Outcome Items for Child Welfare Qualitative Case Reviews

This document contains the questions by which trained quality assurance reviewers will assess case work practice related to child safety, Permanency, and well-being.

Outcomes and Items are taken from the Federal Child and Family Services Review.
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Item 1

Services to Family to Protect Child(ren) in the Home and Prevent Removal or Re-Entry Into Out-of-Home Care

1.0 Were concerted efforts made to provide services to the family to prevent children’s entry into out-of-home care or re-entry after a reunification? (CFSR Safety Outcome 2, Item 2)

Response Rating: ☐ Strength ☐ Area Needing Improvement

Applicable Cases: This item is applicable to all in-home services cases.

Definitions:

- “Appropriate services” are defined as those services that are provided to, or arranged for, the family with the explicit goal of ensuring the child’s safety. Some examples include:
  
  (1) if there are safety issues in the home due to environmental hazards, homemaking services could be an appropriate safety-related service;  
  (2) if there are safety concerns related to the parent’s ability to manage specific child needs or child behaviors, intensive in-home services could be an appropriate safety-related service;  
  (3) child care services could be a safety-related service in cases where the child was being cared for in an unsafe setting or by an inappropriate caregiver; and  
  (4) if there are safety concerns related to parental substance abuse, substance abuse treatment could be an appropriate safety-related service.  
  (5) if a child needs mental health services, education-related services, or services to address health issues, in most cases these would not be considered relevant to the child’s safety if the child remained in the home. Efforts of the agency to meet these service needs are assessed in other items.

- “Concerted efforts” include the following activities: working to engage families in needed services and facilitating a family’s access to those services.

- “Preventive services” are defined as social services and other supportive and rehabilitative services provided to the parent or legal custodian of the child and to the child for the purpose of averting the removal of the child from the home or disruption of a family which will or could result in the placement of a child in foster care. Social services and other supportive and rehabilitative services shall promote the child’s developmental needs and need for physical, mental, and emotional health and a safe, stable, living environment; shall promote family autonomy; and shall strengthen family life, whenever possible. (Section 39.01(60), F.S.)

The Federal CFSR On-Site Review Instrument (Item 2) focuses on two questions:

1. For the period under review, did the agency make concerted efforts to provide or arrange for appropriate services for the family to protect children and prevent their entry into out-of-home care or re-entry into out-of-home care after a reunification?

Instructions: The reviewer must determine if the agency made concerted efforts to provide or arrange for appropriate services for the family to protect children and prevent their entry into out-of-home care or re-entry into foster care after a reunification. (Be sure to assess the entire period under review.) Use the definitions below for the definitions of “appropriate services” and “concerted efforts”.

When the child is removed during an in-home services case, the reviewer should focus on whether the circumstances of the case suggest that services would not have been able to ensure the child’s safety if the child remained in the home. If services should have been offered to protect the child, but were not because those services were not available in the community, the answer is no.

Section 39.301(9)(a)6b, F.S. requires community-based care lead agency to prioritize safety plan services to families who have multiple risk factors, including, but not limited to, two or more of the following:

1. The parent or legal custodian is of young age;
2. The parent or legal custodian, or an adult currently living in or frequently visiting the home, has a history of substance abuse, mental illness, or domestic violence;
3. The parent or legal custodian, or an adult currently living in or frequently visiting the home, has been previously found to have physically or sexually abused a child;
4. The parent or legal custodian or an adult currently living in or frequently visiting the home has been the subject of multiple allegations of abuse or neglect;
5. The child is physically or developmentally disabled; or
6. The child is 3 years of age or younger.

**Rating Criterion:**

- **Strength**, if the agency made concerted efforts to provide appropriate and relevant services to the family to address the safety issues in the family so that the child(ren) could remain in the home or would not re-enter out-of-home care and if information indicates that it was necessary to remove the child(ren) to ensure the child’s safety before services could be provided or arranged.

- **Area Needing Improvement**, if the agency did not make concerted efforts to provide services and the child(ren) was removed or if services should have been offered to protect the child(ren) but were not because those services were not available in the community.

**Reference:** Sections 39.301(9)(a)6b, Section 39.01(60), F.S.; Federal Child & Family Services Review, Safety Outcome 2, Item 2A, Services to Family to Protect Child(ren) in the Home and Prevent Removal or Re-Entry into Out-of-Home Care.
Item 2  
Initial and On-going Assessments

2.0 Were initial and on-going assessments conducted to assess risk and safety concerns relating to the child(ren) in their home. (CFSR Safety Outcome 2, Item 3, A, & B)

Response Rating: ☐ Strength ☐ Area Needing Improvement

Applicable Cases: All in-home services cases are applicable for an assessment of this item.

Definitions:

- “Comprehensive assessment” or “assessment” is defined as the gathering of information for the evaluation of a child’s and caregiver’s physical, psychiatric, psychological, or mental health; developmental delays or challenges; and, educational, vocational, and social condition and family environment as they relate to the child’s and caregiver’s need for rehabilitative and treatment services, including substance abuse treatment services, mental health services, developmental services, literacy services, medical services, family services, and other specialized services, as appropriate. (Section 39.01(18), F.S.)

- “Present danger” is defined as a significant and clearly observable family condition that is occurring at the current moment and is already endangering or threatening to endanger the child. Present danger threats are conspicuous and require that an immediate protective action be taken to ensure the child’s safety. (Section 39.01,(59), F.S.)

- “Impending danger” is defined as a situation in which family behaviors, attitudes, motives, emotions, or situations pose a threat that may not be currently active but that can be anticipated to become active and to have severe effects on a child at any time. (Section 39.01(31), F.S.)

- “Risk” is defined as the likelihood that a child will be maltreated in the future.

- An assessment of safety is made to determine whether a child is in a safe environment. A safe environment is one in which there are no threats that pose a danger or, if there are threats, there is a responsible adult in a caregiving role who demonstrates sufficient capacity to protect the child.

Core Concepts: In-home services are designed to maintain children safely in their homes by strengthening the ability of families to protect their children and reducing threats to their safety. When a child’s safety can be reasonably assured, in-home services are provided to help stabilize the family and reduce the risk of future abuse or neglect. Safety management services may be provided directly by the CBC or through contracted case management organizations and other community-based service providers. Services may include, but are not limited to: crisis intervention, domestic violence intervention, and day care. The case manager must ensure services are appropriately identified, referred, and engaged. The goal is to prevent unnecessary separation of children from their families by identifying family problems and assisting families in resolving them.

The Federal CFSR On-Site Review Instrument (Item 3) focuses on six questions. For Florida case reviews, this item has been split into 3 items (assessment, safety plans, and monitoring safety plans). For assessments the Children’s Bureau asks:

1. If the case was opened during the period under review, did the agency conduct an initial assessment that accurately assessed all risk and safety concerns for the target child and/or any child(ren) in the home? (Florida case review Item 2)
2. During the period under review, did the agency conduct ongoing assessments that accurately assessed all of the risk and safety concerns for the target child and/or any child(ren) in the home? (Florida case review Item 2)

Instructions: This question should be answered for the target child and any other children in the home.

For on-going assessments the reviewer must determine whether ongoing assessments (formal or informal) were conducted during the period under review. If the agency conducted an initial assessment of risk and safety at the onset of the case, but did not assess for risk and safety concerns on an ongoing basis (for example, when there were new allegations of abuse or neglect, changing family conditions, new people coming into the family home or having access to the children, changes to visitation, upon reunification, or at case closure) the answer should be no.

The reviewer must determine if the assessment considered maltreatment allegations on the family that were never formally reported or formally investigated.

Rating Criterion:

☐ Strength, if the initial and on-going risk and safety assessments were conducted and qualitatively addressed case specific issues related to child safety and emerging risks.

☐ Area Needing Improvement, if the initial assessment of risk and safety was not conducted at the onset of the case or if the agency conducted an initial assessment of risk and safety at the onset of the case, but did not assess for risk and safety concerns on an ongoing basis (for example, when there were new allegations of abuse or neglect, changing family conditions, new people coming into the family home or having access to the children, changes to visitation, upon reunification, or at case closure).

**Item 3**

**Safety Plans**

3.0 If safety concerns were present, did the agency develop an appropriate safety plan with the family? (CFSR Safety Outcome 2, Item 3, C, (1))

**Response Rating:**  ● Strength  ● Area Needing Improvement

**Applicable Cases:** All in-home cases.

**Definitions:**

- “Safety plan” is defined as a plan created to control present or impending danger using the least intrusive means appropriate to protect a child when a parent, caregiver, or legal custodian is unavailable, unwilling, or unable to do so. (Section 39.01(67), F.S.).

- “Safety plan” refers to a plan that describes strategies developed by the agency and family to ensure that the child(ren) is safe. Safety plans should address safety threats and how those will be managed and addressed by the caregiver, caregiver capacity to implement the plan and report safety issues to the agency, and family involvement in the implementation of the plan.

**Core Concepts:** A child is considered safe when there is a balance between known safety factors and the identification of protections that are put into place by all responsible persons. This includes: the capability and reliability of parents, school personnel, child care providers, and others who have immediate responsibility for the child in recognizing safety factors.

A safety plan is appropriate when the caregiver agrees to cooperate with the safety actions and work closely with service providers; the home environment is calm and stable enough for services to be provided and for service providers to be safe in the home; the safety actions are sufficient to control all of the conditions affecting safety and can be put in place immediately; and a responsible person or legal guardian resides in the home. Safety plan interventions may include: restricting access of the alleged perpetrator to the child; the alleged perpetrator leaving the home either voluntarily or as a result of a court order; obtaining a protection order; assessing safety and danger threats at childcare or respite care, etc.

The Federal CFSR On-Site Review Instrument (Item 3) focuses on six questions. For Florida case reviews, this item has been split into 3 items (assessment, safety plans, and monitoring safety plans). For safety planning, the Children's Bureau asks: During the period under review, if safety concerns were present, did the agency develop an appropriate safety plan with the family?

**Instructions:** The reviewer must determine if the agency developed an appropriate safety plan with the family. Recurring maltreatment and recurring safety concerns must be thoroughly reviewed.

Section 39.301(9)(b), F.S. The child protective investigator shall collaborate with the community-based care lead agency in the development of the safety plan as necessary to ensure that the safety plan is specific, sufficient, feasible, and sustainable. The child protective investigator shall identify services necessary for the successful implementation of the safety plan.

Section 39.604(3), F.S. requires that when a child is enrolled in an early education or child care program regulated by the department, the child’s attendance in the program must be a required action in the safety plan or the case plan.

**Rating Criterion:**
Strength, if the case file indicates safety planning discussions are being conducted with the family and if safety planning addressed safety intervention strategies that are sufficient to address the identified danger threat or safety concern.

Area Needing Improvement, if

- The case file does not indicate safety planning discussions are being conducted with the family and/or if safety planning addressed safety intervention strategies are not sufficient to address the identified danger threat or safety concern.
- The safety plan consisted of a promissory note.
- There was at least one substantiated or indicated maltreatment report on any child in the family during the period under review AND there was another substantiated report within a 6-month period before or after that report that involved the same or similar circumstances. In determining the similarity of the circumstances, consider the perpetrator of the maltreatment and other individuals involved in the incident.
- The case was closed while significant safety concerns that were not adequately addressed still existed.

Reference: Sections 39.01(67) and 39.301(9)(b), F.S.; Federal Child & Family Services Review, Safety Outcome 2, Item 3C (1), Safety Management
Item 4
Monitoring the Safety Plan

4.0 If safety concerns were present, did the agency continually monitor the safety plan as needed including monitoring family engagement in any safety-related services? (CFSR Safety Outcome 2, Item 3, C, (1))

Response Rating: ○ Strength ○ Area Needing Improvement

Applicable Cases: All in-home cases.

Definitions:

- “Safety plan” is defined as a plan created to control present or impending danger using the least intrusive means appropriate to protect a child when a parent, caregiver, or legal custodian is unavailable, unwilling, or unable to do so. (Section 39.01(67), F.S.).

- “Safety plan” refers to a plan that describes strategies developed by the agency and family to ensure that the child(ren) is safe. Safety plans should address safety threats and how those will be managed and addressed by the caregiver, caregiver capacity to implement the plan and report safety issues to the agency, and family involvement in implementation of the plan.

