
**REUNIFICATION
ASSESSMENT
REQUIREMENTS**

The purpose of the DHS-147, Reunification Assessment, is to structure critical case management decisions for children in foster care who have a permanency planning goal of return home; see FOM 722-07, RETURN HOME. The assessment must:

- Routinely monitor critical case factors that affect goal achievement,
- Help structure the case review process.
- Expedite the realization of permanency for children in out-of-home care.

The reunification assessment measures two factors:

1. Parenting time compliance during the review period.
2. Progress in resolving the primary barriers identified in the needs and strengths assessment.

An assessment of these factors is related to later case outcomes.

The reunification assessment is paired with the permanency planning decision guidelines for subsequent action by the agency. The guidelines require action to return home, maintain placement and/or change the permanency planning goal based on parental progress on the service plan and parenting time. The foster care worker tracks reunification assessment results in the DHS-66, Updated Service Plan (USP), and applies the guidelines as described below.

DHS workers must complete the DHS-147, Reunification Assessment, in SWSS. Placement agency foster care providers will continue to use the DHS-147, Reunification Assessment, template.

Which Cases

All cases where parental rights have not been terminated and the child is in out-of-home placement. This includes all households with a legal right to reunification, except any case where:

- There is a signed Permanent Placement with a Fit and Willing Relative (PPFWR) or Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA) Agreement.

- There is documentation in the case service plan that the parent can't be located or has refused to participate in service planning.

Decisions

The reunification assessment guides decision making to:

- Return a child to the household removed from or to another household with a legal right to placement.
- Maintain out-of-home placement, and/or
- Change the permanency planning goal from return home.

The reunification assessment has three steps:

1. An assessment of compliance with the parenting time plan;
2. An assessment of barrier and risk reduction; and
3. A determination of the child's safety.

When

The DHS-147, Family Reunification Assessment, is incorporated into the USP. If a decision to recommend return of a child or change the permanency planning goal is necessary before a scheduled USP, complete the stand-alone Family Reunification Assessment form and the DHS-149, Safety Assessment; see FOM 722-09B. If returned home prior to the ISP, only the safety assessment is to be completed; see the safety assessment instructions in FOM 722-09B.

Appropriate Completion

The Reunification Assessment is included in the DHS-66, Updated Service Plan format, Section IV. C, 1-10. One section is completed for each household with a right to reunification services and who are participating in the service plan.

PERMANENCY PLANNING DECISION GUIDELINES AND DEFINITIONS

Permanency planning decision guidelines have been established to determine when a decision to recommend return of a child home,

maintain out-of-home placement or change the permanency planning goal must be made; see FOM 722-07, Permanency Planning. They are applied following completion of the reunification assessment. The reunification and safety assessment are combined to determine recommendations for case action. Outcomes from prior USP's are considered in combination with current outcomes.

Substantial

Both parenting time compliance and overall barrier reduction are substantial and the safety assessment decision is:

- Child is **safe**, foster care worker **must** recommend returning the child(ren) home.
- Child is **safe with services**, foster care worker **must** recommend returning the child(ren) home.
- Child is **unsafe**, foster care worker **must** recommend that the child(ren) remain in placement.

Partial

If both the parenting time and overall barrier reduction assessments are partial but not poor or one is substantial and the other is partial and the safety assessment decision is:

- Child(ren) is **safe**, foster care worker **must** recommend returning the child home.
- Child(ren) is **safe with services**, the foster care worker **must** recommend returning the child(ren) home.
- Child(ren) is **unsafe**:
 - First partial and unsafe, the child(ren) **must** remain in placement and foster care worker **must** consider changing the permanency planning goal.
 - Second consecutive partial and unsafe, foster care worker **must** consider changing the permanency planning goal from return home.
 - Third consecutive partial and unsafe, foster care worker **must** change the permanency planning goal from return home.

Poor

If **either** barrier reduction or parenting time compliance is poor, the safety assessment is not completed. If there is:

- One poor assessment, the foster care worker shall consider changing the permanency planning goal from return home;
- Two poor assessments (may be consecutive or non-consecutive), the foster care worker **must** change the permanency planning goal from return home.
- **2nd unsafe or 1 poor/refused and 1 unsafe** - Child(ren) remain in placement and consider goal change.
- **Any combination of 3 unsafe or poor/refused** - Child(ren) remain in placement and change goal.

Overrides

There are two possible worker overrides of a recommendation to change the permanency planning goal from return home. The overrides are not mandatory and may be used at the discretion of the foster care worker without prior supervisory approval in the following situations:

- Services to address a barrier are not available in the area or unavailable to the client during the period assessed, and/or
- Assessments unable to be completed because of delayed court dispositions.

