been completed in the electronic management system, the After Hours social worker will provide the appropriate date of contact and file number(s) for reference.

Where there is no current open service, the documentation will be provided to the appropriate team for follow up. New investigations commenced after hours **are not** forwarded to the Intake Assessment Team.

- 3.11 All documentation is to be completed during the after hours coverage and forwarded to the appropriate staff person(s) prior to the next regular business day. An exception may be made for Child Protection Report Records questions 10.3 and 11.2; when these sections have substantial information, the After Hours social worker may complete these sections the next regular business day, provided this is done as soon as possible and does not delay any required response to a child protection concern. All other sections of the Child Protection Report Record must be completed during after hours coverage.
- 3.12 Standards for documentation remain the same as during regular business hours.

Child Protection Reports

- 3.13 Upon receipt of a Child Protection Report, the After Hours social worker will review the electronic filing system and any alerts provided.
- 3.14 Child protection reports received during the After Hours Emergency Child Protection Service will be assessed using the same criteria as for the receipt of Child protection reports received during regular business hours. The After Hours social worker will consult with the supervisor for all reports assessed as requiring any response, including the commencement of an investigation, prior to the next regular business day. The After Hours social worker may consult with the supervisor regarding other child protection reports as needed.

Where the After Hours social worker is required to respond to a child protection concern, the After Hours social worker must consult with the After Hours supervisor when the

After Hours social worker has completed the required steps, unless otherwise directed by the After Hours Supervisor.

- 3.15 Reports not requiring an investigation response prior to the next regular business day will be forwarded to the appropriate team for screening. The After Hours social worker will **never** screen a Child Protection Report as a Non-Investigated Report.
- 3.16 The After Hours social worker is not required to complete the Initial Safety Assessment. The Initial Safety Assessment will be completed by the social worker assigned to the investigation. Upon assignment during regular business hours, the team supervisor will use discretion in determining the Bring Forward (BF) date for the Initial Safety Assessment based on the information obtained by the After Hours social worker.
- 3.17 In exceptional circumstances where the reported information has clearly been assessed and determined to be unfounded *and* where no further investigative steps are required, the receiving supervisor may request that the After Hours social worker who responded to the call complete all corresponding documentation to complete the Investigation.
- 3.18 Where a report requires a joint interview to be completed outside regular business hours, the After Hours supervisor will assign an After Hours social worker to complete the interview. If the After Hours social workers do not have the required training, the After Hours supervisor will arrange for another social worker with the training to be called back to work.

Children in Care

- 3.19 For all After Hours Emergency Child Protection Service requests regarding decision-making for children in care, the After Hours social worker will review alerts, and assess the information to determine if a decision or assistance is required prior to the next regular business day.
- 3.20 All actions taken during the After Hours Emergency Child Protection Service will be documented on the Child in Care file.

Administration - Roster

- 3.21 The After Hours social worker roster is created based on a one week rotation for all coverage to include a total of three (3) Social workers - O'Leary/Summerside (1), Charlottetown (1) and Montague/Souris (1) offices. One provincial **After Hours** supervisor will be on call each week for supervisory decisions and support. Roster rotation begins and ends on Friday of each week.
- 3.22 Social workers may seek a replacement social worker for their scheduled week of coverage or any part thereof; however, the replacement of a social worker must not create additional staff working on a statutory holiday. The original social worker scheduled to be on After Hours call is responsible to ensure any schedule change is properly communicated to all social workers and the message centre. The replacement social worker must provide contact information to the message centre.

- 3.23 The After Hours social worker scheduled to be on call during the week that includes Christmas Day will not be scheduled to be on call the next year for the week that includes Christmas Day. In years where Christmas Day falls on the day that the scheduled rotation changes, this will apply to the two social workers who are scheduled to be on call Christmas Day. This guarantee applies only to the social worker originally scheduled for the roster and does not apply to the social workers who volunteer to take the week that includes Christmas Day.
- 3.24 It is the responsibility of the After Hours social worker to immediately inform the After Hours supervisor if unable to remain on call for any reason. The After Hours supervisor will make arrangements to receive all calls for that region until After Hours social worker coverage resumes or is reassigned. Where an in-person response is required, the After Hours supervisor will assign one of the After Hours social workers in another region to respond. On the next regular business day, when applicable, the scheduled After Hours social worker's supervisor is responsible to ensure coverage for the remainder of the roster.
- 3.25 In situations where the scheduled After Hours social worker becomes unavailable to complete on call coverage due to illness or family emergency during the regular business day, the supervisor for the After Hours social worker is responsible to arrange for replacement roster coverage and ensure all notifications are completed.

Administration-Office Closure

- 3.26 Where an office is closed for holidays, storm closures, or other emergencies, the scheduled After Hours social worker is responsible to respond to all child protection reports for that office, and the scheduled After Hours supervisor is responsible for providing supervisory coverage. The After Hours social worker must contact the message centre to advise of the office closure.
- 3.27 Where the Provincial Assessment unit is open, the Provincial Assessment Unit will continue to receive child protection reports for closed offices. Where a response is required prior to the next regular business day, the After Hours social worker for that office will be contacted by the Provincial Assessment Unit. The After Hours supervisor will continue to provide supervisory coverage.
- 3.28 Where the Provincial Assessment unit is closed, the After Hours social workers will be responsible for receiving child protection reports for their offices, and the After Hours supervisor will be responsible for supervisory decisions. Where other offices are open, the appropriate team will respond to any reports requiring an immediate response; where offices are closed, the After Hours social worker will respond.

Where an office is open, alternate arrangements may be made between the After Hours social worker and a supervisor for the receipt and assessment of child protection reports for that office during regular business hours; however, all arrangements must be clearly communicated to the message centre.

- 3.29 Policy 3.28 does not apply to child protection reports received on open services where that office is open. In those situations, the reported information will be forwarded to the appropriate team for assessment and response.
- 3.30 If an office is closed on a Friday, the After Hours social worker scheduled to begin coverage that day will be responsible for responding to child protection reports from the closed office.
- 3.31 If After Hours Child Protection services for a closed office is being provided by a Social Worker from an office that is not closed, and a conflict impacts the social workers' ability to respond to a child protection report, the After Hours social worker will consult with his or her supervisor to determine an appropriate alternative arrangement

Administration–Payroll

- 3.32 All After Hours Emergency Child Protection Service responses will be compensated pursuant to the Collective Agreement with the Union of Public Sector Employees.
- 3.33 The After Hours social worker must submit a copy of all documentation, to include electronic filing system documentation, to their supervisor along with the Emergency Duty Time Sheet for payroll. The Supervisor will review all documentation and follow up with the After Hours social worker regarding any concerns related to decision-making, actions taken and documentation prior to approval for payment.
- 3.34 After Hours social workers will submit the Emergency Duty Time Sheet to their supervisor for review and approval. This will be sent for payment processing.
- 3.35 Emergency Duty payroll documentation will be retained by the Provincial Coordinator for Child Protection for three (3) years.

4.0 REFERENCES

- Apprehension 1.9
- Child Protection Investigation 1.6

HISTORY:

- August 6, 2013 - Editorial and format changes; additional procedural content added for Internal Purposes only.
- April 28, 2015 - Editorial and format changes; procedural clarification for exceptional requests for case specific evidentiary purposes and extenuating circumstances; changes in documentation specific to laptop implementation; clarification on compensation pursuant to the Collective Agreement; and, added Director’s File Service policy to References.

- May 3, 2016 - Editorial and format changes; changes in procedures to reflect electronic documentation
- June 1, 2018 - Editorial and format changes; changes in procedures to reflect After Hours Supervisor roster.