Core Concepts: Safety planning is an ongoing process and needs to be addressed at critical junctures. The need for a plan may be triggered by a specific event, but individual and family circumstances change frequently enough to warrant continual monitoring and updating when new safety threats are identified; parental protective capacities diminish; new members join the family or leave the home; or there is an increase in stressors in general, e.g., loss of job, illness, pregnancy, etc.

The case manager must always assess for emerging dangers that results in present danger or impending danger. Present danger is unique in that it is immediate, significant, clearly observable, and actively occurring. Present danger threats are conspicuous and require an immediate protective action be taken to ensure the child’s safety.

The Federal CFSR On-Site Review Instrument (Item 3) focuses on six questions. For Florida case reviews, this item has been split into 3 items (assessment, safety plans, and monitoring safety plans). For safety plan monitoring, the Children’s Bureau asks:

1. During the period under review, did the agency continually monitor and update the safety plan as needed, including monitoring family engagement in any safety-related services? (Florida case review Item 4)

2. During the period under review, were there safety concerns pertaining to any child(ren) in the family in the home that were not adequately or appropriately addressed by the agency? (Florida case review Item 4)

Instructions: The reviewer must determine if sufficient monitoring took place. Monitoring may include case manager observations; feedback from service providers; and ongoing communication with those individuals who can provide additional insight as to behavioral change and protective capacities of the parents, documenting appropriate interactions with children, assessing occurrences of DV incidents, etc.

Rating Criterion:

☐ Strength, if the agency continually monitored and updated the safety plan as needed including monitoring family engagement in any safety-related services.
Area Needing Improvement, if

- The agency did not continually monitor the safety plan as needed including monitoring family engagement in any safety-related services.

- There was at least one substantiated or indicated maltreatment report on any child in the family during the period under review AND there was another substantiated report within a 6-month period before or after that report that involved the same or similar circumstances. In determining the similarity of the circumstances, consider the perpetrator of the maltreatment and other individuals involved in the incident.

- There was a critical incident report or other major issue relevant to noncompliance by foster parents or facility staff that could potentially make the child unsafe, and the agency could have prevented it or did not provide an adequate response after it occurred.

- The child’s placement during the period under review presented other risks to the child that are not being addressed, even though no allegation was made and no critical incident reports were filed.

- The case was closed while significant safety concerns that were not adequately addressed still existed.

Item 5
Background Checks and Home Study or Home Assessment

5.0 Are background checks and home study or assessment sufficient and responded to appropriately? (CFSR Safety Outcome 2, Item 3)

Response Rating: ○ Strength ○ Area Needing Improvement

Applicable Cases: All cases are applicable for an assessment of this item.

Definitions:

Requirement: A criminal, delinquency and abuse/neglect history checks on additional persons subsequent to placement in a relative’s or non-relative’s home, is required for new household members, frequent visitors or paramours of any household members if they have not otherwise received the checks within the previous twelve months and there has been no break in service for over ninety days. The court shall be informed of the results within seventy-two hours of their receipt:

(a) A local criminal records check, a child abuse/neglect records check and a delinquency records check are required on new household members, frequent visitors or paramours of any household members.
(b) A state criminal records check is required on new household members or paramours of any household members.
(c) A federal criminal records check, including a name check followed by submission of fingerprints to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, is required for any new household members eighteen years of age or older.

Core Concepts: The file must contain an assessment of implications for child safety based on background check results for all household members and other visitors to the home. The case manager must demonstrate an understanding of the background screening information and must also be alert to new household members and request a criminal background check and the abuse and neglect record check on those people. If a determination is made an individual is another visitor in the home, the case manager has the discretion to request a background check through the Hotline. For the purpose of determining an “other visitor,” the following guidelines should be used.

○ Does the visitor spend the night at the house? If so, how often?
○ Does the visitor spend any unsupervised time in the home with the child?
○ Is the visitor ever left in a caregiver role? If so, how often? Under what conditions?
○ Is the visitor a boyfriend or girlfriend of any adult household member?

The reviewer should review the family history, family assessment, and case notes to determine how effectively the background information is used to assess and address potential danger threats.

Instructions: The reviewer must determine if the case manager demonstrates an understanding of the background screening information and is alert to new household members. For reunification cases and relative placements, the reviewer must ensure the file contains an approved home study. The reviewer must assess the home study to determine if it is of sufficient quality to ensure child safety. There should be an emphasis on the overall assessment of the child(ren’s) home environment.

Section 39.0138, F.S., Criminal history and other records checks; limit on placement of a child:

(1) The department shall conduct a records check through the State Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) and a local and statewide criminal history records check on all persons, including parents, being considered by the department for placement of a child under this chapter, including all nonrelative placement decisions, and all members of the household, 12 years of age and older, of the person being considered. For purposes of this section, a
criminal history records check may include, but is not limited to, submission of fingerprints to the Department of Law Enforcement for processing and forwarding to the Federal Bureau of Investigation for state and national criminal history information, and local criminal records checks through local law enforcement agencies of all household members 18 years of age and older and other visitors to the home. An out-of-state criminal history records check must be initiated for any person 18 years of age or older who resided in another state if that state allows the release of such records. The department shall establish by rule standards for evaluating any information contained in the automated system relating to a person who must be screened for purposes of making a placement decision.

(2) The department may not place a child with a person other than a parent if the criminal history records check reveals that the person has been convicted of any felony that falls within any of the following categories:
   (a) Child abuse, abandonment, or neglect;
   (b) Domestic violence;
   (c) Child pornography or other felony in which a child was a victim of the offense; or
   (d) Homicide, sexual battery, or other felony involving violence, other than felony assault or felony battery when an adult was the victim of the assault or battery.

(3) The department may not place a child with a person other than a parent if the criminal history records check reveals that the person has, within the previous 5 years, been convicted of a felony that falls within any of the following categories:
   (a) Assault;
   (b) Battery; or
   (c) A drug-related offense.

(4) The department may place a child in a home that otherwise meets placement requirements if a name check of state and local criminal history records systems does not disqualify the applicant and if the department submits fingerprints to the Department of Law Enforcement for forwarding to the Federal Bureau of Investigation and is awaiting the results of the state and national criminal history records check.

(5) Persons with whom placement of a child is being considered or approved must disclose to the department any prior or pending local, state, or national criminal proceedings in which they are or have been involved.

(6) The department may examine the results of any criminal history records check of any person, including a parent, with whom placement of a child is being considered under this section. The complete criminal history records check must be considered when determining whether placement with the person will jeopardize the safety of the child being placed.

(7) (a) The court may review a decision of the department to grant or deny the placement of a child based upon information from the criminal history records check. The review may be upon the motion of any party, the request of any person who has been denied a placement by the department, or on the court’s own motion. The court shall prepare written findings to support its decision in this matter.

   (b) A person who is seeking placement of a child, but is denied the placement because of the results of a criminal history records check, has the burden of setting forth sufficient evidence of rehabilitation to show that the person will not present a danger to the child if the placement of the child is allowed. Evidence of rehabilitation may include, but is not limited to, the circumstances surrounding the incident providing the basis for denying the application, the time period that has elapsed since the incident, the nature of the harm caused to the victim, whether the victim was a child, the history of the person since the incident, whether the person has complied with any requirement to pay restitution, and any other evidence or circumstances indicating that the person will not present a danger to the child if the placement of the child is allowed.
Rating Criterion:

- Strength, if background checks and home studies/assessments are sufficient and responded to appropriately.

- Area Needing Improvement, if background checks and home studies/assessments are not sufficient and responded to appropriately.

References: s. 39.0138; F.S. and Safety Outcome 1, Item 3: Risk and Safety Assessment and Management
**Item 6**

**Stability of Out-of-Home Care Placement**

6.0 Is the child in a stable placement at the time of the review and were any changes in placement that occurred during the period under review made in the best interest of the child and consistent with achieving the child’s permanency goals? (CFSR Permanency Outcome 1, Item 4)

- **Strength**
- **Area Needing Improvement**

**Applicable Cases:** All out-of-home care cases are applicable for an assessment of this item.

**Definitions:**

- “Placement setting” refers to a physical setting in which a child resides while in out-of-home care under the care and placement of the agency. A new placement setting would result, for example, when a child moves from one foster family home to another or to a group home or institution. Placement settings may include shelter care, treatment facilities, and juvenile justice placements. If, however, a foster family with whom a child is placed moves and the child moves with them, this does not constitute a change in placement.

- “Entry into out-of-home care” refers to a child’s removal from his or her normal place of residence and placement in a substitute care setting under the placement and care responsibility of the state or local title IV-B/IV-E agency. Children are considered to have entered out-of-home care if the child has been in substitute care for 24 hours or more.

- “Current episode of out-of-home care” refers to a child’s current stay in out-of-home care based on the most recent removal of the child from his or her normal place of residence, resulting in his or her placement in out-of-home care and ending upon the child’s discharge from out-of-home care.

- “Placement changes planned by the agency in an effort to achieve case goals or meet the needs of the child” refers to:
  - Placement changes that reflect agency efforts to achieve case goals include moves from a foster home to an adoptive home, moves from a more restrictive to a less restrictive placement, moves from non-relative out-of-home care to relative out-of-home care, and moves that bring the child closer to family or community.

- “Placement changes that do not reflect agency efforts to achieve case goals” refers to:
  - Moves due to unexpected and undesired placement disruptions; moves due to placing the child in an inappropriate placement (that is, moves based on availability rather than on appropriateness); moves to more restrictive placements when this is not essential to achieving a child’s permanency goal; temporary placements while awaiting a more appropriate placement; and practices of routinely placing children in a particular placement type, such as shelter care, upon initial entry into out-of-home care regardless of individual needs.

**Core Concepts:** Children should have stability in their day-to-day lives and live in environments that are free from disruption as evidenced by:

- Commitment by caregiver;
- Mutual understanding, consideration and respect within the household;
- Consistent case management; and
- Positive social support network.
Collaboration between the case manager and the out-of-home care provider must occur to support and ensure the stability of the child’s placement. The case manager must appropriately manage any crises or threats of disruption to the placement.

The Federal CFSR On-Site Review Instrument (Item 4) focuses on three questions.

1. How many placement settings did the child experience during the period under review?
2. Were all placement changes during the period under review planned by the agency in an effort to achieve the child’s case goals or to meet the needs of the child?
3. Is the child’s current placement setting (or most recent placement if the child is no longer in out-of-home care) stable?

Instructions: The reviewer must determine how many placement settings the child experienced during the period under review and if the current placement appears stable through a review of case file documentation. Consideration must be given to the provider’s commitment to maintaining the placement, the child’s adjustment, and the amount of support provided to the caregiver. The reviewer should identify significant risks to the current placement. The reviewer must consider the stability of the placement, as well as whether the placement is appropriate based on the child’s needs and the family’s ability to meet those needs while assuring child safety and well-being.

If there were multiple episodes of out-of-home care during the period under review, add up the placement settings within each episode. If there is a re-entry into out-of-home care and the child is placed in a different placement setting at the time of re-entry, then it would count as a new placement setting. If the child returns to the placement setting he or she was in before the return home, then it would not count as a new placement setting.

Do not consider the following as placement settings:
1. a trial home visit;
2. a runaway episode;
3. temporary absences from the child’s ongoing out-of-home care placement, including visitation with a sibling, relative, or other caretaker (for example, pre-placement visits with a subsequent out-of-home care provider or pre-adoptive parents);
4. hospitalization for medical treatment, acute psychiatric episodes, or diagnosis;
5. respite care;
6. day or summer camps; and
7. locked facilities (for example, when a youth is held in detention).

Rating Criterion:

- Strength, if the child has stability in the current placement and placement changes during the period under review were made in the best interest of the child and consistent with achieving the child’s permanency goals.

