

HAWAII SAFETY OF PLACEMENT ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES - SAFETY FACTORS & CHARACTERISTICS

1. **Child Functioning: How are the children functioning cognitively, emotionally, behaviorally, physically, and socially?** *(This question considers all of the children in the home including the resource family's own children and unrelated children who have been living with the family. Judgments are based on considering all the children. If one child is remarkably different than the other children, an explanation should be made specifically indicating the extent to which this raises any concern for the quality of parenting or the presence of threats.)* **The presence of these behaviors regardless of their origin or cause affects the child's ability to be safe.**

Positive Characteristics

- Openly assertive
- Comfortable speaking mind
- Self-protective
- Make their needs known to others
- Child describes environment as safe
- No indication of maltreatment
- Positive, fulfilling interaction and relationship exists between the foster child and others in the home
- Needs/behaviors of foster child/previously foster children/family's own children are non-competitive/mutually compatible

Characteristics of Concern

- Overly Reserved
- Uncomfortable speaking mind freely
- Ability to protect self questionable
- Limited ability/reluctant to make needs known to others
- Uneasy about describing environment
- Behavior may be consistent with being maltreated
- Courteous, artificial interaction, or apprehensive relationship exists between the foster child and others in the home
- Needs/behaviors of foster child/previously foster children/family's own children stimulate unrest/conflict

Negative Characteristics

- Intimidated, withdrawn, afraid, alert for danger
- Avoids direct communication with anyone
- Not self-protective
- Does not seek assistance or protection
- Avoids discussing environment
- Behaves in ways suggesting presence of threatening environment (e.g. abusive, sexualized, etc.); Indications of maltreatment
- Tense, detached, distrustful, disliking, hostile, or un-accepting relationship exists between foster child and others in home
- Needs/behaviors of all children will stimulate hostility/aggression or extreme competition for attention

2. **Adult Functioning: How are the adult family members functioning cognitively, emotionally, behaviorally, physically, and socially?** *(This question considers the overall functioning of the family. This includes all household residents with more attention to caregivers.)*

Positive Characteristics

- The resource family has adequate physical, emotional, cognitive capacity
- Realistic view on life/expectations
- Clear roles and positive relationships
- Value and practice honesty
- Low stress and/or positive coping skills
- Display healthy outlets for stress
- Very Open
- Shows conscience and empathy
- Awareness of strengths and limitations
- Highly motivated, fully functioning
- Roles, responsibilities, boundaries are clear, appropriate and established by the resource family

Characteristics of Concern

- The family has marginal physical, emotional, or cognitive capacity in need of support
- Unrealistic view on life/expectations
- Imprecise role clarity and unsatisfying relationships
- Not forthcoming, evasive
- Moderate stress and varied coping skills
- Inconsistent ability to manage stress
- Guarded
- Displays minimal empathy
- Limited awareness of strengths and limitations
- Inconsistent motivation interferes with the family's ability to function
- Some blurring of roles, responsibilities, and boundaries among adults in the home results in inappropriate interactions with the foster child(ren)

Negative Characteristics

- The family has limited or deficient physical, emotional, cognitive capacity that has no reasonable accommodation
- Pervasive mood issues, like anger, bizarre thoughts, etc.
- Skewed perceptions, not oriented in reality
- Ineffective roles and hostile, neglectful or manipulative relationships
- Deceptive, manipulative
- High stress and poor/no coping skills
- Copes with stress through angry outbursts, alcohol/substance abuse or dependency
- Avoidant, or closed
- Lack of empathy apparent in manner
- Distorted awareness of strengths and limitations
- Lack of motivation impacts the family's ability to function
- No roles, responsibilities, or boundaries (e.g. sexual, emotional, etc.) are established; allows access by potentially harmful adults or others

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3. **Caregiver Supervision: How are the resource families actively caring for, supervising, and protecting the children in the home?** *(This question considers all adult household members who take an active role in caring for and supervising children already in the resource family home and foster children. More emphasis on resource caregivers should be made.)*

Positive Characteristics

- Closely bonded to own children
- Protective behaviors are observed
- Acknowledges and takes responsibilities for their actions
- Accurate viewpoint of foster child
- Able to fulfill caregiver role
- Are familiar with foster child and his/her uniqueness/ needs
- Are aware of all children's differences, needs, behaviors
- Effective at managing/meeting needs of all the children
- Responds to foster child's behaviors and emotions in supportive and accepting ways
- Have a good understanding of age and developmental roles; responds appropriately to meet the child's needs
- Consistently sets appropriate expectations for the children based on their age and developmental level; child is not held responsible for the running of the household
- Ensures protective measures are taken to address child's abusive or sexualized behaviors

