

Toolkit: Congregate Care Case Reviews

Source: Onondaga County, 2018

Overview:

A regular case review process is a key strategy in Onondaga County's effort to reduce their overreliance on congregate care. It builds upon their "front door" system-reforms, or placement practices, by addressing the "back door", or those already in care. The goal of the congregate care case reviews is to assess the continued need for higher levels of care, and to push forward on permanency goals. By reviewing the progress of youth in care on a monthly, or bi-monthly basis, the county can ensure that congregate care is being used as a short-term intervention, rather than a destination, and that youth in care are stepped-down in a timely manner and to family when possible.

Enclosed in this toolkit is a summary of the goals and process from Onondaga County as well as forms to develop an action plan, and to guide the oral presentations from the placement social worker and caseworker.

Process for Monitoring Onondaga County Youth in Congregate/Institutional Care

Purpose:

Too often, the placement of youth in congregate/institutional settings across all youth-serving systems (Child Welfare, Mental Health, Education and Juvenile Justice) is viewed as or may become a “destination” instead of a short-term, treatment-focused intervention. Onondaga County is committed to the reduction of lengths of stay for youth in congregate/institutional settings and when this level of care is necessary, placing youth in settings that are close to their home and community to enable families to maintain regular contact with their child, be an integral part of their youth’s treatment and build on positive connections between the youth and their communities.

In order to increase the accountability for all systems and provider agencies, the Child Welfare Division of Onondaga County’s Dept. of Children & Family Services, has developed a process for monitoring youth in congregate/institutional settings that will track their progress, address issues of concern raised by any party (youth, family, Children’s Division and/or provider agency) and support the youth’s ultimate return to their home/community.

Values:

The following values will serve as a guide to the efforts of the congregate care case review process:

- The most desirable place for children to grow up is with familiar faces in familiar places
- Parents, children, youth, kin, communities and tribes have strengths, resiliency and natural supports to offer
- Beliefs, values and family practices of cultural, racial, religious and ethnic groups are respected; services and supports are culturally responsive
- Strategies maintain, honor and support relationships and connections
- All staff are committed to partnering with families and children
- Communication is honest, respectful and direct

Goals:

The following are the goals of the congregate care case review process:

- Right service, right intensity, right amount of time
- Ensure alignment of Child Welfare’s goals of placement and the agency’s treatment goals
- Every youth will have clearly identified indicators of readiness for discharge to avoid drift to non-critical issues and unnecessary extensions of stay

- Proactively address any family readiness issues to avoid unnecessary extensions of stay due to unresolved family needs
- Clarify any legal status issues and/or court timelines
- Enhance the “partnership” dynamic between Child Welfare and provider agencies

Process:

The process for monitoring these youth is detailed below and will be distributed to all systems and provider agencies to ensure understanding, agreement and compliance. The initial focus will be on youth in congregate/institutional settings within a 1-hour travel distance. Ultimately, all youth in congregate/institutional settings will be subject to review every three (3) months.

Many providers, especially those within the local vicinity, are aware of the county’s intention to monitor our youth “in care” and support their successful transition back to their home/community in a timely manner. However, some are not and therefore Child Welfare administration will seek out administrative representatives from these facilities to orient them to our goals, this process and the expectations Onondaga County has for our youth, their families and those who provide services to them.

Case Selection:

Catholic Charities’ Permanence Facilitator will coordinate the selection of cases for review. Placement agencies will transmit current rosters of Onondaga County youth to the Permanence Facilitator on the first day of every month. The goal is to review congregate care cases every three months with consideration of other reviews (Service Plan Reviews, Treatment Plan Reviews, Permanency Plan Reviews, etc.) that take place on their respective timelines. A reasonable, scheduled rotation of Congregate Care reviews will be created by the Permanence Facilitator upon admission to the congregate care site and shared with all parties.

In addition to the above scheduled rotation, county caseworkers and placement agency staff have the option to request a case review should circumstances arise that demand the attention of both the county and the placement agency prior to the next scheduled review date. In this case, either party will contact the Permanence Facilitator and request the case be placed on the next available review docket.

Case Review Meetings:

The Catholic Charities’ Permanence Facilitator will provide facilitation of the Congregate Care Review meetings. Attendees at the meeting will include: Placement agency staff/supervisors, DCFS supervisors (A & B) and respective case workers of selected cases and Child Welfare

administration. The youth's caseworker and placement social worker will share information following the Presentation Guide (see attached form). These meetings will provide an ongoing opportunity to discuss case-level concerns as well as aggregate issues and trends with the various providers.

