

Staffing Considerations during CPS assessment through development of the case plan

From CPS through the development of the case plan, the supervisor should assure that the worker has drawn accurate, justifiable conclusions regarding the following:

Safety

Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect

- Was the information collected by the initial assessment worker sufficient? If not, was more information collected to reconcile gaps, with a subsequent reassessment of safety?
- With sufficient information known about the family, are the criteria for why the case remains open post-initial assessment met (e.g., safety threats are present)?
- With sufficient information known about the family, is the current plan to control for child safety sufficient? Is it working? How is this known?
- What is the perspective of the parents/caregivers related to the issues that cause the case to remain open?
- What protective capacities exist that could be enhanced?
- What protective capacities are missing that would be needed for the parents to protect the children on their own?
- Is there a clear connection between the assessment process and the resulting case plan? If not, what still needs to happen to ensure this connection? (ie. additional services to parents, children, caregivers; relative assessments for placement;)
- What are the realities: caregiver readiness and willingness to change; what the court will expect; what is not negotiable (e.g., safety of the children)?
- What strategies for making some changes on the part of the parents will target the top priorities; have a “ripple effect” on other issues needing change; are the issues parents are most ready to focus on?
- Are there services that could help with these strategies and when are they available?
- What will be the benchmarks for progress that will help the parents and worker know the strategies are having the desired effect?
- What will be the role of the worker in helping the family, and how often will the worker have contact?
- How will the worker coordinate, manage and oversee the case plan and all the service providers (including assuring children remain safe, whether they live at home or are in placement)?

Permanency

Children have stability and permanency in their living situations

When Children are in substitute care: Additional Conclusions regarding the Case Plan

Beyond the above conclusions, when one or more of the children are in placement, the supervisor should assure the following additional conclusions have been made.

- What are the circumstances that must be present before the child can return home with an in-home safety plan (i.e., the conditions for return)? If these conditions were developed by the previous worker, were the conditions scrutinized for accuracy and changed if necessary?
- Are there additional strategies necessary to fully engage this family and/or the extended family? What might these be?
- Who are family members who might be resources for a concurrent plan for permanency?
- Are there additional steps necessary to start the diligent search for relatives? Is an ICPC process necessary?
- Have all ICWA issues been identified and followed up on?
- What are the realities and consequences and how have they been discussed with the family; e.g., time limits for change and concurrent planning actions that will be taken?
- Have Family Team Meetings occurred?
- What are the child's permanency needs and who/what has helped to inform the worker of those needs?
- What is the current permanency plan?
- What is the concurrent plan?

Well-Being

Families have an enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs

- What needs do the substitute caregivers have in order to provide sufficient and safe care to the child and how will they be addressed?
- What are the medical, mental health and educational needs of the child, and how will they be addressed?
- How are the CANS screening results incorporated into the case plan?

Issues for Supervisory Consideration

Regarding the practice and process that led to the development of the plan, consider the following.

- ◇ How much time was spent talking with the parents and what was the focus of the conversations?
- ◇ What is the level of involvement, awareness, readiness to change on the part of the parents? What level of effort did the worker make to understand and listen to them?
- ◇ How much time did the court process allow for this step? Was the amount of time reasonable for what must be accomplished during this step or should the court extend its timeframe for the next hearing?
- ◇ If the children are in placement, are there conditions for return that are not confused with the parents resolving all the issues? How does the worker describe the difference between what must happen to bring the children home (with an in-home safety plan) and what must happen to close the case?
- ◇ Can the parents describe what their understanding of what may happen if changes are not made (i.e., is there concurrent planning activity that has genuinely included the parents)?

While this step must result in a product (i.e., a logical, feasible plan for change), place equal if not greater weight on examining the process that led to the plan's creation.