

Jurisdictional Scan: *How do some child protection agencies respond to child maltreatment by teen parents?*

This information packet was prepared by the Knowledge Management (KM) Team for a Casey Family Programs Strategic Consultant, in response to an inquiry about how child protection agencies respond to allegations of child maltreatment by teen parents. The information provided is for informational purposes only and does not necessarily reflect the views of Casey Family Programs.

Background

Responses to child maltreatment by teen parents can be varied and complex. There are a number of factors that must be considered in assessing the allegations, including the age, developmental stage, and living situation of the teen parent.

A selection of child protection agencies were asked to respond to five questions regarding how the agency responds to allegations that a minor parent is maltreating their child:

- [What is your jurisdiction's approach/response \(at the hotline/intake\) to allegations of child maltreatment by teen parents?](#)
- [Is the response different if the teen parent is a youth in care?](#)
- [Are there any considerations for the parent/caregiver/guardian of the teen parent?](#)
- [Is this any different if the teen parent is a youth in care?](#)
- [Do you have any policies you can share related to this topic?](#)

Responses were received from Connecticut,¹ Missouri,² New Jersey,³ Rhode Island,⁴ and Vermont.⁵ Their responses were lightly edited for consistency and are provided below.

What is your jurisdiction's approach/response (at the hotline/intake) to allegations of child maltreatment by teen parents?

Connecticut: The age and developmental stage of the teen parent are key factors that are considered. For example, if the teen parent is between 16-18 years old, a report will be opened under the teen parent's name. If the teen parent is younger, then a report will be opened under the teen parent's caregiver's name. Sometimes two cases will be opened, one under the teen parent's name and one under their caregiver's name. Ultimately, the response will depend upon who is responsible for making decisions regarding the child and/or the teen parent.

Missouri: The response varies by circuit.

New Jersey: If the teen parent is the alleged perpetrator of abuse or neglect, the hotline would handle the response in the same manner as if the parent were an adult. A child protective service intake would be created and assigned to a local office for investigation. Depending on

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the circumstances, the intake worker would explore the teen parent's history and whether any past traumas/generational and/or environmental factors may have contributed to the neglectful/abusive incident. Those considerations would assist in determining the investigative findings.

Rhode Island: If the report meets criteria for maltreatment under the statute, the report is screened in under the teen parent's name.

Vermont: The allegations are entered as a report and screened per Vermont's standard policies. If the grandparent lives in the home then they are also included in the report as an adult in the home and screened per Vermont's policies.

Is the response different if the teen parent is a youth in care?

Connecticut: When a teen in care has a baby, the teen parent maintains custody of the baby, even if the baby is placed with their teen parent in care, as there are placement resources that will take a teen parent and their child together. If a referral is received about a teen parent in care, the response is generally the same.

Missouri: The case manager, rather than an investigator, will often follow up with the teen parent, though again, the response varies by circuit. The Family Support Team will often follow up as well.

New Jersey: The response would not be different if the teen parent was in care.

Rhode Island: The initial screening would not differ.

Vermont: The abuse allegations would be screened according to existing [policy](#).

Are there any considerations for the parent/caregiver/guardian of the teen parent?

Connecticut: A case could be opened against the teen parent's caregiver, depending upon the circumstances.

Missouri: No response.

New Jersey: If the parent/caregiver/guardian of the teen parent shares custody of the child with the teen parent and that person was aware of the abuse/neglect and failed to protect the child, there could be implications for that person.

Rhode Island: If the teen and child reside with the teen's parent and there are allegations related to the care of the teen which impact the parenting of the teen's child, a "companion case" may be created in the name of the teen's parent. Under the practice SAFE model, all caregivers of both children (teen parent and their child) are assessed during the CPS investigation and consequent functioning assessment to determine safety and identify needs and behaviors that need to be addressed to ensure the safety and well-being of the teen parent and their child.

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Vermont: No.

Is this any different if the teen parent is a youth in care?

Connecticut: No. The teen parent's caregiver would be assessed as per department protocol regarding any member of a household when an investigation is underway.

Missouri: No.

New Jersey: If the resource parent and/or service provider was aware of the abuse/neglect and failed to protect the child and/or failed to notify the child protection agency, then yes there could be some implications for that person.

Rhode Island: If the teen is in care, the assessment of the appropriateness of the placement is taken into consideration and if there are allegations about the care of the teen then an investigation may be created under the placement provider's name (foster home or residential provider).

Vermont: No.

Do you have any policies you can share related to this topic?

Connecticut: No.

Missouri: No response.

New Jersey: The child protection agency does not have any specific policy differentiating a response when a teen parent is the subject of a child protective service report. In New Jersey, if the alleged perpetrator is the child's parent, guardian or other person in a caretaking role, who has custody or control of the child and that person has harmed or placed a child at substantial risk of harm, then it meets the criteria for a Child Protective Service report.

Rhode Island: No.

Vermont: Vermont has a specific policy for responding to Pregnant and Parenting Teens in Custody: <https://dcf.vermont.gov/sites/dcf/files/FSD/Policies/74.pdf>

¹ Personal communication with Lisa Daymonde, Careline Director, and Michele Laboy, Careline Program Supervisor, Connecticut Department of Children and Families, May 4, 2022.

² Correspondence with Sara Smith, Deputy Director, Children's Division, Missouri Department of Social Services, March 13, 2022.

³ Correspondence with Christine Island, Special Assistant to the Commissioner, New Jersey Department of Children and Families, March 18, 2022.

⁴ Correspondence with Stephanie Terry, Director, Children and Family Services, Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Family Services, March 11, 2022.

⁵ Correspondence with Diane Jabar, Program Director, Vermont Department of Children and Families, March 15, 2022.