

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

Commissioner Approval for Extended Placements in Qualified Residential Treatment Programs

1.0 Purpose:

The purpose of the *Commissioner Approval for Extended Placements in Qualified Residential Treatment Programs (QRTP) Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)* is to provide child welfare staff guidance for obtaining permission from the Commissioner for the Bureau for Children and Families (Commissioner) for children to remain in QRTP beyond the recommended timeframes within the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA). This SOP is to be used as a supporting document for Foster Care Policy Section 2.4.9.

2.0 Definitions:

2.1 Recommended Length of Treatment in QRTP for Children Under 13 Years of Age: Children under the age of 13 are permitted six months of treatment, consecutive or non-consecutive, in a QRTP per custody episode.

2.2 Recommended Length of Treatment in QRTP for Children 13 years of Age or Older: Children 13 and older are permitted 12 consecutive, or 18 non-consecutive, months of treatment in a QRTP per custody episode.

3.0 Procedures:

3.1 Establishment of Need

At least three months before the expiration of the QRTP placement timeframe, as defined above, the DHHR caseworker, through partnership with the members of the MDT and treatment staff of the QRTP, will need to have formed some plans for the next steps in the child's treatment or return to caregivers with aftercare services. If, during this process, the DHHR caseworker believes that an extended stay in QRTP may be in the best interest of the child, preparations will need to be made for approval by the Commissioner. The reasons for extending the QRTP placement must be based on medical necessity and not because the child has no place to go or needs to finish an educational program. Qualified residential treatment programs are one of the most restrictive levels of care available, curtailing most of the child's ability to interact as a member of a family and do things his/her peers do. Continuation past the recommended timeframe is not a decision to be made without supporting facts that display medical need, and is not a decision that should be made by the DHHR caseworker alone.

3.2 Multidisciplinary Team—Agreement on Extension of QRTP Placement

At least two months before the expiration of the QRTP placement timeframe, as defined above, a meeting of the multidisciplinary team (MDT) must occur, if one has not already been convened that addressed the need for continued stay in QRTP. The worker will schedule the meeting and notify all parties. The DHHR caseworker will gather all relevant documentation related to the treatment being provided in the QRTP for review by the MDT. During the MDT meeting, the team will decide whether or not to recommend an extended length of stay and whether or not it is in the best interest of the child. At a minimum, the MDT will need the following to make its decision:

- The most recent assessment/evaluation completed by the QRTP related to medical need;
- The recommendation of the QRTP clinical professionals;
- Efforts made to seek treatment in the community that could be delivered in less restrictive settings than QRTP;
- The QRTP's recommended discharge date and the aftercare services plan provided by the QRTP to support discharge.

3.3 Memorandum to Commissioner

Immediately after the MDT meeting is held, and extension of the QRTP is recommended, a memorandum will be developed that outlines the reasons why continuation in QRTP is in the best interest of the child. The memorandum must contain:

- The date of the most recent assessment/evaluation of medical need;
- The recommendations of the most recent assessment/evaluation of medical need;
- Efforts made to seek less restrictive treatment that could be delivered in a family setting, through foster care, relative/kinship care or a return home;
- The reasons why the youth cannot be returned to a less restrictive setting, with aftercare services provided to support the discharge from QRTP;
- The estimated date in which the child would be ready for discharge and the aftercare plan;
- The date of the MDT's meeting and agreement for extended QRTP placement.

The DHHR caseworker's supervisor will send the memorandum through the Community Services Manager up the chain of command to reach the Commissioner no later than five business days after the MDT meeting.

3.4 Commissioner Approval

The Commissioner will review the information provided by the DHHR caseworker and render a written decision via memorandum or email within seven (7) business days unless there is a need for further information. The Commissioner will make requests for further information by contacting the DHHR caseworker and his/her supervisor.

3.5 FACTS Documentation

The DHHR caseworker will document the extension of the QRTP placement using the *Placement Extension Screens* provided for this purpose in FACTS. The DHHR caseworker will

file the memorandum seeking permission to extend placement and the written response received from the Commissioner in the child's case record.

4.0 Deviation

Deviation from these guidelines will result in IV-E reimbursement disqualification.

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