

NUMBER

#19-68-10

DATE

April 30, 2019

OF INTEREST TO

County Directors

Social Services Supervisors and
Staff

<Add as needed>

<Add as needed>

ACTION/DUE DATE

Please read information and
prepare for implementation

EXPIRATION DATE

April 30, 2021

Resource family and caseworker visit discussion tool

TOPIC

Resource family and caseworker visit discussion tool.

PURPOSE

A discussion tool to increase and improve communication and engagement between resource families and caseworkers, and assist caseworkers in assessing the needs of resource families and foster children in care.

CONTACT

Child Safety and Permanency Division:

Mailinda Kue, Northstar Quality Assurance Program Representative
651-431-3604, dhs.csp.fostercare@state.mn.us

SIGNED

NIKKI J. FARAGO

Assistant Commissioner

Children and Family Services Administration

TERMINOLOGY NOTICE

The terminology used to describe people we serve has changed over time. The Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) supports the use of "People First" language.

Background

The Minnesota Department of Human Services (department) participated in its third Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) in August 2016, a review of the state's child welfare system by the federal Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau. The reviews are authorized by 1994 amendments to the Social Security Act structured to help state agencies identify strengths and areas that need improvement in specific program areas. The goals of the CFSR are to help state agencies improve child welfare services and achieve positive outcomes for children and families served by this system.

Each CFSR is a two-stage process consisting of a statewide assessment that the state agency completes in preparation for a CFSR, and an onsite review of child and family service outcomes and systems. The onsite review includes case reviews, interviews with children and families engaged in services, and interviews with community stakeholders, e.g., courts, resource families, caseworkers, service providers, etc. Through both stages of a review, the Children's Bureau assesses the state's performance on seven federally defined safety, permanency and well-being outcomes, as well as seven systemic factors. See Appendix A for a list of the outcomes, systemic factors, and specific performance items within each of the outcomes and systemic factors reviewed.

The results of the CFSR indicated that Minnesota was not in substantial conformity with any of the safety, permanency and well-being outcomes, but was in substantial conformity with one of seven systemic factors. As a result, department staff developed a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) that identified goals, strategies, and key activities for improving the child welfare system.

For information on the CFSR final report, see: acf.hhs.gov, and the approved [Minnesota Child and Family Services Review Round 3 – Program Improvement Plan \(PDF\)](#).

Purpose

PIP goal three is to strengthen engagement with parents, children/youth, and resource families (foster/adoptive) in quality caseworker visits, completion of thorough assessments, provision of appropriate services, and comprehensive case planning in the Program Improvement Plan. Within the above goal is strategy four, to increase and improve communication and engagement between resource families and agency caseworkers, and assist caseworkers in assessing the needs of resource families. The tool is part of this strategy that has the potential to impact numerous performance items in the CFSR, including items 3, 4, 8, 11, 12, 16, 17 and 18. (See Appendix A for additional information regarding these and other items.)

The purpose of the Resource Family and Caseworker Visit Discussion Tool (Appendix B) is to support communication between resource families and caseworkers. This is essential to ensure children's and youth's needs are met, families are receiving support and services, and placement stability is enhanced.

The tool is designed to support quality visits and help:

- Increase and improve communication and engagement between resource families and agency caseworkers
- Help resource families prepare for quality home visits with caseworkers
- Assist caseworkers in assessing the needs of resource families and children in their care
- Identify strengths, issues, concerns, and observations caregivers may have about a child's or youth's progress and case plan
- Identify resources that are working or not working for resource families
- Promote transparency and team partnerships.

How to use the tool

The tool is a guide to lead discussions between caseworkers and caregivers. It is **not** required, but made available to support quality visits. Caregivers may fill out the tool prior to scheduled home visits, or use during a visit. It gives caregivers a chance to reflect, write down information to share about a child or youth, and communicate new or updated information. It describes services that are working or not working for a child or youth, and helps with on-going case planning. It is an opportunity for caregivers to provide feedback on issues, concerns, or request additional services.

The tool focuses on areas of care and case planning that caseworkers must be aware of to support safety, permanency and well-being. It helps caregivers prepare for visits and provides them an outline to address all service and case planning items.

Suggestions for how the tool can be used include:

- Part of a child's or youth's case file as documentation of topics discussed during visits (foster parent or caseworker files)
- Utilized during caseworker and supervisor monthly case reviews
- A resource for preparing court reports
- Part of an orientation packet for new:
 - Foster parents to understand the role of caseworker visits, or
 - Caseworkers to understand their role during home visits.

