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Subject:	Promoting Safety in Family Cases	Page 1 of 6
Approved:	Cynthia K. Walcott, Deputy Commissioner	Effective: 8/22/2011
Supersedes:	Policy 62 Promoting Safety in High Risk Families Policy 71 Initial Assessment and Planning Policy 72 Plan Reviews for Non-custody Cases	8/12/2011 FINAL

Purpose

To set policy for assessment and case planning requirements in non-custody family cases (CF). To describe the process to ensure that safety and risk issues are affirmatively addressed with and for all families who are classified as very high and high risk during a child safety intervention.

Keeping children safe is our primary concern and we address it in every intervention, every plan and every contact. Child safety is a collaborative effort; we engage families and community members to find safe solutions for children. This is best accomplished through the use of a balanced investigation/assessment during which safety, risk, strengths and protective factors are considered.


Policy

During the course of every child safety intervention, the social worker will complete the Family Risk Assessment. The risk assessment can be completed at any point during the intervention when the social worker has sufficient information and will be completed no later than 60 days from the date the child safety intervention was accepted.

By completing the risk assessment, the social worker obtains an objective appraisal of the likelihood that a family will maltreat their children in the next 12 to 18 months. The Family Risk Assessment **does not predict** occurrence or recurrence, but simply assesses whether a family is more or less likely to have abuse/neglect incident without intervention.

Social workers will complete the Risk Assessment at any point during the child safety intervention to assist in determining the need for ongoing Family Services involvement. A CF case **must** be opened for ongoing services if any of the following criteria are met.

- The family is at high or very high risk as indicated by the final risk level on the Family Risk Assessment; or
- The family has a danger issue identified on the Assessment of Danger and

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Safety that could not be resolved during the child safety intervention, **regardless of risk level**; or

- The family requires FSD involvement beyond 60 days of acceptance of the child safety intervention to ensure engagement with services or other support or monitoring.

The risk assessment allows for the use of discretionary override. The risk level may be overridden one level higher or one level lower. Supervisory approval is needed to override the risk to a higher level. District director or designee approval is needed when overriding the risk to a lower level. If an override is approved, this is the final risk level, the level used to determine if a CF case will be opened for ongoing services.

The CF case opening process will be concluded within 5 working days and includes:


- Supervisory review;
- concluding the CI (child safety investigation¹), CA (child safety assessment) or CJ (child safety assessment) case and entering the necessary data on the Supervisory Tracking Form to indicate a CF case will be opened for ongoing services;
- assignment of social worker in SSMIS; and
- contact with the family to schedule an initial visit to review the safety plan and to engage family in developing the initial case plan.

Investigations Open Longer Than Sixty Days

If the completion of an investigation is delayed due to a delay in interviews by law enforcement (See Policy 52), and the risk assessment is very high or high, a CF case should be opened for ongoing services and the CI may remain open with documentation on steps necessary to resolve the outstanding law enforcement issue.

If the risk assessment is low or moderate, no CF case will be opened unless it is necessary to ensure engagement with services or other support and monitoring.

¹ The CI may remain open, in addition to the new CF case, if closing it will compromise an ongoing criminal. See Family Services Policy 52, section – Informing Child’s Caregiver of Case Disposition.

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If there are outstanding law enforcement issues the CI may remain open with documentation on steps necessary to resolve the outstanding law enforcement issue.

If a family refuses ongoing services the social worker should consult with his or her supervisor for a **discussion of any unresolved danger** and a decision about whether to pursue a court order for services.

If unable to provide ongoing services because the family refuses and there will be no court order, consider connecting family to community services. Document the reasons ongoing services were not provided in case notes and the Closure Summary (FS-242CS).

Initial Case Planning

When a social worker has been assigned to provide ongoing services to a family, he or she will complete an initial case plan with the family within sixty days of the date that the Family Risk Assessment that was conducted during the child safety intervention.

Case planning is the process of working together with the family to develop a set of agreed upon goals and strategies that focus on the underlying issues that led to child safety intervention as well as the issues that are contributing to current unresolved danger and/or future risk of harm.

The case plan must plan for the safety of the child. The social worker should work with the family to identify the family's strengths, protective capacities and any natural supports, including relatives that may be of assistance. When possible, the priorities in the case plan should reflect the family's view of the most pressing issue facing them.


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Risk Reassessment and Case Plan Updates

The risk reassessment uses a selection of some of the strongest actuarial risk items plus progress toward case plan goals to arrive at an estimate of the likelihood of future harm after services have been provided for a period of time.

The risk reassessment must be completed at 90 day intervals starting with the date of the initial case plan and can also be completed at any time if a change in circumstances occurs. The reassessment helps to determine whether to continue ongoing services or to close the case. If the risk reassessment indicates high or very high a Case Plan Update (FS- 246S) must be completed. The case plan update explains why it is necessary for the family to remain involved with DCF and identifies goals to reduce the risk and/or address any unresolved danger.

Assessments and Case Planning Requirements in Open Family Cases (No Custody)		
Activity	Timeframe	Purpose
Danger and Safety Assessment	Within 24 hours of the first interview with the family.	Determine if the child is safe, conditionally safe or unsafe. If unsafe, a court order or voluntary placement with alternate caregiver is necessary. If placed with alternate caregiver open case for at least 90 days.
Risk Assessment	No more than 60 days from the acceptance of the valid allegation	Very high or high scores result in opening a CF case within 5 days
Initial Case Plan	60 days from the date of the risk assessment, which is completed during the child safety intervention	Engage family to develop case plan that address unresolved danger or risk as identified in initial risk assessment.
Risk Reassessment and Case Plan Update	At 90 day intervals from the date of the initial case plan or if a change in circumstances occurs	To determine if risk has been reduced enough to close the case. If risk is not reduced after 2 reassessments discuss alternative approaches with supervisor.

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Case Closure


A case may be closed if the risk level, as indicated by the Family Risk Assessment, decreases to moderate or low **and** there is no unresolved danger. A Case Closure Summary (FS-242CS) must be completed and copied into case notes to document required case closure information. See Family Services Policy 122 for assessment and case planning requirements for children in custody.

Social Worker Tasks

- Complete the Assessment of Danger and Safety with the family in Phase I of the child safety intervention no later than 24 hours after the first interview with the family.
- Complete the Family Risk Assessment with the family in Phase II of the child safety intervention no later than 60 days from the acceptance of a valid allegation.
- Complete all child safety intervention documentation and close out CI, CA or CJ with in policy timeframes, see page 2 for exception.
- Open a CF case for very high and high risk cases or cases with unresolved danger.
- Develop initial case plan with family within 60 days of the date that the Family Risk Assessment was completed.
- Complete subsequent risk reassessments and case plans according to policy.
- If risk level does not decrease after 2 risk reassessments discuss alternative approaches with supervisor.

Supervisor Tasks

- Ensure that social workers are using SDM definitions when completing all SDM tools.
- Review request for risk level override if necessary.
- Ensure that appropriate cases are opened for ongoing FSD services according to policy criteria and timeframes.
- Ensure that initial case plans are developed with families and within 60 days from the initial risk assessment.
- Ensure that risk reassessments and case plans updates are completed according to policy.

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- Ensure that social workers are discussing cases in supervision where the risk has not decreased after two risk reassessments. Ensure Case Closure Summary (FS-242CS) is completed prior to case closure.