

## Chapter 4

## INVESTIGATION TYPES AND USE OF THE FAMILY FUNCTIONING ASSESSMENT (FFA)

4-1. Types of Investigations. There are three investigation types in which a child has been alleged to be maltreated: “In-Home,” “Other,” and “Institutional.” The main determinants in identifying the type of investigation are the alleged maltreater’s relationship to the alleged child victim(s) and the setting or location at which the alleged maltreatment occurred.

4-2. Definitions.

a. An “In-Home” investigation is an intake in which the child’s parent, legal guardian (i.e., both permanent guardianship through section [39.6221](#), F.S., and temporary custody of a minor through Chapter [751](#), F.S.), paramour (residing or frequenting the home) and/or other adult household member with significant caregiver responsibility for care and protection of the child is the alleged person responsible for the maltreatment. The child victim may reside in the household on a full or part-time basis. If the child’s parents or legal guardians have established separate households through divorce or separation, only the household in which the abuse is alleged to have occurred is assessed for danger threats and family functioning.

b. An “Other” investigation is an “In-Home” subtype which involves alleged abuse by a relative, non-relative, paramour, or adult babysitter temporarily entrusted with a child’s care who does not reside in the home with the parent and child. Similarly, human trafficking involving a non-parent as the alleged perpetrator is an “Other” investigation. When a parent is the alleged trafficker however, an “In-Home” investigation is required even though the parent may be trafficking the child at a location away from parent’s household. An “Other” investigation does not require a Family Functioning Assessment (FFA)-Investigation, but does require a Present Danger Assessment. The investigator’s responsibility in this type of investigation is to determine the appropriate maltreatment findings and assess whether or not the parent or legal guardian will take appropriate protective actions if the maltreatment is verified (i.e., change babysitter, not allow the relative to be in a caregiver role in the future, etc.).

c. An “Institutional” investigation involves alleged abuse by an “Other Person Responsible for a Child’s Welfare” (as defined in section [39.01](#), F.S.) which typically occurs in institutional settings such as schools, daycares, foster care, residential group care or facilities. Family Functioning Assessments (FFAs) are not completed in Institutional investigations because the alleged maltreatment does not involve the child’s parent(s) or legal guardian.

4-3. Purpose of the Family Functioning Assessment. The Family Functioning Assessment (FFA) is the process by which investigators apply critical thinking skills to guide decision-making regarding child safety and risk based upon having an extensive and comprehensive knowledge of the individual and family conditions in the home. This process is summarized in six information domains and is essential to the investigator being able to accurately identify impending danger threats, assess the sufficiency of caregiver protective capacities, complete a safety analysis, implement a safety plan (as appropriate), and determine the risk for future maltreatment to the child(ren).

4-4. Required Use of the Family Functioning Assessment. An FFA-Investigation (FFA-I) is required for all In-Home investigations except when the report is being closed out as a “Duplicate,” “No Jurisdiction,” “Patently Unfounded,” “False Report,” or when the subtype is determined to meet the criteria for and is changed to “Other.” Since Special Condition Referrals only involve problematic circumstances (e.g., parent hospitalized, Parent Needs Assistance, etc.) with no allegations of maltreatment, FFAs are not completed in those circumstances either.

a. Safe Family Functioning Assessment (SFFA-I).

(1) A Safe FFA-I must be completed when there is no impending danger identified and the child(ren) are determined to be **safe; or**

(a) When the family is **currently** open to ongoing case management services. Although this criterion requires an unsafe safety determination, a Safe FFA-I must be completed. This criterion requires a multidisciplinary team staffing prior to closure.

(b) When a new child (infant or otherwise) enters a household that is **open** to ongoing case management services. This criterion requires an unsafe safety determination if the new child is unsafe and is being added to the FFA-Ongoing (FFA-O) and/or progress update, but a Safe FFA-I can be completed if, during the required multidisciplinary team staffing, case management agrees to add the new child to the FFA-O and/or progress update.

(2) Requirements for Safe FFA.

(a) The investigator will determine appropriate finding(s) upon completion of the investigation, including presentation and documentation of credible evidence which supports or refutes child maltreatment for each alleged victim (as set forth in CFOP 170-5, [Chapter 22](#), Determination of Findings).

(b) These findings will be sufficiently documented in FSFN in the Maltreatment/Nature of Maltreatment domain by using typed chronological notes accordingly.

b. Documentation. The following documentation activities must occur in all In-Home investigations with a safe determination.

(1) The investigator will document the Present Danger Assessment, compelling evidence, and corroborating information using FSFN functionality contained in case notes, per requirements for an In-Home investigation.

(2) All information regarding investigative activities must be thoroughly documented in **typed** chronological notes. The completion and sufficiency of this information and its documentation must be confirmed by the reviewing supervisor prior to investigation closure.

(3) The investigator will launch the “In-Home” investigative subtype in FSFN, launch the Family Functioning Assessment, and document the assessment in the body of the first domain section, titled “Maltreatment.” The summary should contain, at a minimum:

(a) Type, Severity, Duration, and History of the maltreatment. Patterns of functioning leading to or explaining the maltreatment. Parent/legal guardian or caregiver intent concerning the maltreatment, assessment of intent (re: parenting/discipline vs. intent to harm), and unique aspects of the maltreatment, such as whether weapons were involved. Explanations for the maltreatment and attitudes and acknowledgement about the maltreatment. Description of specific events and emotional and physical symptoms. Condition of the child.