How to request

To request a Microsoft Word version of the Resource Family and Caseworker Visit Discussion Tool, email Mailinda Kue at mailinda.kue@state.mn.us.

The tool will be an electronic document on the department's [searchable document library](#) as an eDoc.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Advisory

This information is available in accessible formats for people with disabilities by calling (651) 431-3809 (voice) or by using your preferred relay service. For other information on disability rights and protections, contact the agency's ADA coordinator.

Child and Family Services Reviews

Quick Reference Items List

Outcomes

Safety outcome 1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.

- Item 1: Were the agency's responses to all accepted child maltreatment reports initiated, and face-to-face contact with the child(ren) made, within time frames established by agency policies or state statutes?

Safety outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.

- Item 2: Did the agency make concerted efforts to provide services to the family to **prevent** children's **entry into foster care or re-entry** after reunification?
- Item 3: Did the agency make concerted efforts to **assess and address the risk and safety** concerns relating to the child(ren) in their own homes or while in foster care?

Permanency outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.

- Item 4: Is the child in foster care in a **stable placement** and were any changes in the child's placement in the best interests of the child and consistent with achieving the child's permanency goal(s)?
- Item 5: Did the agency establish **appropriate permanency goals** for the child in a **timely manner**?
- Item 6: Did the agency make concerted efforts to achieve reunification, guardianship, adoption, or other planned permanent living arrangement for the child?

Permanency outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.

- Item 7: Did the agency make concerted efforts to ensure that **siblings in foster care are placed together** unless separation was necessary to meet the needs of one of the siblings?
- Item 8: Did the agency make concerted efforts to ensure that **visitation between a child in foster care and his or her mother, father, and siblings** was of sufficient frequency and quality to promote continuity in the child's relationships with these close family members?
- Item 9: Did the agency make concerted efforts to **preserve the child's connections** to his or her neighborhood, community, faith, extended family, Tribe, school, and friends?
- Item 10: Did the agency make concerted efforts to **place the child with relatives** when appropriate?
- Item 11: Did the agency make concerted efforts to promote, support, and/or maintain **positive relationships between the child in foster care and his or her mother and father** or other primary caregivers from whom the child had been removed through activities other than just arranging for visitation?

Well-being outcome 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.

- Item 12: Did the agency make concerted efforts to **assess the needs** of and **provide services** to **children, parents, and foster parents** to identify the services necessary to achieve case goals and adequately address the issues relevant to the agency's involvement with the family?
- Item 13: Did the agency make concerted efforts to involve the **parents and children** (if developmentally appropriate) **in the case planning** process on an ongoing basis?
- Item 14: Were the **frequency and quality of visits between caseworkers and child(ren)** sufficient to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of the child(ren) and promote achievement of case goals?
- Item 15: Were the **frequency and quality of visits between caseworkers and the mothers and fathers** of the child(ren) sufficient to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of the child(ren) and promote achievement of case goals?

Well-being outcome 2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.

- Item 16: Did the agency make concerted efforts to assess **children's educational needs**, and appropriately address identified needs in case planning and case management activities?

Well-being outcome 3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.

- Item 17: Did the agency address the **physical health needs** of children, including dental health needs?
- Item 18: Did the agency address the **mental/behavioral health needs** of children?

Systemic factors

Statewide information system

- Item 19: How well is the **statewide information system** functioning statewide to ensure that, at a minimum, the state can readily identify the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for the placement of every child who is (or within the immediately preceding 12 months, has been) in foster care?

Case review system

- Item 20: How well is the case review system functioning statewide to ensure that each child has a **written case plan** that is developed jointly with the child's parent(s) and includes the required provisions?
- Item 21: How well is the case review system functioning statewide to ensure that a **periodic review** for each child occurs no less frequently than once every 6 months, either by a court or by administrative review?
- Item 22: How well is the case review system functioning statewide to ensure that, for each child, a **permanency hearing** in a qualified court or administrative body occurs no later than 12 months from the date the child entered foster care and no less frequently than every 12 months thereafter?
- Item 23: How well is the case review system functioning to ensure that the filing of **termination of parental rights (TPR)** proceedings occurs in accordance with required provisions?
- Item 24: How well is the case review system functioning to ensure that foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers of children in foster care are **notified of, and have a right to be heard** in, any review or hearing held with respect to the child?

Quality assurance system

- Item 25: How well is the **quality assurance system** functioning statewide to ensure that it is (1) operating in the jurisdictions where the services included in the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) are provided, (2) has standards to evaluate the quality of services (including standards to ensure that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect their health and safety), (3) identifies strengths and needs of the service delivery system, (4) provides relevant reports, and (5) evaluates implemented program improvement measures?

