

Section 1 Overview

The role of the Children's Division (CD) is to assure the protection of children by assisting their caregivers in providing a safe and nurturing environment in which children can develop. To accomplish this task, CD partners with families and the community to assure child safety and well-being. This section will explore the role and responsibilities of CD staff, families, and community partners as we work together to protect children from abuse and/or neglect, promote child well being, and achieve permanency.

Chapter 1 Overview

This chapter will describe the role and responsibilities of the Children's Service Worker, Supervisor, and Agency Administrators.

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1.1 Mandate

The Missouri Children's Division has statutory authority and responsibility for accepting and investigating all reports of child abuse and/or neglect of children under age 18. That authority comes to CD under RSMo Chapter 210. Other statutes (RSMo 207 and RSMo 211) charge CD with the responsibility for serving the needs of Missouri's children by providing remedial treatment services, and where needed, alternative placement outside the birth home when such placement is in the best interest of the child.

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1.2 Roles and Responsibilities of Children's Division

Responsibilities of the Children's Division

Related Subject: Section 1, Chapter 3 Attachment A: Foster Parent Bill of Rights and Responsibilities

As the court-ordered legal custodian of the foster child, the Children's Division has the ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the child has the best possible foster care experience and that appropriate long-term plans are made. The agency also has a direct, vested interest in resolution of the problems or conditions affecting the status of the birth family.

Services of the agency which are aimed at supporting or reuniting the family, as well as all available and appropriate community resources, should be made a part of the case plan in an effort to utilize foster care for the least possible length of time.

When efforts to return the child to the birth family are not successful, the agency must move toward a permanent plan for the child, so that the child may be placed for adoption or another permanent plan may be developed.

The Children's Division responsibilities include:

- To provide well-trained, educated staff who are given the necessary support and training to carry out the job. Training will address "risk management strategies to protect themselves, persons served, and the organization; protocol on recognizing reportable criminal behavior, acquaintances, statutory rape and staff's duty to warn (COA Standard G7.4.01)."

Related Subject: Section 5, Chapter 2.4.2 Duty to Warn

- To serve as the court-appointed legal custodian for the child;
- To effectively and appropriately communicate information to persons of special needs in a manner that he/she is able to understand;
- To provide the birth parent(s) with support and services and, when appropriate, guidance to other community resources, in an effort to enable them to resume their parental responsibilities or to prevent the use of foster care;
- To assist the birth parent(s) in resolution of conditions or problems which prevent returning the child home;
- To place the child in an approved foster home or licensed child care facility, whichever is the least restrictive environment appropriate for that child. The foster home will be selected in view of adequacy to meet the food, shelter, clothing and emotional needs of the child;

- To ensure that foster parents are appropriately trained, provided opportunities for ongoing training and growth and are continually reevaluated;
- To identify and recruit persons who are willing to provide placement to sibling groups in an effort to maintain and preserve sibling and family connections.
- To provide the foster family or facility with sufficient background, needs and characteristics of the foster child as part of pre-placement activities;
- To develop a written case plan, with the birth parent(s) whenever possible, to provide for a timely exit from foster care; and to ensure that all team members are aware of their particular roles;
- To notify foster parents of court hearings relating to the child(ren) placed in their care so they may be heard in court. The Children's Service Worker should mail a notice of this hearing to the foster/adoptive parent no later than 14 days prior to the hearing. This notification shall be followed up with contact with the foster parent, reminding him/her of the hearing.
- To provide the foster child, birth parent(s) and foster family with the necessary support services to accomplish goals set out in the case plan;
- To work with birth parent(s) and foster parents to see that the child's emotional needs are met;
- To work with birth parent(s) and foster parent(s) to see that the child's educational needs are met;
- To conduct regular staffings of the case;
- To provide the necessary medical or psychological services, evaluations, care or treatment needed by the child;
- To ensure that the child has planned regular contact with his/her birth parent(s) or provide services directed to removal or reduction of any barriers to visitation;
- To maintain regular contact with all team members according to the case plan;
- To keep all team members informed of significant changes in status of the case or individual team members;
- To provide educational opportunities in accordance with the child's potential and in accordance with RSMo 167.031; the child's educational plan is developed by the Family Support Team (FST). Plans that include private/home schooling require Juvenile court approval;

