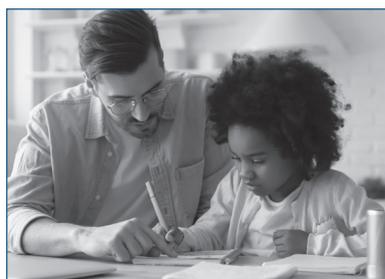


THE SUPREME COURT *of* OHIO

QUALITY HEARING



TOOLKIT
for Judicial Use



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THE SUPREME COURT *of* OHIO

QUALITY HEARING TOOLKIT
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PURPOSE OF THIS TOOLKIT

The Advisory Committee on Children & Families' Subcommittee on Responding to Child Abuse Neglect & Dependency commissioned Dr. Alicia Summers, Director of Data Savvy Consulting, to study the relationship between quality hearings and case outcomes. This bench guide shares Dr. Summers' findings and her recommendations for quality hearings.

Quality hearing is defined as having:

1. The active presence and participation by key parties;
2. Engagement of parents and youth;
3. A discussion of key topics; and
4. Oral findings being made on the record.

Dr. Summers found a correlation between the engagement of parents and children and achieving permanency in child-welfare cases. The more engaged the parents are in the process and the hearings, the higher the rate of reunification and the timelier the achievement of permanency.

This toolkit was created as part of the Supreme Court's Quality Hearing Project, which was a result of the state's performance in the 2017 Child and Family Service Review (CFSR). This document is intended to assist courts in engaging parents and children and ensuring that judicial officers obtain all necessary information to make reasonable-efforts findings in abuse, neglect, and dependency cases.

How to Use This Guide

This toolkit is to be used in conjunction with the Ohio Department of Job & Family Services' [Court Report](#) that is generated out of the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) for use at annual-review hearings under R.C. 2151.417 or at the court's discretion at other related hearings. A copy of the report is at the end of this guide.

The Court Report contains information entered into SACWIS by local child-welfare case workers regarding a child and family, their case plans, and steps the case worker takes to ensure reasonable efforts toward reunification are being made.

The questions listed correspond to the various sections of the Court Report. They are designed so judicial officers can ascertain information during the review hearing that aligns with what is contained in the report.

Introductory Questions

These questions are designed to identify the persons present at the hearing and address any procedural issues on the record.

Questions to Ask:

- Were there any notice or service issues?
- Have there been any changes to your address, phone number, or email address?
- Review who should be present at the hearing.
- Review necessary parties and updates to party status, including paternity issues (i.e, Has paternity been established? Should anyone now be excluded as a party due to paternity testing? Any other paternity questions?)
- Inquire about any no-shows; determine why a particular person is not present.
- State the purpose of hearing on the record and make sure everyone present understands the purpose.
- If the child is not present, ask why the child is not there.

1. FAMILY PROFILE

Questions to Ask:

- Any updates to Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) status?
- Review health-care diagnoses.
- Review mental health diagnoses.
- Review current probation status and any new charges (Can ask anyone to respond to this, including parent’s attorney).
- Inquire about current delinquency status.

Section 1: Family Profile	
Family Name:	SACWIS ID:
Court Case Number:	Court ID Number:
Case Open Date:	
Child	
First Name:	Gender:
DOB:	Permanency Goal:
Agency Legal Status:	Child’s Living Arrangement:
Child	
First Name:	Gender:
DOB:	Permanency Goal:
Agency Legal Status:	Child’s Living Arrangement:
Adult	
Name:	Relationship:
Name:	Relationship:
Indian Child Welfare Act Information	
Person:	Possible Tribal Affiliation: (maternal/paternal?)
Date Family Asked:	Tribe Name:
Outcome: (Ex. Membership Verified)	
Family Reports Tribal Ancestry but Details Unknown: Y/N	



2. EDUCATION

Questions to Ask:

- How is the child doing in school? What is the child's educational status?
- Review education services/special education services; are any other services needed?

