

CHILD PROTECTION ALERTS

POLICY STATEMENT

This policy outlines the basic principles that inform the Bay of Plenty District Health Board (BOPDHB) child protection alert system and processes to be followed when staff consider an alert should be placed, and the steps to be followed when an alert is endorsed for placement on the patient health record. All child protection alerts will be uploaded to the national Medical Warning System (MWS) which is linked to the National Health Index (NHI) number.

PURPOSE

To ensure that BOPDHB has a system in place that allows health professionals to see child protection alerts lodged in both BOPDHB and other DHBs. If an at risk child is moving into another DHB area this information will be communicated directly with the staff in that DHB. This will ensure that safe and consistent practices are followed by BOPDHB staff when placing, responding to and removing child protection alerts on health records.

BACKGROUND

Acts of child abuse are seldom single events. Many children diagnosed with abuse have previous child protection concerns, evidence of old injury, or have been seen with vague symptoms that in retrospect could have been indicators of abuse. Most cases of serious abuse occur in infants and pre-verbal children, who are unable to tell others. Such abuse is under-diagnosed, in part because signs and symptoms are missed due to a lack of diagnostic suspicion.

Many children who die from abuse are unknown to CYF, but most are known to health. Many families are highly mobile. Reports highlight how important it is for health services to share information about children at risk, and how often this fails to happen.

Women may present in pregnancy in circumstances which will create high risk for the baby after delivery. Failure to recognise and respond to these women appropriately may result in poor outcomes. A CPA lodged on the health record of a pregnant woman is often referred to as an "Antenatal Alert". This is transferred onto the child's health record after delivery, if risk persists.

Alerts draw the attention of healthcare professionals to serious child protection concerns already known within the health system, so they can decide its relevance to the latest presentation. This information must be readily available. Police and CYF data is not readily accessible to health providers, who will only contact them if already concerned.

The purpose of entering these CPAs onto the National Medical Warning System is to make relevant health information available to other DHBs as a child moves around New Zealand.

An Alert merely draws our attention to past history. If other current factors for concern about child protection exist, the absence of a CPA should not be regarded as evidence that a child or young person is not now at risk.

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PRINCIPLES

The following principles are fundamental to the system:

- Consistent minimum criteria. CPA will only be placed if the level of risk is such that the child has been referred to CYF.
- Consistent process. CPA will only be placed if the decision to do so has been formally reviewed by a multi-disciplinary team with expertise in child protection.
- Consistent health information. Any CPA placed must be supported by enough health information to inform subsequent clinical decision-making by other health professionals.

EXCLUSIONS

There are no exclusions

REFERENCES

- Paediatric Society of New Zealand. Child protection alert system within health policy paper. February 2011
- Office of the Commissioner for Children. Final report on the investigation of James Whakaruru. June 2000
- Privacy Impact Assessment National Child Protection Alert System. February 2011.
- Memorandum of Agreement for National Child Protection Alert System between Bay of Plenty District Health Board, Ministry of Health and Paediatric Society of New Zealand.
- Health Act 1956 (and amendments 1993)
- Children Young Persons and their Families Act 1989 (and amendments 1994)
- Privacy Act 1993
- Health Information Privacy Code 1994
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ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

- [Bay of Plenty District Health Board policy 1.2.7 protocol 1 Child Protection Alerts - Standards](#)
- [Bay of Plenty District Health Board policy 1.2.1 Child Abuse and Neglect – Management and Reporting](#)
- [Bay of Plenty District Health Board Form FM.R6.1 Child, Youth and Family – Report of Concern](#)
- [Bay of Plenty District Health Board policy 2.5.1 Health Information Privacy](#)
- [Bay of Plenty District Health Board policy 6.1.5 Alerts](#)
- [Bay of Plenty District Health Board policy 1.1.1 Informed Consent](#)
- [Bay of Plenty District Health Board policy 2.1.4 Incident Management](#)

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