

1. **Child Functioning: How are the children functioning cognitively, emotionally, behaviorally, physically, and socially?** *(This question considers all of the children in the home including the out-of-home family's own children and unrelated children who have been living with the family. Judgments are based on considering all the children. If one child is remarkably different than the other children, an explanation should be made specifically indicating the extent to which this raises any concern for the quality of parenting or the presence of threats.) The presence of these behaviors regardless of their origin or cause affects the child's ability to be safe.*

Positive Characteristics

- Openly assertive
- Comfortable speaking mind
- Self-protective
- Make their needs known to others
- Describes environment as safe
- No indication of maltreatment
- Positive, fulfilling interaction and relationship exists between the placed child and others in the home
- Needs/behaviors of placed child/previously placed children/family's own children are non-competitive/mutually compatible

Characteristics of Concern

- Overly Reserved
- Uncomfortable speaking mind freely
- Ability to protect self questionable
- Limited ability/reluctant to make needs known to others
- Uneasy about describing environment
- Behavior may be consistent with being maltreated
- Courteous, artificial interaction, or apprehensive relationship exists between the placed child and others in the home
- Needs/behaviors of placed child/previously placed children/family's own children stimulate unrest/conflict

Negative Characteristics

- Intimidated, withdrawn, afraid, alert for danger
- Avoids direct communication with anyone
- Not self-protective
- Does not seek assistance or protection
- Avoids discussing environment
- Behaves in ways suggesting presence of threatening environment (e.g. abusive, sexualized, etc.); Indications of maltreatment
- Tense, detached, distrustful, disliking, hostile, or un-accepting relationship exists between placed child and others in home
- Needs/behaviors of all children will stimulate hostility/aggression or extreme competition for attention

2. **Adult Functioning: How are the adult family members functioning cognitively, emotionally, behaviorally, physically, and socially?** *(This question considers the overall functioning of the family. This includes all household residents with more attention to the caregiver(s).)*

Positive Characteristics

- The out-of-home family has adequate physical, emotional, and cognitive capacity
- Realistic view on life/expectations
- Clear roles and positive relationships
- Value and practice honesty
- Low stress and/or positive coping skills
- Display healthy outlets for stress
- Very open
- Shows conscience and empathy
- Awareness of strengths and limitations
- Highly motivated, fully functioning
- Roles, responsibilities, boundaries are clear, appropriate, and established by the out-of-home caregiver(s)

Characteristics of Concern

- The out-of-home family has marginal physical, emotional, or cognitive capacity in need of support
- Unrealistic view on life/expectations
- Imprecise role clarity and unsatisfying relationships
- Not forthcoming, evasive
- Moderate stress and varied coping skills
- Inconsistent ability to manage stress
- Guarded
- Displays minimal empathy
- Limited awareness of strengths and limitations
- Inconsistent motivation interferes with the family's ability to function
- Some blurring of roles, responsibilities, and boundaries among adults in the home results in inappropriate interactions with the placed child(ren)

Negative Characteristics

- The family has limited or deficient physical, emotional, and cognitive capacity that has no reasonable accommodation
- Pervasive mood issues like anger, bizarre thoughts, etc.
- Skewed perceptions, not oriented in reality
- Ineffective roles and hostile, neglectful, or manipulative relationships
- Deceptive, manipulative
- High stress and poor/no coping skills
- Copes with stress through angry outbursts, alcohol/substance abuse or dependency
- Avoidant, or closed
- Lack of empathy apparent in manner
- Distorted awareness of strengths and limitations
- Lack of motivation impacts the family's ability to function
- No roles, responsibilities, or boundaries (e.g. sexual, emotional, etc.) are established; allows access by potentially harmful adults or others

3. **Caregiver Supervision: How are the out-of-home caregiver(s) actively caring for, supervising, and protecting the children in the home?** *(This question considers all adult household members who take an active role in caring for and supervising children already in the out-of-home family home and placed children. More emphasis on out-of-home caregiver(s) should be made.)*

