



NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT  
OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

## New Jersey Department of Children and Families Policy Manual

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Subchapter:	1	SPRU Administration	
Issuance:	400	<b>SPRU Worker Roles and Responsibilities</b>	

### Role and Responsibilities of SPRU Workers 1-28-2013

The Special Response Unit (SPRU) Worker provides all necessary protective and/or emergency services for children at risk and for other emergent child/family situations brought to his or her attention by SCR in accordance with the SPRU philosophy of intervention. See [CP&P-II-D-1-600](#), SPRU: Philosophy of Intervention. A response may be a field investigation or outreach, a single or a series of telephone contacts, or a combination of both, depending on the nature and severity of the presenting situation/allegation. SPRU Workers assess child safety, a vital component of every field contact, and develop and implement Safety Protection Plans, when needed to assure a child's safety. See [CP&P-IV-A-2-400](#), Assessing Safety After Hours, and [CP&P-III-B-6-600](#), Child Safety Assessment (In-Home). The timing of that intervention is based on the nature of the situation, agency policy, the hour of the day/night, and the volume of cases assigned to that SPRU Worker during his or her tour of duty.

While on duty, SPRU Workers are accountable to, and directly supervised by, the on-call SPRU Supervisor assigned to cover that county. The SPRU Worker turns copies of his or her work in to; registers active hours with; and is scheduled for coverage, and has his or her work performance assessed, monitored, and reviewed by the SPRU Coordinator.

Activities and functions of the on-call SPRU Worker, in addition to the responsibilities of a CP&P (day) field Worker, include, but are not limited to:

- Seeking guidance from the SPRU Supervisor, as needed and when required.
- Consulting the IAIU After-Hours Supervisor, and initiating actions on institutional abuse/neglect or resource family home abuse allegations, as directed. Advising the IAIU After-Hours Supervisor of the results of intervention by SPRU. See IAIU Manual on After-Hours response.

- Obtaining the Local Office Manager's consent, through the SPRU Supervisor, to place a child with a relative or family friend (kin caregiver). See [CP&P-IV-B-2-100](#), Placing Children with Kinship Caregivers.
- When placing with kin, confirming each prospective adult caregiver's identity. See [CP&P-II-D-2-700](#), Screening Kin Caregivers and Clearing DCF Resource Family Homes through NJS. The SPRU Worker asks to see proper identification as explained in the policy.
- Contacting SCR before placing or re-placing a child in a licensed resource family home, to enable a Screener to conduct an NJS check/search on the provider, to assure that the home is currently active, available for an additional child(ren), and in "approved" status. See [CP&P-II-D-2-700](#), Screening Kin Caregivers and Clearing DCF Resource Family Homes through NJS;
- Contacting assigned (day) CP&P Workers and/or Supervisors, to gather background information about cases known to the Division, to better assess safety, risk factors, and determine what safeguards should be introduced/emergency services initiated (i.e., develop a Safety Protection Plan, see [CP&P-III-B-6-600](#)) to stabilize the immediate situation until the next business day;
- Taking steps necessary to secure and/or receive clearance to provide medical consent to treat a child in CP&P placement. See [CP&P-II-D-2-200](#), DCF Office of Child Health Services Doctors;
- Following Special Instructions on file at SCR. See [CP&P-II-D-2-100](#), Day Staff Vs. SPRU Coverage;
- Counseling/supporting a resource family parent or a child in placement, in an attempt to preserve/maintain a placement;
- Assisting, at SCR's or the SPRU Supervisor's request through SCR, another CP&P or SPRU Worker with an unusual case situation and/or a multi-county SPRU response.

Like day staff, SPRU Workers are not permitted to audio or video tape interviews or telephone conversations with children and families when conducting investigations. See [CP&P-IX-G-1-100](#), Collection and Retention of Client Information; and [CP&P-II-C-5-1000](#), Interviewing, Gathering, and Verifying Information.