- Area Needing Improvement, if the child
  - Does not have stability in the current placement;
  - Moves occurred due to unexpected and undesired placement disruptions;
  - Moves due to placing the child in an inappropriate placement (that is, moves based on availability rather than on appropriateness);
  - Moves to more restrictive placements when this is not essential to achieving a child’s permanency goal;
  - Temporary placements while awaiting a more appropriate placement; and
  - Practices of routinely placing children in a particular placement type, such as shelter care or group care, upon initial entry into out-of-home care regardless of individual needs.
Quality of Practice Standards  Case Management Services

Item 7
Permanency Goal for the Child

7.0 Was the appropriate permanency goal established for the child in a timely manner? (CFSR Permanency Outcome 1, Item 5)

☐ Strength  ☐ Area Needing Improvement  ☐ Not Applicable

Applicable Cases: All out-of-home care cases are applicable for assessment of this item, unless the case has not been open long enough (less than 60 days) for the agency to have developed a case plan and established a permanency goal. If the case has been open for less than 60 days, but a permanency goal has been established, the case is applicable for assessment.

Definitions: The Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) requires an agency to seek Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) under the following circumstances:

- The child has been in care for at least 15 of the most recent 22 months, or a court of competent jurisdiction has determined that:
  - The child is an abandoned infant, or
  - The child’s parents have been convicted of one of the felonies designated in Section 475(5)(E) of the Social Security Act: (1) committed murder of another child of the parent; (2) committed voluntary manslaughter of another child of the parent; (3) aided or abetted, attempted, conspired, or solicited to commit such a murder or such a voluntary manslaughter; or (4) committed a felony assault that resulted in serious bodily injury to the child or another child of the parent.

Core Concepts: For children in out-of-home care, the permanency goals, in order of preference per Chapter 39 are:

1) Reunification,
2) Adoption (if a petition for termination of parental rights has been or will be filed),
3) Permanent Guardianship of a dependent child,
4) Permanent placement with a fit and willing relative, and,
5) Placement in another planned permanent living arrangement (APPLA),
6) The case plan goal for court ordered in-home or non-court ordered in-home cases is Maintain and Strengthen.

If a TPR petition was not filed, there must be a compelling reason and an exception for not filing the petition was documented. The state is required to file or join a TPR petition unless there were compelling reasons for not filing. The reviewer must assess if the child welfare agency did not file a TPR petition, did they clearly specify a justifiable reason for not having filed one? The child welfare agency must document that they have reported to the court why a TPR petition was not filed. One of the following compelling reasons for not filing the TPR petition must be met:

1) Child is being cared for by a relative under s. 39.6231; or
2) A TPR petition was not in the child's best interest for one of the following compelling reasons:
   a. Adoption was not the appropriate permanency goal for the child.
   b. No grounds existed to file a TPR petition.
   c. The child is an unaccompanied refugee minor as defined in 45 C.F.R. 400.111.
   d. There are international legal obligations or compelling foreign-policy reasons that preclude terminating parental rights.
   e. Services deemed necessary for the child's safe return to the home were not provided to the family consistent with the time period in the case plan.

The Federal CFSR On-Site Review Instrument (Item 5) focuses on five questions.
1. What is (are) the child’s current permanency goal(s) (or if the case was closed during the period under review, what was the permanency goal before the case was closed) and is the child’s permanency goal(s) specified in the case file?

2. Were all permanency goals in effect during the period under review established in a timely manner?

3. Were all permanency goals in effect during the period under review appropriate to the child’s needs for permanency and to the circumstances of the case?

4. Has the child been in out-of-home care for at least 15 of the most recent 22 months?

5. Does the child meet other ASFA criteria for termination of parental rights (TPR)?

Instructions: Permanency goals include adoption, guardianship, reunification with parents, and Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangements (APPLA). APPLA refers to a situation in which the state maintains placement and care responsibility for the child, but places the child in a setting in which the child is expected to remain until adulthood, such as with foster parents who have made a commitment to care for the child permanently, with relatives who have made the same commitment, or with a residential care facility (for example, for children with developmental disabilities who require residential care). Answer this question for all permanency goals in effect during the period under review. If there are concurrent goals, the answer should apply to both goals. For example, if there are concurrent goals of reunification and adoption, and the reviewer believes the reunification goal was established in a timely manner but the adoption goal was not, the overall rating would be no.

All out-of-home cases must have a case plan goal. Reviewers are asked to assess the appropriateness of the goal in case reviews as to whether the goal reflects the family’s circumstances.

If a child will not be reunified with a parent, then adoption is the primary permanency option. The reviewer should find evidence the goal of adoption was thoroughly considered before deciding on other less permanent goals.

The reviewer must use professional judgment to determine if the permanency goal in an out-of-home care or post reunification case is appropriate. The reviewer must determine if the case plan goal appropriately matched the child’s individual needs for safety, permanency, and well-being. The reviewer should review the factors the agency considered in deciding on the case plan goal and whether the relevant factors were evaluated.

If the goal is APPLA, the reviewer should find evidence other case plan goals were thoroughly considered before deciding on this one. The APPLA goal is appropriate only if there is reason to believe the placement will endure and be more stable and secure than ordinary out-of-home care; that the health, safety, and well-being of the child will not be jeopardized; and that there are compelling reasons the living arrangement is most suitable to the specific child. Compelling reasons for the goal of APPLA include:

1) The parent and child have a significant bond, but the parent is unable to care for the child because of an emotional or physical disability and the child’s foster parents have committed to raising the child to the age of majority and to facilitate visitation with the disabled parent.

2) An Indian Tribe has identified the goal as being appropriate.

3) The child is 16 years of age or older and chooses to remain in out-of-home care and the foster parents are willing to care for the child until the child reaches 18 years of age.

Use professional judgment regarding the timeliness of establishing the goal, particularly with regard to changing a goal. For children who recently entered care, expect the first permanency goal to have been established no later than 60 days from the date of the child’s entry into out-of-home care, consistent with the federal requirement.
For children whose goal was changed from reunification to adoption, consider the guidelines established by the federal Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) regarding seeking termination of parental rights, which might affect the timeliness of changing a goal from reunification to adoption.

**Rating Criterion:**

- **Strength**, if the permanency goal is specified in the case file, such as in the case plan or in a court order and the goal was established in a timely manner and, if applicable, a TPR petition was filed in a timely manner.

- **Area Needing Improvement**, if the permanency goal is not specified anywhere in the case file, such as in the case plan or in a court order or if the goal was not established in a timely manner or if a TPR petition was not filed in a timely manner.

- **NA**, if the case has been open for less than 60 days and the goal is not specified in the case file.

Item 8
Achieving Reunification, Guardianship, Adoption, or Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangement

8.0 Are concerted efforts being made to achieve reunification, guardianship, adoption, or other permanent planned living arrangement? (CFSR Permanency Outcome 1, Item 6)

☐ Strength ☐ Area Needing Improvement ☐ Not Applicable

Applicable Cases: All out-of-home care cases.

Definitions:

- A goal of reunification is defined as a plan for the child to be discharged from out-of-home care to his or her parents or primary caretaker.

- A goal of guardianship is defined as a plan for the child to be discharged from out-of-home care to a legally established custody arrangement with an individual that is intended to be permanent.

- A goal of adoption is defined as a plan for the child to be discharged from out-of-home care to the care and custody of adoptive parents through a legal adoption.

- A goal of Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA) refers to a situation in which the agency maintains placement and care responsibility for and supervision of the child, and places the child in a setting in which the child is expected to remain until adulthood. Examples of these “permanent” living arrangements include situations where foster parents have made a formal commitment to care for the child until adulthood, the child is with relatives who plan to care for the child until adulthood, the child is in a long-term care facility to meet special needs and will be transferred to an adult facility at the appropriate time, the child is an older adolescent in a stable group home and both the group home directors and the child have agreed that it will be the child’s placement until adulthood, or the child is in agency-supervised transitional living.

- “Entry into out-of-home care” refers to a child’s removal from his or her normal place of residence and placement in a substitute care setting under the placement and care responsibility of the state or local title IV-B/IV-E agency. Children are considered to have entered out-of-home care if the child has been in substitute care for 24 hours or more.

- “Discharge from out-of-home care” is defined as the point when the child is no longer in out-of-home care under the care and placement responsibility or supervision of the agency. If a child returns home on a trial home visit and the agency retains responsibility or supervision of the child, the child is not considered discharged from out-of-home care unless the trial home visit is longer than 6 months and there was no court order extending the trial home visit beyond 6 months.

- The date of documentation regarding “permanency” is the date on which there was a court order, signed agreement, or other method to formalize that the caretaker of a particular facility would provide care for this child until the child reaches adulthood.

Core Concepts: Permanency in child welfare means a legally permanent, nurturing family for every child. Child welfare professionals first focus on preserving families and preventing the need to place children outside of their homes. When
children must be removed from their homes to ensure their safety, permanency planning efforts focus on returning them home as soon as is safely possible or placing them with another permanent family. Other permanent families may include adoptive families, guardians, or relatives who obtain legal custody. Achieving reunification with birth parents, guardianship, adoption, or Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement for children in out-of-home care is a primary goal of the child welfare system.

*Instructions:* If the child is no longer in out-of-home care, then the answer should be based on the child’s last placement before leaving out-of-home care. The answer is yes, if the child has been in out-of-home care for more than the suggested time frame (12, 18 or 24 months depending on the goal) and the goal has not yet been achieved because of particular circumstances that justify the delay. For example:

- The permanency goal of reunification has been in place for longer than 12 months, but the child was physically returned to the parents during or before the 12th month and remained at home on a trial home visit beyond the 12th month. If the reviewer determines that the length of time that the child spent in out-of-home care and on the trial home visit was reasonable given the child and family circumstances, even though the child was not discharged from out-of-home care until after the 12th month.

- The permanency goal of adoption has been in place for longer than 24 months, but there is evidence that the agency has made concerted efforts to find an adoptive home for a child with special needs although an appropriate family has not yet been found, or a pre-adoptive placement disrupted despite concerted efforts on the part of the agency to support it.

*The Federal CFSR On-Site Review Instrument (Item 6) focuses on 3 questions.*

1. What is/are the child’s current (or most recent) permanency goals?

2. During the period under review, did the agency and court make concerted efforts to achieve permanency in a timely manner?

*Rating Criterion:*

- Strength, if concerted efforts are being made to achieve reunification, guardianship, adoption, or other permanent planned living arrangement or place the child in a living arrangement that can be considered permanent until discharge from out-of-home care.

- **Area Needing Improvement,**
  - If the child has been in out-of-home care for more than the suggested time frame (12, 18 or 24 months depending on the goal) and the goal has not yet been achieved and there are not any special circumstances that justify the delay.
  
  - If concurrent goals are in place, but permanency will not be achieved in a timely manner.
  
  - If it is determined that the agency and court could have achieved the permanency goal before the suggested time frame, but there was a delay due to lack of concerted efforts on the part of the agency or court, even if the child achieved the goal within the suggested time frame.

- **Not applicable,** if the child is not in out-of-home care.

*Reference:* s. 39.01; 39.301; 39.402(8)(H)6; 39.402(9)(b); 39.701(2)7; 409.966(18)(b)& Federal Child & Family Services Review, Permanency Outcome 1, Item 6 Achieving Reunification, Guardianship, Adoption, or Other Permanent Planned Living Arrangement
Item 9
Placement with Siblings

9.0 Were concerted efforts made to ensure that siblings in out-of-home care are placed together unless a separation was necessary to meet the need of one of the siblings? (CFSR Permanency Outcome 2, Item 7)

☐ Strength ☐ Area Needing Improvement ☐ Not Applicable

Applicable Cases: All out-of-home cases in which the child has one or more siblings who are (or were) also in out-of-home care during the period under review. If the child has no siblings in out-of-home care during the period under review, the case is Not Applicable for an assessment of this item. For example, if the child in out-of-home care has an older sibling who was in out-of-home care at one time, but not during the period under review, this case would be Not Applicable.

Definitions:

- Siblings are children who have one or more parents in common either biologically, through adoption, or through the marriage of their parents, and with whom the child lived before his or her out-of-home care placement, or with whom the child would be expected to live if the child were not in out-of-home-care.

- “Sibling” means: A child who shares a birth parent or legal parent with one or more other children; or a child who has lived together in a family with one or more other children whom he or she identifies as siblings. (s. 39.01 (71), F.S.)

Core Concepts: The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-351) amended title IV-E State plan provisions to require that State agencies make reasonable efforts to place siblings removed from their home in the same out-of-home care, adoption, or guardianship placement or, if that is not possible, facilitate visits or ongoing contacts for siblings that cannot be placed together, unless it is contrary to the safety or well-being of any of the siblings to do so.

