

PROCEDURE

Series:	Operating Procedures	COA: N/A CFOP: N/A
Procedure Name:	Suitability Assessments	
Procedure Number:	OP-1155	
Review Date:	02/03/12, 05/03/16, 4/16/24, 10/02/2025	
Revision #/Date:	(1) 05/03/16, (2) 12/16/19	
Effective Date:	08/06/10	
Applicable to:	Family Partnerships of Central Florida (FPOCF) staff and its subcontracted agencies	

PURPOSE: To outline the process for obtaining Suitability Assessments on children in licensed out of home care

PROCEDURE:

References

Florida Statute 39.407

Florida Administrative Code 65C-27.002

Suitability Assessments

The purpose of the independent evaluation is to determine the suitability for residential treatment and appropriateness of treatment. 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 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 Healthcare within five (5) working days of the date the child was seen whom will then forward the assessment to the FPOCF Behavioral Health Coordinator, or Single Point of Access (SPOA), within three (3) working days of receipt. Prior to sending the completed report to the SPOA, Magellan Healthcare staff must review for corrections, additions and compliance with Statutory and AHCA standards. The SPOA is then responsible for disseminating it as appropriate.

Suitability Assessment Referral Process

The Dependency Case Manager and/or Supervisor will contact the FPOCF Behavioral Health Coordinator or designee if it is determined that the child may be in need of a Specialized Therapeutic Group Care (STGC), Qualified Residential Treatment Program (QRTTP), Behavioral Qualified Residential Treatment Program (BQRTTP) or Statewide Inpatient Psychiatric Program (SIPP) Residential Treatment placement or if a referral for Suitability Assessment has been ordered by the court. Cases are required to be reviewed at a multi-disciplinary team (MDT) staffing prior to requesting a Suitability Assessment.

The Dependency Care Manager or designee is responsible for providing the Behavioral Health Coordinator with supporting clinical documentation from the youth's hospitalizations, therapeutic services, medication management, and/or documented incidents involving the youth's maladaptive behaviors. The Behavioral Health Coordinator or Single Point of Access (SPOA) then completes the Initial Referral for Assessment of Suitability of a Child for Residential Treatment and forwards the referral to Magellan Healthcare.

FPOCF: These evaluations are to be conducted by a Qualified Evaluator prior to admission to Residential Psychiatric Treatment. The case manager assigned to the child/adolescent is responsible for ensuring the youth is available and ready to participate in the assessment at the designated date, time, and location or platform. Supporting documentation (if applicable) to provide includes: CBHA, mental health treatment history, shelter petition, shelter order, foster care order, pre-disposition report, foster care case plan, Baker Act discharge paperwork if applicable and individual education plan (IEP). The SPOA is responsible for providing any MDT notes. These reviews must include:

- A review of treatment records from previous mental health services
- Face to face evaluation of the child/adolescent
- The child/adolescent has been provided with a clinically appropriate explanation of the nature and purpose of the treatment; and
- 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.

A Notice of Suitability Assessment for Residential Treatment will be sent to the FPOCF SPOA who will then forward the information to the assigned Dependency Care Manager, Dependency Care Manager Supervisor, Guardian Ad Litem and Attorney Ad Litem office (if assigned), Child Legal Services, Intake Specialists and treatment provider if applicable.

The Qualified Evaluator will review all supporting documentation and conduct a face-to-face or virtual 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, Guardian Ad Litem and Attorney Ad Litem (if assigned), Child Legal Services, Intake Specialist, and any other parties involved in the case.

The SPOA will upload the suitability assessment to the Medical Tab in FSFN with the corresponding date of completion.

Process for Placement of Child Based on Suitability Assessment Results

If the recommendation is for STGC, QRTP, BQRTP, or SIPP placement, the FPOCF Behavioral Health Coordinator or designee will schedule the child for an MDT. The Suitability Assessment results will be sent to all relevant parties to the child's case, including but not limited to: Dependency Care Manager, Guardian Ad Litem and Attorney Ad Litem (if assigned), therapeutic providers (if applicable). The Dependency Case Manager is responsible for notifying Children's Legal Services to request a court order for placement in the recommended level of care.

Any child placed in a SIPP, STGC, QRTP, or BQRTP level of care will have a Suitability Assessment completed within 60 days from the child's initial placement in residential treatment and 90 days thereafter so long as the child remains placed in residential treatment. The FPOCF Behavioral Health Coordinator or designee (SPOA) will notify the Dependency Care Manager 30 days prior to expiration to request documentation to support the completion of the referral. Referrals for 60-Day and 90-Day Reviews are submitted to Magellan Healthcare by the FPOCF SPOA. These evaluations are conducted at the Residential Treatment Facility on an appointment basis. The SPOA is responsible for providing copies of all supporting documentation to the QE prior to the appointment date/time. The QE Coordinator and Associates will schedule appointments for the 60-Day and 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 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.

Each month, the Dependency Care Manager is responsible to participate in the child's treatment team staffing and submit a written report to the court having jurisdiction over the child regarding the child's progress towards achieving the goals specified in the individualized plan of treatment.

60-Day and 90-Day Suitability Assessment results are discussed at the child's MDT as part of the child's current treatment documentation.

BY DIRECTION OF THE PRESIDENT AND
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER:



PHILIP J. SCARPELLI
President and Chief Executive Officer
Family Partnerships of Central Florida

APPROVAL DATE: 10/31/2025