

Chapter 6

SAFETY PLAN INVOLVING A FAMILY-MADE ARRANGEMENT

6-1. Purpose. A family-made arrangement is a safety action initiated by the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) in response to present or impending danger. This safety action is a separation of the child and parent(s)/legal guardian voluntarily and temporarily to a responsible adult of his/her choosing to provide daily care and supervision of the child(ren). The parent(s) retain full legal responsibility including decision-making authority and access to the children.

a. There are three circumstances in which a family made arrangement may be used as a safety action:

(1) If it is in place at the time the child welfare professional arrives at the home;

(2) If it is in the process of occurring at the time that the child welfare professional arrives at the home; or,

(3) If it is in response to open-ended questioning by the child welfare professional of how to provide for the safety of the child(ren) while gathering more information.

b. A child welfare professional must evaluate whether the family-made arrangement is sufficient to manage the danger threat. It is not a family-made arrangement if at any time the child welfare professional directs the parent/caregiver as to what the arrangement should be or if the child welfare professional directs that access by the parent/caregiver is to be restricted.

6-2. Requirements.

a. The child welfare professional must seek a Supervisor Consultation for approval after completion of the assessment required in paragraph 6-3 of this operating procedure.

b. When a relative/non-relative is willing and able to assume the role of a short-term safety management provider in an out-of-home safety plan, the following requirements must be met:

(1) The safety management provider must be approved per paragraph 6-3 of this operating procedure.

(2) The danger threat can be managed without restricting the parent(s)/legal guardian(s)' contact with the child(ren) and the parent/legal guardian, and the safety management provider is willing and able to coordinate the parent/legal guardian's contact and access to the child(ren). The agreement that the parent/legal guardian and the safety management provider will be responsible for and will coordinate all contact in the safety plan will be documented in FSFN by the child welfare professional.

(a) The parent(s)/legal guardian(s) and the safety management provider agree that the arrangement will be for a period of time until one of the options in paragraph 6-5 of this operating procedure is achieved.

(b) The parent(s)/legal guardian(s) will maintain all of their legal responsibilities and rights including, but not limited to, enrolling the child(ren) in school, making and attending medical appointments, etc.

c. A family-made arrangement may not be used under the following circumstances and a Multidisciplinary Team or Legal Staffing will be pursued for the purpose of discussing other potential safety plan options when any of the following conditions exist.

(1) The parent(s)/legal guardian(s) are unable, unwilling or in denial of the need for the child(ren)'s temporary safety using a family-made arrangement.

(2) The child welfare professional, based on any current information or prior history about the family, believes that the restriction of parent(s)/legal guardian(s) access is required in order to effectively manage the safety of the child(ren). Restriction of parent(s)' access includes any requirement that visits must be supervised.

6-3. Assessment Process.

a. The child welfare professional will conduct an interview of the safety management provider to affirm their ability to care for and protect the child(ren). See Appendix B of this operating procedure, "Safety Management Provider Can and Will Protect the Child," for specific examples. The family arranged caregivers must demonstrate that they:

(1) Understand and believe the danger threat(s) exist.

(2) Are aligned with protecting the child(ren).

(3) Understand and support the safety plan.

(4) Are able and willing to care for and protect the child(ren).

(5) Are willing to work with parents to arrange contact.

(6) Agree to child abuse and background checks for all household members age 12 and older, and provide information as to what records checks will reveal.

(7) Agree to provide open access to agency staff responsible for monitoring.

(8) Will allow the child welfare professional access to the home in which the child(ren) will reside. The child welfare professional shall conduct a walk through to assess the safety and accommodations for the child(ren), including sleeping arrangements for the child(ren) and other household members.

b. Immediately following the interview, the child welfare professional will initiate a Florida Sexual Offenders and Predators registration check along with a local background check on all household members over the age of 12 using the locally established protocol and gather information necessary to affirm the appropriateness and viability of the parent or legal guardian's safety management provider, which includes:

(1) Complete a walk-through of the home.

(2) Review FSFN child abuse history on all household members. If history is present, document if it was disclosed by the safety management provider or household member and if history should or should not preclude their current ability to care for the child(ren).

(3) Analyze the results of the background checks to determine the relevance to the safety management provider's ability to care for and/or protect the child(ren), including considerations of major life circumstances that have changed along with sufficient resources to care for the child(ren).

c. Once the assessment of the family-made arrangement has been completed, the child welfare professional must complete an out-of-home safety plan that includes the safety management provider and details as to how and when the child welfare professional will monitor the plan.

d. The child welfare professional responsible for the safety plan must seek court action if any of the requirements for approval of the family-made arrangement are no longer met.

6-4. On-Going Assessment of Sufficiency of a Family-Made Arrangement. At the completion of the FFA-Ongoing, and at each Progress Update, an evaluation of the continued appropriateness of the family made arrangement must occur, focusing on whether there has been any progress made toward achieving permanency. If no progress has been made, the child welfare professional must complete an assessment of whether more intrusive safety actions are needed.

6-5. Closing Cases with a Family-Made Arrangement.

a. An investigation or ongoing case management case involving a safety plan with a family-made arrangement cannot be closed until one of the following has occurred:

(1) The child(ren) are able to safely reside in their own home;

(2) A non-maltreating parent has sought and gained custody of the child; or,

(3) A relative or non-relative has achieved temporary custody pursuant to Chapter 751, Florida Statutes.

b. If none of these options has occurred and the family is not making progress toward permanency, the child welfare professional must seek more intrusive safety actions through judicial intervention.

6-6. Supervisor Consultation and Approval. The supervisor is responsible for final approval of the family-made arrangement. The supervisor will conduct a Supervisor Consultation to affirm that the caregivers in a family-made arrangement are reasonable and adequate. The supervisor will affirm that:

a. An appropriate family-made arrangement was in place prior to the child welfare professional's arrival or the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) initiated the use of the family-made arrangement and identified appropriate caregivers subsequent to the child welfare professional's non-directive, open-ended questions regarding issues around child safety.

b. It is clear how the family arranged caregivers will control and manage the danger threat(s).

c. Appropriate interviews, background checks, and assessment of caregivers have been completed.

d. The caregivers have agreed to be a part of the safety plan and understand their role.

e. A child welfare professional at a level higher than the supervisor must review the circumstances and agree that the family-made arrangement is appropriate.

(1) Investigations supervisors will request a 2nd Tier Consultation.

(2) Case management supervisors will consult with a program manager or his/her designee.

6-7. FSFN Documentation.

a. All interviews conducted to gather information for a family-made arrangement will be documented in FSFN case notes within two business days.

b. The assessment of the family-made arrangement must be documented in FSFN case notes. The family-made arrangement will be reflected as a safety action in the safety plan.

c. The family arranged caregivers will be made case participants with complete contact and address information.

d. If the case is being transferred to ongoing case management services, a living arrangement in FSFN will be entered.

e. The supervisor will document the Supervisor Consultation.