<u>Section 2: Education</u>	
<u>School Information</u>	
<u>Person:</u>	
School Name:	Start Date:
End Date:	
School Name:	Start Date:
End Date:	
<u>Special Education</u>	
<u>Person:</u>	
Evaluation Team Report (ETR)/Multi-Factored Evaluation (MTE) History:	
Date ETR/MFE Completed:	
Originating School District:	
<u>Individualized Education Plan (IEP)/504 Plan History:</u>	
<u>Person:</u>	
Plan Type:	Effective Date:
Expiration Date:	School District:
Special Education Contact:	Amendment:
Special Education Designation:	Basis for Special Education:



3. EMPLOYMENT

Questions to Ask:

- Review parent’s employment and income; acknowledge any barriers related to same.
- Review child-support order.

<u>Section 3: Employment</u>	
Person:	
Employer Name:	
Start Date:	End Date:
Employer Name:	
Start Date:	End Date:



4. MILITARY

Question to Ask:

- If any noted, inquire as to services available due to military service.

Section 4: Military

Person:

Branch:

Date Discharged:

Date Entered:

Discharge Type:



5. CURRENT LEGAL STATUS AND CURRENT PLACEMENT

Questions to Ask:

- How long has child been in his/her current legal status?
- How many placement moves has the child/children experienced?
- Review days in agency custody lifetime.
- Review percentage of life in custody.

Appropriateness of Placement

- For each child, ask: how is the child doing day-to-day?
 - Can include questions about mood/temperament, communication/social skills, emotions/feelings, behavior, peer relations, independence, motor skills, physical/mental health.
- How has the child progressed since the removal?
- How has the child adapted to the placement?
- What efforts have been made to promote normalcy?
- How is the placement culturally and linguistically appropriate?
- How does the placement support the child's cultural identity?
- In what way does the placement support the child's connection to the family and community?
- How does the placement support the family/child's involvement in the case plan and goal?
- Is this the least-restrictive placement?

Foster Parent/Caregiver Questions

- Ask if the child's foster parent/caregiver is present.
- Ask the foster parent/caregiver for his/her input regarding the child (see previous questions for possible inquiries).

Kinship/Relative Searches

- What efforts were taken to find relatives who may be open to placement?
- Have kinship-care options been fully explored?
- If not, what is being done to explore relatives?
- If so, provide a summary of the intensive efforts to secure a placement with a fit and willing relative or kin.

- Include efforts that use search technology (e.g., social media) to find biological family members for the child.
- If potential kinship-care options were explored, but not pursued, then why were the relatives not determined to be a possible placement?
- If kinship/relative placements are a possibility, describe the specific individuals and their step in the process.
- Are any home studies/Interstate Compact of the Placement of Children (ICPC) orders completed? Any pending? Any ideas for additional family placements to explore?
- If child is placed in kinship care, what steps were taken to ensure the relative is linked with all available training, services, and financial support?

Section 5: Current Legal Status and Current Placement

Person:

Number of Legal Status Changes for this Legal Episode: 3

Effective Date	Termination Date	Legal Status	Termination Reason	Days in Status	Agency

Total Number of Placement Moves:

Length of Time to Achieve Reunification:

Placement Type:

Days in Current Placement:

Overall Days in Placement for Current Legal Episode:

Current Placement Begin Date:

Historical Agency Custody Information and Prior Legal Episodes

Days in Agency Custody (Lifetime):

Percent of Life in Custody:

Person:

Legal Status History

Effective Date	Termination Date	Type	Legal Status	Termination Reason	Number of Days in Status

6. CASE PLAN, CASE REVIEW, AND SAR INFORMATION

Risk Contributors - Safety Considerations:

- Why can't the child safely return home today?
- What needs to happen today for the child to return home? What is preventing the child from returning home today?
- What type of safety plan could be developed and implemented in order for the child to return home today?
- Is there a possibility of an in-home safety plan or children-in-need-of-protective-supervision (COPS) order?
- What is the current and immediate safety threat?
- Has the threat diminished? How do you know?
- If the safety threat is too high to return the child home, how have the conditions for return been conveyed to the parents, family, and child, and are you satisfied they understand the conditions?
- What are the risk factors? Specifically, how can the risk(s) be ameliorated or removed?
- Will the removal from or addition of any person into the home allow the child to be safe and be placed back into the home?