- To verify that the resource family has filed a signed, written declaration of enrollment with the Recorder of Deeds stating their intent for the child to attend a home school. This verification must be documented in the child's file;
- To provide whatever supports are required by the placement providers who will "act as the parents" in the educational planning and placement for students with disabilities attending public school.
- For youth in residential facilities, the Children's Service Worker is to "act as the parent" in making educational decisions until the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education can appoint a "surrogate parent."
- To provide opportunity for a religious experience with respect for the child's birth parent(s)' religion;
- To take the legal steps necessary to free the child for placement in another permanent home when return to the birth parent(s) is not possible;
- To assist the foster parent in the child's return home, particularly recognizing that the foster parent may grieve the loss of the child.
- To ensure the child is protected from exploitation by the media, public or other agencies.

Related Subject: Section 8, Chapter 4, Child Public Performance and Media Involvement

- Discontinue any service or intervention provided to its families if it:
 - Produces adverse side effects such as illness, severe emotional or physical stress, or physical damage; and/or
 - Is deemed unacceptable according to prevailing community standards; and/or
 - Is ineffective or detrimental in meeting treatment plan goals and objectives.

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1.3 Roles and Responsibilities of the Children's Service Supervisor

The Supervisor shall:

- Assist the Children's Service Worker in the identification of threats of danger to vulnerable children and the assessment of the caregiver's capacity to protect the child(ren) from significant harm;
- Assist the Children's Services Worker in the development of effective safety interventions that control identified threats of danger to the child(ren);
- Assist the Children's Service Worker in the process of information gathering and the development of effective treatment plans that enhance insufficient or diminished caregiver protective capacity;
- Model good practice, problem-solving techniques, and effective child protection intervention strategies for the Children's Service Worker and other professionals involved with the family;
- Educate the Children's Service Worker regarding federal, state, and local statutes, as well as agency policies and procedures;
- Consult with the Children's Service Worker to ensure that support is being provided to the placement provider to meet the educational needs of the child.
- Monitor services and/or interventions to ensure that the family is not negatively impacted, treatment plan objectives and goals are being met, and such services and/or interventions are acceptable by best practice standards;
- Assist the Children's Service Worker in determining whether a request for a child's participation in public performance or media involvement is appropriate;

Related Subject: Section 8, Chapter 4, Child Public Performance and Media Involvement

- Assign cases to Children's Service Workers;
- Provide staff supervision;
 - a. Act as a bridge between the Children's Service Worker and agency administration;
 - b. Be cognizant of the personal safety needs of staff;

- c. Assist the Children's Service Worker in determining when the judicious use of an authoritative approach may be appropriate to motivate the family in a positive way;
- d. Assign cases, provide clinical consultation, assist in determining intervention strategies for the family; and
- e. Ensure that services are provided to the family in the event the Children's Service Worker is unavailable or the family is not currently assigned to a Children's Service Worker.
- f. Review all court involved cases where children are placed in out-of-home care documentation to ensure that foster/adoptive parents are being notified of the court hearing by mail and a follow-up reminder regarding the child placed in their home.
- g. Consult and review all cases with the Children's Service Worker that have not resulted in permanent placement for a child on a monthly basis, in the case of infants reviews shall occur weekly.

Related Subject: Section 3, Chapter 10, Supervision and Case Consultation

Related Subject: Section 7, Chapter 26, Supervisory Considerations
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- h. Consult and review cases with the Children's Service Worker that involve the placement and visitation of siblings.
- i. Apply the [Supervisory Case Review](#) process to randomly selected Family-Centered and Family-Centered Out-of-Home cases as well as CA/N Investigations and Assessments on a monthly basis. The information gained from the process should be used during case consultations to help the Children's Service Worker improve child welfare practice. The process will support supervisors in teaching Children's Service Workers to recognize how current policy requirements and day-to-day decisions impact the safety, permanence and well-being of children served by the Children's Division.

A [Supervisory Case Review Process Training Power Point](#) is available on the Children's Division intranet. A one-page instructional sheet explaining the [automation process](#) of the Supervisory Case Review Tool is also available online.

- j. Discuss case goals and recommendations with the Children's Service Worker prior to the Family Support Team meeting. Attend FST meetings when supervisor support, guidance and/or approval is needed, particularly during critical decision making points.

