

	GEORGIA DIVISION OF FAMILY AND CHILDREN SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY MANUAL			
	Chapter:	(8) Family Preservation Services	Effective Date:	March 2019
	Policy Title:	Case Closure		
Policy Number:	8.5	Previous Policy #:	2105.20, 2105.21	

CODES/REFERENCES

Family Preservation and Support Services Act of 1993, PL 103-66

REQUIREMENTS

The Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) shall:

1. Close a Family Preservation Services case when:
 - a. The case evaluation determines that the case plan outcomes have been achieved, acceptable risk reduction is observed and documented, and all children in the home are determined to be safe and protected; or
 - b. The children in the household enter out-of-home care (foster care) and remain in foster care beyond the adjudicatory hearing; or
 - c. The family moves to another state and a referral has been made to the state where the family is residing.

NOTE: If the family cannot be located, diligent efforts to locate the family must be conducted (see policy [19.21 Case Management: Unable to Locate](#)).

2. Consider closing a Family Preservation Services case when case plan outcomes have not been achieved due to the family not cooperating or refusing services, despite exhaustive efforts to engage the family, and:
 - a. Court intervention was initiated but dismissed by the court; or
 - b. Legal grounds do not exist to seek court intervention based on a consultation with the Special Assistant to Attorney General (SAAG).
3. Ensure that prior to closure of any case that involves caregiver substance abuse the guidelines in policy [19.26 Case Management: Cases Involving Caregiver Substance Use or Abuse](#) are followed.
4. Provide written notification of the Family Preservation case closure to the family.
5. Document all case closure activities in Georgia SHINES within 72 hours of occurrence.

PROCEDURES

Family Preservation Case Closure Process

The Social Services Case Manager (SSCM) will:

1. Complete the case evaluation as outlined in policy [8.4 Family Preservation Services: Case Evaluation](#).
2. Engage the family to discuss consensus reached regarding case closure and what to expect regarding the case closure process.
3. Convene a Family Team Meeting in accordance with policy [19.3 Case Management: Solution-Focused Family Team Meetings](#):

- a. Discuss the case closure decision, case plan progress, behavioral changes related to the outcomes, and the plan for sustainability related to the positive changes which have occurred in the family.
- b. Help the family celebrate the caregiver(s) positive behavioral change resulting in the case closure decision.
4. Arrange for additional services needed to assist the family after case closure.
5. Notify the following of the case closure decision:
 - a. Any service providers actively involved in the case;
 - b. Office of Family Independence Case Managers, when the family is receiving benefits.
6. When the case closure is due to a child being placed in foster care:
 - a. Document reasonable efforts made to prevent the child's removal from the home, or if reasonable efforts were not required, in accordance with policy [9.5 Eligibility: Reasonable Efforts](#).
 - b. Participate in legal proceedings and complete legal/custody tabs as outlined in policy [17.1 Legal: Juvenile Court Process](#);
 - c. Participate in a transfer staffing and joint visit with the permanency SSCM to formally transition the case as outlined in policy [19.4 Case Management: Case Transfer](#)
 - d. Participate in the 25-Day FTM (see policy [19.3 Case Management: Solution Focused Family Team Meetings](#)).
 - e. Document a transfer summary in Georgia SHINES Contacts/Summaries describing the reasons for removal and the services that have been provided to the family;
 - f. Submit the case to the Social Services Supervisor (SSS) for closure in Georgia SHINES.
7. Provide written notification to the family of the case closure via the Notification of Child Protection Services Family Preservation Services Case Closure following the Georgia SHINES case closure.
8. Submit the case for supervisory review and approval within five business days of the FTM.

NOTE: Follow the guidelines in policy [19.26 Case Management: Cases Involving Caregiver Substance Use or Abuse](#) for cases that have substance abuse involvement.

The Social Services Supervisor (SSS) will:

1. Ensure the case evaluation process is completed prior to submitting a case for closure (see policy [8.4 Family Preservation Services: Case Evaluation](#)).
2. Ensure FPS cases are submitted for closure within five business days of the closing FTM with the family.
3. Review and analyze case documentation to determine if case closure is a viable option, consider all the DFCS history of the family (see policy [19.10 Case Management: Analyzing DFCS History](#)).
4. When a child enters foster care
 - a. Participate in the case transfer staffing, as outlined in policy [19.4 Case Management: Case Transfer](#).
 - b. Participate in the 25 Day FTM as outlined in policy [19.3 Case Management: Solution-Focused Family Team Meetings](#).
5. Provide guidance to the SSCM regarding court intervention if the family has not

achieved case plan outcomes and is not cooperating or refusing services to address safety threats.

6. Complete the case closure approval in Georgia SHINES within five business days of the case being submitted for closure.

NOTE: If the case involves caregiver substance abuse/use and the caregiver does not complete a recommended substance abuse assessment and/or substance abuse treatment, submit the approved case closure to the Social Services Administrator (SSA) for second level approval.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

Case closure is a natural and planned component of the case work process. While not all case closings are planned, all efforts should be made to ensure the family is fully engaged in the process leading up to closure. Consider the following when ending services with families:

1. Family Preparation

Discussions about termination and case closure should begin at service initiation and continue throughout the life span of the case. Families should be knowledgeable regarding what requirements are needed for case closure and should be engaged regularly regarding the level of progress made in order to achieve goals necessary for case closure. When families are well on their way towards goal achievement, discussions regarding possible case closure timeframes should be held to begin preparation.

2. Developing Support Systems

Families should be assisted in developing formal and informal systems that can support them during and after DFCS involvement. The support system should be identified with the involvement of the family. This support system or family team can assist in the transitioning of families after case closure. Families should be encouraged to utilize these systems during the life of the case as a way for them to “practice” for life after DFCS services.

3. Disengagement

When terminating DFCS involvement with families, it is important to begin the process of disengagement of the working relationship between the SSCM and family prior to closing the case. The family should be reminded of the ongoing progress being made in resolution of risk and safety factors and that this will lead to a reduced need for DFCS involvement. This can be a challenging process for both the SSCM and the family as the SSCM must separate from the family while continuing to support and encourage them. The goal of the SSCM is to increase the emphasis on the family taking on more responsibility for problem solving and follow up.

4. Family Reactions

Termination can be met with ambivalent feelings, especially when the helping relationship with the family has been rewarding. Some typical reactions may include denial, regression, additional needs and flight. It is essential to validate the family’s feelings regarding termination and provide positive feedback regarding their achievements as well as assisting them in recognizing their strengths and abilities.

5. SSCM Reactions

Workers may experience a sense of loss as a result of termination. Separating from someone with whom a meaningful relationship has been developed can be difficult. Workers may question the quality of their performance, may have feelings of guilt, etc.

Being clear about one's own feelings regarding termination can prevent transference issues as one can get easily caught up in the family's reactions if they are attempting to prolong the relationship.

6. Process Evaluation

Case closure should be a joint decision-making process between the SSCM and the family. The SSCM should review with the family all critical elements of intervention, while empowering the family to express their opinions/feelings and provide constructive feedback. Obtaining feedback from the family regarding their experience can provide valuable information to the family and agency regarding performance as well as in establishing future relationships. The evaluation helps the family to assess and recognize their progress and encourages future self-assessment/evaluation.

FORMS AND TOOLS

[Notification of Child Protection Services Family Preservation Services Case Closure](#)

[Notification of Child Protection Services Family Preservation Services Case Closure - Spanish](#)