Every possible effort must be made to place siblings in the same home, when two or more siblings are in licensed or non-licensed out-of-home care. Siblings are children who have one or more parents in common either biologically, through adoption, or through the marriage of their parents, and with whom the child lived before his or her out-of-home care placement, or with whom the child would be expected to live if the child were not in out-of-home care. When rating this item, consider only the location of each of the siblings, not the reason for their location.

Florida Specific Requirements for Placement of Siblings Citation: Admin. Code §§ 65C-15.021(3)(d); 65C-30.006(5):

- The child-placing agency shall select the most appropriate service for the child, consistent with the child’s and family’s need. When selecting care, the agency shall take into consideration a child’s racial, cultural, ethnic, religious heritage, and sibling relationships and shall preserve them to the extent possible without jeopardizing the child’s right to care or to a permanent family.

- The case manager has specific tasks in regard to a child’s case plan. The case manager shall ensure that a schedule for visits between a child in an out-of-home placement and his or her separated siblings, parents, relatives, and other people of significance in the child’s life is addressed in the case plan.

The Federal CFSR On-Site Review Instrument (Item 7) focuses on 2 questions.
1. During the period under review, was the child placed with all siblings who also were in out-of-home care?

2. If Area Needing Improvement, was there a valid reason for the child’s separation from the siblings?

Instructions: Consider the circumstances of the placement of siblings, focusing on whether separation was necessary to meet the child’s needs. For example, were siblings separated temporarily because one sibling needed a specialized treatment or to be in a treatment foster home, or because one sibling was abusive to the other, or because siblings with different biological parents were placed with different relatives?

If siblings were separated for a valid reason, consider the entire period under review and determine if that valid reason still exists and if the need for separation still exists. For example, the siblings were separated because one sibling needed temporary treatment services. However, during the period under review, the sibling’s treatment services ended. In this situation, determine whether concerted efforts were made to reunite the siblings after the treatment service was completed. If the need for separation no longer exists and no efforts have been made to reunite the siblings, then the answer should be an Area Needing Improvement.

Rating Criterion:

- **Strength**, if concerted efforts made to ensure that siblings in out-of-home care are placed together unless a separation was necessary to meet the need of one of the siblings and a valid reason for separation is documented.

- **Area Needing Improvement**, if
  - If the separation of siblings is attributed by the agency to a lack of foster homes willing to take sibling groups
  - If siblings were separated for a valid reason and concerted efforts were not made to reunite the siblings after a treatment service was completed.
  - If the need for separation no longer exists and no efforts have been made to reunite the siblings.

- **NA**, if
  - the child had no siblings or the siblings under supervision did not reside in licensed or non-licensed out-of-home care.
  - The child is not in out-of-home care.

Reference: s. 39.001 (k), F.S.; & Federal Child & Family Services Review, Permanency Outcome 2, Item 7, Placement with Siblings
**Item 10**

**Visiting with Parents and Siblings in Out-of-Home Care**

10.0 Were concerted efforts made to ensure that visitation between a child in out-of-home care and his or her mother, father, and siblings was of sufficient **frequency and quality** to promote continuity in the child’s relationship with these close family members? (CFSR Permanency Outcome 2, Item 8)

- **Strength**
- **Area Needing Improvement**
- **Not Applicable**

**Applicable Cases:** Out-of-home care cases are applicable for an assessment of this item if any of the following apply:

- The child has at least one sibling in out-of-home care who is in a different placement setting.
- The whereabouts of the child’s parents are known and there is no documented information in the case file indicating that contact between the child and the parents is not in the child’s best interest.

**Definitions:**

- “Mother” is defined as the female caretaker from whom the child was removed.
- “Father” is defined as the male caretaker from whom the child was removed.
- If the biological parents were not the caretakers the child was removed from, they should not be considered in the assessment of this item.

**Core Concepts:** The primary purpose of visitation is to maintain the parent-child attachment, reduce a child’s sense of abandonment, and preserve their sense of belonging as part of a family and community. A child needs to see and have regular contact with their parent(s), as this relationship is the foundation of child development. Visitation facilitates permanency planning, promotes timely reunification, and helps in the decision-making process to establish alternative permanency plans. Visitation maintains and supports the parent-child relationship necessary for successful reunification. Maintaining family connections has life-long significance for a child. Visitation maintains their relationships with siblings and others who have a significant role in a child’s life. When a child loses family connections, they also lose family history, medical history, and cultural information. Visitation is considered the heart of reunification, but even when reunification is not likely, parents, siblings and extended family continue to be important in children’s lives. Research identifies the following as benefits of parent-child visitation:

- Supports parent-child attachment
- Eases the pain of separation for all
- Maintains and strengthens family relationships
- Reassures a child that their parent(s) is/are alright and helps them to eliminate self-blame for placement
- Supports the family in dealing with changing relationships
- Enhances parent motivation to change by providing reassurance that the parent-child relationship is important for a child’s well-being
- Provides opportunities for parent(s) to learn and try new skills
- Supports a child’s adjustment to the foster home
- Enables the parent(s) to be active and stay current with their child’s development, educational and medical needs, church, and community activities
- Provides opportunities for parent(s) to assess how their child is doing, and share information about how to meet their child’s needs
- Assists in the assessment and decision-making process regarding parenting capacities and permanency goals
The Federal CFSR On-Site Review Instrument (Item 8) focuses on 6 questions.

1. During the period under review, were concerted efforts made to ensure that visitation (or other forms of contact if visitation was not possible) between the child and his or her mother was of sufficient frequency to maintain or promote the continuity of the relationship?

2. During the period under review, were concerted efforts made to ensure that visitation (or other forms of contact if visitation was not possible) between the child and his or her father was of sufficient frequency to maintain or promote the continuity of the relationship?

3. During the period under review, were concerted efforts made to ensure that the quality of visitation between the child and the mother was sufficient to maintain or promote the continuity of the relationship?

4. During the period under review, were concerted efforts made to ensure that the quality of visitation between the child and the father was sufficient to maintain or promote the continuity of the relationship?

5. During the period under review, were concerted efforts made to ensure that visitation (or other forms of contact if visitation was not possible) between the child and his or her sibling(s) was of sufficient frequency to maintain or promote the continuity of the relationship?

6. During the period under review, were concerted efforts made to ensure that the quality of visitation between the child and his or her sibling(s) was sufficient to promote the continuity of their relationships?

Instructions: The reviewer must assess the frequency and quality of visits between the child in care and the mother, father, and siblings. For frequency, address the question of appropriate frequency based on the circumstances of the child and the family, rather than on Florida DCF policy. The reviewer must determine whether the frequency of visitation during the period under review was sufficient to maintain the continuity of the relationship between the child and the mother or father, depending on the circumstances of the case. For example, frequency may need to be greater for infants and young children who are still forming attachments. Frequency also may need to be greater if reunification is imminent. Visitation should be as frequent as possible, unless safety concerns cannot be appropriately managed with supervision. The opportunity for visitation should not be used as a consequence or reward for parents or for children.

If, during the period under review, frequent visitation with the mother or father was not possible (for example, due to incarceration or the mother or father being in another state), determine whether there are documented concerted efforts to promote other forms of contact between the child and the mother or father, such as telephone calls or letters in addition to facilitating visits when possible and appropriate.

Assessing the quality of visitation in a case file review may be difficult. The reviewer should determine if visits provide opportunities for family time between the child and their parents. This time together is essential because it reduces the loss and separation children experience while in care, preserves the children’s relationship with parents and other extended family members and reinforces the child’s connection to a world that is familiar to them. Parent-child visitation also enables the case manager to assess parents’ progress toward having their children return from out-of-home placement and to identify the additional supports needed to help achieve family reunification.

Rating Criterion:

- Strength, if concerted efforts were made to ensure that visitation between a child in out-of-home care and his or her mother, father, and siblings was of sufficient frequency and quality to promote continuity in the child’s relationship with these close family members.
Area Needing Improvement, concerted efforts were not made to ensure that visitation between a child in out-of-home care and his or her mother, father, and siblings was of sufficient frequency and quality to promote continuity in the child’s relationship with these close family members.

NA if:

- The child has no siblings in out-of-home care, and there is documentation in the case file indicating that contact between the child and both of his or her parents is not in the child’s best interests.

- The child has no siblings in out-of-home care, and the whereabouts of both parents are unknown despite documented concerted agency efforts to locate the parents.

- The child has no siblings in out-of-home care, both parents were deceased during the entire period under review or the parental rights of both parents have been terminated during the entire period under review, and no parent is involved in the child’s life.

- The child is not in out-of-home care.

**Item 11**

**Preserving Connections**

11.0 Were concerted efforts made to maintain the child’s connections to his or her neighborhood, community, faith, extended family, Tribe, school, or friends? (CFSR Permanency Outcome 2, Item 9)

- **Strength**
- **Area Needing Improvement**
- **Not Applicable**

**Applicable Cases:** Almost all out-of-home care cases are applicable for an assessment of this item. A possible exception may be the situation of an abandoned infant where the agency has no information about the child’s extended family or connections.

**Core Concepts:** When children move from their homes to out-of-home care, they may lose touch with the people who hold the memories, the pictures of how they looked when they were born, and the rituals or traditions that became important to them. Children may struggle to remain connected to their past. When they move from one out-of-home placement to another, they again risk losing people with whom they have shared memories and built connections. This experience can be traumatic to children who may already be struggling with the aftermath of having survived abuse and neglect and losing family members, while simultaneously facing the daily challenges of growing up. Children develop a sense of disconnect, often feeling confused, lost, and responsible for the situation they are facing.

The Federal CFSR On-Site Review Instrument (Item 9) focuses on 4 questions.

1. During the period under review, were concerted efforts made to maintain the child’s important connections (for example, school, neighborhood, community, faith, language, extended family members including siblings who are not in out-of-home care, Tribe, school, and/or friends)?

2. Was a sufficient inquiry conducted with the parent, child, custodian, or other interested party to determine whether the child may be a member of, or eligible for membership in, a federally recognized Indian Tribe?

3. If the child may be a member of, or eligible for membership in, a federally recognized Indian Tribe, during the period under review, was the Tribe provided timely notification of its right to intervene in any state court proceedings seeking an involuntary out-of-home care placement or termination of parental rights (TPR)?

4. If the child is a member of, or eligible for membership in, a federally recognized Indian Tribe, was the child placed in out-of-home care in accordance with the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) placement preferences or were concerted efforts made to place the child in accordance with ICWA placement preferences?

**Instructions:** This item is focusing on maintaining a child’s community connections. Determine what the important connections are for the child (for example, a young child is more likely to have an important connection with extended family than with school, and it is important for Native American children to maintain Tribal connections) and then determine whether concerted efforts were made to maintain those connections.

Do not rate this item based on connections to parents or siblings who are in out-of-home care. Information about sustaining those connections is captured in other items. However, the item may be rated based on connections with siblings who are not in out-of-home care and other extended family members (who were not the child’s primary caregivers before entry into out-of-home care), such as grandparents, uncles, aunts, or cousins.

**Rating Criterion:**

- Strength, if concerted efforts were made to maintain the child’s connections to his or her neighborhood, community, faith, extended family, Tribe, school, friends.
Area Needing Improvement, if concerted efforts were not made to maintain the child’s connections to his or her neighborhood, community, faith, extended family, Tribe, school, friends.

Not Applicable, if the child is not in out-of-home care.

Reference: Federal Child & Family Services Review, Permanency Outcome 2, Item 9, Preserving Connections
**Item 12**

**Relative Placement**

12.0 Were concerted efforts made to place the child with relatives when appropriate?  (CFSR Permanency Outcome 2, Item 10)

| ☐ Strength | ☐ Area Needing Improvement | ☐ Not Applicable |

**Applicable Cases:** All out-of-home care cases except those in which (1) the agency determined upon the child’s initial entry into care that his or her needs required a specialized placement (such as residential treatment services) and that they will continue to require such specialized treatment the entire time the child is in care and a relative placement would be inappropriate, or (2) situations such as abandonment in which the identity of the parents and relatives remains unknown despite documented concerted efforts to identify them.

**Core Concepts:** In order for States to receive Federal payments for out-of-home care and adoption assistance, Federal law under title IV-E of the Social Security Act requires that they “consider giving preference to an adult relative over a nonrelated caregiver when determining placement for a child, provided that the relative caregiver meets all relevant State child protection standards.”

