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| LOCAL COMMISSIONERS MEMORANDUM |
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DSS-4037EL (Rev. 9/89)

Transmittal No: 96 LCM-29

Date: March 19, 1996

Division: Services and
Community Develop-
ment

TO: Local District Commissioners

SUBJECT: Local District Clearances

ATTACHMENTS: NONE

We are taking this opportunity to respond to suggestions from local district staff on ways to improve the timeliness and efficiency of the current method of determining whether prospective foster parents, adoptive parents or child care employees are subjects of indicated child abuse or neglect reports. We are inviting local departments of social services to consider assuming responsibility for the initial phase of this screening process. Districts may find that the assumption of this responsibility, while maintaining the integrity of the clearance process, is both expeditious and cost-effective.

BACKGROUND: At present, the SCR receives clearance requests from local districts and provider agencies via Form DSS-3370. SCR staff compare the information on the clearance form regarding the applicant and other members of the applicant's household against the SCR database. The SCR is able to determine in all but a fraction of the requests, that applicants are not subjects of indicated reports. Less than 10% of such clearances cannot be disposed of readily. In those cases, local district Child Protective Services staff may have to be contacted in order to determine or verify identity or culpability. Further, when the Department's SCR Clearance Unit learns that local CPS staff did find the applicant to be a subject in an indicated report, it will need to affirm the local CPS determination in order to fulfill the provisions of Social Services Law. Districts have complained that this process is unnecessarily cumbersome.

PROPOSED PROCEDURE: Local districts choosing to assume responsibility for the initial phase of SCR screening, will use their access to the SCR database to conduct the initial phase of the clearance process for persons being considered as adoptive parents, foster parents, etc. Local districts will assign responsibility for this undertaking to employees who have access to the SCR database and who are familiar with cross-referencing/name search procedures. In those instances where the name search has resulted in no potential matches, the screening process could be considered complete without any SCR intervention required. However, in instances where potential matches are identified, and further review is necessary, responsibility will be transferred from the local district to the SCR for a determination on the matter. The SCR, in turn, will inform the local district as to whether or not the applicant is a subject.

This Department will enter into an agreement regarding such shared responsibility in the clearance process with any districts wishing to do so. For further information regarding the details of the agreement, or the proposed process itself, contact David R. Peters, SCR Director, at 518-474-9607. E-mail address is 89A452.

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Deputy Commissioner