

7. Measuring progress

Whenever the department is involved with a family or former foster child due to a request for services, or when the court orders a pre-adjudicated delinquent to the department for services or placement, the caseworker is responsible for measuring progress on meeting the specific needs identified in the FSS Case Plan on a continual basis. Family support services cases, in particular, are most often short-term involvement with the the department, where services are provided to meet an identified need.

Regularly measuring progress increases the likelihood that the goals of the FSS Case Plan are achieved in a timely manner, and focuses the attention of the department's involvement to meeting the identified needs. When measuring progress, a number of areas need to be considered, including whether:



- The parents, legal guardians or former foster child are making adequate progress toward achieving the FSS Case Plan goals;
- The services provided through the department are effective in assisting the family; and
- The child-specific needs are being met and can be adequately managed and sustained without ongoing department involvement.

Procedure

The caseworker must:

- Measure progress as part of the ongoing intervention with the family or former foster child, including at the following times:
 1. During and/or after any contacts with the parents, legal guardians, former foster child, children, service providers and others who are connected with the child and or the family.
 2. Every 90 days, formally measure progress when reviewing the FSS Case Plan as described previously.

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- Progress is measured in terms of changes in behavior, conditions or circumstances that mitigated the identified needs of the family. Progress can be documented, because it has been verified that it has occurred, changed or been observed. Measure progress with respect to the following:
 1. When a child has been placed in substitute care through a Voluntary Custody Agreement or Voluntary Placement Agreement, is there progress toward achieving the child's return home?
 2. When a pre-adjudicated delinquent is in substitute care through an order of the court, what behaviors, circumstances or conditions have changed toward achieving circumstances in which the pre-adjudicated delinquent can return home?
 3. When working with a family who is receiving post-adoption or post-assisted guardianship services, are the services effective in meeting the identified case goals?
 4. When working with a family using voluntary services for a temporary crisis in the family, how are the family's circumstances changing?
- Adjust the following, when indicated, based on the information gained in monitoring the FSS Case Plan, maintaining case contacts and measuring progress:
 1. Department interventions including, but not limited to, service agreements when a family needs logically sequenced actions or services that are time-limited.
 2. Caseworker contacts or
 3. Caseworker approach with the parents, legal guardians or former foster child.
 4. The FSS Case Plan, including.
 - a. Securing other services or supports that more appropriately address the identified needs or
 - b. Increasing the family's support system so that the changes occurring through the services can be sustained without the department's involvement.
- Consider the following when measuring progress toward change:
 1. What observable changes do you see?
 2. How does this compare with what you have seen previously in this family or with this former foster child?
 3. What is the *motivation* to do something or not do something? Is there a motivation that demonstrates *intent* and *choice* to change? Reflect on:
 - a. What the parent, legal guardian, former foster child or child does or says.
 - b. The approach to problem-solving.
 - c. The follow through.

- d. The extent to which family participants remain focused on achieving FSS Case Plan goals.
4. In what ways is *movement* demonstrated toward the desired change? Movement is demonstrated by *activity* and *behavior*. Reflect on:
 - a. Evidence of trying, participating, follow through, dependability, commitment and making gains.
 - b. Qualities of the movement. Reflect on:
 - What small steps are occurring?
 - In what ways are you, as the worker, helping motivate change?
 - How are you acknowledging movement and changes in behavior?
 - c. How are service providers contributing to change?
 - Are services facilitating positive change?
 - Do adjustments need to be made?
5. How likely is it that change will occur within the timeframes of the FSS Case Plan?
 - a. How does the answer to this question impact the child's need for permanency in a reasonable amount of time?
 - b. What has happened historically within this family?
 - c. What supports are in place within the family or what additional support could be put into motion to improve chances for success?
 - d. Are there any other personal or concrete resources available to the family to support and sustain change?
6. Use the child as a source of information.
 - a. Does the child notice any changes (particularly in post-adoption and post-assisted guardianship cases where adjustment has been problematic for the child)?
 - b. What observations does the caseworker have when seeing parents and children together?
7. Use the reports from service providers.
 - a. What progress is reported by the service providers?
 - b. What observations are documented in updates or reports to the caseworker regarding changes in behaviors, conditions or circumstances?
 - c. How have the service providers arrived at these conclusions?
8. Use reports from other department staff involved with the family (the social service assistant, supervisor or other staff).

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9. Whenever a child is in substitute care, make appropriate adjustments when assessing the safety and well being of the child in substitute care.
 - a. Are the services provided meeting the child's identified needs and build upon the identified strengths?
 - b. Is the family continuing to work toward the child's return home, and actively participating in the FSSS Case Plan goals?
 - c. Is the child safe in the substitute care placement?
 - d. Does the child have a supervision plan and/or a personal care services plan and if so, are those plans meeting the child's needs?
- Whenever a child is in substitute care, be attentive to ensuring that an FSS Case Plan continues to be the appropriate plan for the child. Consider:
 1. Is the permanency hearing approaching?
 - a. If so, is it likely the child will return home soon? If not, reconsider the appropriateness of the current FSS Case Plan.
 2. If a child has been placed through a Voluntary Placement Agreement, is the child nearly age 18 when a Voluntary Placement Agreement must end?
 - a. How does the FSS Case Plan address a child's transition to adulthood and independence? How are available ILP services being used?
 - b. What has the court determined to be in the best interests of the child?
 3. If a child has been placed through a Voluntary Custody Agreement, is the child nearly age 18?
 - a. What is the nature of the family crisis and is there a plan for the child?
 - b. Does the child want to agree to voluntary custody after age 18? What is the long-term plan for the child? Is this agreement something the district manager and the court would approve?
 - c. What has the court determined to be in the best interests of the child?
 4. Has the child been in substitute care almost 15 of the last 22 months?
 - a. If so, the law requires that there are compelling reasons not to file a petition to terminate parental rights. Is there justification for these compelling reasons (e.g., a child's special medical or mental health needs continue to require substitute care).

S The supervisor's role

- Provide regular consultation with the caseworker.
- Review the progress reported, ask questions and review case notes.
- Assist the caseworker in making decisions when progress is slow or there is no evidence of progress in meeting the FSS Case Plan goals.
- Review again with the caseworker the purpose of the FSS Case Plan and the scope of the services the department is providing to the family.
- Suggest alternate methods to achieve the FSS Case Plan goals.
- Assist the caseworker in meeting with the family or former foster child when a joint meeting is determined to be helpful.