Positive Characteristics

- Closely bonded to own children
- Protective behaviors are observed
- Acknowledges and takes responsibilities for their actions
- Accurate viewpoint of placed child
- Able to fulfill caregiver role
- Are familiar with placed child and his/her uniqueness/ needs
- Are aware of all children’s differences, needs, behaviors
- Effective at managing/meeting needs of all the children
- Responds to placed child’s behaviors and emotions in supportive and accepting ways
- Have a good understanding of age and developmental roles; responds appropriately to meet the child’s needs
- Consistently sets appropriate expectations for the children based on their age and developmental level; child is not held responsible for the running of the household
- Assures protective measures are taken to address child’s abusive or sexualized behaviors

Characteristics of Concern

- Minimally/questionably attached to own children
- Few protective behaviors are observed; questionable ability to consistently be protective
- Varies in acknowledging and taking responsibility for their actions
- Inaccurate/detached viewpoint of placed child
- Other caregivers/ household members lack of commitment interferes with the caregiver(s)’ ability to fulfill their role
- Are minimally familiar or unfamiliar with placed child and his/her uniqueness and needs
- Have a limited awareness or is unaware of all children’s differences, needs, behaviors
- Has difficulty managing/meeting the needs of all of the children but is willing to accept/use support/ assistance
- Requires assistance to respond to placed child’s behaviors and emotions in supportive and accepting ways
- Limited understanding of age and developmental roles; shows frustration or inability to cope with child
- Inconsistently sets appropriate expectations for the children based on their age and developmental level; child has some responsibility for the running of the household
- Inconsistently assures protective measures are taken to address child’s abusive or sexualized behaviors

Negative Characteristics

- No attachment to own children
- No evidence/observations of protective behaviors
- Fails to take action to protect the child
- Blames others for difficulties; fails to assume responsibilities
- Possesses a distorted viewpoint of placed child
- Other caregiver(s)/household members’ lack of commitment prevents the caregiver(s)’ ability to fulfill their role
- Is unconcerned with placed child’s uniqueness and needs
- Is unaware of all children’s differences, needs, behaviors
- Is unable to effectively manage/meet needs of all of the children
- Responds to placed child’s behaviors and emotions in negative and harmful ways
- Does not understand age and developmental roles, or special needs of the child(ren); does not desire and/or is resistant to having this knowledge; fails to take action to protect the child
- Expects children to perform tasks well beyond their age or developmental level, requires child to assume an inordinate amount of responsibility for the running of the home
- Does not take protective measures to address child’s abusive or sexualized behaviors

4. **Discipline: How are discipline strategies used with the children in the home?** *(This question considers the appropriate and effective strategies and techniques used by the caregiver(s) to discipline the child(ren) in the home.)*

Positive Characteristics

- Ground rules and behavioral expectations are well established and communicated to all children in the home
- Uses a wide range of discipline options successfully
- Disciplinary approaches and styles are appropriate for the placed child’s age and developmental level
- Takes responsibility to discipline the children; does not delegate or allow others in the home to take disciplinary action
- Accurately considers special needs of the placed child when using disciplinary approaches and styles
- Does not use physical discipline or other inappropriate discipline techniques with their own child(ren) or placed child(ren)
- Does not use discipline measures that may trigger or create trauma to the placed child
- Consequences for behavior are natural and logical; discipline is administered in a fair and equitable way for all children in the home

Characteristics of Concern

- Ground rules are unclear or are inappropriately different for the placed child
- Uses a limited range of discipline options; expresses frustration that no discipline works with the placed child
- Disciplinary approaches and styles are marginally appropriate/occasionally inappropriate for the placed child’s age and developmental level
- Inconsistently takes responsibility to discipline the child(ren); occasionally delegates or allow others in the home to take disciplinary action
- Inaccurately considers special needs of the placed child when using disciplinary approaches and styles
- Occasionally uses physical discipline or other inappropriate discipline techniques with their own child(ren) or placed child(ren)
- Uses discipline measures that unknowingly trigger or create trauma to the placed child
- Consequences for behavior are harsh; relying on or using threats to “discipline” the child, such as telling the child they will withhold visitation, parental contact, etc.

