



<b>POLICY TITLE:</b>	<b>Standards for Safe Case Closure</b>		
 	<b>CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES AGENCY</b>		
<b>Approved By:</b>	<b>Date Approved:</b>	<b>Original Effective Date:</b>	<b>Last Revision:</b>
Brenda Donald	October 12, 2018		
<b>I. AUTHORITY</b>	<p>The Director of the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA or Agency) adopts this policy to be consistent with the Agency’s mission, and applicable federal and District of Columbia laws and regulations including, but not limited to, provisions in Titles 4 and 16 of the DC Official Code and the LaShawn A. v. Bowser Implementation and Exit Plan (December 17, 2010).</p>		
<b>II. APPLICABILITY</b>	<p>All Agency employees and contracted personnel, Office of the Attorney General, and contracted providers.</p>		
<b>III. RATIONALE</b>	<p>CFSA opens a permanency or in-home case to protect children and work with families to overcome identified risk and safety issues. The Agency maintains the open case and works with the family to expediently address and ameliorate those issues so that the children can be returned and/or maintained safely in their homes. The Agency’s goal is to ensure the safety of the children and to end formal involvement with the family as soon as the safety and risk of harm issues have been addressed.</p> <p>Given the complexity of family needs, child welfare cases can remain open beyond the time when the risk and safety issues have been resolved and continued involvement of the child welfare agency is no longer in the family’s best interest.</p> <p>Sustaining a family’s connection to the child welfare agency in the absence of identified safety and risk issues is not within the established mission/purview of CFSA; nor is it in the best interests of a family. If a family demonstrates protective capacities such that risk of future harm to the child(ren) is low or moderate, and there are no unresolved safety concerns, then the Agency is to take action to close the case safely.</p> <p>The purpose of this policy is to set forth uniform standards for safe case closure and to ensure that such decisions are made with confidence and reliability.</p>		

<p><b>IV. POLICY</b></p>	<p>It is CFSA’s policy to initiate safe case closure when the Agency’s established criteria have been met, which include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The whereabouts of the children who are part of the open case are known and their safety in their place of residence has been confirmed through either direct observation or through the report of a credible source as determined by the case management team.</li> <li>• There are no open Child Protective Service (CPS) investigations involving the Family, and no parent or caretaker was the subject of a substantiated report of abuse or neglect within the past 60 days.</li> <li>• The family has no open neglect case with the Family Court of the DC Superior Court (Family Court).</li> <li>• All of the goals identified in the family case plan that pertain to child safety and risk have been achieved.</li> <li>• There is a determination by the case management team, supported by the results of evidence-based assessments, that the children will be safe without further Agency involvement in the care of parents or caregivers who had been substantiated for abuse or neglect.</li> </ul> <p>Prior to initiating safe case closure, the Agency shall develop a sustainability plan with the family to address family functioning following case closure.</p> <p>For cases that are court-involved with a child in foster care, CFSA shall petition the court for the child to return home and closure of the Family Court case. After continuing to work with the family to ensure safety and monitor risk, CFSA will then close the case within 90 days of the court granting the child’s return home.</p> <p>If the Family Court does not adjudicate the child as an abused or neglected child, or if abuse or neglect allegations substantiated during the CPS investigation are not upheld by the Agency fair hearing officer and there are no other substantiated allegations against the parent or caretaker, then the case is to be closed as soon as possible, but no more than 5 business days after the issuance of the court order or the fair hearing decision.</p> <p>If the case involves a non-court involved family receiving (or referred to) in-home services that has disengaged or cannot be located, then CFSA shall close the case following completion of protocols outlined in Section D.</p>
<p><b>V. CONTENTS</b></p>	<p><b>A.</b> Household Status Requirement for Closure  <b>B.</b> Programmatic Case Closure Requirements  <b>C.</b> Family Sustainability Planning  <b>D.</b> Case Closure for Disengaged or Unable-to-Locate Families</p>
<p><b>VI. SECTIONS</b></p>	<p><b>Section A: Household Status Requirements for Closure</b></p> <p>CFSA shall initiate case closure by petitioning the Family Court to close the neglect case (if court-involved) or by planning for closure of the Agency case (if not court-involved), if all of the following household criteria are met:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The whereabouts of the children who are part of the open case are known and their safety in their place of residence has been confirmed through either direct observation or through the report of a credible</li> </ol>

