

Developmental/Psychological Assessment Policy for Children Being Adopted

(Revised 03/10/23)

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Forms

The following forms are referenced in this file:

- 02-8 Adoptions Developmental Evaluation Clinic Referral Form

Background

California state adoption regulations require that, prior to finalization of an adoption, a child under the age of 5 receive a developmental assessment and a child age 5 years and older receive a [psychological evaluation if necessary](#).

Policy

When a child is in the process of being adopted, it is the responsibility of the Adoption SW to include a current and complete assessment of the child's developmental and psychological functioning as part of the Adoptive Telling (see Adoption Tellings) report that is provided to the adoptive family. The SW will, based on the age of the child, provide this information through one or more of the following:

- Developmental Screening and Enhancement Program (DSEP) documents
 - full developmental evaluations
 - full psychological evaluation, and/or
 - further assessment completed by the SW in the course of their case management.
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Procedures

In order to ensure that children are appropriately assessed prior to adoption the Adoptions Children's SW will use the following procedures to meet the requirement of providing the most current developmental and psychological functioning of a child to a potential adoptive family.

| When the child is under the age of five years old and... | then... |
|--|---|
| has never had a developmental screening... | schedule a DSEP screening by following the Developmental Screening and Enhancement Program (DSEP) referral procedures. |
| already had an assessment (DSEP screening, full developmental evaluation, regional center individual family services plan, etc.) and all concerns have been addressed... | include all developmental information in the telling for PSS review. |
| the child has had a full evaluation but there are new areas of development that require evaluation... | schedule a DSEP screening and follow the recommendations of the screening. |
| When the child is between the ages of five and six years old and... | then... |
| has never had a developmental assessment... | schedule a DSEP screening. |
| already had an assessment (DSEP screening, full evaluation, regional center, etc.) and there are no concerns that need to be further evaluated... | document all developmental information in the telling and submit to PSS for approval. |
| needs an evaluation because there are new concerns that require evaluation... | schedule a full Developmental Screening and Enhancement Program (DSEP) not a screening) with Developmental Evaluation Clinic. If the evaluation indicates more testing is needed for mental health, follow up with DEC to ensure that they will refer the child for further evaluation (i.e. full psychological evaluation). |

Procedures (cont.)

| When the child is six years old or older and has had... | then... |
|--|---|
| a DSEP mental health screening that noted no mental health concerns... | document this information in the Telling. |
| a DSEP mental health screen that noted a concern and resulted in a Child and Family Team (CFT) recommending a psychological evaluation... | document in CWS/CMS that you have reviewed the results of the screening, the results of the CFT plan for the child, and verified that the screening date was entered into the Health and Education Passport in a CWS/CMS contact and in the Telling. If there are new or additional mental health concerns that require a psychological evaluation, refer the child by following procedures for psychological evaluation. |
| a psychological evaluation and all concerns listed on that evaluation have been addressed... | document the date of the evaluation, the recommendations made and the services that were provided in a CWS/CMS contact. Include this information in the Telling and submit to PSS for approval. |
| a psychological evaluation and the concerns listed on that evaluation have not been addressed or the SW determines that there are new areas that need to be evaluated... | Request a Mental Health Evaluations per the Policy. |

PSS Procedures

PSS will complete the following with regard to developmental evaluations:

- Review the Telling and confirm that all developmental information is included by reviewing any screenings, previous court reports, CWS/CMS contacts and any other documentation regarding the child's development.
 - Review the developmental information to verify that all recommended services and evaluations have been completed.
 - Discuss with the SW if there are any areas of development that need further assessment/evaluation.
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**California State
Adoption Program
Regulations on
Psychological
Evaluations**

The following describes the specific information that needs to be included when assessing a child's need for a psychological evaluation, per California State Regulations.

It is important to note that manager approval is still required when requesting any exceptions that are not specifically outlined in San Diego County Policy. Manager approval should be obtained in writing and included in the case file.

The Adoption Agency shall obtain the results of a psychological evaluation for a child 5 years and older when there is an indication that such an evaluation is necessary as determined by either:

1. The Agency's review of the child's history which indicates a genetic predisposition for mental illness, or
 2. The Agency's review of the child's behavior which seems abnormal and symptomatic of mental illness such as:
 - a. Pervasive lack of responsiveness to other people.
 - b. Solitary, stereotyped, repetitive play.
 - c. Peculiar speech patterns or speech disorders.
 - d. Extreme need for sameness.
 - e. Peculiar interest in or attachment to inanimate objects.
 - f. Retreat into fantasy, bizarre gestures or mannerisms.
 - g. Extreme aggression and uncontrollability when separated from parental figures.
 - h. Slowed thinking, apathy, or suicidal thoughts.
 - i. Bizarre eating habits or disturbances while eating.
 - j. Constricted or inappropriate affect.
 - k. Incoherence with delusions, hallucinations, or loose associations.
 - l. Oddities of motor development, such as peculiar posturing or peculiar hand or finger movements.
 - m. Excessive, persistent anxiety and worry.
 - n. Psychomotor agitation or hyperactivity.
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**California State
Adoption Program
Regulations on
Psychological
Evaluations (cont.)**

When a child age 5 years or older is not displaying symptoms of emotional disturbance, such as those specified in Section 35127.1(b)(9)(A), the agency shall:

1. Determine, based on the agency's judgment, whether other available information about the child and/or the parent indicates that a psychological evaluation is necessary to facilitate the placement and ongoing care of the child, and
2. If the agency determines a psychological evaluation is necessary, arrange for and obtain the results of a psychological evaluation for the child
3. Information which may indicate an evaluation is necessary may be provided by birth or court records or reports from relatives, foster parents, teachers, medical personnel or others who are familiar with the child or birth parent.

This information may include, but is not limited to, any of the following:

- Birth parent history of mental illness
- Birth mother use of drugs or alcohol during pregnancy
- Child history of severe or sustained physical, sexual or emotional abuse.

References

California State Adoptions Regulations 35127.1.

**Alignment with SET
Values**

[Value 3: Helping Children and Youth Achieve Their Full Potential and Develop Lifelong Relationships.](#)

[Value 4: Shared Responsibility with Community Partners.](#)