Characteristics of Concern

- Minimally/questionably attached to own children
- Few protective behaviors are observed; questionable ability to consistently be protective
- Varies in acknowledging and taking responsibility for their actions
- Inaccurate/detached viewpoint of foster child
- Other caregivers/ household members lack of commitment interferes with the caregivers ability to fulfill their role
- Are minimally familiar or unfamiliar with foster child and his/her uniqueness and needs
- Have a limited awareness or is unaware of all children's differences, needs, behaviors
- Has difficulty managing/meeting the needs of all of the children but is willing to accept/use support/ assistance
- Requires assistance to respond to foster child's behaviors and emotions in supportive and accepting ways
- Limited understanding of age and developmental roles; shows frustration or inability to cope with child
- Inconsistently sets appropriate expectations for the children based on their age and developmental level; child has some responsibility for the running of the household
- Inconsistently ensures protective measures are taken to address child's abusive or sexualized behaviors

Negative Characteristics

- No attachment to own children
- No evidence/observations of protective behaviors
- Fails to take action to protect the child
- Blames others for difficulties; fails to assume responsibilities
- Possesses a distorted viewpoint of foster child
- Other caregivers/ household members lack of commitment prevents the caregivers ability to fulfill their role
- Is unconcerned with foster child's uniqueness and needs
- Is unaware of all children's differences, needs, behaviors
- Is unable to effectively manage/meet needs of all of the children
- Responds to foster child's behaviors and emotions in negative and harmful ways
- Does not understand age and developmental roles, or special needs of the child(ren); does not desire and/or is resistant to having this knowledge; fails to take action to protect the child
- Expects children to perform tasks well beyond their age or developmental level, requires child to assume an inordinate amount of responsibility for the running of the home
- Does not take protective measures to address child's abusive or sexualized behaviors

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4. **Discipline: How are discipline strategies used with the children in the home?** *(This question considers the appropriate and effective strategies and techniques used by the caregivers to discipline the child(ren) in the home.)*

Positive Characteristics

- Ground rules and behavioral expectations are well established and communicated to all children in the home
- Uses a wide range of discipline options successfully
- Disciplinary approaches and styles are appropriate for the foster child's age and developmental level
- Takes responsibility to discipline the children; does not delegate or allow others in the home to take disciplinary action
- Accurately considers special needs of the foster child when using disciplinary approaches and styles
- Does not use physical discipline or other inappropriate discipline techniques with their own children or foster child(ren)
- Does not use discipline measures that may trigger or create trauma to the foster child
- Consequences for behavior are natural and logical; discipline is administered in a fair and equitable way for all children in the home

Characteristics of Concern

- Ground rules are unclear or are inappropriately different for the foster child
- Uses a limited range of discipline options; expresses frustration that no discipline works with the foster child
- Disciplinary approaches and styles are marginally appropriate/occasionally inappropriate for the foster child's age and developmental level***
- Inconsistently takes responsibility to discipline the children; occasionally delegates or allow others in the home to take disciplinary action
- Inaccurately considers special needs of the foster child when using disciplinary approaches and styles
- Occasionally uses physical discipline or other inappropriate discipline techniques with their own children or foster child(ren)
- Uses discipline measures that unknowingly trigger or create trauma to the foster child
- Consequences for behavior are harsh; relying on or using threats to "discipline" the child, such as telling the child they will withhold visitation, parental contact, etc

Negative Characteristics

- There are no clearly established/consistent ground rules, or ground rules vary from day to day and child to child resulting in serious negative effects for the child (e.g. behavioral, emotional, etc.)
- Uses adverse discipline measures (e.g. intimidation, withholding food or other basic necessities, aggressive, excessive, inappropriate restrictions, restraint, confinement in small areas, etc.)
- Disciplinary approaches and styles are not appropriate for the foster child's age and developmental level
- Does not take the responsibility to discipline the children; or frequently delegates or allow others to discipline the child
- Does not consider special needs of the foster child when using disciplinary approaches and styles
- Frequently uses physical discipline or other inappropriate discipline techniques with their own children or foster child(ren)
- Uses discipline measures that knowingly trigger or create trauma to the foster child
- Withholds meaningful objects from the foster child's home as punishment
- Consequences for behavior are extreme; foster child is punished more severely than the other children in the home

5. **Acceptance: How do the resource family members demonstrate in observable ways that they accept the identified child into the home?** *(This question considers how the resource family, including household members, and other children residing in the home, accept the identified child as part of the family.)*

Positive Characteristics

- Resource family members embrace the foster child and fully accept them as part of the household
- Foster child helped to fit in; is always included in activities and is included in activities the same as others;
- Other children - foster child are attached/accepting of one another;
- Foster child is not blamed or criticized for the placement
- The foster child is valued;
- Foster child is treated equitably as compared to other children in the home
- Child(ren) are treated equally regardless of religious/cultural beliefs, race, gender or sexual identity