Negative Characteristics

- There are no clearly established/consistent ground rules, or ground rules vary from day to day and child to child resulting in serious negative effects for the child (e.g. behavioral, emotional, etc.)
- Uses adverse discipline measures (e.g. intimidation, withholding food or other basic necessities, aggressive, excessive, inappropriate restrictions, restraint, confinement in small areas, etc.)
- Disciplinary approaches and styles are not appropriate for the placed child’s age and developmental level
- Does not take the responsibility to discipline the child(ren); or frequently delegates or allow others to discipline the child
- Does not consider special needs of the placed child when using disciplinary approaches and styles
- Frequently uses physical discipline or other inappropriate discipline techniques with their own child(ren) or placed child(ren)
- Uses discipline measures that knowingly trigger or create trauma to the placed child
- Withholds meaningful objects from the placed child’s home as punishment
- Consequences for behavior are extreme; placed child is punished more severely than the other child(ren) in the home

5. **Acceptance: How do the out-of-home family members demonstrate in observable ways that they accept the identified child into the home?** *(This question considers how the out-of-home family, including household members, and other children residing in the home, accept the identified child as part of the family.)*

Positive Characteristics

- Out-of-home family members embrace the placed child and fully accept them as part of the household
- Placed child helped to fit in; is always included in activities and is included in activities the same as others;
- Other children - placed child are attached/accepting of one another;
- Placed child is not blamed or criticized for the placement
- The placed child is valued;
- Placed child is treated equitably as compared to other children in the home
- Child(ren) are treated equally regardless of religious/cultural beliefs, race, gender, or sexual identity

Characteristics of Concern

- Out-of-home family members are ambivalent towards the child; superficially accept the placed child as part of the household
- Minimal attempts in assisting placed child to fit in; sometimes not included in activities
- Other children – placed child tolerate each other
- Placed child is somewhat blamed or receives some criticism for the placement
- The placed child is somewhat valued
- Placed child is occasionally not treated equitably as compared to other children in the home
- Child(ren) are treated differently because of their religious/cultural beliefs, race, gender, or sexual identity

Negative Characteristics

- Out-of-home family members are hostile towards the child; do not accept the placed child as part of the household
- Placed child not allowed to fit in; excluded or segregated from activities
- Other children - placed child are antagonistic/ hostile towards each other;
- Placed child is blamed or receives repeated criticism for the placement; constantly reminded that the child is at fault for the placement
- The placed child is not valued;
- Placed child is not treated equitably as compared to other children in the home
- Child(ren) are ostracized/criticized because of religious/cultural beliefs, race, gender, or sexual identity
- Does not allow child access to their own personal possessions, clothing, etc.

6. **Community Supports: How does the out-of-home family access/use community supports to help assure child safety?** *(This question considers INFORMAL aspects of the community, other extended family, friends, neighbors, clubs, organizations, and non child welfare.)*

Positive Characteristics

- Friends, neighbors, relatives or others routinely provide support and assistance;
- Regular, positive contact with others in the community
- Routinely uses reliable neighbors, friends, relatives, and/or other community members as supports
- Level of contact that the out-of-home family has with the community remains the same
- Has an accurate knowledge of the informal resources/supports available and accesses them when needed.

Characteristics of Concern

- Friends, neighbors, relatives or others may occasionally provide support and assistance
- Sporadic contact with others in the community
- Sporadically uses reliable neighbors, friends, relatives, and/or other community members as supports
- Occasionally chooses unreliable or inappropriate alternate caregiver(s) for support
- Level of contact that the out-of-home family has with the community is reduced
- Limited knowledge of the informal resources/supports available and unsure/hesitant of how to access them when needed.

