Overview of Department of Child Safety (DCS) Decision Making Process – pg. 1

- **1. Receipt of information to the Centralized Intake Hotline.** Reporting source contacts the Centralized Intake Hotline to report suspected child abuse.
- **2. Making the decision to take a report.** Information from the reporting source is gathered and assessed by the Hotline Specialist.
- **3a. Report taken.** If the information meets report criteria, a report is taken and assigned a response time.
- **3b. Hotline Communication.** If the information does not meet report criteria, the information is kept in a database at the Hotline.
- **4. Disposition of the report.** Reports are assigned to a Child Safety Specialist for an investigation to determine if child maltreatment occurred.
- **5. Investigation & Child Safety Assessment.** The Child Safety Specialist investigates allegations of abuse or neglect and gathers information to make a decision about child safety and the need for DCS involvement. If the report alleges criminal conduct, the report is investigated jointly with law enforcement.
- 6a. Child Safe/Case Closed.

Circumstances do not warrant continued DCS intervention.

6b. Child Safe/Case Open.

Circumstances warrant DCS services, but do not require the child's removal from the home.

6c. Child Unsafe. If the investigation determines the child is unsafe, a Safety Plan is developed with the parent.

- **7a. In-Home Services.** DCS provides in-home services and supports to the parents and children through contracted or community providers to address existing critical risk factors. If services are successful and child is safe, case is closed (7b). If services are unsuccessful and child cannot remain safely in the home, Safety Planning (7c) is required.
- **7c. Safety Planning.** Safety Plan (In-Home, Out-of-Home or Combination) is finalized and implemented. An Out-of-Home Safety Plan may include a 90-day voluntary placement agreement.
- **7b. Case Closed.** Critical risk factors addressed: child safe, family referred to community resources/services (after care plan), and case closed.
- **8. Team Decision Making (TDM) Meeting.** If a child is removed or may be removed, a TDM Meeting is held with the family to make decisions about the child's safety and placement.
- **9. Temporary Custody.** If no plan can ensure child safety or safety plan fails, the child is removed and a Temporary Custody Notice is served.
- **10. Petition Filed.** A Dependency Petition is filed with the Juvenile Court.

Overview of Department of Child Safety (DCS) Decision Making Process - pg. 2

11a. In-Home Intervention.

The Court does <u>not</u> make a finding of dependency & the child remains in the home with supervision & services.

11b. In-Home Dependency.

The Court makes a finding of Dependency & the child remains in the home with supervision & services.

11c. Out-of-Home

Dependency. The Court makes a finding of Dependency & the child remains out-of-home.

12a. Remain with Family. A case plan is developed. Services and interventions are provided to the family to ensure child safety and maintain the family unit.

12b. Reunification Services. A case plan is developed. Reunification services and interventions are provided to the child and family.

13. Case Review. Court reviews Dependency cases every six months and reviews In-Home Intervention cases every twelve months. Foster Care Review Board reviews Out-of-Home Dependency cases every six months

14. Team Decision Making (TDM) Meeting. A TDM Meeting is held to make decisions about an unplanned change of placement for a child, the transition of a child to his/her family or a change in the permanency goal.

15a. Successful Reunification/In-Home

Services. The child is reunified with their family or remains in the home and services are complete.

15b. In-Home Services

Unsuccessful. In-Home services fail to keep the child safe at home. Child is removed resulting in foster care placement (Out-of-Home Dependency – *see step 11c*).

15c. Permanency Planning. If

reunification services are unsuccessful and the child is not returned home within 12 months, other permanency options are considered. For children under the age of 3, permanency options are considered within 6 months of removal.

16a. Case Closed.

The safety threats are resolved. Court dismisses Dependency Petition. Family is referred to community resources/services (after care plan) & case closed.

16b. Adoption.

Parental rights are terminated and the child is adopted.

16c. Guardianship.

Permanent Guardianship between a child and the caregiver when adoption is remote or not in the child's best interest.

16d. Independent Living.

Permanent living arrangement which includes specialized services for adolescents to transition to adulthood.

17. Case Closed. Permanency achieved. Court dismisses Dependency Petition and case is closed.

18. Team Decision Making (TDM)

Meeting. A TDM Meeting is held to discuss the option of a Voluntary Agreement or a Discharge Plan for a youth who exits foster care at 18 or 21.

19a. Case Closed. If a child does not wish to sign a Voluntary Agreement, the case is closed on their 18th birthday or if a youth signs a Voluntary Agreement, the case is closed on his/her 21st birthday.

19b. Voluntary Agreement.

Youth can voluntarily remain in foster care under supervision of DCS from 18 to 21 years of age.