



Department of Child Safety: Office of Quality Improvement Case Review Consultation & Elevation Process

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A coaching approach is used throughout the case review and consultation process.

- Case consultation is provided using a coaching approach that promotes a safe environment for learning, professional growth, and critical thinking skills.
- Case consultation provides a teaming approach to decision making in cases that are complex or when there are different points of view.
- A teaming approach improves decision making by offering a range of expertise, perspectives, and solutions.

The Office of Quality Improvement (OQI) reviews cases to evaluate service quality and practice fidelity with DCS policy, procedures, and practice guidelines.

OQI case reviewers provide case-specific consultation to support practice fidelity and promote knowledge, skills, and ability applying safety assessment and family engagement practice, so that positive safety, permanency and well-being outcomes are achieved. OQI provides practice trend observations to members of the DCS leadership team to inform quality improvement and strategic planning activities.

OQI conducts the following case review types:

- **Active Case Support** – Cases that have a combination of risk factors (such as young child victim, substance abuse, domestic violence, etc.) are flagged for case consultation support as early as the Hotline Report. Case consultation occurs while the investigation is occurring.
- **Practice Improvement Case Review (PICR)** – Random samples of investigation, in-home service, and out-of-home care cases are reviewed. One case per Field Operation and OCWI unit is reviewed annually. The investigation sample is limited to closed investigations. The in-home service and out-of-home care cases may be open or closed at the time of review.
- **Child and Family Services Review (CFSR)** – In-home service and out-of-home cases are reviewed based on sampling methodology provided by the Children's Bureau, United States Department of Health and Human Services; and using the CFSR On-Site Review Instrument. Case review results are provided to the Children's Bureau for use within the CFSR on-site review and program improvement plan phases.
- **Targeted Review** – Cases are reviewed to gather information about practice in a geographical area or on a particular practice topic. These ad hoc reviews are time-limited and subject-specific.
- **Administrator Requested Review** – A DCS Director, Deputy Director, Office of Child Welfare Investigations Chief, Regional Program Administrator, Chief Quality Improvement Officer, Ombudsman, or General Counsel may request that OQI review and consult on a case.

The Practice Improvement Unit in OQI maintains review sampling methodologies, instruments, rating standards, and procedures for each case review type.

Case consultation is provided by OQI on all Active Case Support and Administrator Requested Reviews, and as indicated during other case review types. OQI maintains a Case Consultation Process Guide.

The case consultation elevation process is used when OQI has reviewed a case and the reviewer identifies that:

- a child in the family may be unsafe due to significant gaps in information collection, an inaccurate safety decision, or an insufficient present danger plan or safety plan;
- a child in out-of-home care is unnecessarily separated from both parents due to a safety plan that is not least intrusive while remaining sufficient to control dangers; or
- a young person age 16 or older does not have an adequate plan to maintain safety and stability upon achieving adulthood and/or exiting DCS care.

The case elevation process is expected to occur rapidly, taking into account the urgency of the case situation.

- For situations indicating the child may be currently in danger, the elevation process will occur the same day the need is identified.
- For other situations, the process will occur within 48 hours.

The case elevation process involves Supervisors and Managers in the case consultation process to expand the range of expertise and perspectives, and decide the actions to be taken when there are different points of view.

The following steps are taken to obtain additional information or clarify existing information. The case reviewer will share observations made during the review of available information, and identify missing information. The individuals involved in the prior steps of the case consultation should be included in the subsequent steps, but only if their involvement will not delay the process moving forward timely.

Step 1: The case reviewer will call the DCS Specialist (DCSS) or OCWI Investigator and if he/she is not able to be reached via phone, an email will be sent to the DCSS or OCWI Investigator, with a carbon copy to the supervisor, requesting a phone call by a certain time.

- If the DCSS is not able to be reached, or the additional information shared does not resolve the concerns about the child(ren)'s safety, the case reviewer will initiate a case consultation (proceed to step 2).

Step 2: The case reviewer will initiate a case consultation with the DCSS or OCWI Investigator, Supervisor or OCWI Manager, and Supervision Coach.

- If the DCSS or OCWI Investigator and Supervisor or OCWI Manager are not able to be reached, or the additional information obtained during the case consultation is not sufficient to resolve all participants' concerns about the child(ren)'s safety and agreement is not reached about sufficient and timely actions, the case reviewer will request the Program Manager or OCWI Regional Manager join the case consultation discussion (proceed to step 3).

Step 3: The case reviewer will request the Program Manager or OCWI Regional Manager join the case consultation.

- If the Program Manager or OCWI Regional Manager is not able to be reached, or the additional information obtained during the case consultation is not sufficient to resolve all participants' concerns about the child(ren)'s safety and agreement is not reached about sufficient and timely actions, the case reviewer will request the Program Administrator or OCWI Chief join the case consultation discussion (proceed to step 4).

Step 4: The case reviewer will request the Program Administrator or OCWI Chief join the case consultation. The Deputy Director of Field Operations or the DCS Director (OCWI cases) and the Chief Quality Improvement Officer will be informed of the case consultation via email, including the steps previously taken in the case consultation elevation process to gather the additional information or resolve concerns about the child(ren)'s safety.

- If the Program Administrator or OCWI Chief is not able to be reached, or the additional information obtained during the case consultation is not sufficient to resolve all participants' concerns about the child(ren)'s safety and agreement is not reached about sufficient and timely actions, the case reviewer will call the Chief Quality Improvement Officer to inform of the specific case circumstances causing concern and the actions taken to date. The Chief Quality Improvement Officer will inform the DCS Deputy Director of Field Operations or DCS Director about the case circumstances and actions taken to date. The DCS Deputy Director or DCS Director will identify the actions to be taken and by whom in order to resolve the safety concern.

Case consultation may confirm there is sufficient information and documentation to resolve all concerns, or result in identification of specific actions to address the concerns.

If at any time during the case consultation process sufficient information is provided to resolve all participants' concerns about the child(ren)'s safety, the elevation process is ended and the reviewer continues with the regular case review process.

If at any time during the case consultation process a sufficient and timely plan to gather additional information and/or actions to address the safety concerns is made, the plan will be documented by the case reviewer via email to the DCSS or OCWI Investigator, Supervisor, Supervision Coach, and involved Administrators. The Supervision Coach (or Supervisor if a Supervision Coach is not involved) will respond to the email daily with updates until the additional information is gathered and/or the action steps are complete.