



North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Social Services
325 North Salisbury Street • Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-2407
Courier # 56-20-25, MSC 2407

Michael F. Easley, Governor
Carmen Hooker Odom, Secretary

Pheon E. Beal, Director
(919) 733-3055

September 7, 2005

DEAR COUNTY DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES:

ATTENTION: DIRECTORS, CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES PROGRAM MANAGERS, SUPERVISORS AND SOCIAL WORKERS

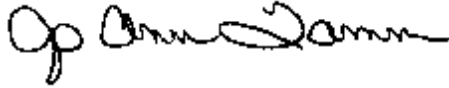
SUBJECT: CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES (CPS) GUIDANCE REGARDING EVACUEES AFFECTED BY HURRICANE KATRINA

Many evacuees from the devastated areas of Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi have relocated here in North Carolina. Among them there may be unaccompanied children who have already experienced tremendous trauma as a result of Hurricane Katrina. The Division, in consultation with our child welfare attorneys, wanted to provide guidance to you as you manage these difficult situations. It is the responsibility of North Carolina's child welfare services to ensure their safety and well-being, without unnecessarily adding to their trauma. We believe that this is best accomplished by asking ourselves the question, "how would I want my children to be treated if they were in this situation?" Our goal in this drastic situation, is to ensure the safety of the child while assessing alternative placements and not unnecessarily involving the court system prematurely.

If a county Department of Social Services receives a CPS report alleging there is an unaccompanied child here from one of these states it will complete the standard CPS Intake Form (DSS-1402) and accept the report as "dependency". In the Multiple Response System counties, these reports will be assigned to the family assessment response. The agency should respond to these cases as high risk situations. Custody of these children should not be sought immediately. Instead, a very thorough assessment should be completed, and as much information as possible concerning parents, relatives, and other supports should be obtained from the child. The agency should allow itself a reasonable amount of time to collaborate with the Red Cross and other agencies such as the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children and the North Carolina Center for Missing Persons to reunite these children with their families. During this time, the county Department of Social Services will maintain close supervision of the children in the centers/shelters. This may be accomplished by having a social worker who is working in the shelter supervise the child, or an official at the shelter who knows of the responsibility and agrees to supervise the child. The Structured Decision-Making Tools should be completed to the extent possible given the limited amount of available information. If after a reasonable time, no parents, caretakers, or relatives can be located, you should then consider legal options for the placement of these children.

We appreciate your continued efforts to provide safety to all children. If you have any questions, please contact your Children's Program Representative or the Work First/Child Protective Services team at (919) 733-4622.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jo Ann Lamm". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jo" being particularly prominent.

Jo Ann Lamm, Section Chief
Family Support and Child Welfare Services

JAL/lme

Cc: Pheon Beal
Sherry Bradsher
Sarah Barham
Local Business Liaisons
Children's Programs Representatives
Work First Program Representatives
Family Support and Child Welfare Services Team Leaders

FSCWS-39-05