



State of Florida  
Department of Children and Families

Rick Scott  
Governor

Mike Carroll  
Interim Secretary

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**DATE:** December 23, 2014

**TO:** Regional Managing Directors  
Regional Family and Community Services Directors

**FROM:** Traci Leavine, Director of Child Welfare Practice

**SUBJECT:** Use of Assessments by Child Protective Investigators

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**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this memorandum is to reinforce the use of professional assessments by child protective investigators during the course of an investigation **prior to the completion of the family functioning assessment (FFA).**

Professional assessments are purpose-specific, stand-alone assessments intended to provide clinical expertise to help determine the need for immediate safety interventions or to adequately inform the investigative family functioning assessment. Professional assessments in this context are different from the more generalized intake assessment that is part of a referral for service process, to a provider.

**BACKGROUND:** Both Florida Statute 39.301(9)(a)1., and the Safety Methodology Investigation Practice Guidelines (ref: *Inter-Agency Consultation and Teamwork*) clearly outline that consultations with subject matter experts in various professional disciplines are critical to the investigative assessment process.

Examples of appropriate referrals to a professional discipline for an assessment or service would include, but not be limited to:

- Substance abuse assessments to determine if drug or alcohol use is out of control to the point of having a direct and imminent effect on child safety
- Lethality assessments by Domestic Violence professionals to help determine the severity of the pattern of coercive control
- Mental Health evaluations for assessment of the severity of the condition as well as for medication management or the need for changes in dosage or drug prescribed
- Referrals to Healthy Families or other community services
- Any referral assistance requested by the parent for voluntary services at the conclusion of a shelter hearing

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**ACTION REQUESTED:** Please remind investigative staff of the importance of obtaining professional assessments and evaluations to significantly improve information collection for the purpose of enhancing safety decision-making.

**CONTACT INFORMATION:** For additional information, please contact Ginger Griffeth at 850-717-4654 or email at [Ginger.Griffeth@myflfamilies.com](mailto:Ginger.Griffeth@myflfamilies.com).

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