



16.12, Severe Abuse Review

Application: To All Department of Children's Services Family Service Workers and Supervisors

Authority: TCA 37-5-105(3); 37-5-106; 37-5-112; 37-1-130

Standards: CFS 8.02; 8.04; 8.05

Original Effective Date: 11/15/96
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Supersedes: 08/24/22
Last Review Date: 2/19/25

Glossary: None

Policy Statement:

The Department of Children's Services returns all dependent/ neglected children/youth to the home of their parents or caretakers when it is determined that the risks to the health and the safety of the child/youth have been adequately reduced and the circumstances or behaviors contributing to the child/youth's commitment have been sufficiently remedied. When custodial children are victims of severe abuse, the Department takes additional steps to ensure safety, support, well-being and permanency by conducting a Severe Abuse Review prior to beginning unsupervised visitation or Trial Home Visits.

Purpose:

The purpose of a multi-supervisory level review and approval process is to provide additional oversight and care for children who have been victims of severe abuse as they reunify with parents or caretakers. This process promotes safety and minimizes trauma to the child/youth and ensures that the causes for the severe abuse petition or adjudication are absent and the child/youth can return home without the threat of harm.

Procedures:

A. Severe Abuse Review

1. The Severe Abuse Review is a review and approval process developed to ensure that children/youth who have been victims of severe abuse are returning to a safe environment with support in place for the family to be successful. Severe abuse cases are defined as cases where a parent or caretaker has been subject to a severe abuse petition or adjudicated for severe abuse. This process must be completed prior to beginning unsupervised visits or a Trial Home Visit (THV) with a parent or

caretaker that has been subject to a severe abuse petition or adjudicated for severe abuse.

2. This process should involve ongoing discussion throughout the case to avoid a delay in permanency. This discussion should occur in permanency planning development, through Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTM), and in supervision consultation. The process should be completed before any court hearings involving unsupervised visitation or reunification are requested.
3. At times, staff encounter courts that unexpectedly order a THV or unsupervised visitation for severe abuse cases that have not had a Severe Abuse Review. DCS requests of the Judge permission to complete the Severe Abuse Review process prior to beginning the unsupervised visit or THV. However, if the Judge does not agree, the TL documents the court's decision as a Severe Abuse Review Consultation in the Electronic Records System.
4. If the court orders a Trial Home Visit or unsupervised visitation prior to a Severe Abuse Review, DCS staff will complete the review within 10 (ten) business days and submit a summary of the review to the court.

B. Cases Requiring a Severe Abuse Review

1. All open custodial cases where a child/youth is being returned to a parent or caretaker who has been subject to a severe abuse petition or adjudicated for severe abuse requires a Severe Abuse Review.
2. If severe abuse was alleged in the petition or adjudicated, but DCS is reunifying with a non-offending family member, a Severe Abuse Review is not required.

NOTE: Additional cases may be included in Severe Abuse Reviews at the discretion of the Regional Director, Child Protective Services Regional Director and/or Juvenile Justice Director.

Please refer to the [Protocol for Severe Abuse Review](#) for additional information regarding the steps necessary when conducting a severe abuse review.

Additionally, utilize [CS-4280, Severe Abuse Review](#) when documenting a Severe Abuse Review.

Forms:

[CS-0747, Child and Family Team Meeting Summary](#)

[CS-4280, Severe Abuse Review](#)

Collateral Documents:

[Protocol for Severe Abuse Review](#)

[Case Closure Protocol](#)

[Child and Family Team Meeting Guide](#)

[Visitation Guide](#)

[Protocol for Safe Sleep Education and Delivery of Safe Sleep Furniture](#)