Chapter 13

CONTACTING THE REPORTER

13-1. <u>Purpose</u>. This chapter describes the process by which a reporter is contacted by an employee of the Florida Abuse Hotline.

13-2. <u>Confidentiality of the Reporter</u>. The identity of all reporters is held confidential per s. 39.201(1d). However, it may be necessary to contact a reporter to fully assess or process a report to ensure the safety of a child. Staff at the Florida Abuse Hotline should only call a reporter back when necessary to ensure sufficient information is gathered for decision making or to notify the reporter of a change in screening decision. Counselors must obtain and document supervisory approval prior to making contact and the supervisor will determine the appropriate follow up needed. All attempts to contact the reporter will be documented in the reporter narrative.

13-3. <u>Calling Reporters</u>. Staff at the Florida Abuse Hotline will contact reporters to gather additional information in the event the call is disconnected, or there is insufficient information with the received fax document or web report. To ensure that the information is gathered from the appropriate party and also that the reporter's confidentiality is not compromised, the counselor should take the following steps:

a. In these circumstances, the counselor will make an attempt to contact the reporter immediately. If unable to make contact, they will continue their documentation with the available information and make an additional attempt to contact the reporter prior to completion of the intake.

b. If someone answers the phone, the counselor should only provide his or her own name and ask to speak with the reporter by name. For example: *This is John Smith, may I speak with Pam Johnson?*

c. Counselors shall not leave a voicemail or message if the reporter is unavailable.

d. Once the reporter has identified themselves by name the counselor should advise of the purpose for their call. For example: *I'm with the Department of Children and Families and I am following up on information you provided earlier.*