(b) An explanation of the household composition, including the relationship of the alleged maltreating caregiver(s) and victim(s).

(c) A concise summary of investigative tasks that directly impact the findings and safety outcome of the case including, but not limited to:

1. Interview(s) with household members including the child(ren) and adult(s);

2. Overview of information provided by collateral contact(s), prior history, criminal history, callouts, etc. (if relevant or impactful), or the absence of concerning or related history; and,

3. Completion of any required staffings and outcomes, when available, including Child Protection Team (CPT), law enforcement, multi-disciplinary team staffings, subject matter expert (SME) consultations, etc.

(d) Documentation of maltreatment findings.

(e) Final safety determination for each child (the safety determination will be safe for all children unless the children are already under ongoing case management services or a new child is being added to an active ongoing services case as outlined in paragraph 4-4a(1) above, at which time the safety determination for these children will remain unsafe and an accompanying safety plan will be required).

(f) Summary of any referral(s) completed for the family and discussion of the family's engagement.

(4) The investigator should document "See Chronological Notes" in the following FFA sections:

(a) Child Functioning.

(b) Adult Functioning.

(c) Parenting/Behavior Modification.

(5) The investigator should document "See Maltreatment Domain" in the Child Safety Analysis Summary section of the FFA.

(6) The following should be utilized for radio button selections on the FFA:

(a) "No" for all listed danger threats (unless the children are already under ongoing case management services or a new child is being added to an active ongoing services case as outlined in paragraph 4-4a(1) above, at which time the appropriate danger threats will be identified, the safety determination for these children will remain unsafe, and an accompanying safety plan will be required).

(b) Accurate determination and radio button selections should be made surrounding the "caregiver protective capacities."

(c) "Yes" for "Parent/Legal Guardian protective capacity determination summary."

(d) “Safe” for “Child Safety Determination.” The safety determination will be safe for all children unless the children are already under ongoing case management services or a new child is being added to an active ongoing services case as outlined in paragraph 4-4a(1) above, at which time the safety determination for these children will remain unsafe and an accompanying safety plan will be required.

(7) The investigator will complete the “Results-Determination” drop down selection as appropriate.

c. Unsafe Family Functioning Assessment.

(1) An Unsafe FFA-I will be completed for any investigation where impending danger is identified and an unsafe safety determination has been made.

(2) Complete required documentation in all six domains in the FFA-I.

4-5. Conditions Generating a Separate In-home Investigation. The investigator will need to contact the Hotline and generate a separate, subsequent “In-Home” investigation because of information obtained during an “Other” or “Institutional” investigation under the following conditions:

a. A child victim or collateral source interviewed in an Other or Institutional report also alleges maltreatment in the home setting by his or her parent or legal guardian.

b. The investigator determines a parent or legal guardian failed to act with due diligence to protect his or her child from maltreatment despite the parent having prior knowledge that an adult sitter or relative in an Other investigation, or Other Person Responsible for the Child’s Welfare in an Institutional investigation, was abusing or neglecting the child.

c. An investigator determines during an Other or Institutional investigation that a parent or legal guardian does not recognize that the maltreater’s ongoing access to the child represents an active danger threat and the parent or legal guardian refuses to take sufficient protective actions to ensure the child’s safety despite being fully informed of the danger threat(s) posed by the person responsible for the maltreatment (in the Other or Institutional investigation).

d. There is reason to suspect that the individual responsible for maltreatment in an Other or Institutional report is abusing his or her biological or adopted children as well.

4-6. Relationship of Maltreating Caregiver to Child. The following additional situations involving a biological parent or legal guardian should also be treated as an “Other” report:

a. Permanent Guardianship cases in which the alleged maltreating caregivers were formerly the child’s parents but no longer have legal custody and a new report is received alleging the child has been re-abused in that caregiver’s custody (e.g., during visitation or the legal guardian has returned the child to the parent’s home without a legal change in custody).

b. Permanent Guardianship cases in which the investigator determines the documented maltreatment involves one or more of the following conditions:

(1) The guardian’s conduct toward the child or toward other children demonstrates that the continuing involvement of the guardian in the child’s life threatens the life or safety of the child irrespective of the provision of services.

(2) The guardian’s conduct is so egregious (e.g., deplorable, flagrant, or outrageous by a normal standard of conduct) as to threaten the physical, mental, or emotional health of the child.

(3) The guardian has subjected the child or another child to aggravated child abuse as defined in section [827.03](#), F.S., or sexual battery or sexual abuse as defined in section [39.01](#), F.S.

c. The maltreating parent resides out of state.

d. Child trafficking-by a non-caregiver (i.e., not biological parent or child's legal guardian).

4-7. Supervisor. When initiated, the pre-commencement supervisor consultation will affirm the investigator has sufficiently reviewed, to the extent possible, the roles and relationships in the investigation to determine the focus household and validate the type of report (i.e., In-Home, Other or Institutional) initiated by the Hotline.

a. Supervisory and Second Tier Consultations required as part of the standard investigation review process (as outlined in CFOP 170-5, [Chapter 26](#) and [Chapter 27](#)) must be completed for all applicable investigations.

b. Additionally, a closure review must be completed for all investigations with a Safe FFA-I and must include, at a minimum, verification of required investigative tasks, confirmation of typed chronological notes containing sufficient information to support the safety determination, and agreement with the final safety decision.