Characteristics of Concern

- Resource family members are ambivalent towards the child; superficially accept the foster child as part of the household
- Minimal attempts in assisting foster child to fit in; sometimes not included in activities
- Other children – foster child tolerate each other
- Foster child is somewhat blamed or receives some criticism for the placement
- The foster child is somewhat valued
- Foster child is occasionally not treated equitably as compared to other children in the home
- Child(ren) are treated differently because of their religious/cultural beliefs, race, gender or sexual identity

Negative Characteristics

- Resource family members are hostile towards the child; do not accept the foster child as part of the household
- Foster child not allowed to fit in; excluded or segregated from activities
- Other children - foster child are antagonistic/ hostile towards each other;
- Foster child is blamed or receives repeated criticism for the placement; constantly reminded that the child is at fault for the placement
- The foster child is not valued;
- Foster child is not treated equitably as compared to other children in the home
- Child(ren) are ostracized/criticized because of religious/cultural beliefs, race, gender or sexual identity
- Does not allow child access to their own personal possessions, clothing, etc.

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6. **Community Supports: How does the resource family access/use community supports to help assure child safety?** *(This question considers INFORMAL aspects of the community, other extended family, friends, neighbors, clubs, organizations, and non child welfare.)*

Positive Characteristics

- Friends, neighbors, relatives or others routinely provide support and assistance;
- Regular, positive contact with others in the community
- Routinely uses reliable neighbors, friends, relatives, and/or other community members as supports
- Level of contact that the resource family has with the community remains the same
- Has an accurate knowledge of the informal resources/supports available and accesses them when needed.

Characteristics of Concern

- Friends, neighbors, relatives or others may occasionally provide support and assistance
- Sporadic contact with others in the community
- Sporadically uses reliable neighbors, friends, relatives, and/or other community members as supports
- Occasionally chooses unreliable or inappropriate alternate caregivers for support
- Level of contact that the resource family has with the community is reduced
- Limited knowledge of the informal resources/supports available and unsure/hesitant of how to access them when needed.

Negative Characteristics

- Friends, neighbors, relatives or others do not provide support/ assistance or are antagonistic;
- Closed system, avoids contacts with others in the community
- Will not/refuses to use available, reliable neighbors, friends, relatives, and/or other community members as supports
- Consistently chooses unreliable or inappropriate alternate caregivers for support
- Level of contact that the resource family has with the community has been dramatically reduced or has stopped completely.
- Has knowledge of informal resources/supports available but does not access them when needed

7. **Current Status: How do the resource family members respond to the current issues, demands, stressors within the home that affect the child's safety?** *(This question considers resource family' objectives in caring for children and present demands the home is experiencing.)*

Positive Characteristics

- Currently caring for identified child(ren) does not cause any unusual stress
- Foster child meets the expressed preference of the resource family and/or the child does not meet their preference but the caregivers feel successful with the child
- No change in the family circumstances/dynamics; or change occurred which did not result in any unusual stress
- No health or safety concerns on the property
- Managing the demands of the household and children foster in the home

Characteristics of Concern

- Currently caring for identified child(ren) resulting in some stress
- Foster child does not meet the expressed preference of the resource family but they continue to try to be successful with the child
- Moderate change in the family circumstances/dynamics resulting in stress that causes a negative impact on the child
- Minor health or safety concerns on the property which pose no immediate threat and are easily correctable
- Some difficulty managing the demands of the household and children foster in the home

Negative Characteristics

- Currently caring for identified child(ren) resulting in a high degree of stress impacting the caregiver(s) ability to protect the child
- Foster child does not meet the expressed preference of the resource family and they are unwilling to continue making efforts to be successful with the child
- Significant negative change in the family circumstances/dynamics that impacts the caregiver(s) ability to protect the child
- Serious health or safety hazards which pose immediate threat
- Unable to manage the demands of the household and children foster in the home

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8. **Foster Child's Family– Resource Family Relationship: How does the relationship between the family of origin and the resource family support the safety of the child?** *(This question considers the extent to which relationships can contribute to or detract from the foster child's safety and the capacity of the resource family to follow through. Foster child's family refers to the home from which the child was removed. All of the characteristics help to explore the foster child's family's understanding of the need for placement.)*

Positive Characteristics

- Foster child's family – resource family relationship is one of mutual respect
- Foster child's family accept/support resource family roles and responsibilities
- Foster child's family are appropriately involved with the resource family as detailed in the agency developed Safety Plan
- Resource family takes action when necessary regardless of their relationship with the foster child's family
- Foster child's family views resource placement as best place for child
- Resource family shares agency's view of the foster child's family's capacity to care for their children; collaborative
- History of positive, life-long or significant involvement with foster child and/or foster child's family