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1.3.1 Chief Investigator

Missouri law identifies the role and responsibility of a Chief Investigator in § 210.145 RSMo. The Division Director shall name at least one Chief Investigator in each county CD office. The person(s) in each county office who is responsible for supervising staff responding to hotline reports shall be considered a Chief Investigator. Each county must develop procedures to ensure the tasks listed below are completed by the Chief Investigator, or substitute, in the Chief Investigator's absence. Substitutes might include the Circuit Manager, Children's Services Specialist, or other experienced supervisor.

Within 72 hours of receiving a hotline report, the Chief Investigator will review the Safety Assessment (CD-17), Safety Plan (CD-18) (if required by the CD-17), other pertinent case record documentation, and/or information contained in the Family and Children's Electronic System (FACES). If in agreement with the CD-17 and if applicable the CD-18, the Chief Investigator will approve and date the physical copy of the CD-17 and CD-18 (if applicable) and enter approval in FACES. If the CD-18 is required, the Chief Investigator will evaluate the feasibility of the safety plan and plan to monitor the plan and if in agreement will sign and date the physical copy of the CD-18 and enter approval in FACES. The Chief Investigator is expected to communicate with the worker to discuss the case whenever possible.

County offices must develop local protocol to ensure required information obtained for reports received after normal business hours, on weekends and holidays is made available to the Chief Investigator for review within seventy-two (72) hours of the report. Some portions of the Chief Investigator review may be conducted over the telephone in cases of emergency situations. When these situations occur, staff should document the date and time of the consultation in the case narrative in FACES. The Chief Investigator's approval of the safety assessment and/or safety plan should also reflect the date on which they provided initial oversight.

Tasks of the Chief Investigator include:

- Verify the report was appropriately screened as an investigation or family assessment;
- Verify the reporter was contacted, or attempts have been made to initiate contact with the reporter, if their identity is known to the Division;
- Verify that all children in the household have been seen within appropriate timeframes, not to exceed seventy-two (72) hours of the report, unless sufficient documentation indicates the reason(s) for a delay in initial contacts;

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- Verify that all family history with the Division has been considered as it relates to the hotline report and/or the overall assessment of the family;
- Verify and review the case record documentation of all contacts made to the point in the case at which the Chief Investigative review takes place;
- Verify that all reported concerns have been explored and addressed as needed;
- Verify that any additional safety concerns presented (in addition to reported allegations) have been explored and addressed as needed;
- Ensure that co-investigative efforts have been implemented for CA/N Investigations and/or ensure that sufficient documentation is received from law enforcement if they decline to co-investigate the reported concern;
- Support Children Service Workers as they establish and maintain relations with multidisciplinary team members;
- When the report involves a child enrolled in school, ensure information regarding the status of reports is provided to the **public school district liaison**. Should the subject child attend a non-public school, the principal of that school should be notified of the report;
- If in agreement with the Safety Assessment (CD-17) and the Safety Plan (CD-18) (if required), the Chief Investigator, or their substitute, should enter approval in FACES; and,
- If the safety assessment safety decision is unsafe and a CD-18 is developed the Chief Investigator will review the CD-18 and plan for monitoring the safety plan and if in agreement will enter approval in FACES and sign and date the physical copy of the safety plan.

Local protocols must be developed to ensure supervisory coverage and accessibility to Children's Service Workers to provide 72 hour Chief Investigator consultations and for any safety concerns which may develop during the completion of a CA/N Investigation or Family Assessment. The Chief Investigator is expected to communicate with the worker to discuss the case whenever possible or necessary, and provide guidance to the Children's Service Worker with regard to the completion of the reported concern.

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1.4 Roles and Responsibilities of Agency Administrator

The Administrator shall:

- Ensure that the agency's mission and purpose clearly promote good social work practice;
- Create a work environment that supports sound social work practice and service delivery;
- Track fiscal resources and agency personnel; and
- Recruit and select skilled, culturally competent children's service staff members and provide them with pre-service and in-service training opportunities that improve their capacity to engage families from a helping perspective.

