

**1422 - CHILD MEDICAL/CHILD/FAMILY EVALUATION PROGRAM**  
**CHANGE #01-2007**  
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**I. INTRODUCTION**

Medical and medico-legal diagnostic studies and evaluations are included as a component of Child Protective Services under the state's Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) plan. The program designated to fulfill this requirement is the Child Medical/Child/Family Evaluation Program (CMEP/CFEP), previously known as the Child Medical/Child Mental Health Evaluation Program. The program may be reached at the address and telephone numbers below.

Child Medical/Child/Family Evaluation Program  
UNC Department of Pediatrics, CB#3415  
Chapel Hill, N.C. 27599-3415  
(919) 843-9365 or FAX (919) 843-9368

The Division of Social Services administers the CMEP/CFEP through a contractual arrangement with the Division of Community Pediatrics at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The program is funded by a combination of Federal and State funds. No local funds are involved, unless the procedures outlined in this section are not followed. Payment for diagnostic services is handled directly by the program.

The CMEP/CFEP program provides a structured system for medical and child/family evaluations in alleged cases of child abuse and neglect. Local physicians and psychologists, who have agreed to provide the service(s) in accordance with the program guidelines, perform evaluations of children (ages 0 through 17) at the request of County Department of Social Services. The program's professional staff has developed, and periodically updates, evaluation protocols designed to document physical and emotional symptoms in keeping with the latest research relative to significant findings. The program's professional staff provides daily telephone and written consultation to local examiners, CPS social workers, and the legal system regarding appropriate services and an interpretation of the recommendations and case findings. The program is actively involved in educational programs for medical and mental health practitioners, CPS social workers, law enforcement, juvenile judges, and the legal community. The CMEP/CFEP has served as a program model for several other states.

CMEP/CFEP services are available to all North Carolina counties. A network of local physicians and mental health examiners is organized to perform these evaluations. In those counties without a resident CMEP/CFEP provider, the services of a provider in a neighboring county should be used.

The CMEP/CFEP is designed to aid county Departments of Social Services in making case decisions regarding allegations of child abuse and neglect. Both components are designed for CPS assessment purposes **only**, and are **not** to be requested for medical treatment of

children or their families. If during a CPS assessment, DSS needs an evaluation and diagnosis in order to make the case decision, the CMEP is the appropriate resource. If the child is in need of treatment, the emergency room or other medical or mental health provider is the required resource, not the CMEP/CFEP.

## II. THE CHILD MEDICAL EVALUATION PROGRAM (CMEP)

### A. Program Description

The CMEP is a resource to county Departments of Social Services in assessing medical and psychological evidence for children suspected of being physically or sexually abused or neglected. CMEP providers may only evaluate children referred and authorized by a county Department of Social Services. **All children referred by the department must be the subject of a current CPS assessment of alleged child abuse or neglect.**

### B. Objectives of CMEP Evaluations

The objectives of medical evaluations include:

- 1.) Enabling county Departments of Social Services to obtain an assessment of medical evidence of abuse and neglect;
- 2.) Assisting county Departments of Social Services and the courts in determining the most appropriate case decision; and
- 3.) Providing the county Departments of Social Services with guidelines that help in determining appropriate services for the child or children.

### C. Reasons for Obtaining CMEP Evaluations

Social workers engaged in CPS assessments must use professional judgment in determining when a CMEP evaluation is necessary. CMEP evaluations are usually most helpful if they are obtained promptly after the initiation of a CPS assessment. A CMEP evaluation should be considered if the social worker has questions about any of the following issues:

- 1.) Acute or Chronic Physical Abuse
  - (a.) The plausibility of the parent's or caretaker's explanation for any bruise or wound.
  - (b.) Bruises or marks which would not occur as the result of normal childhood activities; bruises on vulnerable areas of the body, such as on the head and torso.
  - (c.) Severe bruising, and/or bruises in various stages of healing.
  - (d.) Any type of fracture. (Acute fractures are usually symptomatic, but old or healing fractures may not be readily apparent and can only be determined with a radiologic evaluation.)

(e.) Head injuries. (Shaken Baby Syndrome does not produce obvious signs of injury, but can result in the death of a child. Any lethargy in an infant which cannot be readily explained should be treated as an emergency.)

(f.) Burns which are suspicious because of their configuration or the child's age.

2.) Neglect

- Significant delay in the child's developmental skills.
- Significant delay in the child's physical development.
- Unusual and unexplained lethargy or irritability.
- Untreated or inadequately treated medical conditions which have significant impact on the child's overall health or physical development.

