



Tennessee Department of Children's Services

High Risk Protocol

Supplemental to DCS Policy: 31.18 Safety Planning for High Risk Behaviors in Children and Youth in DCS Custody

The Department seeks to act in the best interest of Tennessee's children and youth. DCS works closely with foster homes and contract providers to ensure that children in their care are safe.

This protocol applies to youth placed in foster homes and residential settings.

A child/youth is deemed high risk when his/her behavior presents a risk to themselves or others or significantly impairs daily functioning and scores a "2" or a "3" on any of the following CANS high risk items:

- Danger to Others
- Sexually Reactive
- Sexual Aggression

High Risk Notifications:

In order to ensure all parties associated with high risk children/youth are aware of that child/youth's status, formal high risk notifications are sent as follows:

- The COE assessment consultant sends email notifications to regional staff (FSW/JSW, TL and appropriate Regional High Risk Team members) and the Division of Federal Programs of all children/youth that score high risk on the CANS assessment. These notifications are sent within one (1) business day of the finalization of the High Risk CANS.
- If the child/youth is placed with a contract agency or DCS foster home, the assigned FSW/JSW or TL forwards the email notification to the agency and/or Foster Parent Support. These notifications are sent within one (1) business day of receipt of the high risk notification from the COE assessment consultant.
- The notification requires that an immediate safety plan addressing the high risk behavior(s) be put into place for the high risk child/youth if he/she is placed in a foster home.
- Contract agencies and/or FSW/JSWs are required to submit the written signed and dated safety plan to the Regional High Risk Team within five (5) business days of notification that the child/youth is high risk.
- If the child/youth is placed in a residential facility setting, contract agencies are notified and asked to complete a safety plan when the child/youth is ready for step down into a foster home. This safety plan is completed prior to or at the time of step down.

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- When a child/youth steps down to a foster home, the contract agency and/or the FSW/JSW is required to submit the written, signed and dated safety plan for that home to the Regional High Risk Team within five (5) business days of the stepdown to the foster home.

Safety Plans:

DCS and Contract Agencies share responsibility in the development and monitoring of safety plans (refer to Policy [31.18 Safety Planning for High Risk Behaviors in Children and Youth in DCS Custody](#) for more information on expectations).

- All children/youth deemed high risk and placed in foster homes have a safety plan.
- All safety plans are clearly defined and specific to that child/youth.
- All safety plans are developed and shared with the appropriate Regional High Risk Team within five (5) business days of the notification sent from the COE assessment consultant.
- Any time a child/youth moves to a new foster home the contract agency and FSW/JSW are responsible for ensuring a new safety plan specific to the new foster home placement is developed with the new foster parent. The new signed and dated safety plan is shared with the appropriate Regional High Risk Team within five (5) business days of the child's/youth's placement in the new home.
- Child(ren)/youth placed in residential settings are required to have a safety plan implemented and shared with the appropriate Regional High Risk Team prior to or at the time of placement in a foster home.
- The contract agency and FSW/JSW are responsible for ensuring the child's foster home has reviewed the safety plan, understand what is expected and agree to follow the safety plan. They must also work with the foster parent to develop a respite plan for the youth, which includes identifying appropriate respite placements for the youth at the time the safety plan is created and signed by the foster parent.
- If a high risk child/youth is eligible for respite placement, the foster parent is obligated to go over the youth's safety plan with the respite foster parent, prior to the placement.
- Contract agencies notify the Regional High Risk Team when a high risk child/youth moves to any new placement, including respite placements within 24 hours of the move.

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Responsibilities:

Regional High Risk Teams:

- Meet at least one (1) time per month.
- Ensure all high risk children/youth placed in a foster home, receive an initial review and have a safety plan developed and approved within one month of the placement in a foster home.
- Each quarter, ensure all high risk children/youth placed in foster homes or on trial home visits receive a high risk review until the youth is no longer deemed high risk.
- Monitor and track the high risk child(ren)/youth reviewed on the regional high risk spreadsheet on the Central Office shared drive.
- Ensure all high risk children/youth have a current CANS and signed safety plan prior to each quarterly review.
- Review the regional high risk spreadsheet twice per month to ensure the high risk team is aware of the newly added high risk children/youth.
- Ensure all high risk reviews are documented in TFACTS under Case Conference within 30 days of the review being held.

Central Office Division of Federal Programs:

- Ensures all region's high risk spreadsheets are updated twice per month to include the newly identified high risk youth placed in foster homes.

FSW/JSW:

- Ensures that safety plans for children/youth in foster homes are developed, reviewed and signed by all appropriate parties immediately and are documented in TFACTS.
- Ensures the DCS foster parent has reviewed the safety plan, understands their obligations and agrees to follow the plan. They also work with the DCS foster parent to develop a respite plan for the high risk youth and ensures this is documented in TFACTS.
- Ensure that safety plans are developed immediately and are shared with the high risk team within five (5) business days of a child/youth's placement in a foster home.

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- Ensures the youth receives an updated CANS assessment according to the [CANS Case Protocol](#)
- Provides ongoing reminders to DCS foster parents and contract agency foster parents to share the safety plan with any respite foster parent or relative placement.
- Ensures all safety plans are updated, reviewed and signed by all appropriate parties at least quarterly.

Foster Parent Support Staff:

- At each visit with the family, ensure DCS foster parents with high risk placements understand their responsibilities and action steps outlined in the safety plan and monitor to ensure the plan is being followed.
- Provides ongoing reminders to DCS foster parents of their obligation to share the safety plan with any respite foster parent or relative placement.

Contract Agencies:

- Ensure that safety plans are developed immediately and are shared with the appropriate Regional High Risk team within five (5) business days of a child/youth's placement in a foster home.
- Ensure the foster parent has reviewed the safety plan, understands their obligations, signs and agrees to follow the plan. They work with the foster parent to develop a respite plan for the high risk youth, which is documented on the safety plan and shared with DCS.
- Ensure the respite will not result in an unsafe placement and that respite foster parents have reviewed the safety plan and signed off, agreeing to follow the rules of the plan. This is documented in TFACTS.
- Provide ongoing reminders to foster parents of their obligation to share the safety plan with any respite foster parent or relative placement.
- Discuss safety plans at each monthly visit with the foster parent. This must be documented in the youth's monthly summary in TFACTS.
- Review and closely monitor the High Risk Report to track their agency's high risk population.

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