




**New Children in Families with Active Investigations or Case Services or Where Involuntary Termination of Parental Rights has Occurred in the Past**

<b><u>Department Name</u></b> Quality Management		
<b><u>CHAPTER:</u></b>	<b><u>SUBJECT:</u></b> New Children in Families with Active Investigations or Case Services or Where Involuntary Termination of Parental Rights has Occurred in the Past.	<b><u>POLICY NUMBER:</u></b> QM-031
<b><u>APPROVAL:</u></b> 	<b><u>EFFECTIVE DATE:</u></b> 6/26/06	<b><u>REPLACES (policy # and date):</u></b> CFOP 175-72

- I. **PURPOSE:** This policy and procedure establishes the measures which shall be taken to ensure the safety of a child born into a family pending an investigation, or where involuntary termination of parental rights has occurred in the past, or any other circumstance involving a new child born who is living in the home where all other children are currently in out-of-home foster care, relative placements or non-relative placements under active supervision, are under in-home protective supervision (including voluntary) or foster-care post-placement supervision.
- II. **REVIEW HISTORY:** New Policy.
- III. **CONTACT:** Quality Management Department.
- IV. **PERSONS AFFECTED:** Children’s Network of Southwest Florida Staff and Contracted Case Management Organizations.
- V. **POLICY:** This operating procedure establishes the measures which shall be taken to ensure the safety of a child born into a family or any other circumstance involving a new child who is living in the home, or where involuntary termination of parental rights has occurred in the past where all other children are currently in out-of-home foster care or relative placements under active supervision, or are under in-home protective supervision (including voluntary), or foster care post-placement supervision.
- VI. **RATIONALE:** This policy clarifies what procedure to follow when a child is born into a family with an open dependency case or a voluntary case with The Children’s Network.
- VII. **CROSS REFERENCES:** Section 39.521, Florida Statutes (F.S.).

VIII. **PROCEDURES:**

1. Out-of-Home Foster Care and Protective Supervision Services (Relative and Non-Relative) Placements, In-Home Protective Supervision Cases and Foster Care Post-Placement Supervision Cases.

- a. The assigned child welfare case manager shall immediately report to the supervisor a pending birth, a child born into a family or any other circumstance involving a new child who is living in the home where all other children are currently in an out-of-home placement and under active supervision, under in-home protective supervision or under voluntary protective supervision.
- b. The current assigned child welfare case manager shall visit the home within 72 hours of notification of the change in the family's circumstances and conduct an assessment to determine the safety of the new child in the home. A staffing will be held with the supervisor to review the potential effect the addition of the new child may have on the family's current ability to handle stress. The child welfare case manager and supervisor shall determine, in consultation with the child welfare legal services attorney, whether an abuse report needs to be called in on the new child and any needed changes to the current case plan. If the child welfare legal services attorney concludes that there is not legal sufficiency to call in a report, it shall be documented in the HomeSafenet case record.
- c. If the initial decision is to leave the new child in the home even though other children in the home are currently placed in out-of-home care, the written approval of the Program Administrator must be obtained and documented in the HomeSafenet case record.
- d. In all cases, the new child shall be added in HomeSafenet as a participant of the family receiving services. The court and guardian ad litem program, if appointed, shall be notified by the child welfare case manager.

2. Cases Involving a Child Born to a Child in Foster Care.

- a. The minor child in foster care who gives birth while living in a foster home shall be provided counseling by appropriate staff, including adoptions staff, to assist her in arriving at a suitable and realistic plan for her own future and for that of her baby and in making the choice whether to keep and care for her child or relinquish the child for adoptive placement.

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1. If the mother decides to place the child for adoption, she shall be referred to a licensed child-placing agency for adoption planning with agency staff.
  2. If the mother chooses to keep her child or is uncertain, placement for the mother and her child shall be, unless contrary to the best interests of the infant, in the same foster home or residential program in order to strengthen their attachment and provide the mother with the opportunity to learn child-caring skills from the foster mother or residential program staff. In cases where the mother's emotional or mental capacity to parent are in question or the mother has a juvenile delinquency history involving acts of violence, the child welfare case manager shall secure a psychological evaluation of the mother to assess coping skills, mental health issues and abilities to parent. The findings and recommendations set forth in the evaluation shall be considered in determining whether or not the mother can be a safe, viable placement for the child.
- b. In all cases, diligent efforts must be made to establish the child's paternity and to locate and involve the father in developing permanency plans.
  - c. The cases shall be reported to law enforcement if there is reason to suspect that the mother was impregnated as a result of a forceful act or by someone over the age of 18 years. It is the responsibility of law enforcement, working with the State Attorney, to determine if a crime has been committed. Note: see sections 794.011, 794.05, 800.04, and 827.04, Florida Statutes (FS).
  - d. If the child welfare case manager believes that, despite the mother's age, a voluntary placement agreement is appropriate, the case shall be staffed with the lead agencies case management organizations Program Administrator. Voluntary services shall not be offered without concurrence from the Program Administrator, and that concurrence or disagreement must be documented in the HomeSafenet case record.
  - e. If the mother refused to enter into a voluntary placement agreement and has not evidenced sufficient maturity and stability to provide for the child, the child welfare case manager shall call in an abuse report in regards to the baby on grounds of threatened harm or that there is no parent, legal custodian or responsible adult relative to provide supervision and care, pursuant to Chapter 39 of the Florida Statutes, with notice to the father, if known.
  - f. In all cases where the child remains with the mother, the child welfare case manager shall register the newborn in HomeSafenet as a foster care client, and shall notify the court and the guardian ad litem program, if appointed,

of the birth.

- g. Case plans with young mothers in foster care must focus on school attendance, skills training and counseling which will enable the mother to make appropriate decisions for the child. The mother shall be referred for family planning and any other needed health services, and the case plan shall also include any necessary medical and other services pertaining to the infant. Depending on the age of the mother, tasks shall include parenting classes, vocational training, money management and any other relevant tasks which will assist in preparing the young mother for living on her own with her child. The case plan must also address any judicial determinations made in regard to the mother and her child.
- h. The goal of the case plan shall be determined through a staffing with the mother, her birth parents (unless termination of parental rights has occurred or it is not in the best interest of the mother), foster parents, the guardian ad litem, if appointed, child welfare case manager supervisor and any other parties deemed appropriate by the child welfare case manager or invited by the mother. A report of the staffing shall be signed by all parties participating and placed in the case file.