Staff and provider training

- Item 26: How well is the staff and provider training system functioning statewide to ensure that **initial training** is provided to all staff who deliver services pursuant to the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) that includes the basic skills and knowledge required for their positions?
- Item 27: How well is the staff and provider training system functioning statewide to ensure that **ongoing training** is provided for staff that addresses the skills and knowledge needed to carry out their duties with regard to the services included in the CFSP?
- Item 28: How well is the staff and provider training system functioning to ensure that **training** is occurring statewide for current or prospective **foster parents, adoptive parents, and staff** of state licensed or approved facilities (that care for children receiving foster care or adoption assistance under title IV-E) that addresses the skills and knowledge needed to carry out their duties with regard to foster and adopted children?

Service array and resource development

- Item 29: How well is the service array and resource development system functioning to ensure that the following array of services is **accessible** in all political jurisdictions covered by the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP)?
1. Services that assess the strengths and needs of children and families and determine other service needs;
 2. Services that address the needs of families in addition to individual children in order to create a safe home environment;
 3. Services that enable children to remain safely with their parents when reasonable; and
 4. Services that help children in foster and adoptive placements achieve permanency.
- Item 30: How well is the service array and resource development system functioning statewide to ensure that the services in item 29 can be **individualized** to meet the unique needs of children and families served by the agency?

Agency responsiveness to the community

- Item 31: How well is the agency responsiveness to the community system functioning statewide to ensure that, in implementing the provisions of the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) and developing related Annual Progress and Services Reports (APSRs), the state engages in **ongoing consultation** with Tribal representatives, consumers, service providers, foster care providers, the juvenile court, and other public and private child- and family-serving agencies and includes the major concerns of these representatives in the goals, objectives, and annual updates of the CFSP?

- Item 32: How well is the agency responsiveness to the community system functioning statewide to ensure that the state's services under the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) are **coordinated with services or benefits of other federal or federally assisted programs** serving the same population?

Foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention

- Item 33: How well is the foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention system functioning statewide to ensure that **state standards** are applied to all licensed or approved foster family homes or child care institutions receiving title IV-B or IV-E funds?
- Item 34: How well is the foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention system functioning statewide to ensure that the state complies with federal requirements for **criminal background clearances** as related to licensing or approving foster care and adoptive placements, and has in place a case planning process that includes provisions for addressing the safety of foster care and adoptive placements for children?
- Item 35: How well is the foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention system functioning to ensure that the process for ensuring the **diligent recruitment** of potential foster and adoptive families who reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the state for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed is occurring statewide?
- Item 36: How well is the foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention system functioning to ensure that the process for ensuring the effective use of **cross-jurisdictional resources** to facilitate timely adoptive or permanent placements for waiting children is occurring statewide?

Resource family and caseworker visit discussion tool

Purpose

An optional tool used to improve information sharing with your caseworker about needs and services for you and child or youth in your care.

When preparing for visits, you may consider looking over the summary of child-placing agency responsibilities. For more information, see the [Summary of Child Foster Care Responsible Agency Requirements, DHS-0139A \(PDF\)](#).

Section I – General information

Date of visit: _____

Child or youth name(s): _____

Caseworker visiting: _____ Their role: _____

Visit location:

☐ Home

☐ In the community: _____

Out-of-home placement plan (OHPP): Caseworkers are to consult with foster parents as part of child's or youth's OHPP; foster parent may sign OHPP, and receive a copy. [\[Minnesota Statutes, section 260C.212, subdivision 1\]](#)

- Did you participate in creating the OHPP? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not offered opportunity
- Were you given an opportunity to sign the OHPP? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Did you receive a copy of the OHPP? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Do you know the permanency plan for the child or youth? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Section II: Child's or youth's progress in the home

Write in the sections below new or updated information that you would like to share. If there are no updates, leave the sections blank or write none. In each section there are suggested questions for you to think about to help prepare for visits.

Child well-being

- Physical health**

(Provide information that is important to know about child's or youth's physical health, including dentists, eye doctors, medications, and medical services being provided.)

Recent doctor appointment: ☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, date: _____ Clinic/doctor: _____

Concerns: _____

Next doctor appointment: _____ Reason: _____

Concerns: _____

Recent dental appointment: ☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, date: _____ Clinic/doctor: _____

Concerns: _____

Next dental appointment: _____ Reason: _____

Concerns: _____

Medications: ☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, list: _____

Are you providing medical care for child or youth as directed by a doctor? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, describe: _____

- **School**

Questions for consideration:

- If child is pre-school age, what educational services are they receiving? Describe services. For information on early childhood education visit [Minnesota Department of Education – Early Childhood Family Education](#) webpage.

