



Administrative Policies and Procedures: 16.12

Subject:	Severe Abuse Review
Authority:	TCA 37-5-105(3); 37-5-106; 37-5-112; 37-1-130
Standards:	None
Application:	To All Department of Children's Services Family Service Workers and Supervisors

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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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
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	<p>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 TFACTS.</p>
<p>B. Cases Requiring a Severe Abuse Review</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 3. If the court has already ordered the return of the child/youth to a parent or caretaker who has been subject to a severe abuse petition or adjudication, a Severe Abuse Review is not required. <p>NOTE: Additional cases may be included in Severe Abuse Reviews at the discretion of the Regional Administrator, Child Protective Services Director and/or Juvenile Justice Director. (Refer to Form CS-0251, Local Administrative Procedures and Protocols for Facilities/Regions).</p>
<p>C. Review Process for Unsupervised Visits</p>	<p>Prior to the beginning of unsupervised visits, a request for a Severe Abuse Review must be submitted and approved by the Regional Administrator (RA), Deputy RA, Regional Juvenile Justice Director or a Regional Designee with a Master's Degree in Social Work (hereinafter referenced as the designated reviewer).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The assigned Family Service Worker (FSW) reviews the case with their Team Leader (TL) prior to the Child and Family Team Meeting (CFTM). As part of this review, the FSW and TL review together the Family Permanency Plan along with the requirements listed on the plan and all supporting documentation (including, but not limited to, drug screens, assessments, professional letter recommendations, and Child and Family Team Meeting summaries). The FSW and TL determine if the case is ready to move forward for discussion in the CFTM. If the recommendation to move forward towards unsupervised visits or a THV occurs in a CFTM unexpectedly and prior to the FSW and TL having the discussion, this FSW and TL review occurs within five (5) business days of the CFTM. 2. The Child and Family Team meets and discusses the readiness of the family to transition to unsupervised visitation. The Child and Family Team should review the case and consider safety, assessments, and progress on the goals and actions steps of the permanency plan when making a recommendation and provide a clear plan for the unsupervised visitation including parameters, services, and other needs of the child or family. This should be documented on the Child and Family Team Meeting Summary. 3. The TL and FSW review the case with the supervising Team Coordinator (TC) within three (3) business days.

	<p>4. If the TC agrees with the team's decision to move forward, the TC submits a written request outlining the current recommendations to the reviewer and provides supporting documentation to the designated reviewer. The TC uploads this request in TFACTS in the child/youth's electronic record under the Document Category-"Permanency", Document Type-"Severe Abuse Documentation."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The request should be a report that covers the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk factors and circumstances that were present at the time of entering custody and the progress in reducing risk of further harm of abuse and neglect; • Family/Informal supports; • Protective factors exhibited by parent/caregiver to mitigate future abuse or further risk of harm to the child/youth; • Professional reports (letters from therapists, reports from providers, and drug screens if applicable); • Results of criminal background checks, inclusive of pending criminal and civil charges, the status of those charges, and input from the District Attorney (DA)'s office and/or other Child Protective Investigative Team (CPIT) partners; • Progress on Permanency Plan completion; • Recommendations from the Child and Family Team including input from the child/youth when appropriate; and • Recommendations from legal consult. <p>5. The designated reviewer reviews the request within five (5) business days. If approved, they notify the TC and the Associate General Counsel and documents the decision in the Electronic Case File, as a Consultation, Consultation type: Severe Abuse Review.</p> <p>6. If the designated reviewer does not approve, they provide that feedback to the TC along with suggestions on how to move the case towards permanency and documents the decision in the Electronic Case File, as a Consultation, Consultation Type: Severe Abuse Review.</p> <p>7. Upon approval of the designated reviewer and the Associate General Counsel, a motion is filed to ask the court for visitation limits to be lifted. The approval must occur prior to securing a court date.</p>
<p>D. Review Process for Trial Home Visits</p>	<p>To begin a Trial Home Visit, the TC provides the Regional Administrator (RA), Deputy RA, Regional Juvenile Justice Director or a Regional Designee with a Master's Degree in Social Work a written update of the information provided in the original Severe Abuse Review. If there was no prior review, the review for THV should follow the process outlined in section C. The TC should also provide the plan for transitioning the child/youth home and address the reduction of trauma for the child/youth. The designated reviewer provides a decision within five (5)</p>

	business days and documents the decision and any supporting details in the Electronic Case File, as a Consultation, Consultation Type: Severe Abuse Review.
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Forms:	<u>CS-0483, Notice and Motion - Unruly</u> <u>CS-0747, Child and Family Team Meeting Summary</u>
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Collateral documents:	<u>Case Closure Protocol</u> <u>Child and Family Team Meeting Guide</u> <u>Visitation Guide</u> <u>Protocol for Safe Sleep Education and Delivery of Safe Sleep Furniture</u>
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