Title IV-E further requires States to exercise due diligence to identify and provide notice to all grandparents and other adult relatives of the child (including any other adult relatives suggested by the parents) regarding the fact that the child has been or is being removed from the custody of his or her parents, the options the relative has to participate in the care and placement of the child, and the requirements to become a foster parent to the child.

Before a child can be placed in the home of a relative, the child-placing agency must do a home study and required background screening to determine that the relative is “fit and willing” to provide for the child. Generally, preference is given to the child’s grandparents, followed by aunts, uncles, adult siblings, and cousins. For Indian children, nine States allow members of the child’s Tribe to be considered “extended family members” for placement purposes.

Florida specific Requirements for Placement with Relatives Citation: Ann. Stat. §§ 39.401; 39.5085; 39.6231: Placement of a child that is not in a licensed shelter must be preceded by a criminal history records check. In addition, the department may authorize placement of a housekeeper/homemaker in the home of a child alleged to be dependent until the parent or legal custodian assumes care of the child.

Relative caregivers must be capable, as determined by a home study, of providing a physically safe environment and a stable, supportive home for the children under their care. They must assure that the children’s well-being is met, including, but not limited to, the provision of immunizations, education, and mental health services as needed.

*The Federal CFSR On-Site Review Instrument (Item 10) focuses on 3 questions.*

1. During the period under review, was the child’s current or most recent placement with a relative and if so, is (or was) this placement stable and appropriate to the child’s needs?

2. Did the agency, during the period under review, make concerted efforts to identify, locate, inform, and evaluate maternal relatives as potential placements for the child, with the result that maternal relatives were ruled out as, or were unwilling to be, placement resources?

3. Did the agency, during the period under review, make concerted efforts to identify, locate, inform, and evaluate paternal relatives as potential placements for the child, with the result that paternal relatives were ruled out as, or were unwilling to be, placement resources?
Instructions: The reviewer must assess if the agency made concerted efforts to effort to identify, locate, inform, and evaluate maternal and paternal relatives as potential placements for the child. There must be clear documentation as to the rational for why relatives were ruled out as such as they were unwilling to be a placement resource.

If a child entered OHC during the period under review, determine whether the state followed the requirements of the title IV-E provision that requires states to consider giving preference to placing the child with relatives, and determine whether the state considered such a placement and how (for example, identifying, seeking out, and informing and evaluating the child’s relatives).

If a child entered foster care before the period under review and the child is not currently placed in a relative placement that is stable and appropriate to the child’s needs, the reviewer should assess whether the agency made concerted efforts to search for and assess relatives as placement resources, if appropriate. If all maternal and/or paternal relatives had already been appropriately considered and ruled out before the PUR, this item can be rated as not applicable. If the reviewer determines that, during the PUR, the agency did not consider relatives as placement resources in cases in which consideration was appropriate, this item would be rated no.

Rating Criterion:

- **Strength**, if during the period under review, the agency made concerted efforts to identify, locate, inform, and evaluate maternal and paternal relatives as potential placements for the child, with the result that maternal and paternal relatives were ruled out as, or were unwilling to be, placement resources.

- **Area Needing Improvement**, if during the period under review, the agency did not make concerted efforts to identify, locate, inform, and evaluate maternal and paternal relatives as potential placements for the child, with the result that maternal and paternal relatives were not ruled out as, or determined to be an unwilling placement resource.

- **Not Applicable**, if

  - the agency determined upon the child’s initial entry into care that his or her needs required a specialized placement (such as residential treatment services) and that they will continue to require such specialized treatment the entire time the child is in care and a relative placement would be inappropriate.

  - Situations such as abandonment in which the identity of the parents and relatives remains unknown despite documented concerted efforts to identify them.

  - The child entered out-of-home care prior to the period under review and all maternal and paternal relatives had already been appropriately considered and ruled out before the period under review.

  - The child is not in out-of-home care.

**Item 13**

**Relationship of Child in Care with Parents**

13.0 Were concerted efforts made to promote, support, and/or maintain positive relationships between the child in out-of-home care and his or her mother and father or other primary caregiver(s) from whom the child had been removed through activities other than just arranging for visitation? (CFSR Permanency Outcome 2, Item 11)

- **Strength**
- **Area Needing Improvement**
- **Not Applicable**

**Applicable Cases:** All out-of-home care cases are applicable for assessment of this item unless (1) parental rights for both parents were terminated before the period under review (2) the child was abandoned and neither parent could be located; (3) the whereabouts of both parents were not known during the entire period under review despite documented concerted agency efforts to locate both parents; (4) contact with both parents was considered to not be in the best interests of the child (for example, both parents are abusive and there is concern about managing contact with the child); or (5) the child was initially removed from a parent’s home but, during the entire period under review, both parents were deceased.

**Definitions:**

- “Mother” is defined as the female caretaker from whom the child was removed.
- “Father” is defined as the male caretaker from whom the child was removed.
- If the biological parents were not the caretakers that the child was removed from, they should not be considered in the assessment of this item.

**Core Concepts:** This item pertains to additional activities to help support, strengthen, or maintain the parent-child relationship. Examples of concerted efforts include:

- Encouraged the mother and father’s participation in school activities and case conferences, attendance at doctors’ appointments with the child, or engagement in the child’s after school or sports activities.
- Provided or arranged for transportation or provided funds for transportation so that the mother and father could attend the child’s special activities and doctors’ appointments.
- Provided opportunities for therapeutic situations to help the mother, father, and child strengthen their relationship.
- Encouraged the foster parents to provide mentoring or serve as role models to the mother and father to assist her in appropriate parenting.

**The Federal CFSR On-Site Review Instrument (Item 11) focuses on 2 questions.**

1. During the period under review, were concerted efforts made to promote, support, and otherwise maintain a positive and nurturing relationship between the child in out-of-home care and his or her mother?

2. During the period under review, were concerted efforts made to promote, support, and otherwise maintain a positive and nurturing relationship between the child in out-of-home care and his or her father?

**Instructions:** The reviewer must assess the efforts made by the agency to promote, support, and otherwise maintain a positive and nurturing relationship between the child in out-of-home care and his or her mother and father? Foster parents’ activities are considered for purposes of this Item. For example, if the foster parent provided transportation so that
the mother or father could attend the child’s school event or medical appointment that would be considered as contributing toward concerted efforts.

Do not answer this Item based on efforts (or lack of efforts) to ensure the frequency or quality of visitation between the mother or father and the child. That information is captured under another item.

**Rating Criterion:**

- Strength, if concerted efforts were made to promote, support, and/or maintain positive relationships between the child in out-of-home care and his or her mother and father or other primary caregiver(s) from whom the child had been removed through activities other than just arranging for visitation.

- Area Needing Improvement, if concerted efforts were not made to promote, support, and/or maintain positive relationships between the child in out-of-home care and his or her mother and father or other primary caregiver(s) from whom the child had been removed through activities other than just arranging for visitation.

- NA, if
  - the parental rights for both parents were terminated before the period under review;
  - the child was abandoned and neither parent could be located;
  - the whereabouts of both parents were not known during the entire period under review despite documented concerted agency efforts to locate both parents;
  - contact with both parents was considered to be not in the best interests of the child (for example, both parents are abusive and there is concern about managing contact with the child) and there is documentation advising why contact is not in the best interest of the child;
  - the child was initially removed from a parent’s home but, during the entire period under review, both parents were deceased; or
  - the child was not in out-of-home care.

**Item 14**

**Needs and Services of Child, Parents, and Foster Parents**

14.0 Were concerted efforts made to assess the needs of children, parents, and foster parents (both at the child’s entry into out-of-home care [if the child entered during the period under review] or on an ongoing basis) to identify the services necessary to achieve case goals and adequately address the issues relevant to the agency’s involvement with the family, and provided the appropriate services? (CFSR Well-being Outcome 1, Item 12)

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**Applicable Cases:** All cases are applicable for an assessment of this item.

**Definitions:**

- For in-home services cases, “parents” are defined as the children’s primary caregivers with whom the children live (for example, biological parents, relatives, guardians, adopted parents) or a noncustodial parent who is involved, or has indicated a desire to be involved, in the child’s life.

- For out-of-home care cases, “parents” include the child’s parents, or the child’s primary caregivers (if other than the biological parents) with whom the child will be reunified. “Parents” include adoptive parents if the adoption has been finalized.

- Foster parents are defined as related or non-related caregivers who have been given responsibility for care of the child by the agency while the child is under the care and placement responsibility and supervision of the agency. This includes pre-adoptive parents if the adoption has not been finalized.

**Instructions:** This item considers three areas with a focus on services:

1. The needs assessment and services to children
2. The needs assessment and services to parent
3. The needs assessment and services to foster parents

**The needs assessment and services to children:**

- If the case was opened during the period under review, focus on whether the agency conducted an initial comprehensive assessment as a basis for developing a case plan, and whether ongoing assessment was conducted as appropriate.

- If the case was opened before the period under review, focus on whether the agency conducted periodic comprehensive needs assessments (during critical junctures and as otherwise appropriate) during the period under review to update information relevant to ongoing case planning

- An assessment of needs may take different forms. For example, needs may be assessed through a formal evaluation conducted by another agency or by a contracted provider or through a more informal case planning process involving interviews and conversations with the child, family, and service providers. Answer the item based on a determination of whether the agency made concerted efforts to achieve an in-depth understanding of the needs of the child, regardless of whether the needs were assessed in a formal or informal manner. Consequently, the evaluation of the assessment should focus on its adequacy in accurately assessing the child’s needs in addition to whether one was conducted.

- Answer this item with regard to an assessment of needs other than those related to the child’s education, physical health, and mental/behavioral health (including substance abuse). The assessment of the child’s needs related to
these issues is addressed in later items. Needs that should be assessed in this item include those related to social/emotional development that are not connected to other physical health or mental health issues. These may include social competencies, attachment and caregiver relationships, social relationships and connections, social skills, self-esteem, life skills, and coping skills.

- Independent living services should be provided to all youth age 16 and older and to children of any age with a goal of “other planned permanent living arrangement” who are expected to eventually exit out-of-home care to independence. Consider whether concerted efforts were made to provide the child with services to adequately prepare the child for independent living when the child leaves out-of-home care, such as post-high school planning, life skills classes, employment training, financial planning skills training, and transitional services. In making this determination, consider the following:
  - Did the agency assess for independent living skills?
  - Is there an independent living plan in the file? (This is required for all youth age 16 and older.)

- Examples of services that are assessed under this item include child care services that are not required for the child’s safety (those services would be covered under item 1), mentoring programs that are not related to the child’s education, recreational services, teen parenting education, preparation for adoption and other permanency goals, services that address family relationships that are not mental health in nature (for example, services to assist children in reestablishing or maintaining family ties), and services to assist the child that are recommended by a therapist or other provider but are not mental health-related (such as enrollment in an activity to assist with social skills or to boost self-esteem).

The needs assessment and services to parent:

- For the mother and father, rate Not Applicable if (1) the mother’s or father’s parental rights were terminated before the period under review, (2) the mother’s or father’s whereabouts was not known during the entire period under review despite agency efforts to locate her, or (3) the mother or father was deceased during the entire period under review.

- Determine whether the agency has made concerted efforts to ensure that case planning is based on an in-depth understanding of the needs of the mother and father, regardless of whether the needs were assessed in a formal or informal manner. (Assessment of needs may take different forms. For example, needs may be assessed through a formal psychosocial evaluation conducted by another agency or by a contracted provider or through a more informal case planning process involving intensive interviews with the child, family, and service providers.)

- Assessment of mother’s and father’s needs refers to a determination of what the mother or father needs to provide appropriate care and supervision to ensure the safety and well-being of his/her children.

- Assessment of mother’s and father’s needs may include mental and physical health needs, as later items do not address these concerns for the parents.

- If the case was opened during the period under review, focus on whether the agency conducted an initial comprehensive assessment as a basis for developing a case plan, and whether ongoing assessment was conducted as appropriate.

