

THE TROUP COUNTY, GEORGIA JUVENILE COURT

SERVICE PROVIDER PROTOCOL FOR EVALUATIONS AND ASSESSMENTS IN DEPENENCY CASE

The purpose of the Service Provider Protocol for Evaluations and Assessments in Dependency Cases (referred to herein as the AProtocol@) is to ensure that substance abuse assessments, psychological evaluations, family violence assessments, parental fitness assessments, and other evaluations and assessments are made available to the Department of Family and Children Services (the AAgency@) early in the life of a case so that effective case plans can be developed and implemented timely. Specifically, the goal is to have at least the recommendations from evaluations and assessments of parents whose children have been taken into care within three weeks following the date the children are taken into care so that the Agency can develop a meaningful case plan in each case within thirty days following physical removal of a child from the child's home as required by law. There are essentially two providers who provide the majority of evaluations and assessments and the terms of the Protocol are different for each of those providers, as follows:

A. PROTOCOL FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL EVALUATIONS AND RELATED EVALUATIONS OR ASSESSMENTS BY DR. RONALD COLE

1. Dr. Cole will provide services in accordance with this Protocol as it may be amended from time to time.
2. Dr. Cole will set aside an appropriate portion of every other Friday for psychological evaluations and related evaluations or assessments of the type historically performed by him for, or on behalf of, the Agency (herein referred to as "Evaluations").
3. Priority for Evaluations shall be given as follows:
 - (a) Of parents whose children have been taken into care during the last two weeks;
 - (b) Of parents whose children have been taken into care more than two weeks, who have been scheduled for an Evaluation in the future;
 - (c) Of parents who are working a family preservation case with the Agency under a court-ordered plan, or where a case is pending for a court-ordered plan;
 - (d) Of parents who are working a family preservation case with the Agency under a voluntary plan;
 - (e) Of children of parents described in (a), (b), (c), and (d) above; and then

- (f) Of children who have been adjudicated delinquent and who are in need of an evaluation or assessment.
4. When parents and children described in Paragraph A(3) hereof are determined to be in need of an Evaluation, the case manager shall schedule same as soon as possible in accordance with this Protocol and shall make reasonable efforts to ensure that the parents or children in fact attend the evaluation or assessment in accordance with written procedures to be developed and published by the Agency, including where necessary and reasonable making follow up contact to remind the parent of the date, time and place of the evaluation, and providing or arranging for transportation. Where feasible the parent should be notified of the appointment in writing and acknowledge receipt of the notice. Specifically, when a child is removed from the child's parents or other caretaker and placed in the protective custody of the Agency, the Case Manager for the Agency, relying on his or her experience and training, shall determine if an Evaluation is likely to be needed relative to the reason the child has to be removed. If so, then that Evaluation shall be scheduled for next available time in accordance with the terms of this Protocol.
 5. The Agency and the Court shall designate a Protocol Liaison to work together to coordinate Evaluations in accordance with this Protocol.
 6. Beginning on Monday of the week during which the time is set aside by Dr. Cole for the Evaluation, the case manager shall make frequent contact with any parents whose children have been removed within the last two weeks. If there is any significant risk that the parents will not attend the Evaluation, or if there are no parents whose children have been removed, then the case manager shall identify alternative parents or children to attend the Evaluation and put them on notice that they may be called on to attend an Evaluation. If the Agency is unable to identify alternative parents to fill the spot set aside by Dr. Cole for an Evaluation by 9:00 a.m. on the Tuesday preceding time set aside for the Evaluations, then the Agency shall notify Juvenile Court, who shall then attempt to identify a child who has been adjudicated delinquent and is in need of an evaluation or assessment, and shall put the child and the child's parents on notice of the possible evaluation or assessment. If no parent or child has been identified by close of business on Tuesday afternoon, the DFCS Liaison will contact Dr. Cole and release the time slot.
 7. The Agency shall provide to the Dr. Cole in advance of the Evaluation all information Dr. Cole may need to complete a meaningful Evaluation, including, but not necessarily limited to, copies of all previous evaluations and assessments in the possession of the Agency and a case summary, which shall include the specific reason found by the Court as to why the child cannot be maintained safely at home.
 8. Dr. Cole will, in his Evaluations, state with specificity any recommendations intended to reduce the risk of harm to the child to a level that will allow the child to return home safely. Dr. Cole may also enumerate any other appropriate recommendations. Dr. Cole shall make his best efforts to get at least the written