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1.5 Roles and Responsibilities of the Children's Service Worker

The Children's Service Worker shall:

- Adhere to all Children's Division mandates, policies, and procedures as they relate to providing services to families;
- Respond to reports of child abuse and neglect;

Related Subjects: Section 2, Chapter 4, Investigation Response; and Section 2, Chapter 5, Family Assessment Response

- Provide and explain the Know Your Rights Brochure (CS-132) and the Service Delivery Grievance form (CS-131) during their initial contact with a family when providing Family-Centered Services, Family-Centered Out-of-Home Services, Intensive In-Home Services, Family Reunion Services, Independent Living Services, or Adoption and Guardianship Services and when initiating a Child Abuse/Neglect Investigation and Family Assessment.
- Provide and explain the Handbook for Parents of Children in Foster Care (CS-304) during their initial contact when providing Family-Centered-Out-of-Home-Care Services.

Related Subjects: Section 1, Chapter 2, Roles and Responsibilities of the Parents and Their Children

- Initiate and continue efforts to secure appropriate interpretative or language translation services to communicate with special needs families.

Related Subjects: Section 3, Chapter 5, Attachment B: Listing of Purchased Services

- Initiate and continue involvement with the family until the child is safe from abuse or neglect and the risk of future abuse or neglect has been sufficiently reduced;

Related Subjects: Section 3, Delivery of Services/Intact Families; and Section 4, Out-of-Home Care

- Conduct a comprehensive assessment of the family, with a focus on the caregiver's capacity to protect their vulnerable child(ren) from threats of danger as the primary focus;
- Determine if abuse or neglect has occurred (or is occurring), and intervene to protect the child;

- Assess the parents' knowledge, ability and willingness to protect their child(ren) from threats of danger;
- Engage the child and family in identifying needs, strengths, and resources to enhance caregiver protective capacity to improve child safety and well-being;
- Inform child(ren) and parents of their rights regarding public performance and media involvement;

Related Subject: Section 8, Chapter 4, Child Public Performance and Media Involvement

- Help develop and carry out a case plan with the family that leads to an adequate level of care for the child;

Related Subjects: Section 3, Chapter 3, Family-Centered Services Family Assessment and Written Service Agreement Development; and Section 3, Chapter 4, Implementing the Written Service Agreement

- Initiate protective action (without the cooperation of the parents, if necessary) to legally remove the child from the parents and to obtain adequate out-of-home care when necessary;
- Maintain the parent/child relationship, as appropriate, if the child is removed from the home;

Related Subjects: Section 4, Chapter 6, Out-of-Home Placement Support Activities; and Chapter 7, Begin Work with the Family/Child(ren); and Chapter 8, Ongoing Casework for Out-of-Home Care

- Upon the notification of a court hearing, the Children's Service Worker shall mail a notice of this hearing to the foster/adoptive parent(s). This notice should be mailed no later than (14) days prior to the hearing. Once the notice has been mailed, the Children's Service Worker will follow-up with the foster, adoptive, relative parent reminding him/her of the hearing. The notice should be copied and placed in the legal section of the child's case record along with documentation of the follow-up call in the narrative.
- Assist the parent(s) in preparing for visits by discussing the following:
 - What the parent expects to accomplish during the visit;
 - How to assure safety during visits;
 - How the parent feels about the visit;

- Possible feelings the child(ren) may have about the visit;
- Activities to occur or avoid during the visit;
- The impact on the child when visits do or do not occur; and
- What could cause a visit to end?
- Provide support and assistance to the placement provider to meet the child's educational needs.
- Maintain a comprehensive child protective services record on the family;

Related Subject: Section 5, Case Record Maintenance and Access

- End services to the family when they are no longer necessary or appropriate;

Related Subject: Section 3, Chapter 8, Case Closing

- Terminate services and/or interventions provided to families that negatively impact the emotional or physical well being of the family, is unacceptable by best practice standards, and is ineffective or detrimental to meeting the treatment plan goals and objectives.
- Develop and sustain collaborative relationships with other members of the community to promote and support a community-based response to the protection of children; and
- Model best practice, problem-solving techniques, and effective child protection intervention strategies for the Children's Service Worker and other professionals involved with the family.

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1.5.1 Developing the Children's Service Worker/Family Relationship

The Children's Service Worker shall initiate the Family-Centered Services assessment process by attempting to establish rapport and convey that the Children's Service Worker is there to help the family help itself.