- If the case was opened before the period under review, focus on whether the agency conducted periodic comprehensive needs assessments (as appropriate) during the period under review to update information relevant to ongoing case planning

The needs assessment and services to foster parent/pre-adoptive parent:

- During the period under review, did the agency adequately assess the needs of the foster or pre-adoptive parents on an ongoing basis (with respect to services they need to provide appropriate care and supervision to ensure the safety and well-being of the children in their care)?

- All foster parents who cared for the child during the period under review are included in this assessment.
• These items will not be considered for foster parents if the case is not an out-of-home care case or if, during the entire period under review, the child was in out-of-home care in a residential facility or similar placement, but does not have foster parents.

• Determine whether an assessment was conducted to identify what the foster parents needed to enhance their capacity to provide appropriate care and supervision to the children in their home, such as respite care, assistance with transportation, or counseling to address the child’s behavior problems.

• Determine whether assessment of foster parent needs is done on an ongoing basis. If there is no evidence in the case file that the agency assessed the needs of the foster parents at any time during the period under review, and the foster parents (if available for interview) indicate that they have not been assessed, the answer would be no.

The Federal CFSR On-Site Review Instrument (Item 12) focuses on eight questions.

1. During the period under review, did the agency conduct a formal or informal initial and/or ongoing comprehensive assessment that accurately assessed the child’s needs?

2. During the period under review, were appropriate services provided to meet the child’s identified needs?

3. During the period under review, did the agency conduct a formal or informal initial and/or ongoing comprehensive assessment that accurately assessed the mother’s needs?

4. During the period under review, did the agency conduct a formal or informal initial and/or ongoing comprehensive assessment that accurately assessed the father’s needs?

5. During the period under review, did the agency provide appropriate services to the mother to meet identified needs?

6. During the period under review, did the agency provide appropriate services to the father to address identified needs?

7. During the period under review, did the agency adequately assess the needs of the foster or pre-adoptive parents on an ongoing basis (with respect to services, they need to provide appropriate care and supervision to ensure the safety and well-being of the children in their care)?

8. During the period under review, were the foster or pre-adoptive parents provided with appropriate services to address identified needs that pertained to their capacity to provide appropriate care and supervision of the children in their care?

Rating Criterion:

☑ Strength, if concerted efforts were made to assess the needs of children, parents, foster parents, and pre-adoptive parents (both at the child’s entry into out-of-home care [if the child entered during the period under review] or on an ongoing basis) to identify the services necessary to achieve case goals and services where provided to address the issues relevant to the agency’s involvement with the family.

☐ Area Needing Improvement, if concerted efforts were not made to assess the needs of children, parents, and foster parents (both at the child’s entry into out-of-home care [if the child entered during the period under review] or on an ongoing basis) to identify the services necessary to achieve case goals and services where provided to address the issues relevant to the agency’s involvement with the family.

☐ There are no circumstances under which this item could be rated as not applicable.

Reference: Federal Child & Family Services Review, Well-being Outcome 1, Item 12, Needs and Services of Child, Parents, and Foster Pare
**Item 15**  
**Child and Family Involvement in Case Planning**

15.0 Were concerted efforts made to involve parents and children (if developmentally appropriate) in the case planning process on an ongoing basis? (CFSR Well-being Outcome 1, Item 13)

- **Strength**
- **Area Needing Improvement**
- **Not Applicable**

**Applicable Cases**: All out-of-home care cases are applicable for an assessment of this item:

**Definitions**:

- For out-of-home care cases, “parents” include the child’s parents or the child’s primary caregivers (if other than the biological parents) with whom the child will be reunified. “Parents” include adoptive parents if the adoption has been finalized.

- “Actively involved” means that the agency consulted with the child (as developmentally appropriate) regarding the child’s goals and services, explained the plan and terms used in the plan in language that the child can understand, and included the child in periodic case planning meetings, particularly if any changes are being considered in the plan.

**Core Concepts**: Involving families and children in the development of case plans and identifying service needs is critical to achieving permanency goals. The mother, father, and child, if developmentally and age appropriate, should participate in the case planning process.

**Instructions**: This standard looks at a different set of circumstances other than whether or not there is a current case plan. Although the case plan may not have been filed timely or may not be current, there is evidence the family was actively involved in the case planning process.

*The Federal CFSR On-Site Review Instrument (Item 13) focuses on two questions.*

1. During the period under review, did the agency make concerted efforts to actively involve the child in the case planning process? *This would not be applicable if the child is not old enough to participate in case planning or is incapacitated. Although the capacity to participate actively in case planning will need to be decided on a case-by-case basis, as a guideline, most children who are elementary school-aged or older may be expected to participate to some extent.*

2. During the period under review, did the agency make concerted efforts to actively involve the mother in the case planning process? *This would not be applicable if the mother’s or father’s involvement was determined to be contrary to the child’s safety or best interests (for example, the parents are considered abusive parents whose contacts with the child continue to pose unmanageable risks) or the child is in out-of-home care and the mother’s or father’s whereabouts were not known, and there is documentation in the case file regarding the agency’s concerted efforts to locate her or him; the mother or father was deceased during the entire period under review; the mother or father voluntarily terminated his or her parental rights (i.e., consented to adoption of the child) shortly after contact with the agency and/or did not seek to be involved in any way in the child’s life.*
Rating Criterion:

- Strength, if concerted efforts were made to involve parents and children (if developmentally appropriate) in the case planning process on an ongoing basis.

- Area Needing Improvement, Were concerted efforts were not made to involve parents and children (if developmentally appropriate) in the case planning process on an ongoing basis.

- NA, if:
  - The child is in out-of-home care and involves a child for whom participating in planning is not developmentally appropriate, and whose parents or relatives cannot be located despite documented concerted efforts on the part of the agency.
  
  - The child is in out-of-home care and involves a child for whom participation in planning is not developmentally appropriate, and whose parents were deceased during the entire period under review.
  
  - The child is in out-of-home care and involves a child for whom participation in planning is not developmentally appropriate, and whose parents voluntarily terminated their parental rights (i.e., consented to adoption of the child) shortly after contact with the agency and/or did not seek to be involved in any way in the child’s life.
  
  - The child is in out-of-home care and involves a child for whom participation in planning is not developmentally appropriate, and whose parents’ rights were terminated before the period under review.
  
  - The child is in out-of-home care and involves a child for whom participation in planning is not developmentally appropriate, and, during the entire period under review, it was documented in the case file that it was not in the child’s best interests to involve the parents and the child in case planning.

**Item 16**  
**Case Manager Visits with Child**

16.0 Is the frequency and quality of visits between case managers and the child(ren) in the case sufficient to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of the child and promote achievement of case goals? (CFSR Well-being Outcome 1, Item 14)

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**Applicable Cases:** All cases are applicable for an assessment of this item:

**Definitions:**

- A “visit” is defined as a face-to-face contact between the case manager and the child.

**Core Concepts:** Case manager visits are an integral part of assessing and ensuring the safety, permanency, and well-being of children. Visits provide an opportunity to meet with children to monitor children’s safety and well-being; assess the ongoing service needs of children; monitor progress toward established goals; evaluate the continued appropriateness of safety interventions; observe or parent and child interactions with siblings, caregivers, and other household members; and assess child functioning and child vulnerability. Qualitative visits and case manager contacts should be professional consultations which are:

1. Planned in advance of the visit, with issues noted for exploration and goals established for the time spent together.
2. Open enough to offer opportunities for meaningful discussions with children.
3. Individualized. For example, visits should include separate time for discussions with children. This provides the opportunity to privately share their experiences and concerns and to ensure that issues that might not be disclosed when other family/household members are present are identified and addressed.
4. Focused on the case plan and the completion of actions necessary to support children in achieving the goals established in their plans.
5. Exploratory in nature, examining changes in the child’s circumstances on an ongoing basis.
6. Supportive and skill-building, so children feel safe in dealing with challenges and change and have the tools to take advantage of new opportunities.
7. Well documented so that the agency can follow up on commitments and decisions made during the visit.

*The Federal CFSR On-Site Review Instrument (Item 14) focuses on two questions.*

1. During the period under review, what was the most typical pattern of visitation between the case and the child(ren) in the case?
2. During the period under review, was the quality of the visits between the case manager and the child(ren) sufficient to address issues pertaining to the safety, permanency, and well-being of the child and promote achievement of case goals (for example, did the visits between the case manager and the child(ren) focus on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and goal achievement)?

*Instructions:* This item is assessed based on the frequency of the visits (based on the needs of the child not the Florida DCF 30 day requirement) and the quality of the visits. The reviewer must consider the frequency necessary to ensure the child’s safety, permanency, and well-being and not on state policy requirements regarding caseworker contacts or visits with the child. For example, if state policy is that the caseworker should visit the child at least once a month, and the reviewer determines that given the circumstances of the case (for example, there are safety concerns), the caseworker should visit...
more frequently, then the answer should be an Area Needing Improvement. If the typical pattern of visits is less than once a month, the answer to question should be an Area Needing Improvement unless the reviewer determines that there is a substantial justification for a Strength answer. If the child is in a placement in another state, the reviewer should determine whether a caseworker from the jurisdiction in which the child is placed, or a caseworker from the jurisdiction from which the child was placed, visits with the child in the placement on a schedule that is consistent with the child’s needs and no less frequently than once per month, as required by federal law.

Face-to-face contacts shall occur more frequently than every thirty days when the child’s situation dictates more frequent contact, as determined in consultation with the case manager’s supervisor based on a review of the case and assessed safety and risk level or as determined by the court.

At least once every three months, the case management agency shall make an unannounced visit to the child’s place of residence. Contact requirements are required even if a child is placed in a Department of Juvenile Justice facility.

**Frequency of Visits:**

- The reviewer should determine the frequency necessary to ensure the child’s safety, permanency, and well-being and not on Florida DCF policy requirements regarding case manager contacts or visits with the child. For example, if state policy is that the case manager should visit the child at least once a month, and given the circumstances of the case (for example, there are safety concerns), the case manager should visit more frequently, then the answer should be an Area Needing Improvement.

- If the typical pattern of visits is less than once a month, the answer should be an Area Needing Improvement unless the reviewer determines that there is a substantial justification for a Strength answer. If the child is in a placement in another state, the reviewer should determine whether a case manager from the jurisdiction in which the child is placed, or a case manager from the jurisdiction from which the child was placed, visits with the child in the placement on a schedule that is consistent with the child’s needs and no less frequently than once per month, as required by federal law.

**Quality of Visits:**

- For quality, consider both the length of the visit (for example, was it of sufficient duration to address key issues with the child, or was it just a brief visit) and the location of the visit (for example, was it in a place conducive to conversation, such as a private home, or was it in a more formal or public environment, such as a restaurant or court house?).

- Consider whether the case manager saw the child alone or whether the parent or foster parent was usually present during the case manager’s visits with the child.

- Also consider the topics that were discussed during the visits, if that information is available in the case file or through interviews. For the answer to be a “strength”, there must be some evidence that the case manager and the child addressed issues pertaining to the child’s needs, services, and case goals during the visits.

- Consider the pattern of visits during the period under review and not over the life of the case.

- Focus on the visitation frequency of the agency caseworker (or other responsible party) responsible for the case and not on other service providers who may be visiting the children.

- Determine the most typical pattern of visiting during the period under review because the actual frequency may vary in specific time periods.

**Rating Criterion:**
Strength, if the frequency and quality of visits between case managers and the child(ren) sufficient to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of the child and promote achievement of case goals

Area Needing Improvement, if the frequency and quality of visits between case managers and the child(ren) were not sufficient to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of the child and promote achievement of case goals; if the child is older than an infant and the case manager did not see the child alone for at least part of the visits; there is no evidence that the case manager and the child addressed issues pertaining to the child’s needs, services, and case goals during the visits; the typical pattern is less than once a month or if the child was older than an infant, and the case manager did not see the child alone for at least part of each visit.

