



BETTER FOR OHIO FAMILIES

OHIO'S STATEWIDE SYSTEM
IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

PURPOSE

To offer strategies for addressing families appearing in court as a result of child abuse, neglect, or dependency related to substance use.

DESIGN

This bench card provides specific inquiries that may be made at each court appearance, as well as practice tips to make the most effective use of the process.

These inquiries are meant to be layered upon the best practices and legal requirements already in place.

Indicates a practice tip. (NOTE: These are suggestions).

Indicates a question to ask.

REVIEW OF SERVICES

- Services should be tailored to the individual needs of each family member, not guided by a standard checklist.**
- The SUD service should be in addition to other relevant services the family may need.**
- When speaking to respondent(s), address them in a respectful manner. If the respondent has not completed a SUD assessment or any other service, use the review hearing to engage the respondent.**
- If respondent(s) has made efforts to, or has completed the SUD evaluation, be sure to recognize their positive efforts. [R.C. 2151.3514(B), JUV.R. 13(B)(1) AND JUV.R. 13 (B)(2)(F-G)]**
- If not completed at the shelter care hearing, has the parent(s) completed the SUD assessment?**
- Have the parties and/or attorneys reviewed reports and assessments?**

CHILD TRAUMA

- If not completed at the shelter care hearing, has a trauma assessment been completed? Has the GAL had a chance to review the results of the assessment? If additional services were recommended, have referrals been made?**
- If the parties consent, issue an order directing the respondent(s) to complete a trauma assessment and sign releases authorizing the results and recommendations be sent to the local Children Services Board.**

FAMILY TIME

(ASK THESE QUESTIONS AT ALL APPEARANCES, AS APPROPRIATE)

- What are the frequency, duration, and level of supervision of visits?**
- What activities occurred during visitation? What are the strengths of the parent(s) during the visit? What parenting issues need to be worked on and/or developed during the visit? Did parent(s) spend most of the visit in actual engagement with the child(ren)?**
- Can visitation occur more frequently or for a longer period of time?**
- As the case progresses, discussions around visitation should focus on behavioral changes and growth. Extra care should be given to the level of engagement between parent(s) and child(ren). Continue to highlight strengths and offer encouragement around areas needing improvement.**
- If the parent(s) is doing well in SUD treatment, mediation may be helpful to resolve ongoing visitation or custodial issues with the caregiver/custodian.**

STATUS OF SUD SERVICES

- During court appearances (appearances can be every two weeks, monthly, or as deemed appropriate by the judicial officer), focus should be on the case plan/recommendations. Discuss any barriers and potential solutions to overcome those barriers.
- Monthly (or next scheduled) appearances center on ongoing progress in treatment. Progress in services should relate to demonstrated behavioral changes and how they impact the permanency goal.
- Special attention should be given to sober time, step-downs in level of care, etc.
- If there was a setback, speak directly to the respondent(s) about what happened to establish accountability.
- ❓ What steps can be taken to avoid similar behavior in the future?
- ❓ Has the respondent(s) been drug tested? If so, when, how often, and what were the results? If not, why not, and what is being done to ensure any substance use is quickly and reliably detected? [R.C. 2151.3514(B) AND (C)]
- ❓ Is the respondent(s) involved in self-help/sober support groups?
- Keep encouraging them to work toward case plan goals.

REVIEW OF PLACEMENT OR PERMANENCY GOAL

(IF APPLICABLE)

- Focus should remain on the safety issues that brought the case to court. Specific behavioral changes should be documented, for example, what behavioral improvements were made in parenting practices? What success has parent(s) accomplished during SUD treatment and any other recommended services?
 - ❓ If the child(ren) is unable to return home today, what needs to occur for this to happen?
 - ❓ Have the factors that placed the child(ren) in immediate danger of serious harm been ameliorated? If so, how? If not, what needs to change?
- Does SUD continue to prevent the respondent from being able to provide the minimally adequate standard of care to protect the child(ren)?
- ❓ What has occurred to ensure the child(ren) can safely return home?