The following may assist in this process:

1. The Children's Service Worker should facilitate getting-acquainted activities as he/she would when initiating any relationship. Formal introductions should not be overlooked. Parents should be referred to as "Mr." or "Mrs." unless permission is obtained for less formal interaction. Inquiries about the family's daily schedule, and the most opportune times for home visits, will convey the importance of family cooperation and involvement in the success of the casework;
2. The Children's Service Worker should allow the family to express their feelings. Active listening by the Children's Service Worker is the most appropriate response. This will encourage the family's open expression of their feelings and beliefs and may offer insight into the family's perception of the problem;

Related Subjects: Section 3, Chapter 4.1, Providing Services; and Section 7, Chapter 2, Family Communication; and Chapter 17, Relationship Building

3. The family may present a positive or negative first impression of itself that may not be genuinely descriptive. The family may attempt to discount the seriousness of the problems or convince the Children's Service Worker that the presenting problems are due to the actions or inactions of someone else. In other instances the family may attempt to test the limits and competence of the Children's Service Worker by being verbally hostile or with incessant complaints about the CA/N report and investigation process. After allowing reasonable ventilation, the Children's Service Worker must attempt to focus the family upon the present and future;

Related Subject: Section 7, Glossary Reference, Chapter 20: Working With Resistant Families

4. The concrete needs of the family should be considered as soon as possible. If the family is occupied with basic survival needs, other needs will not be a priority. Offering assistance in this area can help establish rapport and team building with the family;

Related Subject: Section 3, Chapter 4, Attachment C, Crisis Intervention Funds

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5. The casework process should be fully explained. The Children's Service Worker should clarify his/her role and what expectations exist for the family. During the assessment the Children's Service Worker shall describe the activities requiring family involvement and their purpose. The family will be informed that the Division expects involvement with the family to be time-limited and that the case will be closed when the family is meeting minimally acceptable community standards; and
6. The Children's Service Worker should observe family roles and which members are likely to participate more readily than others. Involving those with influence may lead others to more readily cooperate.

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1.5.2 The Importance of the Children's Service Worker's Attitude

Because it is difficult to measure the impact of the Children's Service Worker's attitude on the family, it is easy to underestimate its importance. The family's acceptance of services and overall cooperation often depends on the manner in which services are offered.

To maximize Division effectiveness, staff contact with families must convey respect and consideration. These professional attitudes must be evident at intake and permeate all phases of the Children's Service Worker's process.

It is important to avoid using phrases and terminology that have been associated with hopelessness. Diagnostic terms are often vague and simplistic, rather than useful. Labels may tell us more about the person who applies them than about the family itself. The following principles are useful in cultivating and maintaining a therapeutic attitude:

- All children and youth have great potential for development, given a healthy and stimulating environment;
- No parent deliberately sets out to fail, whatever the outcome. There is probably no greater sense of failure than when one fails as a parent;
- Family problems are "symptoms" of a dysfunctional family system and send legitimate messages on how family members attempt to cope;
- Treatment emphasis is on coping, which is a continuous process, rather than on cure;
- The Children's Service Worker should approach family situations from a positive perspective. Don't ask "What is your problem?" but rather, "What do you hope for?"
- It is important to be satisfied with small gains and to be persistent in the pursuit of those gains;
- Enhancing family communication is important. What family members have to say to each other is probably more important than what we have to say to them; and
- Intimacy and respect must go hand-in-hand. There is little room for either without clear and honest communication.

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1.5.3 Implementing the Initial Contacts with the Family

NOTE: If the family is in crisis, the Children's Service Worker may need to provide crisis intervention services. This will require an immediate response, which will eliminate procedure #1 in this section.

Related Subject: Section 3, Chapter 4.3, Crisis Intervention Guidelines

1. Contact the family by letter or telephone for an appointment UNLESS the family is experiencing crisis that places, or potentially places the child in immediate harm and/or warrants removal from the home, such as during a child abuse/neglect investigation or Family Assessment resulting from a CA/N hotline report.

If contacting the family prior to the initial visit is not possible, and crisis intervention is not necessary, the Children's Service Worker should visit the home, introduce him/herself and schedule an appointment for a future date if an immediate meeting is not convenient whenever possible. This will convey a sense of respect and demonstrate the Children's Service Worker's desire to involve the family in the treatment process.

