

SUITABILITY FOR RESIDENTIAL PLACEMENT GUIDELINES

Section 39.407, F.S., provides criteria for the placement of children in department's custody, outlines steps to achieve placement in a residential treatment center, and provides for regularly scheduled reviews by treatment center, a community based care organization (CBC), and the courts. The section is to prevent children in the dependency system from being placed or maintained in residential treatment when treatment for mental health conditions did not require it. This document is to provide a guideline for the suitability assessment and placement in residential care.

Suitability Assessments

The purpose of the independent evaluation is to determine the suitability for residential treatment and appropriateness of treatment. In order for a child/adolescent to be admitted, a Qualified Evaluator must conduct an examination and assessment of the child/adolescent and make written findings on the following:

- Whether the child/adolescent appears to have an emotional disturbance serious enough to require residential treatment and is reasonably likely to benefit from the treatment;
- Whether the child/adolescent has been provided with a clinically appropriate explanation of the nature and purpose of the treatment; and
- That all available treatment options less restrictive than residential treatment have been considered and a less restrictive alternative that would offer comparable benefits to the child/adolescent is unavailable.

A copy of the written findings of the evaluation and suitability assessment must be provided to Magellan Medicaid Administration within five (5) working days of the date the child was seen. They will then forward the assessment to the local Single Point of Access (SPOA) within three (3) working days of receipt. Prior to sending the completed report to the SPOA, Magellan staff must review for corrections, additions and compliance with statutory and Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) standards. The SPOA is then responsible for disseminating, as required.

Before a child can be referred for a suitability assessment, CBC Lead Agency Service Worker will review the child's current condition with the child's mental health case manager in relation to specific threshold criteria. This internal review is to confirm the determination of the child's emotional disturbance, and the severity, to require the intensity and restrictiveness of treatment in a residential treatment center.

Suitability Assessment Referral Process

The Dependency Case Manager and/or Supervisor will contact the Utilization Management (UM) Program Manager if it is determined that the child may be in need of a Therapeutic Group Care (TGC) or Statewide Inpatient Psychiatric Program (SIPP) Residential Treatment placement or if a referral for Suitability Assessment has been ordered by the court. The SPOA will schedule a multidisciplinary treatment team (MDT) staffing prior to a suitability request being submitted, and all MDT members will be in agreement with the child needing a suitability assessment.

The Dependency case manager or designee is responsible for completion of the Initial Referral for Assessment of Suitability of a Child for Residential Treatment referral form along with the supporting packet of clinical documentation. Once complete, it is submitted to the UM Program Manager (Single Point of Access) for review. The SPOA then forwards the referral to Magellan Medicaid Administration Department.

The assessment must be conducted by a qualified evaluator who is appointed by Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA). A qualified evaluator must:

- Be a psychiatrist or a psychologist licensed in Florida;
- Have at least 3 years experience in the diagnosis and treatment of serious emotional disturbances in children and adolescents; and
- Have no actual or perceived conflict of interest with an inpatient facility or residential treatment center or program.

Initial Suitability Assessments are submitted to Magellan by the SPOA. These evaluations are to be conducted in the Qualified Evaluator's office prior to admission to Residential Psychiatric Treatment. The CBC case manager assigned to the child/adolescent is responsible for transporting the individual, and providing past treatment records for the Evaluator to review. Supporting documentation (if applicable) includes:

- Comprehensive Behavioral Health Assessment (CBHA),
- Mental health treatment history,
- Shelter petition,
- Shelter order,
- Foster care order,
- Pre-disposition report,
- Foster care case plan,
- Individual education plan (IEP), and
- MDT staffing notes.

These reviews must include:

- A review of treatment records from previous mental health services;
- Face-to-Face evaluation of the child/adolescent;
- An appropriate explanation of the nature and purpose of the treatment to the child; and
- A written report of the Qualified Evaluator's findings submitted to the Agency and the Single Point of Access designated by DCF.

