DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

SUBJECT: **SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE/NEGLECT REPORTING GUIDELINES**

EMT-I, PARAMEDIC, MICN
REFERENCE NO. 822

PURPOSE: To provide guidelines and procedures for prehospital care personnel to report suspected child abuse.

AUTHORITY: California Penal Code, Chapter 916, Sections 11164-11174.3
County of Los Angeles Department of Children and Family Services

DEFINITIONS:

Agencies authorized to accept mandated reports: Any police department or sheriff's department, and the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Child Protection Hotline (CPH). School district police and security departments are not authorized to accept reports.

Child: Any person less than eighteen years of age.

Mandated reporter: Any healthcare practitioner, child care custodian, or an employee of a child protective agency. This includes EMTs and paramedics.

Neglect: The negligent treatment or maltreatment of a child by a person responsible for the child's welfare under circumstances indicating harm or threatened harm to the child's health or welfare. The term includes both acts and omissions on the part of the responsible person.

Physical abuse: Physical injury or death inflicted by other than accidental means upon a child by another person.

Sexual abuse: Sexual assault or the exploitation of a minor. Sexual assault includes, but is not limited to, any intrusion by one person into the genitals; anal opening of a child; oral copulation intentional touching for the purposes of sexual arousal or gratification, or masturbation in the presence of a child. Sexual exploitation includes conduct involving matters depicting minors engaged in obscene acts; and/or prostitution.

PRINCIPLES:

1. The purpose of reporting suspected child abuse/neglect is to protect the child, prevent further abuse of the child and other children in the home, and to facilitate treatment for the entire family. The presence of abuse, rather than the degree of that abuse is the determinant for intervention by DCFS and law enforcement.

2. California Penal Code, Sections 11166 and 11168, require mandated reporters to promptly report all suspected non-accidental injuries, sexual abuse, or neglect of children that they suspect, have knowledge of, or observe in their professional capacity. A verbal report shall be made to DCFS Child Protection Hotline immediately, or as soon as practically possible, and the Suspected Child Abuse Report shall be completed within 36 hours.

APPROVED: Director, EMS Agency — Medical Director, EMS Agency

In Los Angeles County, it is recommended that a report be made to local law enforcement as well.

3. It is not necessary for the mandated reporter to determine child abuse but only to suspect that it may have occurred. Law enforcement, DCFS and the courts determine whether child abuse/neglect has, in fact, occurred.

4. Current law mandates (CPC 11166) all healthcare professionals to report suspected child abuse/neglect that they know of or observe in their professional capacity. Mandated reporters are required to sign a statement acknowledging their understanding of the law (See Ref. No. 822.3, Sample Employee Acknowledgement as a Mandated Reporter). Any person who fails to report as required may be punished by a fine or imprisonment.

5. When a mandated reporter suspects or has observed child abuse/neglect, that individual is required to report by telephone to local law enforcement and/or to DCFS Child Protection Hotline.

6. When two or more mandated reporters are present at scene and jointly know or suspect an instance of child abuse/neglect, a member of the reporting team may be designated to report on behalf of the team. Any member who knows that the designated reporter failed to uphold their agreement shall thereafter make the report. If paramedics are not selected as the designated reporters, they shall document the name and agency of the designated reporting team member on the EMS Report Form.

7. Persons legally required to report suspected child abuse are immune from criminal or civil liability for reporting as required.

POLICY:

I. Reporting Procedure

A. Notify local law enforcement immediately if a child is suspected to be in imminent danger. Prehospital care providers should be aware of their local law enforcement reporting procedures and telephone numbers for notification.

B. Call the 24-hour Child Protection Hotline at **(800) 540-4000** as soon as possible to make the verbal report. (Refer to 822.1 for reporting options and instructions).

The telephone report shall include the following:

- Name of the person making the report
- Name of the child
- Present location of the child
- Nature and extent of the injury
- Information that led reporting party to suspect child abuse

The reporting party will be provided with a Referral Number (Case Number) that shall to be transcribed onto Form SS8572 in the upper right hand corner under "Case Number"

Within 36 hours:

1. Compete and submit the Suspected Child Abuse Report (SS8572), that is accessible on the DCFS web site at http://dcfs.lacounty.gov

   OR

2. Complete a hard copy according to the instructions on the back of the form (Ref. No. 822.2 and 822.2a, SS8572). The completed form must be mailed to local law enforcement and either mailed to DCFS (1933 S. Broadway Street, Los Angeles, CA 90007) or faxed (213) 745-1727

C. Document the following on the EMS Report Form

1. The name of the DCFS social worker and/or name, department and badge number of the law enforcement officer contacted.

2. Time of notification

3. Disposition of the child

CROSS REFERENCES:

Prehospital Care Manual:
Reference No. 822.1, Guide to Suspected Child Abuse Reporting
Reference No. 822.2, **Suspected Child Abuse Report Form SS 8572**
Reference No. 822.2a, **Definitions and General Instructions for Completion of Form SS 8572**
Reference No. 822.3, **Sample Employee Acknowledgement as a Mandated Reporter**