Negative Characteristics

- Friends, neighbors, relatives, or others do not provide support/assistance or are antagonistic;
- Closed system, avoids contacts with others in the community
- Will not/refuses to use available, reliable neighbors, friends, relatives, and/or other community members as supports
- Consistently chooses unreliable or inappropriate alternate caregiver(s) for support
- Level of contact that the out-of-home family has with the community has been dramatically reduced or has stopped completely.
- Has knowledge of informal resources/supports available but does not access them when needed

7. **Current Status: How do the out-of-home family members respond to the current issues, demands, stressors within the home that affect the child’s safety?** *(This question considers out-of-home caregiver(s)’ objectives in caring for children and present demands the home is experiencing.)*

Positive Characteristics

- Currently caring for identified child(ren) does not cause any unusual stress
- Placed child meets the expressed preference of the out-of-home caregiver(s) and/or the child does not meet their preference but the caregiver(s) feels successful with the child
- No change in the family circumstances/dynamics; or change occurred which did not result in any unusual stress
- No health or safety concerns on the property
- Managing the demands of the household and children placed in the home

Characteristics of Concern

- Currently caring for identified child(ren) resulting in some stress
- Placed child does not meet the expressed preference of the out-of-home caregiver(s) but they continue to try to be successful with the child
- Moderate change in the family circumstances/dynamics resulting in stress that causes a negative impact on the child
- Minor health or safety concerns on the property which pose no immediate threat and are easily correctable
- Some difficulty managing the demands of the household and child(ren) placed in the home

Negative Characteristics

- Currently caring for identified child(ren) resulting in a high degree of stress impacting the caregiver(s)’ ability to protect the child
- Placed child does not meet the expressed preference of the out-of-home caregiver(s) and they are unwilling to continue making efforts to be successful with the child
- Significant negative change in the family circumstances/dynamics that impacts the caregiver(s) ability to protect the child
- Serious health or safety hazards which pose immediate threat
- Unable to manage the demands of the household and children placed in the home

8. **Placed Child’s Family– Out-of-Home Family Dynamics: How do the dynamics between the caregiver(s) of origin and the out-of-home family support the safety of the child?** *(This question considers the extent to which relationships, perceptions, and/or attitudes can contribute to or detract from the placed child’s safety and the capacity of the out-of-home family to follow through. Placed child’s family refers to the home from which the child was removed. All of the characteristics help to explore the placed child’s family’s understanding of the need for placement.)*

Positive Characteristics

- Caregiver(s) of origin – out-of-home family relationship with/attitude toward is one of mutual respect
- Caregiver(s) of origin accepts/supports out-of-home caregiver(s) roles and responsibilities
- Caregiver(s) of origin is appropriately involved with the out-of-home family as detailed in the County Children and Youth Agency developed Safety Plan
- Out-of-home caregiver(s) takes action when necessary regardless of their relationship with/attitude towards the caregiver(s) of origin
- Caregiver(s) of origin views out-of-home setting as best place for child
- Out-of-home caregiver(s) shares the County Children and Youth Agency’s view of the caregiver(s) of origin’s capacity to care for their children; collaborative
- History of positive involvement/attitude towards and/or life-long or significant relationship with placed child and/or caregiver(s) of origin

Characteristics of Concern

- Caregiver(s) of origin – out-of-home family relationship/attitude toward is passive or detached
- Caregiver(s) of origin marginally/occasionally impacts the out-of-home caregiver(s) abilities to fulfill their roles and responsibilities
- Caregiver(s) of origin tries to become more/questionably involved with the out-of-home family contrary to the County Children and Youth Agency developed Safety Plan
- Out-of-home caregiver(s) reluctantly takes action when necessary, influenced by their relationship with/attitude toward the caregiver(s) of origin
- Caregiver(s) of origin not accepting of out-of-home setting as best place for child
- Out-of-home caregiver(s) is not certain of the County Children and Youth Agency’s view of the caregiver(s) of origin’s capacity to care for their child(ren); influenced by the caregiver(s) of origin
- Short-term relationship with placed child and/or caregiver(s) of origin

Negative Characteristics

- Caregiver(s) of origin – out-of-home family relationship/attitude toward is tense, conflicted, or hostile
- Caregiver(s) of origin significantly/continuously impacts the out-of-home caregiver(s) abilities to fulfill their roles and responsibilities
- Caregiver(s) of origin actively undermines/ignores the County Children and Youth Agency developed Safety Plan
- Out-of-home caregiver(s) does not take action when necessary, negatively aligned with caregiver(s) of origin
- Caregiver(s) of origin opposed to out-of-home setting as best place for child
- Out-of-home caregiver(s) does not share the County Children and Youth Agency’s view of the caregiver(s) of origin’s capacity to care for their children; are in collusion with caregiver(s) of origin
- Unpleasant or negative relationship with/attitude towards placed child and/or caregiver(s) of origin

