

June 21, 2022

RE: Reports to the Department involving parental refusal of Vitamin K and/or erythromycin eye ointment

Dear Colleagues,

This letter is written to provide clarification to hospitals caring for newborn infants regarding reports to the DCFS Abuse and Neglect hotline due to parental refusal to allow their newborn to be administered intramuscular Vitamin K and/or topical erythromycin eye ointment. Attached is a recent Practice Memo issued by DCFS to staff at the DCFS hotline and Child Protection Specialists and incorporated into DCFS Procedures clarifying DCFS procedures related to parental refusal to allow newborns to be administered intramuscular Vitamin K and/or topical erythromycin eye ointment.

The Department relies on the guidance given by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in assessing the medical safety and well-being of the children brought to its attention. Consistent with AAP and CDC guidance, we accept that all newborns are deficient in Vitamin K which places them at risk of Vitamin K Deficiency Bleeding.

Administration of Vitamin K at birth is the best way to ensure newborns do not develop Vitamin K Deficiency Bleeding. They further recommend that health care providers provide reliable information to parents so that parents can make the most informed choices about their child's medical care and protect them from potentially devastating health consequences. It is recommended that information shared with parents include the benefits of Vitamin K administration as well as the risk of Vitamin K Deficiency Bleeding in newborns that do not receive adequate vitamin K prophylaxis at birth.

Further, the Department accepts the recommendation of the U.S. Preventative Services Taskforce that prophylactic topical ocular medication be provided to all newborns to prevent gonococcal ophthalmia neonatorum.



**However, refusal by a parent to allow administration of Vitamin K and/or the application of erythromycin eye ointment to their newborn, in and of itself, does not meet criteria to be accepted as a report of Allegation of Harm #79, Medical Neglect.**

DCFS encourages healthcare providers to educate parents during the prenatal as well as perinatal period about the importance and safety of Vitamin K administration and erythromycin eye ointment at birth, as well as the risks of Vitamin K Deficient Bleeding and gonococcal ophthalmia neonatorum. Clear education from a trusted medical professional is the most effective means to ensure parental acceptance of these important medical interventions for their babies.

Information for mandated reporters can also be found in the [Manual for Mandated Reporters](#).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Margaret Scotellaro". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above the typed name and contact information.

Margaret Scotellaro, MD  
Medical Director, Illinois Department of Children and Family Services  
60 E. Van Buren, Suite 1339  
Chicago, IL 60601  
margaret.scotellaro@illinois.gov

Attachment: June 6, 2022 Practice Memo

**DATE:** June 6, 2022

**TO:** Child Welfare Specialists at the State Central Registry and Child Protection Specialists

**FROM:** Tierney Stutz, Chief Deputy Director, Division of Child Protection and State Central Registry

**RE:** Reports to the Department involving refusal to provide Vitamin K shot and/or erythromycin eye ointment to Infants

This memo provides clarification for *Child Welfare Specialists* working at the Child Abuse/Neglect Hotline regarding how to assess information from a reporter who states that a parent/caregiver has refused to allow their newborn to be administered a dose of Vitamin K and/or erythromycin eye ointment.

This memo also provides clarification for *Child Protection Specialists* receiving assignment of an investigation involving a parent/caregiver who has refused to allow their newborn to be administered a dose of Vitamin K and/or erythromycin eye ointment.

The Department relies on the guidance given by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), other established organizations, such as the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (UPSTF) and the DCFS Medical Director in assessing the medical safety and well-being of the children brought to our attention.

Consistent with AAP and CDC guidance, DCFS accepts that all newborns are deficient in Vitamin K which places them at risk of Vitamin K deficiency bleeding. Administration of Vitamin K at birth is the best way to ensure newborns do not develop Vitamin K deficiency bleeding. Both organizations further recommend that health care providers provide reliable information to parents so that parents can make the most informed choices about their child's medical care and protect them from potentially devastating health consequences. The recommended information shared with parents includes the benefits of Vitamin K and the risk of Vitamin K deficiency bleeding in newborns that do not receive adequate Vitamin K prophylaxis at birth.

The UPSTF recommends the provision of an antibiotic eye ointment to prevent gonococcal eye infections.

**Refusal by a parent(s) to allow administration of Vitamin K and/or erythromycin eye ointment to their newborn infant, in and of itself, does not meet criteria to be accepted as a report of Allegation of Harm #79, Medical Neglect.**

Unless it is marked as an Emergency Response, if a *Child Protection Specialist* receives assignment of an investigation that involves a refusal by a parent(s) to allow administration of Vitamin K and/or erythromycin eye ointment, they are to consult with DCFS Medical Director prior to initiating the investigation.