

## Chapter 9

LICENSING RESPONSE TO REPORTS  
INVOLVING A FOSTER PARENT (“Licensed Foster Care Assessment”)

9-1. Purpose. This operating procedure provides requirements for the local system of care response to reports involving a licensed foster care provider. A child placed in foster care may disclose abuse, neglect or abandonment that occurred prior to or during their placement. When any report alleges abuse, neglect or abandonment by a foster parent, the department must ensure that there is an assessment of the local system of care’s due diligence in providing the foster parent(s) with the support necessary to care for vulnerable children. This operating procedure applies to any child welfare professional responsible for investigations, case management, licensing, intake and placement.

Note: CFOP 170-5, Chapter 28 provides requirements for the Child Protective Investigator’s (investigator) response to the investigation component of the Licensed Foster Care Assessment.

9-2. Legal Authority.

- a. Sections 39.01(10), (32), (47); 39.302; 39.307; 39.701(2), Florida Statutes.
- b. 65C-13.024-13.030; 13.032; 13.034 Florida Administrative Code.
- c. 65C-28.04; 28.017 Florida Administrative Code.
- d. 65C-29.04; 29.06 Florida Administrative Code.
- e. 65C-30.05; 30.07; 30.011, 30.015 Florida Administrative Code.
- f. 409.175(3)(b), Florida Administrative Code.

9-3. Definitions.

- a. “Licensed Foster Care Assessment” means a review of the child welfare system’s activities to manage and support a foster parent alleged to have abused, neglected or abandoned a child in their care.
- b. “Report or “Hotline Report” means the intake created from an allegation to the Florida Abuse Hotline alleging knowledge or a suspicion that a child has been abused, neglected or abandoned by a parent, guardian, adult household member other person responsible for a child’s welfare.
- c. “Specialist” as used in this chapter means a person responsible for foster home licensing activities including support of foster parents and re-licensure.

9-4. Local Protocol for Reports Involving a Foster Home.

- a. The Regional Licensing Authority will ensure that there is a local protocol that provides the operational details for collaboration between all agencies involved in the response to a report involving a licensed foster parent. The Regional Licensing Authority per [65C-13.034](#) is ultimately responsible for appropriate follow-up on recommended licensing actions resulting from a report alleging maltreatment associated with a licensed foster parent.
- b. The protocol will include each CBC/Lead Agency, Supervising Agency, Department program or Sheriff’s Office performing investigations. Case Management Organizations (CMO) will be included as determined locally.

c. The protocol will include the specific local process to achieve a coordinated, multi-agency response to a report alleging maltreatment by a foster parent. It will also include the following:

- (1) The decision-making process when a child in a foster home should be moved to a new setting.
- (2) The child welfare professionals to be involved in determining maltreatment findings.
- (3) The parties responsible for training and developing the expertise of its licensing, placement and intake staff. Training will address the coordinated response.
- (4) The procedures for resolution of foster parent concerns related to the Licensing Assessment. The Regional Licensing Authority will be the final arbiter responsible when resolution at the agency level is not achieved. The resolution process will include any of the following:
  - (a) The foster parent believes that they have not been treated in a respectful, professional manner.
  - (b) Requirements in this operating procedure have not been followed.
  - (c) A child welfare professional assigned to the team has a possible conflict of interest.

d. The protocol must align with local procedures in place to establish and manage Child Placement Agreements per CFOP 170-11, [Chapter 4](#).

e. To minimize any conflict of interest when conducting a review of agency management and support of a foster home, the protocol will identify the agencies responsible for system assessment activities based on the following different living arrangements for the child in the intake:

- (1) The child lives with a foster home provider licensed through the CBC/Lead Agency.
- (2) The child lives with a foster home provider licensed through an agency under contract with the CBC/Lead Agency or one of the agency's sub-contractors.
- (3) The child lives with a foster home provider licensed by a supervising agency directly through the Regional Licensing Authority.
- (4) The child lives with a foster home provider whose home is managed by a supervising agency that has both licensing and case management responsibility.

f. Law enforcement will only be requested to respond on any foster care investigation or foster care referral when there is a concern for the safety of an employee, household member, or other's safety and/or if any criminal activity is suspected or becomes known.

#### 9-5. Conducting a Licensed Foster Care Assessment.

a. The investigator will notify the Regional Licensing Authority within 1 business day of any new report involving a licensed foster parent. The Regional Licensing Authority will notify the agency responsible per the local protocol for convening a multi-agency team to conduct a Licensed Foster Care Assessment.