3.) Sexual Abuse

- The presence or suspicion of sexual abuse.
- Trauma or bleeding in the genital or rectal area.
- Sexually transmitted diseases.
- Foreign objects in the vagina, urethra, or rectal cavity.
- Pregnancy.
- Ejaculation. (Evidence of ejaculation is present only if the child is examined soon after the alleged incident.)

**D. Contents of the CMEP Evaluation**

The CMEP evaluation is designed to respond to the specific questions asked by the referring county Department of Social Services. The social worker should provide information regarding the child's presenting problems, the child's health and family history, the precipitating incident and the specific questions to be addressed by the physician.

The evaluation report will contain the following information:

- 1.) The presence or absence of signs of abuse and/or neglect.
- 2.) The results of a thorough physical examination.
- 3.) The reactions of the child to the examination.
- 4.) Colposcopy results in sexual abuse cases.
- 5.) A determination as to whether any condition or injuries that may be present are the result of abuse and/or neglect.
- 6.) A determination as to whether the conditions or injuries that are present could have resulted from the causes alleged by the parents or caretakers.

**E. Parental Consent or Court Order Required**

The parent or legal guardian of the child or children must give written consent **prior** to the CMEP evaluation or a court order authorizing the county director to consent to the

evaluation must be obtained prior to the CMEP evaluation and attached to [DSS-5143](#). (See Family Services Manual, [Volume I, Chapter VIII, Section 1414](#) for procedures to obtain court order.)

To obtain the parent's or legal guardian's consent for a CMEP evaluation, the social worker should focus initially on the welfare of the children and the benefits of the evaluation. If more encouragement is needed, the social worker can emphasize:

- 1.) That the evaluation can be helpful in ascertaining the facts as they relate to the reported incident and the parents' or caretaker's explanation of the incident;
- 2.) That the evaluation is free to the parent when performed by a participating CMEP physician;
- 3.) That the presence of other physical problems unrelated to the report may be detected.

#### **F. CMEP Providers**

The physicians performing the medical evaluations for this program consist primarily of pediatricians and family physicians. These physicians have agreed to provide services and to appear in court, if necessary. A list of participating CMEP providers may be obtained by calling the CMEP/CFEP office at (919) 843-9365.

The CMEP provider will, within reasonable limits, be available at all times to perform evaluations. If for some reason a provider is unavailable, then he/she will notify the DSS of the period of time he or she will be unavailable and, if practical, arrange for the evaluation to be performed by another CMEP provider.

#### **G. Referral for CMEP Evaluation**

- 1.) The social worker shall notify the CMEP provider that a child is being referred for evaluation and shall obtain an appointment as soon as possible.
- 2.) The social worker shall complete the Consent/Authorization for Medical/Child/Family Evaluation [DSS-5143](#), including the consent from the parent or guardian (or copy of court order), along with the DSS director or his designee's signature. The social worker must complete the DSS-5143 **prior** to the CMEP evaluation, and no CMEP provider should perform an evaluation **without** this authorization.
- 3.) The social worker should provide the examiner with data on the child, including:
  - Relevant information given by the reporter;
  - Details of the incident which precipitated DSS involvement;
  - The child's customary health care provider; and
  - Information about parent-child interaction which is relevant to the presenting problem.

- 4.) The parents, guardians, or custodians should be encouraged to accompany the child to the evaluation. The assigned social worker should accompany the family in order to assure that appropriate information is available to the examiner.
- 5.) The CPS Social Worker shall give the CMEP provider a copy of the DSS-5143 prior to or at the time of the evaluation. In addition, the social worker shall provide information regarding the child's eligibility for Medicaid. In order to maximize the use of available funds, the CMEP program is billed for evaluations only when other resources are unavailable.
- 6.) A post-evaluation conference provides the social worker an opportunity to have the examiner interpret the findings from the evaluation and to make recommendations for follow-up. In some instances it may be useful to include in the conference other professionals who would be helpful in planning ongoing services to the family.

### **III. CHILD/FAMILY EVALUATION PROGRAM (CFEP)**

#### **A. Program Description**

The Child/Family Evaluation Program (CFEP) is another resource available to county Departments of Social Services to aid in the assessment of child abuse and neglect. This component is designed to provide an assessment for those children exhibiting symptomatology believed to be related to emotional abuse. It can also be utilized in cases involving other forms of abuse and neglect in which there is evidence of significant emotional damage. CFEP providers may only evaluate children referred and authorized by a county Department of Social Services. **All children referred by the department must be the subjects of a current CPS assessment of alleged abuse or neglect.**

#### **B. Objectives of CFEP Evaluations**

The objectives of CFEP evaluations include:

- 1.) Enabling the county Department of Social Services to obtain an additional diagnostic assessment for complex abuse and/or neglect cases, including those in which there is a significant issue of possible emotional abuse;
- 2.) Assisting the county Department of Social Services and the courts in determining the most appropriate case decision;
- 3.) Providing the county Department of Social Services with guidelines that help in determining appropriate services for the child or children.

