

110 CMR: DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

110 CMR 5.00: ASSESSMENT

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5.01: Introduction

(1) Assessment is the process of gathering and evaluating information regarding a family or individual's situation, in order to determine:

- (a) whether services are necessary,
- (b) which services would be appropriate, and
- (c) who could best provide the needed services.
- (d) the desired outcome(s)/behavioral changes to be achieved.

(2) After the assessment process, a written "Assessment" document shall be prepared by the social worker, in accordance with a standard format established by the Department. The assessment document shall include relevant information regarding the family's composition, the home environment, the family's financial situation, the family's functioning, and an evaluation of the family's general situation. The social worker shall inform the client of the assessment outcome.

(3) Assessment shall include:

- (a) face-to-face contact with the client; and
- (b) collateral contacts with such persons as the social worker deems necessary, including but not limited to extended family, previous or current service providers, and any other information resources identified by the client.

(4) During the course of the assessment process, the social worker shall establish an initial relationship with the client and shall respond to the client's immediate needs, including authorizing any immediately necessary services for the client and providing any necessary casework services.

5.02: When Required

An assessment of a family's or individual's needs for services must be completed for each new case. For cases which were previously assessed, closed, and are re-opened, a new assessment is not required. However, an update of the assessment, in particular a current evaluation of family functioning, must be completed.

5.03: When Completed

A *full* assessment must be completed within 45 working days after the initial contact event/case opening (i.e., the date of a supported investigation, Voluntary Application, or referral from a court) and includes evaluations of risk to children based on factors identified in the Department's Risk Factor Matrix.

5.04: How Conducted

(1) Upon assignment, the social worker reviews the material included in the case record. If the material indicates that a previous case record exists, the social worker accesses and reviews the previous record(s).

(2) The social worker, together with the client, identifies family members who will be included in the assessment. The assessment process includes the active involvement of all family members. For the purpose of assessment, family is defined as: all family members and other individuals residing in the home, children in Department placement, children residing out of the home, and any parent/parent substitute living out of the home.

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5.04: continued

(3) The assessment involves collateral contacts with extended family, service providers, and other resources identified by the social worker and family. If the family is willing to sign the required releases permitting the Department to contact these collateral sources, the social worker proceeds to contact these collaterals. If the family is not willing to sign releases, the social worker documents this in the dictation and proceeds with the assessment without the benefit of collateral contacts.

(4) During the course of the assessment, the social worker shall have a minimum of three face-to-face contacts with parents and other individuals who reside in the home, the first of which occurs within five working days after the assignment of the case to the social worker responsible for completing the assessment. Two of the three face-to-face contacts take place in the home. If an out-of-home parent/parent substitute can be located, he/she is visited a minimum of one time, at a mutually agreeable location, during the assessment. All children are visited a minimum of two times during the assessment. The first face-to-face contact occurs in the child's current residence within five working days after the assignment of the case to the social worker responsible for completing the assessment.

(5) If the social worker is not able to meet with the individuals in the family, cannot conduct the expected number of visits, and/or it is not possible or appropriate to conduct a visit in the expected location set forth in 110 CMR 5.04(4), the social worker discusses this with his/her supervisor prior to the completion of the assessment. The reason(s) why the visits were not conducted, and/or occurred at a different location, and the outcome of the discussion with the supervisor are documented in the case record.

(6) In cases which were opened as a result of a supported investigation, under M.G.L. c. 119, § 51B, the social worker informs the family that they may submit information to her/him regarding the investigation decision which will be reviewed at the completion of the assessment.

(7) As part of the assessment, the social worker should request a check of the Registry of Alleged Perpetrators for all household members. For protective cases only, the social worker, in consultation with his/her supervisor, should determine if there is a need to conduct a Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) check on a household member. When such a determination is made, the social worker should submit a request in accordance with the Department's Policy and Procedures for Accessing Name Search, Central Registry, Registry of Alleged Perpetrators, and CORI Checks policy, (Department Policy # 86-014(R)).

(8) If an assessment is being completed as the result of a supported investigation under M.G.L. c. 119, § 51B, and the family refuses, despite reasonable casework efforts, to participate in the assessment process, the social worker and supervisor consult with the Area Director, or designee, to determine risk to the child(ren) and, in consultation with a Department attorney, to determine if there are reasons to pursue legal action.

(9) Documentation. Information gathered during the assessment process is documented, by the social worker, in consultation with the supervisor, utilizing a form or an electronic method established by the Department's Assessment policy, Department Policy # 85-011. The assessment is based on an evaluation of information learned from the interviews with all family members and collateral contacts and the use of the Department's Risk Factor Matrix.

(10) Outcome. Following completion of the assessment, the social worker and supervisor determine if the case will remain open or be closed.

For cases remaining open the social worker and supervisor determine who in the family will be receiving services and be included in the service plan. The social worker verbally informs the family of the outcome of the assessment and also provides the family with written notification.

For cases that will be closed after the assessment, the social worker verbally informs the family of the outcome of the assessment and proceeds in accordance with 110 CMR 9.00 et seq. and the Department's Case Closing Policy (Department Policy # 86-007(R)).

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5.05: Administrative Review

(1) Supported decisions in new cases, made by the Department on or after December 1, 1988, will be automatically reviewed following the Department's assessment, by Administrative Review.

(2) Each Administrative Review will consider all information gathered during assessment, as well as the original information gathered during investigation which formed the basis of the "supported" decision. The purpose of each Administrative Review is to determine whether the "supported" decision should be changed to "unsupported", because:

- (a) based on information available during the investigation, the decision at the time it was made was not in accordance with 110 CMR or policies, or was not reasonable; or
- (b) based upon new information not available during the investigation, the decision is not in accordance with 110 CMR or policies, or is not reasonable.

(3) In any case where the Department changes, via the above Administrative Review process, a decision from "supported" to "unsupported".

- (a) The Department's Central Registry shall reflect said change, and shall be expunged according to the timetable as if the original decision had been "unsupported";
- (b) Any alleged perpetrator listing on the Central Registry will be automatically eliminated;
- (c) The parents, the mandated reporter who filed the report, if applicable, and any individual identified on the Registry of Alleged Perpetrators as a result of the supported investigation, shall be notified that the supported decision has been unsupported and that any perpetrator listing that resulted from the support decision has been eliminated; and
- (d) The M.G.L. c. 119, §§ 51A and 51B reports and related case record materials shall be filed with other closed record files.

(4) An individual may waive his/her right to the Department's assessment and Administrative Review (for example, where the Department proposes and the individual agrees, to support the allegation(s) after investigation but to close the case thereafter).

REGULATORY AUTHORITY

110 CMR 5.00: M.G.L. c. 18B.