**State of Readiness1-28-2013**

An individual who accepts a SPRU shift must realize that he or she is making a commitment to be in a state-of-readiness to accept an assignment from SCR anytime during that shift of duty.

The SPRU Worker is to be prepared at all times while on-call, with ample CP&P forms and supplies, the local SPRU Kit (see [CP&P-II-D-2-800](#), The SPRU Response Kit), and a fully operable, duly charged State-issued cellular phone.

SPRU staff who advise SCR they can be "reached by home telephone" (as opposed to cell phone) should not rely on privately owned telephone answering machines to obtain messages or reports from SCR. "Reachable by telephone" means that the SPRU Worker may be contacted directly and immediately by dialing the telephone or cellular phone number provided.

### **Six (6) Shift Maximum On-Call Per SPRU Work Week (Primary or Back-Up) 5-20-2013**

SPRU Workers may serve up to six (6) shifts on-call, maximum, per SPRU work week, regardless of the volume of assignments handled while on-call during that period of time, or the number of county SPRU operations served.

The SPRU work week, for shift count purposes, begins at 9 a.m. Saturday morning, and ends 8:59 a.m. the following Saturday morning.

### **Nine (9) Shift Maximum On-Call Service Per SPRU Work Week, Including Work as Scheduled SPRU Buddy 9-26-2011**

SPRU Workers (serving as Primary or Back-Up, if activated) may serve on-call for up to six (6) shifts, maximum, per SPRU work week, as specified, above. In addition, an employee may serve up to three (3) additional shifts per SPRU work week in the capacity of scheduled on-call SPRU Buddy (for county SPRU operations that regularly schedule SPRU Buddies). Thus, a SPRU Worker may serve a maximum of nine (9) shifts on-call per SPRU work week regardless of the volume of assignments handled while on-call during that period of time, the number of county SPRU operations served, or the function performed while on-call for SPRU - as a Primary SPRU Worker, an activated Back-Up SPRU Worker, or an on-call Buddy.

### **Contact SPRU Supervisor Before Responding to Third Field Assignment (Required) 7-5-2011**

Upon receipt of a third (3rd) field assignment from SCR in the course of an eight-hour shift, the SPRU Worker is required to consult the SPRU Supervisor before initiating a response to that assignment. By so doing, the SPRU Supervisor and SPRU Worker determine, together, whether the SPRU Worker is able to provide a timely, quality response to this new assignment, based on the nature and status of the previous two field assignments, the time of the day or night, the day of the week, and other

considerations. The SPRU Worker and Supervisor make a determination together, as appropriate, including:

- Confirm the assignment can be adequately handled by the SPRU Worker;
- Determine whether the assignment can wait for response by the Local Office or be handled safely by telephone outreach before the start of the next work day; or
- Make the assignment to another SPRU Worker - the designated Back-Up SPRU Worker, if one is scheduled; the next Primary Worker on-call on the daily roster (this may be his or her third field assignment as well, and a determination would need to be made as to how to proceed in accordance with these procedures); or activate another SPRU Worker to take responsibility for the assignment.

This mandate is initiated to serve the following purposes:

- To determine whether the SPRU Worker can adequately handle the third field assignment, and not leave a child in danger, at undue risk, or in a compromising situation (such as: a child kept waiting at the police station or hospital emergency room, while the SPRU Worker responds to other case assignments);
- To assure that the SPRU Worker will have sufficient time to write up his or her response reports and other required forms before 9 a.m., the start of the next work day. See [CP&P-II-D-2-900](#), Documentation of SPRU Intervention;
- To permit the SPRU Worker to have adequate opportunity for repose and sleep before the start of the next work day, in an attempt to limit adverse effects on staff working late on SPRU and/or day operations;
- To prevent a SPRU Worker from putting him or herself (or a child) at risk by operating a motor vehicle with no sleep for 24 consecutive hours.