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	<p>source as determined by the case management team.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. None of the children is in foster care.</li> <li>3. No parent or caretaker is the subject of an active CPS investigation.</li> <li>4. No parent or caretaker was the subject of a substantiated report of abuse or neglect within 60 days prior to initiating closure of the Agency case.</li> </ol>
	<p><b>Section B: Programmatic Case Closure Requirements</b></p> <p>A determination to close the Agency abuse or neglect case must be supported by assessment of the caregiver and child(ren) conducted within 90 days prior to case closure that indicates that any safety or risk issues have been ameliorated.</p> <p>For cases that are not court involved, or are court-involved but there are no children in foster care, case closure activities and family sustainability planning will begin following completion of such assessment.</p> <p>For cases that are court-involved with a child in foster care:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Prior to the court hearing at which CFSA recommends a child's return home, CFSA will develop a sustainability plan with the family.</li> <li>2. At the court hearing granting a child's return home, the Office of the Attorney General shall petition the court for a period of court monitored protective supervision not to exceed 90 days.</li> <li>3. Within the intervening 90 day protective supervision period, CFSA is to hold a team meeting with the family, complete safety and risk assessments, review (with the family) the sustainability plan, and provide the family with service referrals to support post-closure family stability.</li> </ol> <p>For court-involved cases, the closure of the Agency's case shall coincide with the closure of the Family Court case.</p> <p>Prior to case closure, CFSA shall document in the case record that the family has substantially achieved all of its case plan goals.</p>
	<p><b>Section C: Family Sustainability Planning</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Following the Agency's decision to close the case (and prior to the court hearing requesting case closure), a team meeting (Permanency FTM for court-involved cases) is held to develop a family sustainability plan, which shall include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. A review of family strengths and challenges.</li> <li>b. Referrals to community-based resources and identification of familial or non-familial supports for the family to access.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>c. Concrete action steps, based on family strengths and needs, directed at maintaining child safety, promoting well-being, and keeping the family intact.</li> <li>d. Strategies and action steps for the family’s response to potential setbacks that may impact child safety and/or family functioning.</li> </ul> <p>2. CFSA shall ask the parent or caregiver to consent to inviting community-based partners and supports to the meeting before doing so.</p>
	<p><b>Section D: Case Closure for Disengaged or Unable-to-Locate Families</b></p> <p>No open case will be closed solely on the grounds that the child or family could not be located until exhaustive efforts have been made by the assigned social worker to locate and engage the child and family. Such efforts shall include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A minimum of 4 unannounced visits at different times within a 1 week timeframe, with at least one visit between the hours of 7:00 PM and 8:00 AM.</li> <li>2. Visit to neighbors, relatives, and other collateral resources.</li> <li>3. Visit to the child(ren)’s school.</li> <li>4. Referral to the Diligent Search Unit and follow-up on information resulting from it.</li> <li>5. Search of the following databases/contacts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. DC Superior Court</li> <li>b. Landlord</li> <li>c. Property Records</li> <li>d. DC Department of Human Services Automated Client Eligibility Determination System (ACEDS)</li> </ul> </li> <li>6. Certified letter written in the family’s identified primary language to the last known address.</li> <li>7. Contact with law enforcement to request assistance gaining access to the family (if allegations warrant involvement), including the DC Metropolitan Police Department’s Youth Division.</li> <li>8. Consultation with the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) to determine if Agency legal action is warranted.</li> </ul> <p>If the above efforts have been made and documented, closure of the case further requires the approval of the Program Administrator.</p>

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