Questions to focus on during the meeting will include, but not be limited to:

- 1) Is child "on-track" or "off-track" for the initial discharge date set at time of placement?
 - a. If "on-track", what do you attribute the child's success to?
 - b. If "off-track", what interferes with the child's safe/timely return to home, school and community?
 - c. What efforts are being made (or need to be made) to address and overcome these issues/concerns?
 - d. What support and assistance is the provider agency looking for from the youth's family, home community and/or children's division?
 - e. Could any of the needs be met with intensive community-based services?
- 2) What is the discharge plan for this youth? Including . . .
 - a. What level of care will s/he be stepping-down to?
 - b. What community services/activities are (or will) the youth and family connected to as an aid to the youth's transition home?
 - c. What is the educational plan/placement for this youth upon discharge?
- 3) How ready is the family for the youth to return home? (Providers should pose this question directly to the family in advance of the meeting)
- 4) Summary of actionable items (what, by whom, and by when)
- 5) Other issues/concerns related to the ongoing partnership between the department and provider

At the conclusion of the meeting, a list of any actionable items identified by the group, the associated responsible party for each and the timeline for its completion will be shared with all present (see attached Action Plan template).

Case Follow-up/Updates:

In order to sustain the necessary attention and focus on the cases presented at the Case Review Meetings, updates on any actionable items identified in the meetings will be provided by the responsible party within 10 days (or the agreed upon timeline) to the Permanence Facilitator. If additional discussion is warranted or desired by either party, a subsequent meeting will be arranged or the matter will be presented with updates at the next scheduled meeting.

Congregate Care Case Review: Action Plan

Child's Name:		Date:			
Discharge Plan: Return Home <input type="checkbox"/> Step-down <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> Please Specify:					
Anticipated Date:					
<i>Strategy/Goal (e.g., family engagement, youth involvement, individualized services, etc.)</i>	<i>Actions (the specific tasks planned (e.g., contact maternal aunt for current situation))</i>	<i>Anticipated Barriers to Implementation (if any)</i>	<i>Plan to Overcome Identified Barriers</i>	<i>Target Completion Date (month, year)</i>	<i>Person Responsible</i>
1.	a.				
	b.				
	c.				
	d.				
2.	a.				
	b.				
	c.				
	d.				
3.	a				
	b				
	c				
	d				

Congregate Care Case Review: Action Plan

4.	a				
	b				
	c				
	d				
5.	a				
	b				
	c				
	d				

Debrief:

How will the plan be shared with youth and family (if not present at meeting)?

Are there any unanswered questions or concerns? If so, how should they be addressed?

What did we learn by reviewing this case that we can apply to other cases?

Systemic Issues and/or Resource Barriers identified?

Congregate Care Case Review

Oral Case Presentation Form – DCFS Caseworker

Child’s Name:

Case Name:

Caseworker’s Name:

Supervisor:

Instructions for the **DCFS Caseworker**: Use the requested information in the left column to prepare a 10-minute Case Presentation to share at the Congregate Care Case Review meeting.

Instructions for **Facilitator/Attendees**: Record your review notes from the Caseworker’s presentation in the right-hand column.

Case Presentation Topic	Case Review Notes
<p>Worker Introduction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State your name and explain (a) your position with the agency, (b) how long you have been assigned to this case, and (c) your relationship with the child/family. 	
<p>Description of Child’s (and Family’s) Background:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child’s age, gender, family members at home (including any siblings in custody) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child’s strengths, supports and other positive aspects of his/her situation 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child’s issues, challenges or needs (e.g., physical, social, emotional, behavioral, developmental) that led to this placement decision 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth/custodial parent(s)’ strengths and supports 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issues, challenges or needs that may be affecting progress toward Discharge 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child’s significant relationships with caring adults. Include type and frequency of contact/visits 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any other relevant information regarding the child and family 	

Case Presentation Topic	Case Review Notes
<p>Permanency/Concurrent Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State the current Permanency plan for this child (return to parent, relative custody, APPLA, etc.). If not reunification, please explain why. • State the concurrent plan for this child; if there is no concurrent plan, please explain why. 	
<p>Current Services/Supports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the services and supports being provided for the birth/custodial parent and other family members, indicating what is/is not working and why • State which parental needs are not being addressed and how they might be 	
<p>Agency Factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe any DCFS or agency practices/factors that may be affecting progress toward Discharge or Permanency. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe any court processes that may be affecting progress toward Discharge or Permanency in this case. 	
<p>Next Steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the next steps in the current case plan. • Indicate how you expect this child's Placement status to change within the next three to six months. 	

SOURCE: Content produced by Care Solutions, Inc., under contract with Casey Family Programs, for the State of Alabama, October 2009; Revised by Onondaga County DCFS, May 2018

Congregate Care Case Review

Oral Case Presentation Form – Social Worker

Child’s Name:

Case ID #:

Social Worker’s Name:

Placement Agency:

Instructions for the **Placement Social Worker**: Use the requested information in the left column to prepare a 10-minute Case Presentation to share at the Congregate Care Case Review meeting.