9. **Oversight: How does the out-of-home family demonstrate that they are agreeable to and cooperative with CCYA and other formal resources?** *(This question considers tendencies toward inclusion; examples of cooperation with formal resources, the family's openness to child welfare professionals, etc.)*

Positive Characteristics

- Consistently forthcoming to CCYA with changes in their family circumstances or changes in their household composition
- Consistently makes child available at home or other locations to CCYA or provider personnel
- Consistently assures child attends school
- Consistently assures child participates in needed services
- Consistently seeks help for the child from CCYA, the school, service providers, and other appropriate persons and consistently follows through with recommendations
- Is consistently compliant with County Children and Youth Agency policy & procedures and/or foster care regulations
- Consistently accessible in person/by phone
- Actively engaged in child's Treatment and Safety Plan
- Routine and frequent contact with professionals or agencies in the community that are a part of the placed child's treatment
- Consistently attends appointments related to the placed child
- In agreement with and fulfilling the case plan

Characteristics of Concern

- Inconsistently shares relevant information about changes in their family circumstances or their household composition
- Inconsistently makes child available at home or other locations to CCYA or provider personnel
- Inconsistently assures child attends school
- Inconsistently assures child participates in needed services
- Inconsistently seeks help for the child from CCYA, the school, service providers, and other appropriate persons and inconsistently follows through with recommendations
- Inconsistently compliant with County Children and Youth Agency policy & procedures and/or foster care regulations
- Inconsistently accessible in person/by phone; availability often a matter of convenience
- Provides transportation, scheduling, etc. as part of the child's Treatment and Safety Plan but shows little interest in the child's progress
- Inconsistent contact with professionals or agencies in the community that are a part of the placed child's treatment
- Begin to demonstrate a pattern of missing appointments related to the placed child
- Not in agreement with but complying with the case plan

Negative Characteristics

- Withholds relevant information about changes in their family circumstances or their household composition
- Does not make child available at home or other locations to CCYA or provider personnel
- Does not assure child attends school
- Does not assure child participates in needed services
- Does not seek help for the child from CCYA, the school, service providers, and other appropriate persons and will not follow through with recommendations
- Does not comply with County Children and Youth Agency policy & procedures and/or foster care regulations
- Routinely not accessible in person/by phone
- Argumentative, resistant, or unwilling to assume any role or responsibility in meeting essential treatment needs or needs identified in the Safety Plan
- No contact with professionals or agencies in the community that are a part of the placed child's treatment, or refuses to allow access to the placed child
- Consistently misses appointments related to the placed child
- Sabotages or refuses to support the case plan

10. **Planning: How do the out-of-home caregiver(s) demonstrate that they are capable of and actively engaged in day to day planning for the child's day to day safety?** *(This question considers specific arrangements and intentions, methods, assurances, feasibility, and commitment. This does not refer to the formal Safety Plan developed by the County Children and Youth Agency.)*

Positive Characteristics

- Fully understand/are attentive to the placed child's vulnerability/need for protection
- An effective daily routine/plan for caring for the placed child exists that meets the child's needs
- Daily planning includes specific responsibilities, timing, activities, and acceptable/effective means for child management and discipline
- Commitment/capability for carrying out daily routines/planning
- Planning takes into account the demands of having several children in the home

Characteristics of Concern

- Partially understands placed child's vulnerability/need for protection
- A vague daily routine/plan for caring for placed child exists
- Daily planning does not include specific responsibilities, timing, activities, and acceptable/effective means for child management and discipline
- Moderately committed to/somewhat capable of implementing daily routines/planning
- Planning does not take into account the demands of having several children in the home

Negative Characteristics

- Do not understand, believe, and/or care about placed child's vulnerability/need for protection
- No daily routine/plan exists or it does not meet the placed child's needs
- Not committed to or capable of creating or implementing daily routines/planning
- Planning does not occur, there are too many children in the home to assure safety based on the out-of-home family's capabilities