

Family Connections - Operational Definitions of Referral Criteria

The goal of Family Connections is to reach and provide early intervention to families who are not currently known to Child Protective Services (CPS) but due to their circumstances are experiencing a number of risks that, without intervention, could eventually lead to a CPS report. The following criteria guide our acceptance of families for services.

Lives in West Side Baltimore

Families who live and/or whose children go to school in West Baltimore are eligible to participate. Because we are unable to serve the whole city, we have defined our boundaries to be consistent with the West Side. This will permit our service providers who are located in West Baltimore to get to know neighborhoods and communities and to empower families to access existing services close to home.

No Current Involvement with CPS

In order to evaluate how effective we are in helping families manage stress and improve child and family well being, we must try to reach families early, before problems have evolved to the point of needing CPS intervention. You should only refer families if, to your knowledge, they are not currently receiving CPS intervention.

Family is Willing to Participate

Services are voluntary, so prior to making a referral, you should talk with the family about the services available through Family Connections so that you know that the family is interested in receiving services. If the family expresses an interest in the program, you can initiate the referral by calling Family Connections to request an intake appointment. Following this initial appointment, services will be provided within the home or wherever is most convenient for the family.

Child is At Risk of Harm because Basic Needs Have Not Been Met

At least one of the following must be a concern:

Inadequate/delayed health care: failure of a child to receive needed care for physical injury, acute illnesses, physical disabilities, or chronic condition or impairment that if left untreated could result in negative consequences for the child.

Inadequate nutrition: failure to provide a child with regular and ample meals that meet basic nutritional requirements or when a caregiver fails to provide the necessary rehabilitative diet to a child with particular types of physical health problems.

Poor personal hygiene: failure to attend to cleanliness of the child's hair, skin, teeth, and clothes.

Inadequate clothing: chronic inappropriate clothing for the weather or conditions.

Unsafe household conditions: presence of obvious hazardous physical conditions in the home that could result in negative consequences for the child(ren).

Unsanitary household conditions: presence of obvious hazardous unsanitary conditions in the home.

Unstable living conditions: moves of residence due to eviction or lack of planning at least three times within a six month period or homelessness due to the lack of available, affordable housing or the caregiver's inability to manage finances.

Shuttling: the child is repeatedly left at one household or another due to apparent unwillingness to maintain custody, or chronically and repeatedly leaving a child with others for days/weeks at a time.

Inadequate supervision: child left unsupervised or inadequately supervised for extended periods of time or allowed to remain away from home overnight without the caregiver knowing the child's whereabouts.

Inappropriate substitute caregiver: failure to arrange for safe and appropriate substitute child care when the caregiver leaves child with an inappropriate caregiver.

Drug exposed newborn: a newborn infant has been exposed to drugs because the mother has used one or more illegal substances during her pregnancy.

Inadequate nurturance or affection: marked inattention to the child's needs for affection, emotional support, attention, or competence; being detached or uninvolved, interacting only when absolutely necessary, failing to express affection, caring, and love for the child.

Isolating: the child is consistently denied opportunities to meet needs for interacting/communicating with peers or adults inside or outside the home; markedly overprotective restrictions which foster immaturity or emotional over dependency; chronically applying expectations clearly inappropriate in relation to the child's age or level of development; inattention to the child's developmental/emotional needs.

Witnessing violence: a child witnesses violence in the home, e.g., partner abuse or violence between other persons who visit the home on a regular basis.

Permitting alcohol or drug use: encouraging or permitting of drug or alcohol use by a child.

Permitting other maladaptive behavior: encouraging or permitting of other maladaptive behavior (e.g., severe assaultiveness, chronic delinquency) under circumstances where the caregiver had reason to be aware of the existence and seriousness of the problem but did not attempt to intervene.

Delay in obtaining needed mental health care: a child is not provided needed treatment for an emotional or behavioral impairment.

Chronic truancy: a child (age 6) is not enrolled in school or habitual truancy (minimum of 20 days) without a legitimate reason.

Unmet special education needs: a child fails to receive recommended remedial educational services, or treatment for a child's diagnosed learning disorder or other special educational needs or problems of the child.