Chapter 4

INVESTIGATION TYPES AND USE OF THE FAMILY FUNCTIONING ASSESSMENT (FFA)

4-1. Types of Investigations. There are three investigation types in which a child has been alleged to be maltreated: “In-Home,” “Other,” and “Institutional.” The main determinants in identifying the type of investigation are the alleged maltreater’s relationship to the alleged child victim(s) and the setting or location at which the alleged maltreatment occurred.

4-2. Definitions.

a. An “In-Home” investigation is an intake in which the child’s parent, legal guardian (i.e., both permanent guardianship through s. 39.6221, F.S., and temporary custody of a minor through Chapter 751, F.S.), paramour (residing or frequenting the home) and/or other adult household member with significant caregiver responsibility for care and protection of the child is the alleged person responsible for the maltreatment. The child victim may reside in the household on a full or part-time basis. If the child’s parents or legal guardians have established separate households through divorce or separation, only the household in which the abuse is alleged to have occurred is assessed for danger threats and family functioning.

b. An “Other” investigation is an “In-Home” subtype which involves alleged abuse by a relative, non-relative, paramour, or adult babysitter temporarily entrusted with a child’s care who does not reside in the home with the parent and child. Similarly, human trafficking involving a non-parent as the alleged perpetrator is an “Other” investigation. When a parent is the alleged trafficker however, an “In-Home” investigation is required even though the parent may be trafficking the child at a location away from the parent’s household. An “Other” investigation does not require a Family Functioning Assessment (FFA)-Investigation, but does require a Present Danger Assessment. The investigator’s responsibility in this type of investigation is to determine the appropriate maltreatment findings and assess whether or not the parent or legal guardian will take appropriate protective actions if the maltreatment is verified (i.e., change babysitter, not allow the relative to be in a caregiver role in the future, etc.).

c. An “Institutional” investigation involves alleged abuse by an “Other Persons Responsible for a Child’s Welfare” (as defined in s. 39.01, F.S.) which typically occur in institutional settings such as schools, daycares, foster care, residential group care or facilities. Family Functioning Assessments (FFAs) are not completed in Institutional investigations because the alleged maltreatment does not involve the child’s parent(s) or legal guardian.

4-3. Purpose of the Family Functioning Assessment. The Family Functioning Assessment (FFA) is the process by which investigators apply critical thinking skills to guide decision-making regarding child safety and risk based upon having an extensive and comprehensive knowledge of the individual and family conditions in the home. This information is summarized in six information domains and is essential to the investigator being able to accurately identify impending danger threats, assess the sufficiency of caregiver protective capacities, complete a safety analysis and implement a safety plan (as appropriate) and determine the risk for future maltreatment to the child(ren).

4-4. Required Use of the Family Functioning Assessment. An FFA-Investigation is required for all In-Home investigations except when the report is being closed out as a “Duplicate,” “No Jurisdiction,” “Patently Unfounded,” “False Report,” or “Other.” Since Special Condition Referrals only involve problematic circumstances (e.g., parent hospitalized, Parent Needs Assistance, etc.) with no allegations of maltreatment, FFAs are not completed in those circumstances either.
4-5. **Conditions Generating a Separate In-home Investigation.** The investigator will need to contact the Hotline and generate a separate, subsequent “In-Home” investigation because of information obtained during an "Other" or "Institutional" investigation under the following conditions:

a. A child victim or collateral source interviewed in an Other or Institutional report also alleges maltreatment in the home setting by his or her parent or legal guardian.

b. The investigator determines a parent or legal guardian failed to act with due diligence to protect his or her child from maltreatment despite the parent having prior knowledge that an adult sitter or relative in an Other investigation, or Other Person Responsible for the Child’s Welfare in an Institutional investigation, was abusing or neglecting the child.

c. An investigator determines during an Other or Institutional investigation that a parent or legal guardian does not recognize that the maltreater’s ongoing access to the child represents an active danger threat and the parent or legal guardian refuses to take sufficient protective actions to ensure the child’s safety despite being fully informed of the danger threat(s) posed by the person responsible for the maltreatment (in the Other or Institutional investigation).

d. There is reason to suspect that the individual responsible for maltreatment in an Other or Institutional report is abusing his or her biological or adopted children as well.

4-6. **Relationship of Maltreating Caregiver to Child.** The following additional situations involving a biological parent or legal guardian should also be treated as an “Other” report:

a. Permanent Guardianship cases in which the alleged maltreating caregivers were formerly the child’s parents but no longer have legal custody and a new report is received alleging the child has been re-abused in that caregiver’s custody (e.g., during visitation or the legal guardian has returned the child to the parent’s home without a legal change in custody).

b. Permanent Guardianship cases in which the investigator determines the documented maltreatment involves one or more of the following conditions:

   (1) The guardian’s conduct toward the child or toward other children demonstrates that the continuing involvement of the guardian in the child’s life threatens the life or safety of the child irrespective of the provision of services.

   (2) The guardian’s conduct is so egregious (e.g., deplorable, flagrant, or outrageous by a normal standard of conduct) as to threaten the physical, mental, or emotional health of the child.

   (3) The guardian has subjected the child or another child to aggravated child abuse as defined in s. 827.03, F.S., or sexual battery or sexual abuse as defined in s. 39.01, F.S.

c. The maltreating parent resides out of state.

d. Child trafficking-by a non-caregiver (i.e., not biological parent or child’s legal guardian).

4-7. **Supervisor.** When initiated, the pre-commencement supervisor consultation will affirm the investigator has sufficiently reviewed, to the extent possible, the roles and relationships in the investigation to determine the focus household and validate the type of report (i.e., In-Home, Other or Institutional) initiated by the Hotline.