Characteristics of Concern

- Foster child's family – resource family relationship is passive, detached, or non-existent
- Foster child's family marginally/occasionally impacts the resource family's abilities to fulfill their roles and responsibilities
- Foster child's family try to become more/questionably involved with the resource family contrary to the agency developed Safety Plan
- Resource family reluctantly takes action when necessary, influenced by their relationship with the foster child's family
- Foster child's family not accepting of resource placement as best place for child
- Resource family not certain of agency's view of the foster child's family's capacity to care for their children; influenced by the caregiver(s) of origin
- Short-term involvement with foster child and/or foster child's family

Negative Characteristics

- Foster child's family – resource family relationship is tense, conflicted, or hostile
- Foster child's family significantly/continuously impacts the resource family's abilities to fulfill their roles and responsibilities
- Foster child's family actively undermine/ignore the agency developed Safety Plan
- Resource family does not take action when necessary, negatively aligned with the foster child's family
- Foster child's family opposed to out of home placement as best place for child
- Resource family does not share agency's view of the foster child's family's capacity to care for their children; are in collusion with caregiver(s) of origin
- Unpleasant, no involvement, or negative involvement with foster child and/or foster child's family

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9. **Oversight: How does the out of home family demonstrate that they are agreeable to and cooperative with CWS and other formal resources?** *(This question considers tendencies toward inclusion; examples of cooperation with formal resources, the family's openness to workers, etc.)*

Positive Characteristics

- Consistently forthcoming to CWS with changes in their family circumstances or changes in their household composition
- Consistently makes child available at home or other locations to CWS or provider personnel
- Consistently ensures child attends school,
- Consistently ensures child participates in needed services
- Consistently seeks help for the child from CWS, the school, service providers, and other appropriate persons and consistently follows through with recommendations
- Is consistently compliant with agency policy & procedures and/or foster care regulations
- Consistently accessible in person/by phone
- Actively engaged in child's Treatment and Safety plan
- Routine and frequent contact with professionals or agencies in the community that are a part of the foster child's treatment
- Consistently attends appointments related to the foster child
- In agreement with and fulfilling the case plan

Characteristics of Concern

- Inconsistently shares relevant information about changes in their family circumstances or their household composition
- Inconsistently makes child available at home or other locations to CWS or provider personnel
- Inconsistently ensures child attends school,
- Inconsistently ensures child participates in needed services
- Inconsistently seek help for the child from CWS, the school, service providers, and other appropriate persons and inconsistently follows through with recommendations
- Inconsistently compliant with agency policy & procedures and/or foster care regulations
- Inconsistently accessible in person/by phone; availability often a matter of convenience
- Provides transportation, scheduling, etc as part of the child's Treatment and Safety plan but shows little interest in the child's progress
- Inconsistent contact with professionals or agencies in the community that are a part of the foster child's treatment
- Begin to demonstrate a pattern of missing appointments related to the foster child
- Not in agreement with but complying with the case plan

Negative Characteristics

- Withholds relevant information about changes in their family circumstances or their household composition
- Does not make child available at home or other locations to CWS or provider personnel
- Does not ensure child attends school,
- Does not ensure child participates in needed services
- Does not seek help for the child from CWS, the school, service providers, and other appropriate persons and will not follow through with recommendations
- Does not comply with agency policy & procedures and/or foster care regulations
- Routinely not accessible in person/by phone
- Argumentative, resistant or unwilling to assume any role or responsibility in meeting essential treatment needs or needs identified in the safety plan
- No contact with professionals or agencies in the community that are a part of the foster child's treatment, or refuses to allow access to the foster child
- Consistently misses appointments related to the foster child
- Sabotages or refuses to support the case plan

10. **Planning: How do the resource family members demonstrate that they are capable of and actively engaged in day to day planning for the child's day to day safety?** *(This question considers specific arrangements and intentions, methods, assurances, feasibility, and commitment. This does not refer to the formal Safety Plan developed by the CWS agency.)*

Positive Characteristics

- Fully understand/are attentive to the foster child's vulnerability/need for protection
- An effective daily routine/plan for caring for the foster child exists that meets the child's needs
- Daily planning includes specific responsibilities, timing, activities, and acceptable/effective means for child management and discipline
- Commitment/capability for carrying out daily routines/planning
- Planning takes into account the demands of having several children in the home

Characteristics of Concern

- Partially understand foster child's vulnerability/need for protection
- A vague daily routine/plan for caring for foster child exists
- Daily planning does not include specific responsibilities, timing, activities, and acceptable/effective means for child management and discipline Moderately committed to/somewhat capable of implementing daily routines/planning
- Planning does not take into account the demands of having several children in the home

Negative Characteristics

- Do not understand, believe and/or care about foster child's vulnerability/need for protection
- No daily routine/plan exists or it does not meet the foster child's needs
- Not committed to or capable of creating or implementing daily routines/planning
- Planning does not occur, there are too many children in the home to assure safety based on the resource family's capabilities