

	INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY	
	Chapter 8: Out-of-Home	Effective Date: July 1, 2014
	Section 44: Reunification Assessment (Out-of-Home)	Version: 2

STATEMENTS OF PURPOSE

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) will conduct a [Reunification Assessment \(Out-of-Home\)](#) which includes a Risk Reassessment, Visitation Plan Evaluation, Reunification Safety Assessment, Placement/Permanency Plan Guidelines, and Recommendation Summary on all open cases where at least one child is placed in substitute care.

The [Reunification Assessment \(Out-of-Home\)](#) will be used to structure critical case management decisions for children in placement who have a reunification goal by:

1. Routinely monitoring critical case factors that affect goal achievement;
2. Helping to structure the case review process; and
3. Expediting permanency for children in substitute care.

Note: If more than one household is receiving reunification services, complete one tool on each household.

The [Reunification Assessment \(Out-of-Home\)](#) will be conducted at least every 180 days and prior to completing an updated case plan. The [Reunification Assessment \(Out-of-Home\)](#) will also be conducted when reunification is recommended, when a change in the permanency planning goal is identified, and sooner if there are new circumstances or new information that affect risk that are identified.

The [Reunification Assessment \(Out-of-Home\)](#) guides decision making to:

1. Return a child to the removal household or to another household with a legal right to placement (non-removal household);
2. Temporarily maintain out-of-home placement; and/or
3. Terminate reunification services and implement a different permanency plan.

Note: Removal household is that household from which the child was removed, or, if due to joint custody that designation is unclear, then the household where the most serious maltreatment occurred is to be designated the removal household. Non-removal households are those with legal rights to the child (father's home, mother's home).

Code References

N/A

PROCEDURE

The Family Case Manager (FCM) will:

1. Answer all questions on the [Reunification Assessment \(Out-of-Home\)](#);
2. Determine the Reunification Risk Level, noting any appropriate Overrides;
3. Evaluate the Visitation Plan by indicating visit frequency and quality of visit;

4. Determine if any safety threats exist;
5. Indicate which protective factors mitigate the safety threats;
6. Indicate if any safety interventions could control the threat to safety;
7. Identify the safety decision;
8. Use the Placement/Permanency Guidelines decision tree to obtain a recommendation;
9. Use the Override function, in conjunction with supervisory approval to document a different case outcome;
10. Use the Recommendation Summary of all of the Reunification Assessment Components to make case recommendations; and
11. Discuss the results of the [Reunification Assessment \(Out-of-Home\)](#) with the CFT to develop a plan to assist in the identification and utilization of the families strengths, and informal supports to address needs.

If no safety threats exists and the risk is low to moderate, consider recommending case closure.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

Consider how safe the child would be if he/she were to be returned home at this time. Consider current conditions in the home, current caregiver characteristics, child characteristics, and interactions between caregivers and child during visitation. Note that safety threat items are the same as on the original safety assessment but may have slight variations to reflect the decision at hand. Prior to assessing the current safety, the worker should review the safety assessment that led to removal. Indicate (mark) whether any child vulnerabilities are present. Consider these vulnerabilities when reviewing safety items. Note that these vulnerability issues provide a context for safety assessment. The presence of one or more vulnerabilities does not automatically mean that the child is unsafe.

FORMS AND TOOLS

1. [SDM Reunification Assessment \(Out-of-Home\)](#)
2. [Indiana SDM Reunification Assessment Definitions](#)
3. [IN Guidebook](#)
4. [Family Functional Assessment \(FFA\) Field Guide](#) – Available on the Permanency and Practice Support (PPS) SharePoint

RELATED INFORMATION

Following the principles of family-centered practice, the reunification reassessment is completed in conjunction with each appropriate household and begins when a case is first opened. The case plan should be shared with the household at the beginning so that the household understands what is expected. The reunification reassessment form should be shared with the household at the same time so that the household understands exactly what will be used to evaluate reunification potential and the threshold they must reach. Specifically inform them of their original risk level, and explain that this will serve as the baseline for the reunification reassessment (unless a new referral is received, in which case the new risk level will be used). Explain that a new substantiation or failure to progress toward case plan goals would increase their risk level, and that progress toward case plan goals will reduce their risk level. Explain that both the quantity and quality of their visitation will be considered. Provide information on the reunification safety assessment and explain that if everything else would permit reunification,

the final consideration is safety. They must either demonstrate that no safety threats are present or there must be a plan to address any identified safety threats.

Risk Reassessment

Risk Reassessment is an assessment tool used by the FCM throughout the life of the child welfare case to determine the presence of risk factors that indicate the likelihood of future child maltreatment. The Risk Reassessment also assists FCMs in evaluating whether risk levels have decreased, remained the same, or have increased since the completion of the initial Risk Assessment. In addition to the Risk Reassessment Tool, FCMs should reference the [Family Functional Assessment \(FFA\) Field Guide](#) when working with self-identified Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, and Questioning (LGBTQ) youth. Risk assessment questions that may be helpful in determining the risk factors for LGBTQ youth can be found in the [FFA Field Guide](#).