

	GEORGIA DIVISION OF FAMILY AND CHILDREN SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY MANUAL			
	Chapter:	(19) Case Management	Effective Date:	December 2016
	Policy Title:	Family Developmental Stages and Tasks		
	Policy Number:	19.2	Previous Policy #:	N/A

CODES/REFERENCES

N/A

REQUIREMENTS

The Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) shall engage families from the view point that all families experience the following developmental or life stages¹ and while in those stages families encounter common challenges:

1. Beginning Couple
2. Family with Infant/Preschool Children
3. School Age Children
4. Teenage Children
5. Launching
6. Post Parental/Elder
7. Blended Family

PROCEDURES

The Social Services Case Manager (SSCM) will:

1. Identify the developmental stage(s) of the family.
2. Describe the family’s interaction around the various tasks associated with the family’s developmental stage(s).
3. Describe the tasks that are challenging for the family and have led or may lead to difficult situations with children in the home.
4. Describe any cultural or health issues that impact the developmental stage and tasks of the family.
5. Help a family to identify times when the family was able to successfully manage the challenges of everyday life without demonstrating problematic behavior leading to negative outcomes (i.e. exceptions).

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

Solution Based Casework (SBC) is based on the idea that regardless of socio-economic status, all families face similar challenges and tasks in order to meet the needs of everyday life. Once it is understood how the circumstances that brought a family to the attention of DFCS are related to everyday life events, casework activities (e.g. case planning, service referrals, etc.) become more purposeful. Since human behavior is rooted in what one does every day, it seems logical for DFCS to help families look for solutions to problematic behavioral patterns within their everyday life events.

Everyday life events can be grouped into family developmental stages (e.g. Beginning Couple, Family with Infant/Preschool Children, School Age Children, Teenage Children, Launching, Post Parental/Elder, and Blended Family). Family developmental stages impact the normal life events and challenges that are specific to a family. Each family can experience multiple family developmental stages at one time and the stages can change abruptly. For instance, someone may be in a new relationship with an individual who has children from a previous relationship. Consequently, this family would be in the Beginning Couple stage as well as the Blended Family stage. The Blended Family stage encompasses a multi-generational or cohabitating relationship where one or both cohabitating partners have children from a previous relationship.

The charts below provide examples of family developmental stages along with associated tasks and challenges. The information contained in the charts is not intended to be all-inclusive. It provides examples of some specific everyday life tasks that could become difficult situations for any family. It is a family's interaction around such everyday tasks that leads to the emergence of safety threats and the need for DFCS safety interventions.

Thinking Developmentally

Supervisors should engage SSCMs to help them to think developmentally about the families. Begin discussions about families by identifying who is in the family or reviewing the family genogram. Pose questions that cause the SSCM to think about where a family is developmentally, based on the ages and relationship of the children and adults in the household. Below are examples of questions that might help the SSCM begin to think developmentally about the families they serve:

1. Based upon this family's developmental stage, what developmental issues might they be facing?
2. What specific everyday tasks seem to be difficult for this family to manage?
3. How do the individual family members contribute to the family's inability to successfully manage everyday family events (e.g. getting the children off to school each day, completing household chores)?

Family Developmental Stages and Tasks

Beginning Couple

Financial matters	Children	Housing	Education
Household responsibilities	Rules about being late	Intimacy	Household rules

Family with Infant/Pre-school Children

Potty training	Doctor visits	Managing illness	Child discipline
Sleep schedule	Supervision	Feeding	Co-parenting
Daycare/babysitting	Financial support	Household tasks	Couple intimacy

School Age Children

School attendance	Managing mornings	Homework	Family chores
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Bedtime	After-school hours	School behaviors	Drugs, language, etc.
Riding the bus	After-school supervision	Rules about free time	Exposure to the internet/media
Peer relationships	Transportation to and from activities	Rules about sexual behavior	Choice of friends

Teenage Children

Sexual behavior, orientation, experimentation	Telephone/internet/electronic device usage	Curfew, dating	Peer relationships
School attendance	Language	Chores and money	Alcohol and drugs
School performance	Supervision	Driving	Part-time job
Clothing	Morning routine	Managing free time	Activities (extracurricular)

Launching

Providing money or support	College or work	New relationships and dating	Break-up of relationships
Chores (e.g. laundry)	Household rules	Parenting children and grandchildren	Daily schedules

Post Parental/Elder

Health issues	Financial stability	Managing isolation	Assisting in some parenting
Nutrition	Home safety issues	Couple issues	Maintaining physical conditioning

Blended Family

Who's the authority?	Legal and financial issues	Negotiating family rules	Maintaining couple relationship
Working as a team	Visitation agreements	New blended family rituals	Managing conflict

FORMS AND TOOLS

N/A

¹ Content for this discussion of family developmental stages is sourced from the book *Solutions-Based Casework* by Dana N. Christensen, Jeffrey Todahl, and William C. Barrett.