

RED FLAG PROTOCOL – CHILD PROTECTION

I. PURPOSE:

The Red Flag screening and review protocol is intended to ensure that all child and parental risk and safety factors are thoroughly reviewed and considered in the process of decision-making at all critical case planning junctures, from investigation through permanency. The process must ensure that there is a documented and seamless review of safety and risk through the life of the case.

II. CRITERIA:

Every report received for investigation by the assigned Child Protective Investigator (CPI) shall have a Red Flag Screening Checklist completed and included in the investigative file.

III. PROCEDURES FOR RED FLAG SCREENINGS AND INITIAL REVIEWS:

1. The assigned CPI shall complete the Red Flag screening checklist within 48 hours of receipt of the investigation at the Hotline. This is to ensure concurrency with the completion of the initial Child Safety Assessment (CSA), so that all safety and risk factors are appropriately considered during the initial screening process. A screened investigation shall be preliminarily designated as Red Flag by the screening CPI and therefore be subject to the Red Flag Protocol of review(s), if the screening results in at least one factor from both the child AND adult factors being checked on the screening tool.
2. The CPI will notify their supervisor when an investigation is determined to meet the Red Flag designation by documenting this in the Overall Safety Assessment of the Initial CSA. Upon receipt of this notification, the supervisor will schedule an initial local Red Flag review. The supervisor will document the scheduling of the initial Red Flag review in the Supervisory Review section of the Initial CSA.
3. The initial local review must occur within five (5) working days of identification as a Red Flag investigation.
4. The initial local review will involve the child protective investigator, the supervisor, the ongoing services worker (if there is an active services case) and an OPA/POA, 2nd Party Reviewer or designated authority for the Sheriff's Offices conducting investigations.
5. The initial local review shall include discussion of the presenting issues of the investigation, the subjects involved, investigative synopsis, safety and risk factors, the status of any safety plan, investigative activity recommendations and possible permanency implications (if known). The OPA/POA, 2nd Party Reviewer or designated authority for the Sheriff's Offices conducting investigations will determine the final Red Flag designation of the investigation.
6. A Red Flag designated investigation shall have a safety plan in place and be staffed with Child Welfare Legal Services (CWLS) to determine legal sufficiency for a petition for dependency.

7. When a Red Flag investigation is referred for Case Transfer by the assigned CPI, the Red Flag designation and the explicit criteria which met the designation shall be included in discussion as a portion of the services staffing. The Case Transfer staffing packet shall also include a copy of the screening checklist and any review summaries which resulted from the initial local review.

IV. PROCEDURE FOR ONGOING RED FLAG REVIEWS:

The ongoing Red Flag Case Review process occurs at critical junctures/decision-making points for the purpose of facilitating sound decision-making for cases with a designation of Red Flag. It involves an expanded review process which includes all staff who have managed the investigation or case, and persons external to DCF, CBCs, and Sheriff's Offices who have information or expertise pertinent to the decision(s) being made.

1. The department, CBC partners and Sheriff's Offices shall schedule reviews as often as needed to ensure proper coverage and responsiveness. Each district/region, CBC or Sheriff's Office shall develop a procedure for referring cases for review as appropriate.

2. Those persons having information pertinent to the decision being made on a Red Flag case may be invited by department/Sheriff's Office or CBC staff to participate in the review. If they are unable to attend, they shall be requested to provide input orally or through a written report. Persons to be invited could include but are not limited to:

- (a) Ongoing services worker and/or supervisor, both current and past;
- (b) Parent(s), foster parent(s), caretaker(s) and/or other family member(s);
- (c) CPT;
- (d) CWLS;
- (e) School teachers;
- (f) Treatment provider for child;
- (g) CPI or other expert consultant;
- (h) Other external parties such as the Guardian Ad Litem, community services provider(s), etc.

3. All cases designated as Red Flag by the initial investigative screening will continue to be reviewed at either critical junctures/decision points or every six months, whichever is sooner, until the review process formally concludes that the Red Flag designation is no longer warranted. Critical junctures are those times during the life of a case when fundamental decisions are being made for the child(ren), or critical events are occurring in the case. Critical junctures may include the following:

- (a) Prior to court hearings (adjudicatory, dispositional, review);
- (b) At the birth of a sibling or the addition of a new family member, including paramours;

- (c) Before changing the case plan to include unsupervised visits;
- (d) At case transfer between ongoing services workers;
- (e) At receipt of a new investigative report or report of domestic violence in the home;
- (f) Prior to reunification;
- (g) Before the case is closed or dismissal of court jurisdiction is recommended;
- (h) When a change in the child's safety status is identified through a safety review.

4. During the Red Flag Review process, all safety assessments and other evaluations completed on the child and family to assure safety should be addressed. The process involves the department, Sheriff's office and CBC organization in a joint effort to identify strengths, needs and resources as well as contributing factors and underlying conditions that contribute to a child's safety status and risk of re-maltreatment. The assessment of safety begins at initial contact and continues throughout the life of the case. The review should also address the safety plan status, as well as any signs of emerging or prospective danger that may be present and their impact on the child's permanency goal.

A safety assessment may be used as a tool to support decision-making for safety planning and potential removal of a child. A safety plan may be used to control the presence of the safety threats or increase caregivers' capacities to diminish the safety threat(s). A family assessment may be used for service planning in collaboration with the investigator.