NOTE: During an Investigation or Family Assessment resulting from a CA/N report, it may not be feasible to schedule appointments with the family due to the need to assess and/or plan for the safety of the child.

2. Conduct a face-to-face "in-home" interview with the parent(s)/caretaker(s) and child(ren) within the time frames indicated by SDM response priority or as directed by supervisor.

Related Subject: Section 2, Chapter 2 CANHU Protocol: Structured Decision Making (SDM) Screening Process, Response Priority and Track Assignment

The Children's Service Worker and family should attempt to accomplish as much as possible during the first visit. Usually the family assessment process is initiated at this time.

Related Subjects: Section 2, Chapter 2.3.1 Parameters of Investigation Response and Section 3, Chapter 3.2 Completion of the Family-Centered Services Process

Goals of the initial visit(s) should include:

- The identification of present threats of danger to the vulnerable children in the home and an assessment of the caregiver's capacity to protect the child(ren) from those threats;
- Establishing rapport and relationship building;
- Dispelling confusion and clarifying roles;
- Defining the problem from the family's and the Children's Service Worker's perspectives;
- Determining the needed resources and available options;
- Addressing and alleviating the need for "hard" services; and
- Determining and enhancing the level of cooperation.

It is important for the Children's Service Worker and family members to be clear about what they expect from one another. Establishing ground rules may also provide a special opportunity to convey respect for the family. A family's legitimate activities and the legitimate requirements of in-home service may at times conflict. Discussing the possibility of problems ahead of time demonstrates respect for the family. It provides a head start on dealing with conflicts constructively.

In establishing "ground rules", the Children's Service Worker and the family should discuss issues, such as:

- How the family would like to refer to the Children's Service Worker if friends drop in unexpectedly;
- The procedure for canceling appointments, and legitimate reasons for doing so;
- Ways in which in-home visits can be made more productive. This may include asking the family to limit other visitors when the Children's Service Worker is present, turning off the TV or radio during visits, etc. Arrangements may need to be made for the care of very young children so they will not disrupt the visit too much;
- How to let the Children's Service Worker know if the family is feeling a need for a respite from services;

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- The confidential nature of the service, and explanation of the agency's policy regarding confidentiality;
- The Children's Service Worker should explain to the family that services provided by or through the Division will be time-limited and provided within the framework of the family treatment plan; and
- The procedure(s) to terminate services and close the family's case.

Children's Service Workers will have many opportunities to demonstrate their recognition that the home is the parent(s)'s domain. Recognizing this, both actually and symbolically, helps empower the parents. It emphasizes their active role in the service process. This is an important method of counterbalancing the threats posed by social service intervention, no matter how justified or necessary.

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1.5.4 Initiating the Follow-Up Family Assessment on an Open FCS Case:

1. Initiate the follow-up family assessment by involving all family members in the process:
 - a. Determine if services are still needed by the family. If not, consult with the supervisor in order to close the case.
 - b. If services are still needed by the family:
 1. Involve all family members in the assessment process to obtain a thorough description of the family system, including the vulnerabilities of the children; threats of danger within the family and how they operate; and the caregiver's protective capacity;
 2. Obtain the family's perception of the problem;
 3. Contact collateral sources to obtain additional information on the family and verify information. Use form SS-6, Authorization for Release of Information, when necessary, to obtain information;
 4. Describe the presenting problems or symptoms of the family system's dysfunction;
 5. Develop a diagnosis of the underlying reasons for the family discord which should be addressed;
 6. Identify the family's service needs and the appropriate resources to address the service needs; and
 7. Communicate with family about the conclusions drawn from the assessment process.
2. Document the above items 1.b. (1-7) in the appropriate sections on the CPS-1.

Related Subjects: Section 2, Chapter 5.3.11, Safety Assessment; and Section 2, Chapter 5.3.14, Determination of Level of Risk

Chapter Memorandum History: (prior to 01/31/07)

[CS03-51](#), [CD05-35](#), [CD05-77](#), [CD06-07](#), [CD06-12](#), [CD06-16](#), [CD06-32](#), [CD06-50](#), [CD06-57](#), [CD06-69](#), [CD06-81](#)

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Section 1: Roles and Responsibilities of Team Members
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