

**DSS ADMINISTRATIVE LETTER
FAMILY SUPPORT AND CHILD WELFARE SERVICES
FSCWS-04-06**

TO: County Directors of Social Services

ATTENTION: DSS Family Support and Child Welfare Supervisors

DSS Family Support and Child Welfare Social Workers

SUBJECT: ANONYMOUS REPORTERS

DATE: May 3, 2006

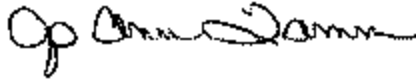
EFFECTIVE DATE: Immediately

A question has arisen regarding using "Caller Identification" information to identify or contact a reporter who wishes to remain anonymous. We have consulted with our child welfare attorneys to provide you guidance. General Statute 7B-301 states that "Refusal of the person making the report to give a name shall not preclude the department's assessment of the alleged abuse, neglect, dependency, or death as a result of maltreatment." The statute does not grant or even mention a right for the reporter to remain anonymous. General Statute 7B-302(a) does state that the Department will hold the reporter's name in the strictest of confidence. However, courts have the discretion to order the release of the reporter's name.

We often need to get back with a reporter to clarify or follow up on other issues, so anonymous calls should be discouraged as much as possible while letting reporters know of the requirement that we keep their identity confidential, unless a court orders otherwise. If a county department of social services has "Caller Identification," the staff should make any caller aware that they have this information, especially if the identifying information the caller is giving is different from the information on the "Caller Identification." If the department knows the identity of the reporter, that information should be recorded on the Structured Intake Tool, even if the caller wishes to remain anonymous. In that case, the fact that the caller wants to remain anonymous should be noted as well.

If you have further questions, please contact Laura Elmore, Program Coordinator, at (919) 733-4622.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jo Ann Lamm". The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized, with a large initial "J" and "A".

Jo Ann Lamm, Chief

Family Support and Child Welfare Services Section

JAL/lme

Cc: Sherry Bradsher

Children's Program Representatives

Work First Representatives

FSCWS Team Leaders

Local Business Liaisons