

Bob Taft  
Governor



Jacqueline Romer-Sensky  
Director

## Ohio Department of Human Services

30 East Broad Street, Columbus, Ohio 43266-0423

April 21, 2000

### OWF/PRC GUIDANCE LETTER NO. 18

**TO:** Directors, County Departments of Human Services  
Directors, County Public Children Services Agencies  
Directors, Child Support Enforcement Agencies

**FROM:** Jacqueline Romer-Sensky, Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jacqueline Romer-Sensky".

**Subject :** Child Safety Review Guidance

Over the last three years, Ohio's public assistance system has changed dramatically. Your steady efforts have been a catalyst for that change. This change brings new opportunities and responsibilities for us as managers of the public safety net for children and families. As we get closer to implementing the three year time limit, I want to work with you to develop procedures that will assure the safety of children. Many of you have taken action to deal with this issue. We want to work with you to develop "best practices" to promote the health and well being of children. I am recommending that each County Department of Human Services (CDHS) work with the Public Children Services Agency (PCSA) to develop a Child Safety Review Process (CSRP) for families losing assistance due to sanctions or time limits.

The **purpose** of a CSRP is threefold:

**To assist families in caring for their children after they leave assistance with continued support services and benefits.**

**To work closely with the PCSA to assure service coordination for families already involved with the PCSA.**

**To work closely with the PCSA to assure that children at risk of abuse and neglect receive protective services.**

Most children will not be at risk because their parents will make the necessary arrangements to assure their well-being. In some cases parents may place their children at risk. Children may be put at risk due to personal hardship beyond the control of the parent. Children may be at risk due to personal choices made by their parents. The following CSRP is intended to assist the CDHS as it ensures the health, well-being and

protection of children whose families are facing sanctions or will lose OWF as a result of time limits. While some counties have protocols in place, some may not. It is the expectation of ODHS that the CDHS will develop a CSRP to review the health and safety needs of children in families facing the loss of OWF due to sanctions or time limits. Listed below are the recommended elements of a CSRP:

#### 1. Assessment

- Define a process for a face to face meeting with the parents to determine the ongoing support needs of the family and continued safety of the children.
- Develop appropriate strategies that will assist families in meeting the needs of their children.
- Identify all families that are about to lose OWF cash assistance and who are also involved with PCSA.

#### 2. Services

- Provide information to the family on how it can continue to use child care, Food Stamps, Medicaid, child support, PRC and employment resources after the OWF case is closed.
- Conduct the pre-termination Medicaid Review as required by MTL 402.

#### 3. Communication with the PCSA

- Establish a communication process with Protective Services regarding families already involved with the PCSA that are about to lose OWF to assure joint case planning and development of a family contingency plan. This process should establish time frames for notification, as well as procedures for joint CDHS/PCSA case and family contingency planning.
- This review process may identify some cases where abuse or neglect is suspected. Where there is a suspicion of abuse or neglect, the CDHS should use its current process for referral to the PCSA as required in ORC 2151.421. Consult the PCSA and the County Prosecutor for clarification and refinements of the local abuse and neglect referral process.

#### 4. Support

- Develop a staffing plan. The CSRP should specify how this function will be staffed. Counties have many options in terms of staffing this function. Counties may provide this service through existing staff, contracted staff, contracted agencies, or by agreement with children services agencies.
- Monitor its implementation to assure that all a CSRP is conducted with all families facing the loss of benefits.

County flexibility is encouraged in the design and administration of this function. It is important to put an effective and timely process in place in order to ensure the safety of children. Should the CSRP create a financial hardship for the agency, ODHS will honor ceiling excesses that can be directly attributable to this function. Counties should work

with their Regional Account Manager if this becomes an issue.

In separated agencies, the CSRП should be a part of the county Plan of Cooperation between separated Children Service Boards and County Departments of Human Services. ORC section 307.983 requires the Boards of County Commissioners to enter into a written Plan of Cooperation with each county social services agency (CDHS/PCSA/CSEA) to enhance the administration of the OWF and PRC programs. Section 307.986 requires each Plan to include an exchange of information to improve services and assistance to individuals and the protection of children. Utilizing and amending this component of the Partnership Agreement provides a vehicle for counties to formulate procedures for reviewing family situations and making appropriate and timely referrals of families with children to the child welfare system. Please consult guidance in Ohio Works First (OWF) letter #4 dated February 27, 1998 regarding the written plan of cooperation.

Included with this letter are three (3) examples of "Best Practices" from counties which have developed procedures for reviewing child safety issues and communicating with the PCSA. As evidenced by these examples, local implementation can vary and is largely dependent on a county's caseload size, resources and level of collaboration between the OWF and PCSA division and/or agency.

Please submit your protocol to your account manager for review and comment by May 1, 2000. If you have further questions, contact your account manager.

C: County Commissioners Association  
PCSAO  
Wayne Sholes  
Regional Account Managers  
Fiscal Supervisors  
Jeanne Carroll  
Stan Sells  
Jane Frye  
Joel Potts

OHSDA  
Cheri Walter  
Deputy Directors  
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