A Notice of Suitability Assessment for Residential Treatment with the date, location of the assessment, name of the Qualified Evaluator, and contact information for the Qualified Evaluator will be sent to the SPOA, who will then forward the information to the assigned Dependency Case Manager, Dependency Case Manager Supervisor, Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) office, Intake Specialists and treatment provider if applicable. The GAL and Attorney Ad Litem must contact the Qualified Evaluator to provide input into the assessment process.

The Qualified Evaluator will review all supporting documentation and conduct a face to face interview with the client. The Qualified Evaluator will complete a written Suitability Assessment report. Once the report is received, the SPOA will submit it electronically to all related parties of the case (i.e., Dependency Care Manager, Dependency Care Manager Supervisor, GAL (if assigned), Intake Specialist, and any other parties involved in the case).

Process For Placement of Child Based On Suitability Assessment Results

If the recommendation is for Therapeutic Group Care (TGC) or SIPP placement, the UM Program Manager will schedule the child for the next Clinical Review/MDT staffing. The Clinical Review/MDT Team approves all placements into Specialized Therapeutic Foster Care (Level I & II), TGC and Residential Treatment Center (RTC).

The core members of the MDT staffing may include, but is not limited to:

- Dependency Case Manager (DCM),
- Dependency Case Management Supervisor (DCMS),
- Dependency Case Management Program Director, Intake and Placement Supervisor or staff,
- Targeted Case Manager (TCM),
- Adoptions Staff, Therapist(s),
- Foster Parent(s) or Group Home Staff,
- Biological Parents, if appropriate,
- Child Placing Agency staff,
- Agency for Persons with Disabilities,
- GAL,
- Attorney Ad Litem,
- DCF Substance Abuse Mental Health (SAMH) staff, and
- Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) and AHCA representatives.

If the recommended level of care is TGC, Intake & Placement will locate an available TGC bed and the SPOA will contact the Magellan Care Manager to obtain authorization. If the child is not enrolled in the Prepaid Mental Health plan due to recent SIPP discharge, the SPOA, AHCA and DCF SAMH will complete the Medicaid Appendix L and forward with the Suitability Assessment referral.

The assigned Dependency Case Manager will be responsible for notifying Children's Legal Services (CLS) at the department, and for requesting a Residential Treatment Hearing. If the recommended level of care is residential treatment, the Dependency Case Manager will notify CLS to request a Residential Treatment Hearing. The Targeted Case Manager, if assigned or the Dependency Case Manager will submit an application with the SAMH office to secure admission. Children with Medicaid eligibility may be authorized for Statewide Inpatient Psychiatric Program (SIPP) funding, which is obtained through a prior authorization request submitted by the SIPP provider to AHCA's contracted utilization management vendor. Medicaid funding is authorized based on medical necessity criteria.

Any child placed in an inpatient residential or TGC level of care will have a Suitability Assessment completed every 90 days while in placement. The UM Program Manager (SPOA) will notify the Dependency Care Manager 30 days prior to expiration to request the completion of the referral. Referrals for 90-Day Reviews will be submitted to Magellan Medicaid Administration by the SPOA. These evaluations will be conducted at the treating Residential Treatment Facility on an appointment basis. If the child is not placed in a Residential Treatment Facility the evaluations will be conducted at the Qualified Evaluator's office and the SPOA is responsible for providing copies all supporting documentation to the Qualified Evaluator prior to the appointment date/time. The Qualified Evaluator Network Coordinator and Associates will schedule appointments for the 90-Day Reviews. The facility is responsible for providing the treatment records and appropriate area for the face-to-face interview and treatment records review. These 90-Day Reviews will be incorporated into a revolving process of updating the documented treatment progress. These reviews must include:

- A record review of the treatment plan;
- A review of the treatment record and progress notes to determine the child's/adolescent's progress toward achieving the goals and objectives of the treatment plan;
- A face-to-face evaluation of the child/adolescent;
- Whether the child/adolescent has been provided with a clinically appropriate explanation of the nature and purpose of the treatment; and
- A written report of the Qualified Evaluator's findings submitted to the Agency and the Single Point of Access designated by DCF.

Initial and 90-Day Suitability Assessment results will be discussed at the child's Clinical Review staffing as part of the child's current treatment documentation.