Reference: Florida Administrative Code 65C-30.007 (1) (a-b); (2) (a-d); (3) (a-b), 4 (a), (5) (a-b), & (7), Federal Child & Family Services Review, Well-Being Outcome 1, Item 14
**Item 17**

**Case Manager Visits with Parents**

17.0 Is the frequency and quality of visits between case managers and the mothers and fathers of the children sufficient to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of the children and promote achievement of case goals? (CFSR Well-being Outcome 1, Item 16)

- **Strength**
- **Area Needing Improvement**
- **Not Applicable**

*Applicable Cases:* This item is applicable for all out-of-home cases unless any of the following apply:

- Both parents are deceased (during the entire period under review) and the child is not in a permanent home.
- There is no court approved plan for further involvement between the parents and the agency or the parents and the child, and the child is not in a permanent home.
- The whereabouts of both parents are unknown (during the entire period under review) and there is documentation of the agency’s concerted efforts to locate them.
- During the period under review, neither parent indicated interest in being involved in the child’s life after contact or concerted efforts to contact were made by the agency, and/or contact between the agency and the parent would not be in the child’s best interests (for example, parental rights have been terminated with no plan for further parental involvement; the parents are considered abusive parents whose contacts with the child continue to pose unmanageable risks). Documentation for this also must be in the case file.

*Definitions:*

- For in-home services cases, “parents” are defined as the children’s primary caregivers with whom the children live (for example, biological parents, relatives, guardians, adopted parents) or a noncustodial parent who is involved, or has indicated a desire to be involved, in the child’s life.

- For out-of-home care cases, “parents” include the child’s parents, or the child’s primary caregivers (if other than the biological parents) with whom the child will be reunified. “Parents” include adoptive parents if the adoption has been finalized.

- A “visit” is defined as a face-to-face contact between the case manager and the parent.

*Core Concepts:* Case manager visits are an integral part of assessing and ensuring the safety, permanency, and well-being of children. Visits by the case manager with the parents must be purposeful and focused on the reasons for supervision and progress with tasks and services in the case plan or safety plan. Visits provide an opportunity to meet parents to monitor children’s safety and well-being; assess the ongoing service needs of children and their parents; monitor progress toward established goals; evaluate the continued appropriateness of safety interventions; observe or parent and child interactions; and assess parental protective capacities. Qualitative visits and case manager contacts should be professional consultations which are:

1. Planned in advance of the visit, with issues noted for exploration and goals established for the time spent together.
2. Open enough to offer opportunities for meaningful discussions with each parent.
3. Focused on the case plan and the completion of actions necessary to support children and families in achieving the goals established in their plans.
4. Exploratory in nature, examining changes in the child’s or family’s circumstances on an ongoing basis.
5. Supportive and skill-building, so children and families feel safe in dealing with challenges and change and have the tools to take advantage of new opportunities.
6. Well documented so that the agency can follow up on commitments and decisions made during the visit.
The Federal CFSR On-Site Review Instrument (Item 15) focuses on four questions.

1. During the period under review, what was the most typical pattern of visitation between the case manager and the mother of the child(ren) - was the frequency of the visits between the case manager and the mother sufficient to address issues pertaining to the safety, permanency, and well-being of the child and promote achievement of case goals?

2. During the period under review, what was the most typical pattern of visitation between the case manager and the father of the child(ren) - was the frequency of the visits between the case manager (or other responsible party) and the father sufficient to address issues pertaining to the safety, permanency, and well-being of the child and promote achievement of case goals?

3. During the period under review, was the quality of the visits between the case manager and the mother sufficient to address issues pertaining to the safety, permanency, and well-being of the child and promote achievement of case goals?

4. During the period under review, was the quality of the visits between the case manager and the father sufficient to address issues pertaining to the safety, permanency, and well-being of the child and promote achievement of case goals?

Instructions:

Frequency of Case Manager Visits

- Consider only the pattern of visits during the period under review and not over the life of the case.

- Determine the most typical pattern of visiting during the period under review because the actual frequency may vary in specific time periods.

- During the period under review, was the frequency of the visits between the case manager and the mother and father sufficient to address issues pertaining to the safety, permanency, and well-being of the child and promote achievement of case goals?

- Consider the frequency of visits that is necessary to effectively address: (1) the child’s safety, permanency, and well-being, and (2) achievement of case goals.

- Do not assess this item based on the case manager visit requirements that are established by Department policy. The reviewer should consider the needs of the mother, father, and family for the frequency required to be sufficient to meet those needs.

Quality of Case Manager Visits

- Consider both the length of the visit (for example, was it of sufficient duration to address key issues with the mother/father, or was it just a brief visit?). For out-of-home care, with a goal of reunification, the reviewer should consider the location of the visit (for example, was it in a place conducive to open and honest conversation, such as a private home, or was it in a formal or public environment that might be uncomfortable for the parent, such as a court house or restaurant?).

- Consider whether the visits between the case manager or other responsible party and the father/mother focused on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and goal achievement.
Rating Criterion:

- **Strength**, if the frequency and quality of visits between case managers and the mother and father were sufficient to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of the child and promote achievement of case goals.

- **Area Needing Improvement**, if the frequency and quality of visits between case managers and the mother and father were not sufficient to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of the child and promote achievement of case goals or if the typical pattern of contact is less than once a month, unless the reviewer has a substantial justification for answering either question as Strength.

- **NA**, if
  - agency contact with the mother or father was determined to be contrary to a child’s safety or best interests (and this is documented in the case file),
  - the location of the mother or father was unknown during the entire period under review, despite documented concerted agency efforts to locate her or him,
  - the mother’s or father’s parental rights were terminated before the period under review and she or he is not involved in the child’s life, or
  - during the entire period under review, the mother or father was not involved in the child’s life or in case planning in any way despite agency efforts to involve her or him.
  - Both parents are deceased (during the entire period under review).
  - The court has released the agency from involving the mother and father.

*Reference:* Florida Administrative Code 65C-30.007(2) (d); (5) (a), (9) (a-d) & Federal Child & Family Services Review, Well-Being Outcome 1, Item 15
Item 18
Educational Needs of the Child

18.0 Did the agency make concerted efforts to assess the educational needs of the child(ren) at the initial contact with the child(ren) (if the case was opened during the period under review) or on an ongoing basis (if the case was opened before the period under review), and were identified needs appropriately addressed in case planning and case management activities? (CFSR Well-being Outcome 2, Item 16)

Strength Area Needing Improvement Not Applicable

Applicable Cases:

- All out-of-home care cases involving a school-aged child, including those in pre-school, are applicable for an assessment of this item. If a child is 2 years old or younger and has been identified as having developmental delays, the case may be applicable if the developmental delays need to be addressed through an educational approach rather than through physical therapy or some form of physical health approach. In these latter cases, the issue of developmental delays would be addressed under item 19.

- Out-of-home care cases are Not Applicable if the child is age 2 or younger and there are no apparent developmental delays.

- In-home services cases are applicable for an assessment of this item if (1) educational issues are relevant to the reason for the agency’s involvement with the family, and/or (2) it is reasonable to expect that the agency would address educational issues given the circumstances of the case. For example, it is reasonable to expect that the agency would address educational issues in a case in which the child is the subject of a substantiated maltreatment report and, during the period under review, the maltreatment appeared to be affecting the child’s school performance.

- In-home services cases are Not Applicable for an assessment of this item if the reviewer determines that, during the period under review, there is no reason to expect that the agency would address educational issues for any children in the family, given the reason for agency involvement or the circumstances of the case. Such a case would be Not Applicable, even if there is information in the case file stating that the mother or other caregiver has obtained educational services for the child.

Core Concepts: Children in out-of-home care face a number of challenges that impact their ability to be successful in the school environment. Children in out-of-home care move from home to home and school to school more frequently than other children for a number of reasons; usually those reasons involve the need to ensure the child resides in the safest and most appropriate home environment that meets the child’s needs. Some children and youth may reside in multiple placements and may ultimately attend many different schools over the course of their time in out-of-home care. Consequently, children in out-of-home care frequently lose course credit, repeat courses they have already taken, are placed in inappropriate classes or grade levels, and cannot participate in extracurricular activities. Delays in transferring school records result in serious disruptions in learning and special education services.

local education agencies and child welfare agencies to coordinate to ensure that children in out-of-home care maintain "education stability."

As outlined in the letter, the law specifically requires that at the time of a child's initial placement in out-of-home care, the child welfare agency (DFPS) must coordinate with local education agencies to ensure that children remain in their current school (unless doing so poses a safety risk for the child or is otherwise not in the child's best interests), thereby keeping them connected with teachers, other family members including siblings, and friends, and helping them continue to progress in their school work.

*The Federal CFSR On-Site Review Instrument (Item 16) focuses on two questions.*

1. During the period under review, did the agency make concerted efforts to accurately assess the child(ren)’s educational needs?

2. During the period under review, did the agency engage in concerted efforts to address the child(ren)’s educational needs through appropriate services?

**Instructions:** The reviewer must determine if the child had identified educational needs and determine if services were provided to address those needs. Education needs may include academics such as grade level, grades, and special education services including appointment of surrogate parent or training of parent or foster parent in educational advocacy as well as truancy, suspension or expulsion. For example, did the child need special education services, appointment of a surrogate parent, extra help or tutoring with school work, advocacy with the school system, early intervention through a preschool program, etc.? Were appropriate services provided to address the identified needs? Evidence of the outcome of service provision may be found in report cards and other school documents located in the file or in case note documentation.

- If the case is an out-of-home care case, the assessment applies only for the child in out-of-home care, even if the child was reunified during the period under review and there are other children in the home.

- If the case is an in-home services case, the question should be answered for all children in the home who meet the case applicability requirements.

- The answer should be yes if there was evidence of an educational assessment in the case file, such as:
  - An educational assessment included in the comprehensive needs assessment.
  - A separate educational assessment conducted by the school (and made available to the agency) or by the agency.
  - An informal (and documented) educational assessment conducted by the agency.

- Review any "services needed but not provided" and focus on agency efforts, even if these efforts were not fully successful due to factors beyond the agency’s control. For example, if the agency made concerted efforts to advocate for special education classes, but the local school continued to resist, the reviewer may answer Strength although the child did not receive the needed services.

**Rating Criterion:**

- **Strength,** if the agency made concerted efforts to assess children’s educational needs at the initial contact with the child or on an ongoing basis, and identified needs were appropriately addressed in case planning and case management.

- **Area Needing Improvement,** if the agency did not make concerted efforts to assess children’s educational needs at the initial contact with the child or on an ongoing basis, and identified needs were not appropriately addressed in case planning and case management.
NA, if

- The child is in out-of-home care, age 2 or younger and there are no apparent developmental delays.

- The case is an in-home case and the reviewer determines that, during the period under review, there is no reason to expect that the agency would address educational issues for any children in the family, given the reason for agency involvement or the circumstances of the case. Such a case would be Not Applicable, even if there is information in the case file stating that the mother or other caregiver has obtained educational services for the child.

**Item 19**

**Physical Health of the Child**

19.0 Has the agency addressed the physical health needs of the child, including dental health needs? (CFSR Well-being Outcome 3, Item 17)

- **Strength**
- **Area Needing Improvement**
- **Not Applicable**

**Applicable Cases:**

- All out-of-home care cases are applicable for an assessment of this item.

- In-home services cases are applicable for an assessment of this item if physical health issues were relevant to the reason for the agency’s involvement with the family, and/or it is reasonable to expect that the agency would address physical health issues given the circumstances of the case. For example, it is reasonable to expect that the agency would address physical health issues in a case in which the child is the subject of a substantiated maltreatment report and there is reason to suspect that, during the period under review, the maltreatment may have affected the child’s physical health.

- In-home services cases are Not Applicable for an assessment of this item if the reviewer determines that there is no reason to expect that the agency would address physical health issues for any children in the family, given the reason for agency involvement or the circumstances of the case. This “non-applicability” applies even if there is evidence in the case file that the agency has learned that the parent is effective in taking care of the child’s physical health.

**Core Concepts:** Children should achieve and maintain their best attainable health status, including dental, audio and visual care consistent with their general physical condition when taking medical diagnoses, prognoses, and history into account. Proper medical care (preventive, acute, and chronic) is necessary for maintaining good health.

Preventive health care should follow Child Health Check-Up Periodicity Schedule. This extends to reproductive health care education and services for older children to prepare and protect them from exposure to sexually transmitted diseases, and teen pregnancy, as appropriate.

Children prescribed medications on a continuous basis should be carefully monitored by a responsible adult. If the child requires any type of adaptive equipment or other special procedures, persons working with the child are provided instruction in the use of the equipment and special procedures. Should a child have a serious condition, possibly degenerative, the services and supports have been provided to allow the child to remain in the best attainable physical status given his/her diagnoses and prognoses.

