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**CITY OF FERGUSON  
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF POLICE****Index as:**

Child Abuse

Neglect of Child

Protective Custody, Child

Sexual Abuse, Child

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**NEGLECT OR ABUSE OF A CHILD****445.00 PURPOSE**

The purpose of this General Order is to establish procedures for response and reporting neglect or abuse of children.

**445.01 POLICY**

The officers responding to a call of neglect or abuse of a child will ensure the victim is safe and if medical attention is necessary, he will immediately have the victim conveyed to the hospital. Chapter 210.125 RSMO effective August 1, 1982 provides that an officer can take a child into protective custody. If the officer has reasonable cause to believe the child is in imminent danger of physical harm or death before the family court could intervene, the officer may take temporary protective custody of the child without the consent of the child's parent, guardian, or others legally responsible for the child. The supervisor should make this decision.

**445.02 PROTECTIVE CUSTODY PROCEDURE**

- A. If an officer is required to take a child into protective custody under this General Order, he will immediately notify the Family Court Abuse and Neglect Unit or after hours, the Detention Center and the Division of Family Services and make a reasonable attempt to advise the parents, guardians or others legally responsible for the child's care. The jurisdiction of the family court begins from the time the juvenile is taken into protective custody. The officer will complete a Protective Custody Admission form, available at the St. Louis County Detention Center or at the foster parents' home, containing a written statement which sets forth the identity of the child and the facts and circumstances which gave the officer reasonable cause to believe that there was imminent danger of serious physical harm or threat to the life of the child.
- B. If the situation is not life threatening and no imminent danger exists the officer who has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering from illness or injury or is in danger of personal harm by reason of his surroundings and that a case of child abuse or neglect exists, may request that a court juvenile officer take the child into protective custody under Chapter 211 RSMO. The Division of Family Services must be notified.

- C. The St. Louis County Family Court can be notified 24 hours a day by calling the Detention Supervisor at 615-2996. The written report, required by the new statute within 12 hours, can be delivered to the detention center after normal working hours and during weekends. A police report or thorough completion of initial detention admissions form will suffice to meet the requirement of this statute. Supplemental reports may follow
- D. The Supervisor or officer designated by him will interview the victim and/or the witness to determine if a serious child abuse or neglect has occurred. This should not be an in depth interview but an attempt to obtain basic information.
- E. If the Supervisor determines the situation requires immediate attention (child's safety or health is in immediate danger), he will notify the Ferguson Detective Supervisor.
- F. A detailed interview and statement should be taken from all witnesses and from the victim by the investigator assigned to the case, and/or investigator from the Division of Family Services.
- G. Notification to the Child Abuse Hotline (1-800-392-3738) will be made giving the basic facts. The Supervisor or officer designated by him will interview the victim and/or the witness to determine if a serious child abuse or neglect has occurred. This should not be an in depth interview but an attempt to obtain basic information. If the Supervisor determines the situation requires immediate attention (child's safety or health is in immediate danger), he will notify the Ferguson Detective Supervisor.
- H. A detailed interview and statement should be taken from all witnesses and from the victim by the investigator assigned to the case, and/or investigator from the Division of Family Services.

#### 445.03 CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

- A. Officers responding to a call of sexual abuse of a child will ensure the victim is safe and if medical attention is necessary will make arrangements to have the victim conveyed to a medical facility.
- B. If the Child Abuse Hotline has not been notified, it is the responsibility of the responding officer to make notification. (Hotline 800-392-3738)
- C. The officer should make every attempt to contact the Juvenile Detective in the Bureau of Operational Support. The officer should prepare an initial incident report based on the complaint. A brief overview of the facts surrounding the call will be included in this report. The responding officer should not attempt to conduct an in-depth interview of the victim.
- D. In the majority of cases of child sexual abuse, a multi disciplinary team approach is utilized. This approach lessens the trauma experienced by the child and provides a

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foundation for the successful investigation and possible prosecution of the perpetrator. The investigating officer will make a referral to the Children's Advocacy Center of St. Louis, located at 4443 West Pine in St. Louis, MO. Phone number: (314) 535-3003. Referrals will meet the following requirements:

1. The victim must be a child between the ages of 3 and 14, inclusively; exceptions may be made for developmentally delayed youths.
2. Complaint is of a sex crime as defined in Chapter 566 RSMO, 1994, allegedly perpetrated within the City of St. Louis or St. Louis County limits.
3. Case does not involve immediate medical emergency.
4. Alleged sex crime is not suspected to have taken place within the past 72 hours.

**Note:** In suspected multi-victim cases, the number of children evaluated may be limited, and such limitation will be established in consultation with the Missouri Division of Family Services and Law Enforcement Officials.

- E. The Children's Advocacy Center will record the child's interview. The investigating officer is responsible for obtaining a copy of said DVD for investigative and evidentiary purposes if necessary. Generally the Assistant Prosecuting Attorney will secure the copy of the DVD.
- F. The original DVD will be kept by the Advocacy Center. DVD's will be preserved, maintained, and stored for a period of 15 years at the Center's storage facility.

By order of:



COLONEL THOMAS JACKSON  
Chief of Police

Distribution

All Department Personnel