recommendations for treatment, if any, to the Agency within ten to fourteen days following the Evaluation. The Dr. Cole will make his best efforts to provide the full written Evaluation to the Agency within thirty days following the Evaluation.

B. PROTOCOL FOR ASSESSMENTS BY WEST GEORGIA COUNSELING AND ASSESSMENT, INC. UPON REMOVAL OF A CHILD FROM THE CHILD'S HOME

1. West Georgia Counseling and Assessment, Inc. (hereinafter "West Georgia") will provide substance abuse assessments, domestic violence assessments, parental fitness assessments, and other assessments of the type historically performed on behalf of the Agency (herein referred to as "Assessments").
2. When a child is removed from the child's parents or other caretaker and placed in the protective custody of the Agency (referred to herein as the "Removal" or "Removed"), the Case Manager for the Agency, relying on his or her experience and training, shall determine if an Assessment is likely to be needed relative to the reason the child has to be Removed. If so, the Case Manager shall notify West Georgia in the manner directed by West Georgia, of the need for an Assessment.
3. At the earliest possible time, but in any event prior to the Preliminary Protective Hearing ("hereinafter referred to as the "PPH"), West Georgia shall schedule the Assessment to be conducted no later than two weeks following Removal, and shall notify the Agency of the date, time and place for the Assessment.
4. If the Court finds the Assessment to be appropriate, then the Court shall order the parent to participate in the Assessment at the specific date, time and place made available by West Georgia, and said order shall be contained in the written order entered following the PPH and served on the parent.
5. If there is any significant risk that the parent will not attend the Assessment the Agency shall make reasonable efforts to ensure that the parent attends the Assessment in accordance with written procedures to be developed and published by the Agency, including where necessary and reasonable making follow up contact to remind the parent of the date, time and place of the evaluation, and providing or arranging for transportation.
6. The Agency shall provide to West Georgia in advance of the Evaluation all information needed to complete a meaningful Evaluation, including, but not necessarily limited to, copies of all previous evaluations and assessments in the possession of the Agency and a case summary, which shall include the specific reason found by the Court as to why the child cannot be maintained safely at home.
7. West Georgia will, in its Assessments, state with specificity any recommendations intended to reduce the risk of harm to the child to a level that will allow the child to return home safely. West Georgia may also enumerate any other appropriate recommendations. West Georgia shall make its best efforts to get at least the written recommendations for

treatment, if any, to the Agency within one week following the Assessment. West Georgia will make its best efforts to provide the full written Assessment to the Agency within thirty days following the Evaluation.

C. MISCELANEOUS PROVISIONS

1. If at any time, either Dr. Cole or West Georgia identifies an issue that places a child at risk in the home of the parents that has not been previously identified by the Agency or the Court, Dr. Cole or West Georgia shall state with specificity the basis of the risk, and a hearing shall be scheduled immediately to determine if the reasons for removal or separation contained in the court order should be amended.
2. This Protocol may be amended from time to time by parties to the Protocol.
3. This is an at-will Protocol, not a binding legal document, and any party to this Protocol may cease participation at any time for any reason upon written notification to the other parties to the Protocol.

RMK/JC/Service Provider Protocol.2016 12/18/17 Version (Solely to correct typographical errors)
Approved by the Court, DFCS and the Service Providers as of January 18, 2017
Effective as of January 18, 2017