



**Series:** 100: Case Management  
**Policy Name:** Reunification and Post Placement Supervision  
**Policy Number:** 114  
**Regulations:** DCF CFOP 170-7; FAC 30.008 ; SB 664

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**Policy:** When reunification is the permanency goal for a child, it is the policy of Communities Connected for Kids and its subcontract providers to work towards that goal. In all instances, Communities Connected for Kids will meet or exceed requirements of CFOP 170-7 in the efforts made to ensure safe and timely reunification. The Communities Connected for Kids case manager will document in the client file and in reports to the court that these steps have been carefully followed.

**Procedure:**

**Court Ordered Out of Home Placement**

1. When a child is in temporary custody, by order of the court, the Judge must **explicitly approve** release of the child from custody. Release of the child without court approval could result in contempt action by the court.
2. If the court (Judge) orders Communities Connected for Kids to return a child to a parent or legal custodian, the child must be returned immediately, regardless of the provisions of the reunification policy.
3. If the ruling is made against the recommendations of the case manager and it is believed that conditions for return have not been met (using the safety analysis criteria), the case manager will immediately staff the case with their supervisor (consultation) and Children's Legal Services (CLS). It will then be determined if there are grounds for a rehearing. A motion for a stay or an emergency appeal could also be pursued. An immediate in-home safety plan will be put into effect to attempt to reduce the present dangers to the unsafe child. A maintain and strengthen case plan must be filed with the court within 14 days of any unrequested or unanticipated reunification made by the court.
4. In the event a Motion from a third party to reunify is received prior to the conditions for return being met, the case manager will contact their supervisor and CLS to arrange an immediate reunification staffing and thus be prepared to present to the court the reasons reunification is not appropriate at that time.
5. For children in an out-of-home placement with a case plan goal of reunification, the case manager must ensure that the parents are provided with reunification services that help identify and remedy the problems that resulted in the removal of the child.



**Family Engagement in Transition from Placement to Reunification (See also Policy 123- Family time:)**

1. The single most significant factor for successful reunification is regular and frequent parent-child contact, e.g., letters, calls, and visits. Prior to reunification, the mechanism is to increase the frequency of visitation between the child and family when permitted by the court, to allow the family to adjust and to observe parent and child interactions.
2. During initial family time visitations, the case manager or designee, will be present to:
  - a) Assist the parent and child in working toward reunification
  - b) Assist in minimizing the stress inherent in parental visiting
  - c) Observe and document progress
3. Progress and observations of family time will be documented in the client file and be used to:
  - a) Ensure that Communities Connected for Kids has facilitated family engagement by arranging and/or providing transportation when necessary and minimizing any other obstacles.
  - b) Determine whether the parent-child interactions are achieving the desired results.
  - c) Determine when it is appropriate for the case manager through a family services team to recommend that the court decrease or withdraw the requirement to supervise visitation.
  - d) Determine whether it is safe to proceed with increased frequency and duration of family time visitation.
4. In situations where the case manager's efforts to implement visitation or improve outcomes of the visits fail, the goal of reunification will be reconsidered (see concurrent case planning).



## Criteria for Reunification

The "Conditions for Return" are a written statement or statements of the specific behaviors, conditions, or circumstances that must exist within a child's home before a child can safely return and remain in the home with an in-home ongoing safety plan while the parents continue to work toward reaching case plan outcomes. While the statements are based on the common criteria that must be met in order to establish an in-home safety plan, they are uniquely tailored to the specific behaviors, circumstances or conditions of each family.

1. The "Conditions for Return" will be established in the FFA-Investigations whenever children have been released, relocated or removed in response to present or impending danger.
2. The "Child Safety Analysis Summary" will provide a clear summary as to why the family's circumstances did or did not meet criteria for an in-home safety plan. The Conditions for Return should reflect the unique application of the criteria to the family. The following table reflects the relationship between the two:

<b>Child Safety Analysis Summary</b>	<b>Conditions for Return</b>
Whether or not the parent/legal guardians were willing for an in-home safety plan to be developed, implemented, and demonstrated that they would cooperate with all identified safety service providers.	If parents were not willing, what would need to happen in order for them to become willing? If parents could not demonstrate that they would cooperate with providers, what would they need to do to demonstrate that commitment?
Whether or not the home environment was calm and consistent enough for an in-home safety plan to be implemented and for safety service providers to be in the home safely.	If the home environment were not calm and consistent enough, what exactly would need to be different in order for safety service providers to be in the home safely?
Whether safety services (formal or from the family resource network) were 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.	What specific safety services need to become available? If there are services to be provided by the family resource network, what needs to happen in order for the family resource to be able to participate in the safety plan?
Whether 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.	If a professional evaluation is needed, what needs to be learned from the evaluation in order to develop an in-home safety plan? How will the evaluation inform conditions for return?
Whether the parent/legal guardians have a physical location in which to implement an in-home safety plan.	If the parents do not have a physical location in which to implement a plan, what needs to happen in order for the parent to have a location?