5. A case's designation as Red Flag can be terminated when the facts of the case, as documented through a safety review, indicate that the safety threats as identified during the initial screening and all subsequent Red Flag reviews have been resolved and/or mitigated. The participants in such a review shall come to substantial agreement regarding termination of the Red Flag designation, prior to such a termination occurring. A child's removal from custody from an offending caregiver shall not in itself constitute grounds to terminate or remove the Red Flag designation. Such investigations and/or cases shall continue to be subject to all guidelines previously set forth in this protocol.

RED FLAG SCREENING CHECKLIST – CHILD WELFARE

Report # _____

Name(s) and Age(s) of

Children _____

Investigations which automatically meet the Red Flag designation are those investigations in which, at a minimum, critical injuries have occurred, a permanent or serious impairment may have occurred, or there has been a death or critical injury to another child in the family. A Red Flag investigation involves a child four years of age and younger and contains at least one factor from each of the categories (1) and (2) below. Investigations involving children five years of age and older may also be designated as part of the Red Flag review process when these or other high risk circumstances are present. This includes investigations which otherwise do not meet the Red Flag criteria, but present with high risk circumstances when viewed in their entirety.

ALL REPORTS RECEIVED AND ASSIGNED FOR INVESTIGATION SHALL HAVE A RED FLAG SCREENING CHECKLIST COMPLETED AND INCLUDED IN THE INVESTIGATIVE FILE.

CHECK EACH ITEM THAT APPLIES AND ADD COMMENTS TO ANY ITEMS CHECKED IN # 3.

1. Child Factors:

- Sexual abuse, serious physical injury, or the threat of serious injury resulting from physical or sexual abuse.
- Serious neglect, resulting in harm or threat of harm.
- Children ages four and under with three or more prior reports on the family.

2. Caretaker Factors:

- Caretaker refuses or fails to obtain medical/psychological treatment placing the child in serious jeopardy.
- Caretaker has had a prior termination of parental rights.
- Caretaker has a history of previous serious abuse to a child, or a child fatality.
- Caretaker is not able or willing to protect the child from risk, including possible perpetrator's access to the child.
- Caretaker has a diagnosis of chronic or acute and debilitating mental illness.
- Caretaker exhibits acute or chronic intellectual, personality, emotional or behavioral handicap.
- Caretakers have a history of domestic violence.
- Caretaker has a documented drug or alcohol problem.
- Caretaker has a history of verified findings of abuse or neglect as a child and is now a parent with a child aged three or under.

3. Other Factors to Consider:

Number of prior reports involving any household member: _____.

Prior reports with same or similar maltreatments:

Criminal History Results that pose threat of harm to child:

Paramour living in the home:

Primary caregiver is under the age of 21.

Screening CPI's Signature

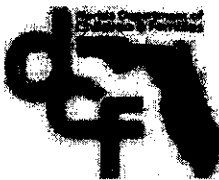
Date

Reviewing Supervisor's Signature

Date

OPA/POA, 2nd Party Reviewer or other designee's signature **Date**

Red Flag Designation: Yes/No_____.



**State of Florida
Department of Children and Families**

**Job Bush
Governor**

**Lucy D. Hadl
Secretary**

DATE: January 3, 2007
TO: District/Region Administrators, Community-Based Care CEOs, Sheriff's Offices
THROUGH: Greg Keller, Assistant Secretary for Operations
David Fairbanks, Director of Provider Relations
FROM: Patricia Badland, Director, Office of Family Safety
SUBJECT: Revised Red Flag Protocol and Screening Checklist

Purpose: The Red Flag Protocol mandates screening of all child protective investigations for high-risk factors in order to identify cases needing further review. The protocol has been revised to clarify the participants, their roles, and suggested guidelines for conducting subsequent reviews. On November 3, we requested your comments on this protocol, and these have been incorporated into the attached revision. We appreciate your input.

The screening checklist has also been updated to specifically identify children four and under with three or more priors on the family as a new high risk 'Child Factor.' While the protocol continues to emphasize the consideration of high-risk factors throughout the life of the case, considerable discretion is granted on the part of each district/region, CBC or Sheriff's Office to develop internal procedures for reviewing "red flagged" cases

Action Required: Please disseminate the revised protocol and screening checklist to child protective investigators and supervisors, and those in management or specialist positions responsible for completing second party and red flag reviews.

The protocol and checklist should also be disseminated to CBC case managers and supervisors to familiarize them with the child and caretaker factors considered during the initial screening, and those specific red flag factors which need to be reviewed during the case transfer process and revisited during critical junctures throughout the life of the case

Background: The former Red Flag Protocol interchangeably used the terms "screening" and "review" which was confusing and contributed to the protocol not being followed as intended. Language has been added to clearly differentiate between the need for a screening and the subsequent review process. Guidelines have been refined to ensure that there is a documented and seamless review of safety and risk until the review process concludes that the Red Flag designation is no longer warranted.

Contact Information: For additional information or clarification, please contact Leslie Chytka, CPI Specialist, at (850) 487-0947 or suncom 277-0947.

Attachments

1317 Winewood Boulevard, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0700

Mission: Protect the Vulnerable, Promote Strong and Economically Self-Sufficient Families, and Advance Personal and Family Recovery and Resiliency