

Practice Guide for Licensing Workers

Assessment

MITEAM COMPETENCY

Licensing is the process of collecting and assessing information to determine if a home is suitable for a foster care placement. The assessment process involves the licensing staff engaging with potential caregivers to acquire the information needed to assess compliance, along with the caregiver's capacity and commitment to serve the characteristics of the children in care. Licensing staff utilize opportunities for engagement to assess the needs of caregivers in an effort to provide support and aide in recruitment and retention strategies.

Assessment is an ongoing process of information gathering, analysis and collaborative decision-making that includes parents, children, caregivers, extended family members and professionals as partners. A comprehensive family assessment is a compilation of evaluations used to design plans and provide children and parents services that focus on safety, permanency and well-being.

FIDELITY MEASURES

Observation:

- Asks the individual(s) to identify strengths.
- Asks the individual(s) to identify primary needs.
- Asks the individual(s) about events that have been experienced that are potentially traumatic.
- When developing or adjusting the plan, asks for team member's input.
- Asks individual(s) their perspective on the parent's ability to keep the child(ren)/youth safe.
- If child(ren)/youth is not residing with custodial parent:
- Asks individual(s) their perspective on the caregiver's ability to keep the child(ren)/youth safe.
- If child(ren)/youth is not residing with custodial parent: Inquires about the caregiver's perspective on the impact of traumatic events on the child.

Documentation:

- A team that provides support to the child(ren)/youth and family has been formed.
- The worker prepares the family team members for participation on the team.
- The family's suggestions and comments are documented in the case file.
- The team member's suggestions and comments are documented in the case file.
- Documentation indicates the worker maintained contact with the family and support persons between in-person meetings.
- The family's team meets within the required timeframes (FOM 722-6B).
- There is evidence in the documentation that the team implements specific safety activities to address safety concerns of the child(ren)/youth.
- There is evidence in the documentation that the team addresses specific permanency plans.
- There is evidence in the documentation that the team addresses specific issues of well-being for the child(ren)/youth.
- The history of the family's involvement with MDHHS is thoroughly reviewed and outlined in the case file.
- The case file contained documentation of a trauma screening for the child(ren)/youth.
- The case file contained documentation of completion of a mental health screening as noted on the child's well child exam form.
- The worker documented a thorough assessment of the family's circumstances.

	<p>Interview:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The individual(s) reports being satisfied with services offered and/or referred. • The individual(s) reports the worker acknowledged religious and/or cultural beliefs. • The individual(s) described specific examples where his/her input was utilized in decision-making. <p>In Supervision:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify what is most important to the individual/family. • Identify how trauma has potentially impacted each individual. • Identify how the parent participates in the process of change.
<p>POLICY REQUIREMENTS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and educate prospective caregivers to ensure safety of children in out of home placements. • Give preference to placement with a relative - if all requirements are fulfilled - when children must be removed from their home. • Place children in the most family-like setting and keep siblings together whenever possible. • Initial and ongoing assessment of rule compliance and safety, as well as thorough recruitment and retention efforts. • Preserve and encourage permanent connections with siblings and caring and supportive adults. • Assess placements that helps facilitate and support return home if the permanency plan is reunification. • Consider a placement with a view toward preparing the child for permanency.
<p>HOW TO USE YOUR SUPERVISOR</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second set of objective eyes when you are trying to identify concerns. • Explore, with supervisor, community resources and services to assist in placement stability. • Discuss with supervisor ways to facilitate engagement with family members. • Seek review by supervisor of assessment and decisions around placement. • Explore, with supervisor, ways to assess prospective caregiver's willingness and ability to assist in ensuring birth parents spend natural, quality time with the child. • Track causes of foster home closures to identify effective recruitment and retention strategies.
<p>LICENSING ACTIVITIES PRACTICE GUIDANCE</p> <p>TECHNIQUES</p>	
<p>LICENSING ACTIVITY</p> <p><i>Assess the foster/kinship parent's ability, strengths and needs.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist prospective parents in assessing his/her own strengths, needs, motivations and parental capacities. • Conduct an assessment of the safety of the home and barriers within the home, including conditions of the home (i.e. fire alarms, gun locks). • Assess willingness and ability of prospective parents to work effectively with birth parents and educate on the positive impact that shared parenting will have on the child. • Assess prospective foster/adoptive/kinship parent's ability and willingness to make a permanent commitment to the child or youth. • Create a plan to address needs and barriers that are identified for that prospective foster parent to becoming licensed. This plan should include the resources and supports that may be needed to meet the needs of the prospective parent • Update the plan as needed to ensure that supports are in place to meet any needs or barriers identified for the caregiver.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observe family relationships (how the family members relate to each other) to understand responses to questions asked as a part of the assessment. Assess the extent to which parent responses align with your observations. • Spend time with the prospective parent in person. Use questionnaires as tools and not as replacement for interviews and in person interaction. • Thoroughly complete all forms in a timely manner to provide a comprehensive assessment. • Listen to what children in the parent’s care are saying about their experiences in the home. This may include biological, adoptive or other foster children. • Ask prospective parents about how he or she would handle certain behaviors or events (i.e. child steals a toy from a friend at school, biological parent is interested in joining you for a meeting with the child’s teacher). • Ask prospective parent if he or she has experienced trauma. If he or she has, help him or her understand how this might affect his or her parenting style. • Think of creative ways to remove barriers to placement. This assessment includes knowing when a variance is appropriate. • Ask the tough questions. Be direct, but also culturally sensitive. • Gather input from the prospective parent about certain child characteristics, conditions and/or life experiences that may be a good fit for his or her strengths and capacities (i.e. medically fragile child, children with significant trauma histories, children who have experienced multiple moves, children with ADHD or depression).
<p>LICENSING ACTIVITY</p> <p><i>Use assessment information to match children and youth to the most suitable placements and inform recruitment efforts.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce trauma for children by matching them to the most appropriate placements and planning for transitions. • Assist caseworkers in making thorough and timely placement and replacement decisions. • Utilize opportunities to team with the child’s caseworker and birth parents to understand more about the child (i.e. what he or she loves to do, family members, natural supports, needs, what he or she wants and needs). • Read the child’s file. Look for family members and other persons who may be able to care for the child (i.e. grandmother of the child’s best friend in kindergarten). • Find out as much as you can about the child before reaching out to any prospective foster/kinship/adoptive parents or group home/hospital staff. • Meet with the prospective foster/kinship/adoptive parent to discuss the child and the needs he or she may have in order to care for the child. • Use information gathered from assessment tools to help inform whether or not to place a child in a particular home. (i.e. screening assessments, mental health status assessments and trainings) • Request placements for children that align with the types of services caregivers are willing and able to provide (i.e. matches service types). • Recruit a variety of homes to facilitate thoughtful placement decisions. • Reinforce early and often the goal to return home.