#### **C. Contents of the CFEP Evaluation**

The CFEP evaluation is designed to respond to the specific questions asked by the referring county Department of Social Services. The social worker should provide

information regarding the child's presenting problems, family history and relationships, the precipitating incident, and the specific questions to be addressed by the examiner.

The evaluation report will contain the following information:

1.) Child

- (a.) The relationship and attachment of the child to the parents and/or caretakers.
- (b.) Evidence of dysfunctional behavior.
- (c.) Symptoms of emotional disorder, with formulation of DSM IV diagnosis, when appropriate.

2.) Parents and Family

- (a.) A behavioral description of observed parent-child interaction.
- (b.) Symptoms of emotional disorders, including formulations of DSM IV diagnoses, when appropriate.
- (c.) Current stressors and level of stress.
- (d.) Ability to protect the child and risk of continued maltreatment.

3.) Other Information

The social worker should provide as much of the following information as possible in order to assist in the preparation of the report.

- a) DSS case record information on family demographic data, presenting problems and circumstances, history of abuse and/or neglect, and responses to interventions.
- b) Results of relevant prior evaluations by agencies or other professionals, including public or private mental health providers, medical examiners, the Children's Developmental Services Agency (CDSA), etc.

**D. Parental Consent or Court Order Required**

The parent or legal guardian of the child or children **must** give written consent prior to a CFEP evaluation or a court order authorizing the county director to consent to the evaluation must be obtained prior to the CMEP evaluation and attached to the [DSS-5143](#). Parents or legal guardians are expected to participate in the evaluation.

**E. CFEP Providers**

All examiners for the child/family component of the program must be licensed psychiatrists or licensed practicing psychologists. These examiners have agreed to provide services and to appear in court as necessary, as specified in the CFEP

Guidelines. A listing of participating examiners for child/family evaluations may be obtained from the CMEP/CFEP office (919) 843-9365 or FAX (919) 843-9368.

If, for any reason, the child/family examiner is unavailable to begin the assessment within two weeks of the referral or a more immediate assessment is needed by the Department of Social Services, arrangements may be made for the examination to be performed by another child/family examiner. The CFEP office will provide assistance, if needed, in locating another available examiner.

#### **F. Referral for CFEP Evaluation**

- 1.) The county Department of Social Services initiates the referral by requesting CFEP approval of a child for evaluation. The Authorization of [Child/Family Evaluation Form](#) should briefly describe the case with particular attention to the criteria established for these funds and to the questions to be addressed in the evaluation. This form should be faxed to [\(919\) 843-9368](#) or mailed to the CMEP/CFEP office. Due to limitations in funding and the specific nature of the objectives of these funds, children and families to be evaluated must be **pre-approved** by the CMEP/CFEP.
- 2.) The CFEP will respond by fax or return mail with an approval or disapproval.
- 3.) If approved, the county Department of Social Services then makes arrangements with a child/family examiner for the evaluation.
- 4.) The social worker shall complete the Consent/Authorization for Medical/Child/Family Evaluation [DSS-5143](#), including the written consent from the parent or guardian (or copy of the court order), along with the DSS director or his designee's signature. This form and the [CFEP authorization](#) must be provided to the CFEP provider **prior** to the evaluation.

No CFEP provider should perform an evaluation **without** these authorizations.

- 5.) The parents, guardians, or custodians should be encouraged to accompany the child to the evaluation. The assigned social worker should accompany the family in order to assure that appropriate information is available to the examiner.
- 6.) The CPS social worker shall provide information to the CFEP examiner regarding the child's eligibility for Medicaid funds. In order to maximize the use of available funds, the CFEP program is billed for evaluations **only** when other resources are unavailable.

#### **G. Case Conference**

When appropriate, a case conference shall be arranged by the child/family examiner. The purpose of the case conference is to present the results of the evaluation, to discuss the DSS's plan for the child and the family and, where needed, to discuss

recommendations for the long term treatment of the child and family. Additional participants in the case conference shall be determined jointly by the examiner and the social worker.

#### **H. Peer Review**

The CMEP/CFEP review all reports submitted by new examiners, any report the examiner requests, and a random sampling of all other reports. The purpose of the case review is to maintain a high standard for the evaluations. Case review comments will be made by the reviewing program consultants and will be sent only to the child/family examiner.