3. The child welfare professional shall assess Conditions for Return at every staffing and hearing and on an on-going basis throughout the life of the case.
4. Within 10 business days of starting a Progress Update to reunify, the child welfare professional must update local criminal history checks, including required fingerprint submission for any household members 18 years of age or older.
5. Any decision to recommend returning the child home will be made in collaboration with participants during the Multi-Disciplinary Team Staffing and will include consideration of the following:
  - a) A Progress Update shall be used to assess the parent(s) protective capacities, home environment and backgrounds for Reunification. The progress update must indicate in the safety analysis that conditions for return have been met.
  - b) An in-home safety plan is now feasible and has been completed with the family.
  - c) The family has an established support system made up of individuals such as family members, extended relatives, church members, neighbors, friends, foster parents, employers, and providers. These supports may also participate in the safety management process.
  - d) Persons responsible for maltreatment, classified egregious in nature, will not have access to the child.
  - e) Safety Management Services focus is on the specific danger threats and protective capacities that make it unsafe to return the child home.
  - f) Informal Safety Management providers have been background screened.
  - g) The Development of a proposed Maintain & Strengthen case plan
  - h) Transition planning
6. If reunification is the recommendation, the MDT staffing form, a maintain and strengthen case plan, transition plan, and in home safety plan must be filed with the court at least 72 hours prior to the hearing date or with the motion if stipulation has been obtained by all parties.

### **Post Placement Supervision**

1. The court is required to exercise a minimum 6-months continuing jurisdiction after a child is returned home. When the case manager recommends and the court orders post-placement supervision for 6 months, the process will include:
  - a) Updating computer systems to indicate the change from substitute care to in-home care.
  - b) If the child is reunified with parents, the case plan will include services and supports the family needs to assist in successful reunification.
  - c) An In-home safety plan
  - d) The amended case plan with a goal of maintain and strengthen must be filed with the court minimally 72 hours prior to reunification being recommended. Case plans will include specific provisions regarding the need for child-care or early education programs.
2. Post reunification visits must occur in the home with all children and parents.



All visits are to be face to face individually with each child and documented in the client file.

The frequency for face-to-face visitation upon reunification is based on the in-home safety plan and should be determined based on the intensity needed, the availability of appropriate safety service providers, age of children (vulnerability), etc. The frequency of visitation must be documented in a supervisory consultation.

Changes in the frequency may only be made when a supervisory consultation has occurred and through the supervisor review of the safety plan, the level of intrusiveness needs to be changed either more intrusive or less intrusive.

3. If a parent or person responsible will not allow observation of the child, for whatever reason, the person making the home visit will immediately contact their supervisor for guidance in gaining access to the child.
4. Compliance with enrollment requirements of the Rilya Wilson Act (i.e., age 3 years to school entry, under court ordered protective supervision and enrolled in a licensed early education or childcare program must be enrolled to participate in the program 5 days a week).
5. Compliance with attendance and absence-reporting requirements of the Rilya Wilson Act (i.e., unexcused/excused absences).
6. The child's adjustment will be evaluated throughout the post-placement supervision period.
7. If the case manager becomes aware of conditions or activities in the child's home, that threaten the safety of the child, that the case manager take whatever steps are necessary to protect the child, and make a report to the Florida Abuse hotline if applicable.
8. Following six months of post-placement supervision (after care), the case manager will submit a Judicial Review Report (JR) including Progress update documenting the family's after care case plan progress.
  - a) When the case manager considers that case plan requirements have been met, parental capacities enhanced and the child is safe, and no further safety plan is required, the case manager will recommend a motion to terminate supervision.
  - b) The court order terminating supervision must be received before supervision is terminated or the case is closed.
  - c) It is the responsibility of the case manager to see that the court order terminating supervision is filed in the child's client record (FSFN) and the computer systems are updated to indicate case closure.
  - d) If the court orders after care supervision beyond six months, a JR will be submitted to the court at least every six months until termination of the case can be achieved.
  - e) If risk factors are present to the extent the case manager recommends continued supervision, these risk factors must be specified.



- f) An after-care case plan update or amendment to address the risk factors must be submitted to the court for approval.

9. Upon reunification the parent(s) must reapply for Medicaid coverage, Food Stamps and/or Cash assistance for their household as coverage is discontinued while in care. If the reunified child receives Social Security Benefits, the parent(s) must reapply with the Social Security Administration to be named as the Representative Payee. CC Kids will return any conserved funds directly to SSA and the new Payee will receive those funds after a full SSA review is conducted.

### **Reintegration of Children Placed Out of State**

1. Pre-placement planning with a parent or relative who lives in another state must include:
  - a) A request for a home study through the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC).
  - b) A clear understanding by the relative that the child may be reunified with the parent or custodian from whom the child was removed
  - c) The out-of-state person's agreement to cooperate in return of the child to Florida for reunification purposes, when requested.
  - d) The other state's social services contact and the out-of-state person with whom placement is being made must understand that parent/child contact may be limited to telephone calls and letters with few or no face-to-face visits.
  - e) Reunification with a parent outside of Florida requires approval through ICPC, per s. 409.401, F.S.
2. Reunification of children returning to Florida who have been legally placed in another state through an ICPC requires careful planning to ensure that the following take place:  
All aspects of inter-family communication Coordination with the social services worker in the other state travel arrangements.
3. Florida's court jurisdiction over the child remains in effect during a legal placement in the other state, through an ICPC, and is legally sufficient to cause the return of the child for the purpose of reunification. However, if the parent or relative in the other state will not cooperate with the department in the return of the child, then the court may have to assert jurisdiction by issuing a pick-up order. Any such pick-up order should also direct the Sheriff to put the pick-up order on the Criminal Information Computer (CIC) System. This necessary precaution will afford some protection to a case manager who may be sent to pick up the child in another state or enable the case manager to obtain law enforcement assistance in the other state with the pick-up.
4. Written progress reports by the supervising social worker in the other state are essential for judicial reviews. Accordingly, case manager to case manager telephone contact is necessary, and notification of court dates will ensure the availability of reports in time for court hearings. Direct transmission of reports is encouraged as long as a copy is also provided to the central Interstate Compact Office in each state. Frequency of progress reports may be determined by a case staffing, or directed by court order, but must occur quarterly at a minimum.