Risk Contributors - Services for the Family:

- For each person: what is the case-plan goal and what has been accomplished?
- What services can be arranged to allow the child to safely return home today?
- How are the services rationally related to the specific safety threat?
- How are the parents, extended family, and children being engaged in the development and implementation of a plan for services, interventions, and supports?
- How will the agency assist the family to access the services?
- Has the family been given an opportunity to ask for additional or alternate services?
- How are services, interventions, and support specifically tailored to the culture and needs of this child and family?
- How do they build on family strengths?

-
- How is the agency determining the services, interventions, and support are culturally appropriate?
 - For parents: What has the agency done to assist you in obtaining safe housing? What other assistance have they offered you?

Concern Review

- Person-by-person: What are the concerns/needs for the family?
- What does the caseworker and family want to see happen to address identified concerns/needs?
- Describe any behavior changes noted in the family/per person.

Parent Questions about Case Plan

- Do you understand the case plan?
- Do you oppose to the case plan?
- If so, has there been discussion about other options?

Parenting Time and Visitation Issues

- Has parenting time occurred?
- Is quality parenting time occurring?
- Are quality visits with siblings occurring?
- Do the terms of family time match safety concerns? Is it supervised? Specifically, why must it be supervised?
- Are the time and location of family time logistically possible for the family and supportive of the child's needs?
- Is there any reason to modify/reduce/expand/change the present parenting time/visitation schedule?
- Has the agency helped and/or facilitated parenting time/visitation?
- What is the recommendation for agency involvement and what is the reasoning/justification?

Permanency Plan

- Is a supplemental/concurrent plan for the family needed at this time?
- Has an alternate or concurrent plan been discussed with the child? What is the child's opinion regarding the plan?
- Describe the agency's recommendation regarding the child's custody arrangement for the next 180 days.

- Has the agency filed a motion for permanent custody? Legal custody? PPLA? Termination orders?
- Describe the agency's efforts to locate an adoptive placement for a child who is in the permanent custody of the agency. Include information on child-specific recruitment activities and the results of those activities.
- What other efforts must be made to support the child/children and promote timely permanency if safety issues cannot be ameliorated?

Section 6: Case Plan, Case Review, and SAR Information

Risk Contributors from Most Recent Case Plan or Case Plan Amendment

Person(s):

What are the concerns/needs for the family?

What does the Family and Caseworker want to see happen to address the identified concerns/needs?

Person(s):

What are the concerns/needs for the family?

What does the Family and Caseworker want to see happen to address the identified concerns/needs?

Risk Contributors, Concern Review, Visitation Summary, and Case Analysis from Most Recent Case Review

Risk Contributors

Person (Child):

Child Functioning Risk Contributor:

Person (Adult):

Adult Functioning Risk Contributor:

Family Functioning Risk Contributor:

Historical Functioning Risk Contributor:

Concern Review

What is the Concern:

What does the family and worker want to see happen to address the identified concerns/needs (Behavior Changes)?

Progress Toward Addressing Concern:

Progress updates since most recent review:



7. REASONABLE EFFORTS

Reasonable Efforts to Prevent Removal (Applies to Initial Removal)

- What measures were taken to prevent the placement of the child/children in foster care?
- Were there pre-hearing conferences or meetings that included the family? Who was present? What was the outcome?
- What services were considered and offered to allow the child to remain at home?
- Were these services culturally appropriate?
- What was done to create a safety plan to allow the child to remain at home or in the home of another without court involvement? If one was not done, what actions or services would be required for an in-home safety plan to keep the child home?
- Does the family have specific protective capacities against the present threats?
- How has the agency intervened with this family in the past? Has the agency's previous contact with the family influenced its response to this family now?

Reasonable Efforts to Eliminate the Need for Continued Removal (Applies to Continued Removal)

- What efforts were taken to eliminate the need for continued removal?
- What measures were taken to decrease the child/children's time in foster care?
- What is the collaboratively developed plan to return the child/children safely home?
- What has the agency done for the family?