- Are there concerns about child's or youth's learning ability and their grades in school? Are there attendance issues reported to you from school staff? In the past 30 days, were there meetings with child's or youth's teacher or other school staff? In the past 30 days, has child been involved in extra-curricular programs or have hobbies they like to do? Are there meetings or activities scheduled in the next 30 days? Are there other concerns?

- **Emotional, mental health and child development**

Questions for consideration:

- Are therapeutic services being provided? Are there any concerns?

- Is the child or youth growing and learning like other children their age? If not, what are your impressions? For information about age-appropriate developmental milestones, see helpmegrowmn.org.

- If the child or youth has a disability (physical or learning), what are you doing to help them? What is working or not working? What services are needed to support their care in your home?

Permanency

- **Visitation**

- **Sibling and parents**

(Questions for consideration: Do you have a role or help out with visits between the child or youth and their family? If yes, what is working and not working? How does the child or youth feel before and after visits? What is their relationship like with sibling(s) and/or parent(s)? What activities do they like to do together? If siblings are not placed together, are you aware of the visitation plan for the siblings? How often are visits occurring, and how are they going? What are you doing to help encourage connections? Is there anything the caseworker can do to help?)

- **Connections**

- **Parent and relative**

(Questions for consideration: How are you supporting the child or youth and the relationship with their parent(s) while in your care? How are the parents involved with medical, dental, school activities and other appointments? Do the parents attend activities? What is working or not working? Does the child talk about relatives or family friends that they miss or would like to see? How do they describe their relationship with these people? Is there contact or visits with relatives or family friends?)

- **Cultural preservation**

(Questions for consideration: How is child or youth supported to practice their cultural beliefs while in your home? What are you doing to learn about, honor, and encourage connections of child's or youth's culture and their community? Do you have questions or need information about the ethnic, cultural and religious background of the child?)

- **Child's or youth's activities/normalcy**

Questions for consideration:

- For infants and pre-school children, do they have opportunities to play with other children their age? How is this being supported?
- For school age children and youth, do they continue to participate in extracurricular, social, or cultural activities? How is this being supported? [[Minnesota Statutes, section 260C.212, subdivision 14](#)]
- If child or youth self identifies as LGBTQ, how are they being supported? What are you doing to learn about, honor, and encourage these connections in the community? For information see [Supporting Your LGBTQ Youth: A Guide for Foster Parents \(PDF\)](#)

For more information, also see [Minnesota's Reasonable Prudent Parent Standard Guidance, DHS-7684 \(PDF\)](#).

Needs and services

- **Supports**

(Questions for consideration: What is going well in your home? What is working and not working? What is your parenting style when the child or youth is acting out, and how do you deal with the behavior? Who do they have relationships with outside the home, and can you identify them? Who do you count on for support (i.e., friends, extended family, church members and co-workers)?

- **Services and training**

(Questions for consideration: What training or services do you need or want for the child or youth, and members of your family? How can the agency provide additional help for all household members?)

- **Team partnerships**

(Questions for consideration: How would you describe your experiences as a team member of the agency? What has been helpful or not helpful? Are you included in the case plan; what is your role? If not, why? What kind of information or participation would you like to have regarding the court process, the child's or youth's case plan and upcoming events? Are you invited to and/or attending case plan meetings, court hearings, or decisions regarding other agency services at this time? If no, why?)

Safety

Questions for consideration:

- Who does child or youth go to for help (for example, foster mother or father, or others in the home)? Do they tell you if they are afraid of anything? Has anything changed from your home safety checklist that the agency should know about? Do you have safety concerns or issues? For information, see [Child Foster Care Home Safety Checklist \(PDF\)](#).
- Are there new or frequent visitors to the home that the agency should be aware of? If yes, who are they?
- For babies, do you have questions or concerns about safe sleep practices? For more information on safe sleep see [Safe Sleep Standards and Training Requirements for Child Care, DHS-7703 \(PDF\)](#).

Updates

Questions for consideration:

- Is there any other information that you want the caseworker to know about (for example, planned family vacations out of state, vacation longer than three nights, extended family visitors, etc.)? You may want to review the [Agreement between Foster Parents and Licensing Agency, DHS-0139 \(PDF\)](#).
- Are there any other topics that didn't get covered?