- (1) The licensing agency will assign a licensing specialist to review the provider record. Whenever possible, the licensing specialist should complete the record review and communicate the

information learned to the professional(s) responsible for conducting interviews before the interviews occur.

(2) The CBC/Lead Agency, Supervising Agency, Investigator and CMO will collaborate in conducting the investigation and other components of the Assessment to minimize the number of interviews for the foster parent(s).

(3) The investigator will schedule and conduct the interviews necessary for the investigation per requirements in CFOP 170-5, Chapter 28.

(4) The Licensed Foster Home Assessment will be completed regardless of the investigation findings unless the report was patently unfounded per CFOP 170-5, [Chapter 23](#).

(5) The Licensed Foster Home Assessment team will conduct the interviews and activities necessary to complete the assessment, document results and formulate recommendations as a team.

(6) The Assessment must be completed no later than 60 days from receipt of the hotline report.

b. The team lead will:

(1) Notify agencies that need to participate in the assessment.

(2) After the investigator has commenced the investigation, provide the foster parent(s) with names of all persons involved. The team lead will explain the role of each person and how information will be gathered.

(3) Assist team members in determining what interviews are necessary and which interviews should involve more than one team member.

(4) Provide supportive communications with the foster family during the course a foster home investigation. The supervising agency will assess whether the family will need additional services to help them cope.

(5) Discuss findings with foster parent(s).

(a) When findings are verified, there must be a team staffing prior to meeting with the foster parent(s) to determine next steps, including whether any child in the home must be moved.

(b) The discussion with foster parent(s) should occur in conjunction with the Team Lead and Supervising Agency representative.

(c) The team lead will provide a status of the ongoing Assessment.

c. Initial 14-day Staffing. An initial staffing must be convened within 14 calendar days of commencement of the Licensing Assessment. The investigator and licensing specialist will collaborate to determine who shall attend the staffing. Discretion shall be utilized when sharing information with foster parents when there are pending criminal charges, if the staffing would interfere in the investigation, when there are safety reasons, or when this would not be in the best interest of the child. The purpose of the staffing is to provide the foster parent(s) with the following information.

(1) The status of the investigation and the other components of the Licensing Assessment.

(2) The next steps and actions necessary to complete the Licensing Assessment.

(3) Discuss any suggestions or concerns that the foster parent(s) have.

(4) If the foster parent(s) do not attend the staffing, determine how they will be provided with the information discussed.

d. Preliminary Review of Completed Assessments.

(1) Team members will complete documentation of information gathered for the Assessment. Each participating agency or designee will determine and document assessment results in Section VII of the Assessment. Team members will submit documentation to the Team Leader.

(2) The Team Leader will compile one preliminary report and share with team members for review.

(3) Team members will review all information gathered and determine if there are any information discrepancies. The team leader will assist the team in determining whether any follow-up actions are necessary before the final team staffing to determine next steps.

e. Foster Care Assessment Staffing.

(1) The team lead will establish meeting logistics for the final Licensed Foster Care Assessment staffing.

(2) The team members responsible for the Assessment will conduct a staffing to review and discuss all information gathered. The Assessment document will be shared with the foster parent(s) and they will be invited to attend the staffing. The staffing will be for the purpose of the following:

(a) Review information gathered and results determined by each agency.

(b) Establish next steps for assisting the foster parent as necessary.

(c) Identify any systemic issues that need to be addressed.

f. Complete documentation of Foster Care Assessment.

(1) The Team Leader will document the "Next Steps" based on agreements reached at the foster care assessment staffing.

(2) The Team Leader will obtain signatures of all team members on the completed Assessment document.

(3) The final copy will be uploaded to FSFN on the Provider's page.

(4) A copy of the final assessment will be distributed to the foster parent(s) and all team members.

9-6. Assessment of Child-on-Child Sexual Abuse Reports in Licensed Foster Care. When a Child-on-Child Sexual Abuse Report is received for a child in licensed foster care, the investigator and the licensing specialist will collaborate in all investigative activities and the development of recommended actions per requirements in CFOP 170-5, paragraph 28-5.

9-7. FSFN Documentation.

a. Each section of the Licensed Foster Home Assessment will be completed by the child welfare professional(s) assigned per the local protocol.

b. Any child, caregiver and other collateral interviews conducted will be recorded in the FSFN Provider record within 2 business days.

c. The signed copy of the Assessment will be uploaded to FSFN as an attachment to the provider page.

d. The following FSFN resources are located on the [Center for Child Welfare](#) FSFN “How Do I Guide” page:

(a) FSFN User Guide for [Provider Licensing](#).

(b) FSFN “How Do I...[Guide](#)” for Person Provider.