Reasonable Efforts Questions for Families

- What are the efforts and services the agency offered your family?
- Is there anything else you feel they could do to help you facilitate getting your kids home?
- Do you believe these services, interventions, and supports will meet your current needs and build upon your family's strengths?

Section 7: Reasonable Efforts

Notes

AL logs only – put this in as template?

What were the original safety issues that resulted in the child(ren)'s placement?

Text Narrative from parameter screen here

Have the original safety issues been altered or reduced to a sufficient level whereby control within the family is probable?

Text Narrative from parameter screen here.

Please document the Reasonable Efforts made by the Agency to reduce or eliminate the above-noted safety issues in a concise, bullet-pointed list.

Person:

Reasonable Efforts:

Person:

Reasonable Efforts:

CONCLUSION OF THE HEARING

End-of-Hearing Questions

- Do you have questions for the court about what happened today or about the next steps?
- Seek input on scheduling next hearing.
- Review relevant timeframes and discuss the relevant time constraints.

RECOMMENDED ORAL FINDINGS IN HEARINGS

- Notification and Service
- Contrary to the Welfare of the Child
- Reasonable Efforts to Prevent Removal/Reunify
- Factual Basis for Reasonable Efforts
- ICWA Applicability



Quality Hearing Quick Reference Guide

Purpose/Hearing Type

This bench guide (and corresponding court report) is recommended for use at annual-review hearings or at the court's discretion/as the court directs.

Introductory Questions

- Review notice or service issues; changes to contact information; review necessary/missing parties; review paternity issues; state purpose of hearing on the record; inquire about child if not present.

1. Family Profile

- Review ICWA status updates; health care/mental health diagnoses review; probation status/any new charges/delinquency status.

2. Education

- Review educational status, education services/special education services.

3. Employment

- Review parents' employment, income, barriers; review child-support order.

4. Military

- Review services available due to military service, as needed.

5. Current Legal Status and Current Placement

- Review length of time in current legal status; number of placement moves; days in agency custody lifetime/percentage of life in custody.

Appropriateness of Placement

- Review how the child is doing day-to-day (mood/temperament, communication/social skills, emotions/feelings, behavior, peer relations, independence, motor skills, physical/mental health); review whether placement is least restrictive.

Foster Parent/Caregiver Questions

- Inquire about foster parents/caregivers who are present and seek input from foster parents/caregivers.

Kinship/Relative Searches

- Explore efforts taken to find relatives/kinship-care options; review pending or completed home studies/ICPCs.

6. Case Plan, Case Review, and SAR Information

Risk Contributors

- Review why the child cannot return safely home today; what needs to happen for the child to do so; review safety/risk factors and options/services to address same.
- For each person, review case-plan goal and status.

Concern Review

- Review concerns/any noted behavior changes, person-by-person; discuss what the agency/family is planning to address identified concerns/needs.

Parent Questions about Case Plan

- Ensure parents understand case plan/address opposition/other options.

Parenting Time and Visitation Issues

- Review status and quality of parenting time and sibling visitation.

Case Analysis

- Review the recommendation for agency involvement and the associated reasoning/justification.

Permanency Plan

- Review any supplemental/concurrent plan; ascertain agency's recommendation regarding the child's custody arrangement for the next 180 days; review any motions by agency (PC, LC, PPLA, TPR).

7. Reasonable Efforts

Reasonable Efforts to Prevent Removal: Initial Removal

- Review agency measures taken to prevent the placement of the child/children in foster care.

Reasonable Efforts to Eliminate the Need for Continued Removal: Continued Removal

- Review agency efforts taken to eliminate the need for continued removal.

Reasonable Efforts Questions for Families

- Review agency efforts and services with family.

End-of-Hearing Questions

- Review parent questions; seek input on scheduling next hearing; review relevant timeframes/time constraints.



**Ohio Department of Job and Family Services
Court Report**

****PLEASE NOTE**:** This report is intended to provide a concise summary of available SACWIS data, but it does not necessarily include case information from sources outside of SACWIS. Any section left blank reflects that this data does not exist within the SACWIS database, but available data may exist elsewhere.