Instructions for **Facilitator/Attendees**: Record your review notes from the Social Worker’s presentation in the right-hand column.

Case Presentation Topic	Case Review Notes
<p>Worker Introduction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State your name and explain (a) your position with the agency, (b) how long you have been assigned to this case, and (c) your relationship with the child/family. 	
<p>Description of Child’s (and Family’s) Progress since Admission:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child’s strengths, supports and other positive aspects of his/her placement experience • Child’s issues, challenges or needs (e.g., physical, social, emotional, behavioral, developmental) that may be affecting progress toward Discharge • Birth/custodial parent(s)’ strengths and supports • Birth/custodial parent(s)’ issues, challenges or needs that may be affecting progress toward Discharge • Any other issues, challenges or needs that may be affecting progress toward Discharge • Child’s significant relationships with caring adults. Include type and frequency of contact/visits • Any other relevant information regarding the child and family 	

Case Presentation Topic	Case Review Notes
Current Services/Supports:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe what is being provided for this child, indicating what is and is not working and why. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State which child needs are not being addressed and how they might be. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the services and supports being provided for the birth/custodial parent, indicating what is/is not working and why 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State which parental needs are not being addressed and how they might be. 	
Agency Factors:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe any DCFS or agency practices/factors that may be affecting progress toward Discharge. 	
Next Steps:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the next steps in the current treatment plan. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss services/supports that will need to continue for youth/family upon discharge (including any school/education needs) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicate how you expect this child's Placement status to change within the next three to six months. 	

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Anticipated Date:					
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1.	a.				
	b.				
	c.				
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Congregate Care Case Review: Action Plan

4.	a				
	b				
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Goals:

The following are the goals of the congregate care case review process:

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1.	a.				
	b.				
	c.				
	d.				
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	b.				
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	d.				
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Congregate Care Case Review: Action Plan

4.	a				
	b				
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Case Presentation Topic	Case Review Notes
<p>Permanency/Concurrent Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State the current Permanency plan for this child (return to parent, relative custody, APPLA, etc.). If not reunification, please explain why. • State the concurrent plan for this child; if there is no concurrent plan, please explain why. 	
<p>Current Services/Supports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the services and supports being provided for the birth/custodial parent and other family members, indicating what is/is not working and why • State which parental needs are not being addressed and how they might be 	
<p>Agency Factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe any DCFS or agency practices/factors that may be affecting progress toward Discharge or Permanency. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe any court processes that may be affecting progress toward Discharge or Permanency in this case. 	
<p>Next Steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the next steps in the current case plan. • Indicate how you expect this child's Placement status to change within the next three to six months. 	

SOURCE: Content produced by Care Solutions, Inc., under contract with Casey Family Programs, for the State of Alabama, October 2009; Revised by Onondaga County DCFS, May 2018

Congregate Care Case Review

Oral Case Presentation Form – Social Worker

Child’s Name:

Case ID #:

Social Worker’s Name:

Placement Agency:

Instructions for the **Placement Social Worker**: Use the requested information in the left column to prepare a 10-minute Case Presentation to share at the Congregate Care Case Review meeting.

Instructions for **Facilitator/Attendees**: Record your review notes from the Social Worker’s presentation in the right-hand column.

Case Presentation Topic	Case Review Notes
<p>Worker Introduction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State your name and explain (a) your position with the agency, (b) how long you have been assigned to this case, and (c) your relationship with the child/family. 	
<p>Description of Child’s (and Family’s) Progress since Admission:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child’s strengths, supports and other positive aspects of his/her placement experience • Child’s issues, challenges or needs (e.g., physical, social, emotional, behavioral, developmental) that may be affecting progress toward Discharge • Birth/custodial parent(s)’ strengths and supports • Birth/custodial parent(s)’ issues, challenges or needs that may be affecting progress toward Discharge • Any other issues, challenges or needs that may be affecting progress toward Discharge • Child’s significant relationships with caring adults. Include type and frequency of contact/visits • Any other relevant information regarding the child and family 	

Case Presentation Topic	Case Review Notes
Current Services/Supports:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe what is being provided for this child, indicating what is and is not working and why. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State which child needs are not being addressed and how they might be. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the services and supports being provided for the birth/custodial parent, indicating what is/is not working and why 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State which parental needs are not being addressed and how they might be. 	
Agency Factors:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe any DCFS or agency practices/factors that may be affecting progress toward Discharge. 	
Next Steps:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the next steps in the current treatment plan. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss services/supports that will need to continue for youth/family upon discharge (including any school/education needs) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicate how you expect this child's Placement status to change within the next three to six months. 	

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