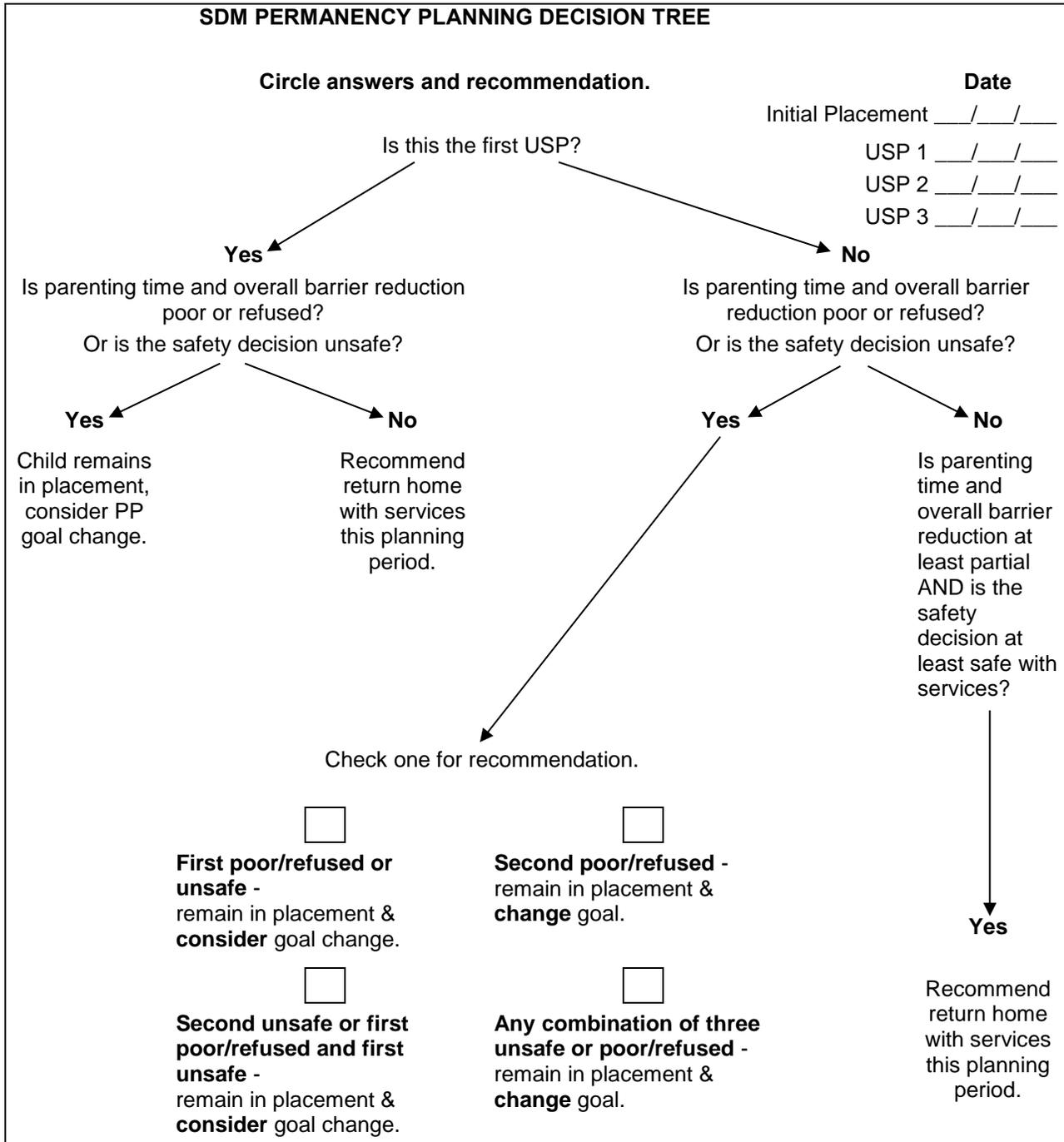
A discretionary override with prior supervisory approval may be used with explanation in Section IV, C-10 of the USP as to why the permanency planning decision guidelines recommendation is not in the best interests of the child(ren).

SDM Permanency Planning Decision Tree; see Exhibit I.

EXHIBIT I

PERMANENCY PLANNING DECISION GUIDELINE TREE

The following decision tree summarizes the policy guidelines:



**DHS-147, FAMILY
REUNIFICATION
ASSESSMENT
INSTRUCTIONS****A. Identifying
Information**

Check whether the form is completed between service plan reviews.

- A1.** Check whether there has been a CPS investigation since the last review and whether the finding was a preponderance of evidence or not. Check appropriate box.

**B. Individual
Barrier Reduction
Assessment**

List the primary barriers identified in the prior service plan; see FOM 722-08A, Family Assessment of Strengths and Needs, for instructions on identifying primary barriers and any new primary barriers identified in the DHS-145, Family Reassessment of Needs and Strengths in the space provided in the USP.

Evaluate progress for reduction of each individual barrier listed using the definitions in FOM 722-09, Updated Service Plan.

**C. Parenting Time
Evaluation**

Assess whether the family has made substantial compliance, partial compliance, poor compliance or refused parenting time. Use the definitions located in FOM 722-09, Updated Service Plan for Parenting Time Evaluation.

**D. Overall Barrier
Reduction
Evaluation**

After assessing individual barrier reduction, assess parent/caretaker overall progress in addressing the barriers that reduce the risk of subsequent harm. Use the Barrier Reduction Definitions located in FOM 722-09, Updated Service Plan.

**E. Final Parenting
Time/Overall
Barrier Reduction
Evaluation**

Determine child safety:

- If both parenting time and overall barrier reduction are substantial, both partial or one is partial and one substantial, complete the safety assessment.
- If either is poor or refused, do not complete the DHS-149, Safety Assessment, and go to the permanency planning decision guidelines.

**F. Safety
Assessment
Results**

If a safety assessment was required, check the safety assessment decision.

**G. Recommenda-
tions**

Following completion of the four steps, refer to the permanency planning decision guidelines as defined above for a recommendation. If the reunification assessment applies to all children in the household assessed, complete only the columns for all children. If the recommendations are different for children in the family, list the foster care case number and the outcomes for each child. Use the codes at the bottom of the page.