Agency: _____ Date: _____
Primary Worker: _____ Supervisor: _____

Section 1: Family Profile

Family Name: _____ SACWIS ID: _____
Court Case Number: _____ Court ID Number: _____
Case Open Date: _____

Child

First Name: _____ Gender: _____
DOB: _____ Permanency Goal: _____
Agency Legal Status: _____ Child's Living Arrangement: _____

Child

First Name: _____ Gender: _____
DOB: _____ Permanency Goal: _____
Agency Legal Status: _____ Child's Living Arrangement: _____

Adult

Name: _____ Relationship: _____
Name: _____ Relationship: _____

Indian Child Welfare Act Information

Person: _____ **Possible Tribal Affiliation:** (maternal/paternal?)
Date Family Asked: _____ **Tribe Name:** _____
Outcome: (Ex. Membership Verified)
Family Reports Tribal Ancestry but Details Unknown: Y/N

Characteristics

Person:

Condition:
Method:
Medication(s):

Effective Date:
Diagnosed By:
Immunizations Up-to-Date:

Person:

Condition:
Method:
Medication(s):

Effective Date:
Diagnosed By:
Immunizations Up-to-Date:

Background

Person:

Does Person Have a Criminal History?
Conviction Date:
Comments:

Offense:
Sentence:

Person:

Does Person Have a Criminal History?
Conviction Date:
Comments:

Offense:
Sentence:

Section 2: Education

School Information

Person:

School Name:
End Date:

Start Date:

School Name:
End Date:

Start Date:

Special Education

Person:

Evaluation Team Report (ETR)/Multi-Factored Evaluation (MTE) History:
Date ETR/MFE Completed:
Originating School District:

Individualized Education Plan (IEP)/504 Plan History:

Person:

Plan Type:
Expiration Date:
Special Education Contact:
Special Education Designation:

Effective Date:
School District:
Amendment:
Basis for Special Education:

Section 3: Employment

Person:

Employer Name:

Start Date:

End Date:

Employer Name:

Start Date:

End Date:

Section 4: Military

Person:

Branch:

Date Discharged:

Date Entered:

Discharge Type:

Section 5: Current Legal Status and Current Placement

Person:

Number of Legal Status Changes for this Legal Episode: 3

Effective Date	Termination Date	Legal Status	Termination Reason	Days in Status	Agency

Total Number of Placement Moves:

Length of Time to Achieve Reunification:

Placement Type:

Days in Current Placement:

Overall Days in Placement for Current Legal Episode:

Current Placement Begin Date:

Historical Agency Custody Information and Prior Legal Episodes

Days in Agency Custody (Lifetime):

Percent of Life in Custody:

Person:

Legal Status History

Effective Date	Termination Date	Type	Legal Status	Termination Reason	Number of Days in Status

Section 6: Case Plan, Case Review, and SAR Information

Risk Contributors from Most Recent Case Plan or Case Plan Amendment

Person(s):

What are the concerns/needs for the family?

What does the Family and Caseworker want to see happen to address the identified concerns/needs?

Person(s):

What are the concerns/needs for the family?

What does the Family and Caseworker want to see happen to address the identified concerns/needs?

Risk Contributors, Concern Review, Visitation Summary, and Case Analysis from Most Recent Case Review

Risk Contributors

Person (Child):

Child Functioning Risk Contributor:

Person (Adult):

Adult Functioning Risk Contributor:

Family Functioning Risk Contributor:

Historical Functioning Risk Contributor:

Concern Review

What is the Concern:

What does the family and worker want to see happen to address the identified concerns/needs (Behavior Changes)?

Progress Toward Addressing Concern:

Progress updates since most recent review:

Parenting Time/Visitation Summary

Adult Visitation

Adult:

Frequency:

Visit Occurred:

Visit Not Occurred Rationale:

Child:

Duration:

Quality:

Have the original safety issues been altered or reduced to a sufficient level whereby control within the family is probable?

Test Narrative from parameter screen here.

Please document the Reasonable Efforts made by the Agency to reduce or eliminate the above-noted safety issues in a concise, bullet-pointed list.

Person:

Reasonable Efforts:

Person:

Reasonable Efforts:

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