

Chapter 12

IMPLEMENT REUNIFICATION AND POST-PLACEMENT SUPERVISION

12-1. Purpose. Per s. [39.521\(e\)\(9\)](#), F.S., the reunification decision evaluates the extent to which the circumstances and behavior identified in the Conditions for Return can now be met and if safety of the child(ren) can currently be managed using an in-home Safety Plan. The court may reunite a child with either parent, regardless of the custody arrangement at the time of the child's placement. Reasonable efforts require that any child with an out-of-home Safety Plan should be reunified as promptly as is safe and appropriate. Reunification is active as of the date the child returns to the home with an in-home Safety Plan.

12-2. Due Diligence to Achieve Reunification.

a. The case manager will clearly communicate and discuss the Conditions for Return to everyone involved in the case including the parent(s)/legal guardian(s), the court, attorneys, guardian ad litem, child (if appropriate), Tribe(s), etc., through regular court reports, case plan reviews, discussions, and other forms of communication.

b. The case manager is responsible for a constant and intense level of effort to achieve reunification through the following activities:

(1) Assist the family with meeting the Conditions for Return.

(2) Support the frequency and quality of family time that provides the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) with opportunities to demonstrate progress toward enhancing protective capacities.

(3) Know when the Conditions for Return have been met.

(4) Take actions to achieve reunification with development of an appropriate in-home Safety Plan.

c. The case manager should proceed with reunification planning when the following criteria for an in-home Safety Plan have been met:

(1) The parent(s)/legal guardian(s) are willing for an in-home Safety Plan to be developed and implemented and have demonstrated that they will cooperate with all identified safety service providers.

(2) The home environment is calm and consistent enough for an in-home Safety Plan to be implemented and for safety service providers to be in the home safely.

(3) Safety services are available at a sufficient level and to the degree necessary in order to manage the way in which impending danger is manifested in the home.

(4) An in-home Safety Plan and the use of in-home safety services can sufficiently manage impending danger without the results of scheduled professional evaluations.

(5) The parent(s)/legal guardian(s) have a physical location in which to implement an in-home Safety Plan and an assessment of the location and household members has been completed by the investigator, or the case manager has confirmed that the location provides a safe and reasonable setting. The location may include any of the following examples:

(a) A location that the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) own or are renting.

(b) The home of a family member or friend.

(c) A certified domestic violence center or treatment center that will allow the child(ren) to be reunified and will support an in-home Safety Plan.

d. Updated local criminal history checks have been completed on the parent(s)/legal guardian(s), and Florida and local criminal history checks, including required fingerprint submission for any household members 18 years of age or older. The analysis of these results must be captured in the Progress Update.

e. A Progress Update has been completed and contains documentation of criteria in paragraphs 12-2c(1)-(5) and 12-2d of this operating procedure.

f. A Supervisor Consultation has occurred.

12-3. Planning Conference Associated with Reunification.

a. Planning will occur at a safety planning conference with the parent(s)/legal guardian(s), treatment providers, foster parents and any safety plan providers. If a treatment provider is unable to attend in person or by other means, their input will be gathered prior to the conference. A family team meeting may be used for the purposes of planning reunification.

b. The following issues will be addressed:

(1) Review of the Progress Update to discuss the updated protective capacity assessment and safety analysis.

(2) Development of the in-home Safety Plan.

(3) Determination as to whether the child in care has any behaviors that pose a threat to self or others that need to be addressed.

(4) Determination as to what other actions and supports are necessary to transition the child to his/her parent(s)/legal guardian(s) care.

(5) Identification of supports and/or services necessary to assure a timely, smooth, and successful adjustment for the child and family after the transition occurs.

12-4. Implementation of Reunification.

a. The case manager will determine that based on the in-home Safety Plan developed at the reunification planning conference:

(1) Safety services are available and accessible at the level of effort required to assure safety in the home.

(2) Safety service providers are committed to participating in the in-home Safety Plan.

(3) The in-home Safety Plan will provide the proper level of intrusiveness and level of effort to manage safety threats.

(4) The child, the caregivers, other family members and any treatment providers are prepared for reunification.

(a) For the child, this includes agreement that the child's well-being, physical, mental and emotional health will not be endangered.

(b) For the parent, this includes agreement as to how the parent(s) will address the child's well-being, physical, mental and emotional needs.

b. If a case is court supervised, the case manager will conduct a staffing with CLS to prepare an appropriate pleading to the court for reunification. The court is required to review the conditions for return and determine whether the circumstances that caused the out-of-home placement and issues subsequently identified have been remedied to the extent that the return of the child to the home with an in-home Safety Plan prepared or approved by the Department or Community-Based Care Lead Agency (Lead Agency) will not be detrimental to the child's safety, well-being, and physical, mental, and emotional health.

c. The case manager must implement the child's transition and reunification as ordered by the court. Action should begin to transition and reunify based upon the order of the court (verbal or written).

12-5. Post-Placement Supervision.

a. Within five business days after the child is reunified, the case manager and supervisor will confirm that the ongoing Safety Plan is sufficient.

b. Per s. [39.521\(7\)](#), F.S., post placement supervision in court-supervised cases will be provided for no less than six (6) months after reunification with each parent or legal custodian from whom the child was removed.

c. The case manager will actively monitor and modify the in-home Safety Plan in accordance with paragraphs 11-2 and 11-3 of this operating procedure.

d. The case manager will continue to assess the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) progress in achieving change in accordance with CFOP 170-9, Chapter 6, Evaluating Family Progress.

e. The case manager should terminate a Safety Plan in accordance with Chapter 13 of this operating procedure when the Safety Plan is no longer necessary.

12-6. Supervisor Consultation and Approval.

a. The supervisor is responsible for case consultation focused on the family's progress to meet Conditions for Return and the information in the assessment supports the child safely returning to the parent(s)/legal guardian(s).

b. Prior to reunification, the case management supervisor has conducted a consultation with a program manager, or their designee and they concur that a reunification should occur.

c. The supervisor should consider the case manager's need for consultation in the following areas:

(1) The case manager's consistent monitoring and assessment of family progress in meeting the Conditions for Return. Is the child welfare professional focusing on behavioral change by caregivers, or compliance?

(2) Is the case manager providing reasonable methods of supporting the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) ability to achieve Conditions for Return?

(3) If there are differences of opinion regarding the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) level of progress, does the child welfare professional attempt to reconcile those differences?

(4) Is the child welfare professional open to considering a lack of progress based on system issues, such as:

(a) A Safety Plan that is inadequately designed?

(b) Service providers whose services are not adequate for the interventions needed?

(5) Is the child welfare professional assessing the behaviors and conditions that relate to the central issues of the danger threats and gaps in protective capacities?

(6) Is there a thoughtful distinction between all the central problems being resolved and enough of a change in caregiver conditions or capacities that an in-home Safety Plan can be implemented?

(7) Does the evaluation carried out by the child welfare professional reflect critical thinking and teamwork?

12-7. FSFN Documentation.

a. The child welfare professional or supervisor will record supervisory case consultations for reunification using the supervisory case consultation functionality in FSFN.

b. The case manager will use the Progress Update and Judicial Review in FSFN to update the safety analysis and document the evaluation of family progress.

c. The child's placement and removal episode will be end-dated, and the child's current living arrangement documented in FSFN when the child returns to the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) home.

d. The new in-home Safety Plan signed by all parties will be uploaded into FSFN to the Safety Plan page prior to the child's date of reunification.