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**PURPOSE**

To establish the department's procedures and timeframes regarding death alerts of children and wards, including those ages 18 or over, who are under the care and supervision of the department.

For adult deaths refer to Services Requirements Manual, SRM 173, Adult Death Reporting Process.

**REASONS FOR  
REPORTING**

- To notify central office administrators of the child/ward death and the circumstances surrounding the death to monitor that required departmental procedures have been initiated.
- To notify the MDHHS Native American Affairs director of any American Indian child/ward death to ensure appropriate tribal notification has occurred.
- To notify legislators of the district where a court has jurisdiction over a foster care child/ward or juvenile justice child that has died.
- To respond to legislative, executive office and media inquiries.
- To identify trends in factors that contributed to the death and to address systemic issues that could prevent further deaths.
- To meet the personal and emotional needs of clients and staff at the time the death occurs.
- To ensure accuracy in reporting child abuse/neglect deaths to the National Child Abuse Neglect Data System.

**TYPES OF  
DEATHS TO BE  
REPORTED AND  
BY WHOM**

Centralized Intake must receive an immediate verbal complaint, with a written follow-up within 72 hours, regarding any child death occurring in the following circumstances:

1. The death occurs during an open CPS case or active CPS investigation.

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2. The death involves a child/ward under the care and supervision of MDHHS including:

- Foster care (FC) (includes the death of wards ages 18 and over).
- Juvenile Justice (JJ) (includes the death of wards ages 18 and over).
- Adoption Services (AS) (includes the death of wards in a MDHHS supervised adoption placement prior to finalization).

These deaths must also be reported to the Division of Child Welfare Licensing (DCWL) within 24 hours of notification that the death has occurred.

3. The death occurs in department-regulated child care homes, centers, facilities, camps, child caring institutions, or any child/ward supervised by a child placing agency (including MDHHS).

These deaths must also be reported to the Division of Child Welfare Licensing (DCWL) within 24 hours of notification that the death has occurred.

For the death of a child who has been identified as American Indian, regardless of whether child abuse or neglect is suspected; see PSM 712-8, Transferred for Investigation.

For the death of a child who is pending verification of American Indian ancestry, regardless of whether child abuse or neglect is suspected; see NAA 200, Identification of a Native American Child and PSM 712-8, Transferred for Investigation.

## PROCEDURES AND TIMEFRAMES

Upon receipt of a complaint regarding a child death, Centralized Intake must complete a child death alert, DHS 4712-M, Report of a Minor's Death, and save it in the MiSACWIS system.

**Note: For all active and open child welfare and juvenile justice cases where a child death occurs, regardless of type, and where there is an assigned worker at the local county/private agency, the county/worker involved with the case must**

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**complete the child death alert (DHS 4712-M) and save it in the MiSACWIS system.**

## ADDITIONAL NOTIFICATIONS

### MDHHS Alert System Unusual Incident

Instructions for the MDHHS Alert System Unusual Incident can be found at DHS Intranet.

1. From DHSNet Hot Topics, select DHS Alert System @ <http://mdhsintranet/AgencyAlerts/>.
2. Enter User Name and Password and then click Login.
3. Select System Intro and New User Info and then click Unusual Case/Incident.

For the MDHHS Alert System Unusual Incident to be sufficient for immediate reporting and to prevent unnecessary duplicative reporting, the following information must be provided by the local office or facility director or designee:

4. Date of Event. The date of death of the deceased child.
5. Customer Name. The name of the deceased child.  
Organizational Unit/County.
6. Customer Date of Birth. The date of birth of the deceased child.
7. Issue. Enter the:
  - MISACWIS Case or Intake number.
  - Name and phone number of MDHHS primary worker.
  - Name and phone number of MDHHS supervisor.
  - Name and phone number of any private child placing agency, child caring institution or camp involved.
  - Date and time agency was notified of the death.
  - Circumstances leading up to the death. Give as much detail as possible to tell what happened.

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- Law enforcement and/or emergency medical technicians that were called to the scene.
- If the child was transported to a hospital, include the name of the hospital.
- If the child was pronounced dead at the scene or at the hospital and identify the individual who pronounced the child/ward dead.
- Include information on media coverage and/or if media coverage is imminent.

8. Prior CPS history. Enter a summary of prior CPS history regarding the current caregiver(s), include the complaint date, a summary of the allegations and the disposition (rejected complaint or category).

If any required information is unavailable, indicate the specific information that is unavailable and the anticipated date for updating the MDHHS Alert Unusual Incident, as this will prevent follow-up from central office.

### **Local court and legislative notifications**

When a child who is under court jurisdiction for abuse and neglect dies, the local MDHHS must notify the local court with jurisdiction no later than one business day after the child's death.

The Office of Family Advocate is responsible for notifying the state senator and state representative who represent the district in which the court is located. The OFA will also notify the Office of Children's Ombudsman no later than the next business day after notification of the child's death. The Office of Family Advocate must include in the notification to the Office of Children's Ombudsman any of the following that apply:

- The child died during an active child protective services investigation or an open CPS case.
- The department received a prior CPS complaint concerning the child's caretaker.
- The child's death may have resulted from child abuse or neglect.
- The child was under court jurisdiction at time of death.

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**Other Unusual Child Deaths and Severe Injuries*****Death***

When the local MDHHS office receives information about the death of a former ward who is now an adult, or a child who is not under the care and supervision of MDHHS, but has prior family CPS, FC or juvenile justice history, the information must be reported by the **local MDHHS office or facility director or designee** using the **MDHHS Alert System Unusual Incident** format if:

- There were unusual circumstances surrounding the death which may have an impact on department policy, procedure or operation.
- The nature of the death may require the department to respond to legislative, public or media inquiry.

***Severe Injury***

Severe injury of a child/ward must also be reported by the **local MDHHS office or facility director or designee** using the **MDHHS Alert System Unusual Incident**. Instructions can be found at <http://mdhsintranet/AgencyAlerts/>. Select "System Intro and New User Info" and then "Unusual Case/Incident."

**Note:** If a severe injury complaint is received by CPS and assigned for investigation and the injury later results in the death of the child/ward, a new CPS complaint intake must be completed using MISACWIS CPS to generate the MISACWIS CPS child death alert. If the circumstances of the severe injury which cause the death are being actively investigated, the new complaint documenting the death may be rejected as already assigned.

**TRAUMATIC  
INCIDENT  
STRESS  
MANAGEMENT  
PROGRAM**

In any of the death situations required to be reported and for any other traumatic incident, managers need to assess the impact on department staff and consider a referral to the Office of Human Resources for intervention by the [Traumatic Incident Stress Management program](#).

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