A child’s physical health needs must be assessed within 72 hours if he/she is removed from the home, or if health issues are the reason why the dependency system has intervened. Health assessments are important at the time of the initial contact and on an ongoing basis. This applies to all out-of-home cases and for children in in-home cases when the physical health issue is relevant to the reason for the agency’s involvement. Reviewers should determine if there is evidence that, during the period under review, the agency arranged for assessment of the child(ren)’s health care needs both initially (if the child entered out-of-home care during the period under review), or on an ongoing basis through periodic health and dental screening services conducted during the period under review. For out-of-home cases only, the reviewer should determine if there is evidence that the Child Health Check-Up schedule was followed:

- Birth or neonatal examination
- 2-4 days for newborns discharged in less than 48 hours after delivery
- By 1 month
The child may enter the periodicity schedule at any time. For example, if a child has an initial screening at age 4, then the next periodic screening is performed at age 5. Florida Medicaid recommends check-ups at 7 and 9 years of age for children at risk. To receive Medicaid reimbursement for Child Health Check-Ups, providers must follow the Child Health Check-Up periodicity schedule. The schedule is based on the American Academy of Pediatrics, “Recommendations for Preventive Pediatric Health Care” and Florida Medicaid’s recommendation to include the 7 and 9 year old recipients.

To be reimbursed by Medicaid, the provider must assess and document in the child’s medical record all the required components of a Child Health Check-Up. The required components are as follows:

- Comprehensive Health and Developmental History including assessment of past medical history, developmental history and behavioral health status;
- Nutritional assessment;
- Developmental assessment;
- Comprehensive unclothed physical examination;
- Dental screening including dental referral, when required;
- Vision screening including objective testing, when required;
- Hearing screening including objective testing, when required;
- Laboratory tests including blood lead testing, when required;
- Appropriate immunizations;
- Health education, anticipatory guidance;
- Diagnosis and treatment; and
- Referral and follow-up, as appropriate

The Federal CFSR On-Site Review Instrument (Item 17) focuses on five questions.

1. During the period under review, did the agency accurately assess the child’s physical health care needs?
2. During the period under review, did the agency accurately assess the child’s dental health care needs?
3. During the period under review, did the agency provide appropriate oversight of prescription medicines for physical health issues, including following state protocols for the appropriate use and monitoring of psychotropic medications?
4. During the period under review, did the agency ensure that appropriate services were provided to the child(ren) to address all identified physical health needs?
5. During the period under review, did the agency ensure that appropriate services were provided to the child(ren) to address all identified dental health needs?

Instructions: Determine whether there is evidence that, during the period under review, the agency arranged for assessment of the child(ren)’s health care needs, including dental care needs, both initially (if the child entered out-of-home care during the period under review), or on an ongoing basis through periodic health and dental screening services conducted during the period under review.
The evidence to consider would include, but is not limited to:

- Conducting an initial health care screening, such as EPSDT (Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment) or other comprehensive medical examination upon entry into out-of-home care (if the child entered out-of-home care during the period under review).
- Ensuring that, during the period under review, the child received ongoing periodic preventive physical and dental health screenings to identify and avoid potential problems. (Preventive health care refers to initial and periodic age-appropriate dental or physical health examinations.)
- Including an assessment of physical and dental health needs in the initial comprehensive needs assessment (if the child entered out-of-home care during the period under review), or in ongoing needs assessments conducted to guide case planning.

To the extent available and accessible, the child’s health records are up to date and included in the case file [Social Security Act § 475(1)(C)].

- The case plan addresses the issue of health and dental care needs [Social Security Act § 475(1)(C)].
- To the extent available and accessible, foster parents or out-of-home care providers are provided with the child’s health records [Social Security Act § 475(5)(D)].
- Health records include the names and addresses of the child’s health care providers, a record of the child’s immunizations, the child’s known medical problems, the child’s medications, and any other relevant health information.

**Rating Criterion:**

- **Strength**, if the agency is addressing the physical health needs of the child, including dental health needs.

- **Area Needing Improvement**, if the agency is not addressing the physical health needs of the child, including dental health needs. This item is answered Area Needing Improvement if any of the five items required by the CFSR Assessment tool are answered Area Needing Improvement.

- **NA**, for In-home services cases only if, the reviewer determines that there is no reason to expect that the agency would address physical health issues for any children in the family, given the reason for agency involvement or the circumstances of the case. This “non-applicability” applies even if there is evidence in the case file that the agency has learned that the parent is effective in taking care of the child’s physical health needs.

Item 20
Mental/Behavioral Health of the Child

20.0 Has the agency addressed the mental/behavioral health needs of the child? (CFSR Well-being Outcome 3, Item 18)

☐ Strength ☐ Area Needing Improvement ☐ Not Applicable

Applicable Cases:

- Out-of-home care cases are applicable for an assessment of this item if the reviewer determines that, during the period under review, the child had existing mental/behavioral health needs, including substance abuse issues. If the child had mental/behavioral health issues before the period under review that were adequately addressed and there are no remaining needs during the period under review, the case should be rated as Not Applicable.

- In-home services cases are applicable for an assessment of this item if (1) mental/behavioral health issues were relevant to the reason for the agency’s involvement with the family, and/or (2) it is reasonable to expect that the agency would address mental/behavioral health issues given the circumstances of the case. For example, it is reasonable to expect that the agency would address mental health issues in a case in which the child is the subject of a substantiated maltreatment report and there is reason to suspect that, during the period under review, the maltreatment may have affected the child’s mental health.

- In-home services cases are Not Applicable for an assessment of this item if the reviewer determines that there is no reason to expect that, during the period under review, the agency would address mental/behavioral health issues for any children in the family, given the reason for agency involvement or the circumstances of the case.

Core Concepts: A Comprehensive Behavioral Health Assessment (CBHA) of the child’s mental/behavioral health needs is required initially for all children in out-of-home care regardless if behavioral problems are identified including substance abuse. Assessments must also be done on an ongoing basis to inform case planning decisions. Out-of-home cases are also applicable when a substance abuse treatment need is identified. For in-home cases, this requirement is applicable if mental/behavioral health issues are relevant to the reason for the agency’s involvement.

For example a mental/behavioral health assessment may be required for an in-home child who is the subject of a verified maltreatment report and there is reason to suspect the maltreat affected the child’s mental health; a service case is activated due to inappropriate parenting of a mentally ill child and treatment would be relevant to reduce the risk to the child, etc.

The Federal CFSR On-Site Review Instrument (Item 17) focuses on five questions.

1. During the period under review, did the agency conduct an accurate assessment of the child(ren)’s mental/behavioral health needs either initially (if the child entered out-of-home care during the period under review) or on an ongoing basis to inform case planning decisions?

2. During the period under review did the agency provide appropriate oversight of prescription medicines for mental health issues, including following state protocols for the appropriate use and monitoring of psychotropic medications?
Instructions: Determine whether, during the period under review, the agency conducted a formal or informal mental/behavioral health assessment on the child either at entry into out-of-home care or on an ongoing basis to provide updated information for case planning decisions with regard to mental/behavioral health issues.

If the case is an in-home services case, the question should be answered for all children in the home who meet the case applicability requirements.

Rating Criterion:

1. Strength, if the agency is addressing the mental/behavioral health needs of the child, including conducting an assessment of the child(ren)’s mental/behavioral health needs either initially or on an ongoing basis to inform case planning decisions and if the agency is providing appropriate oversight of prescription medicines for mental health issues, including following state protocols for the appropriate use and monitoring of psychotropic medications.

2. Area Needing Improvement, if the agency is not addressing the mental/behavioral health needs of the child, including conducting an assessment of the child(ren)’s mental/behavioral health needs either initially or on an ongoing basis to inform case planning decisions and if the agency is not providing appropriate oversight of prescription medicines for mental health issues, including following state protocols for the appropriate use and monitoring of psychotropic medications.

☐ NA, if for in-home services case the reviewer determines that there is no reason to expect that, during the period under review, the agency would address mental/behavioral health issues for any children in the family, given the reason for agency involvement or the circumstances of the case.

Reference: s. 39.407(1); & 39.6012(2)(a), F.S.; Florida Administrative Code 65C-28.014; Florida Administrative Code 65C29.008; Florida Administrative Code 65C-30.002(1); Florida Administrative Code 65C-30.006(1)(a), (2), (3)(b), & (5)(g)1, Children & Families Operating Procedure 155-10; & Federal Child & Family Services Review, Well-Being Outcome 3, Item 18
**Item 21**

**Planning for Safe Closure**

21.0 Does the case plan for safe case closure provide a sequence of strategies, interventions, and supports that are organized into a coherent service process providing a mix of services that fits the child and family’s evolving situation?

☑ Strength ☐ Area Needing Improvement

**Applicable Cases:** All cases are applicable for assessment of this item.

**Instructions and Considerations:** To be effective, the case plan process should be:
- Based on a “big picture” understanding of accurate and recent assessments that explain near-term needs and underlying issues that must be addressed in order to bring about essential family changes;
- Reflective of the views and preferences of the child and family;
- Directed toward the achievement of conditions necessary for family independence and sustainable safe case closure in the long-term;
- Coherent in design and practical in the use of formal and informal resources;
- Culturally appropriate; and
- Modified frequently based on changing circumstances, experience gained, and progress made toward meeting necessary conditions for safe case closure.

Processes and practices to ensure that information sharing and responsibility for the family are in place in the following circumstances:
- Transfer of case management responsibility from CPI to CBC;
- New abuse report in an open services case;
- Change in case manager;
- Multiple case management responsibility--Out of Town Inquiry/Out of County Services/ICPC;
- Adoptions as Secondary/Transfer to Adoptions;
- Independent living.

Documentation clearly reflects on-going discussion and completion of activities and regular communication between entities responsible for the child’s safety, i.e. the loop is closed. The reviewer must assess whether the case plan specifically addressed the actions necessary to resolve the issues that led to the family’s involvement with the agency.

**Rating Criterion:**

☑ Strength, if the case plan is individualized and matched to the child and family’s present situation, and preferences, and includes a realistic, long-term goal toward safe case closure.

☐ Area Needing Improvement, if the case plan is not individualized or matched to the child and family’s present situation, and preferences, and/or does not include a realistic long term goal toward safe case closure.

☐ NA, if there is no current case plan.

**Reference:** s. 39.6012 (1) (a) & (b) 1-7, F.S.
**Item 22**

**Supervisory Case Consultation and Guidance**

22.0 Is there evidence the case management supervisor is regularly consulting with the case manager, recommending actions when concerns are identified, and ensuring recommended actions followed up on urgently?

- Strength
- Area Needing Improvement

**Applicable Cases:** All cases are applicable for assessment of this item.

**Core Concepts:** Supervisors must be involved in any casework decision that affects child safety and permanence. The supervisor and case manager should collaborate to reach consensus on decisions regarding safety for the child. Since the case manager is the primary holder of the information, the supervisor should review his or her documentation and meet with the case manager to analyze the information.

The supervisor and case manager must both be aware of the information needed and why. The case manager must consult with the supervisor to review the observed family condition and discuss what was observed and why the child was assessed to be safe, or if there is evidence of Impending Danger, is evidence to support Present Danger. The supervisory consultation should focus on whether the case manager’s information and observations are sufficient to support the case manager’s conclusion. When the case manager determines there is present or impending danger, the supervisor must explore all aspects of the family condition and ensure the information obtained is reconciled with the core concepts of each.

The reviewer should look for evidence the case manager was encouraged to critically analyze the information obtained, observations made, and what is known and unknown about the family.

**Rating Criterion:**

- Strength, if supervision identifies concerns in service provision related to all of the above and recommended actions are followed up on urgently.

- Area Needing Improvement, if supervision does not identify noted concerns in service provision related to all of the above and/or if recommended actions are not followed up on urgently.

**References:** This item is tied to CFSR Safety Outcome 1, Item 3: Services to the family to maintain in the home and Safety Outcome 1, Item 4: Risk and safety management.
Data Collection Items

Item 23: Was a case consultation completed?  ○ Yes ○ No

Item 24: Was a Request for Action completed in FSFN for an immediate safety concern?  ○ Yes ○ No

Item 25: Was this case a safety methodology case?  ○ Yes ○ No