I. **PURPOSE**: This policy outlines the Children's Network of Southwest Florida’s process regarding interviews with children upon their exit from a licensed out of home care facility or home. The purpose of the interview is to gain the child’s perspective concerning the safety and quality of care provided in the placement.


III. **CONTACT**: Quality Management Licensing Specialist

IV. **PERSONS AFFECTED**: Staff at the Children's Network of Southwest Florida and its subcontracted case management organizations.

V. **POLICY**: This policy applies to all children, over the age of 5, who are in the custody of the Department of Children and Families/Children’s Network of Southwest Florida and are exiting a licensed out of home placement where they have resided for a minimum of 30 days. The Case Management Organization assigned to the child is directly responsible for obtaining this exit interview from the child.

VI. **RATIONALE**: In order to assess the quality of care in the placement, it is necessary to get the child’s perspective about his or her treatment in the home or facility.

VII. **CROSS REFERENCES**: This policy is accordance with Florida Administrative Code
65C-28.017 and replaces the Department of Children and Families’ operating procedure 175-61.

VIII. **DEFINITIONS:**

a. Child Exit Interview: The process of directing a specific set of questions to a child who has exited a licensed out of home placement.

b. Child Exit Interview Form: The specific set of questions designed for use with children from age 5 through 7 and age 8 through 18.

IX. **PROCEDURES:**

1. The child exit interview is to be considered anonymous but not confidential. This means the interviewer tells the child that the information shared by the child will eventually reach the foster parent or facility; however, the child’s name will not be attached to that information. Even though the foster parent or facility may be able to determine the child’s identity, it is important for foster parents and facilities to have the information so that they know how children are responding to the care they provide.

   a. Children ages 5 through 17 must be interviewed if they have resided in the home or facility for 30 days or more.
   b. The interview must be conducted within five days of the child’s exit from the home or facility.
   c. The interview shall not be conducted in the home or facility from which the child just exited. It must take place in a setting where the child feels comfortable and where the conversation can be considered private.
   d. If the child is resistant or unresponsive, the interviewer may gently persist but should reschedule the interview if the child becomes upset or exhibits other behaviors of concern.
   e. Interviewers must be careful not to influence or lead the child in answering the questions through positive or negative facial expressions, body language or comments. Thanking the child for answering the question will encourage the child to answer, but not bias the responses.
   f. Interviewers must record any observations about the child’s physical appearance or emotional state (positive or negative) that seem significant to the interview process.
   g. If the child alleges abuse, neglect, or any maltreatment during the exit interview, the interviewer is mandated to make an immediate report to the Abuse Hotline.
   h. A child whose exit from the placement is due to running away will be temporarily exempt from the exit interview. Upon the child’s return, efforts must be made to interview the child.
2. Response and Follow-Up Requirement. The case management organizations will designate
staff to coordinate appropriate responses to both positive and negative feedback from the child
exit interviews. Guidelines are as follows:

a. If the child indicates the quality of care he/she received was above average or
exceptional, this information should be purposefully shared with the foster parents
or facility as positive reinforcement for their efforts. This may be accomplished
in a variety of ways:
(1) Positive responses may be shared during home visit or by letter or phone call.
(2) Positive responses may be summarized in writing on a quarterly or read with
the foster parent or facility.

b. If the child indicates the quality of care needs improvement, a careful
assessment, by the interviewer, of the child’s feedback should follow. An
assessment involves consideration of the following:
(1) Child’s responses to the interview questions;
(2) Child’s developmental level and special needs;
(3) The foster parent(s’) response to the issue(s) raised;
(4) Observations obtained from all staff who have visited in the home within the
previous 6 months;
(5) Feedback obtained from other foster children who may have exited the same
foster home within the previous 6 months; and,
(6) Feedback obtained from any other relevant sources, e.g., teachers, therapists,
guardian ad litem, if applicable.

c. When a safety or quality of care issue raised by the child exiting from a foster home is
supported by other information, the case management organization must develop a
corrective action plan. The Department is responsible for follow up action on Child
Placing, Child Caring Agencies, and Group Home facilities. The type of corrective action
can range from providing more intense supervision/support/training for the foster parent
or facility to a more formal
corrective action plan, or a recommendation for revocation of the license, if
appropriate. Decisions about the type and manner of response must take into
account:
(1) The seriousness of the issue raised by the child.
(2) Protection of the child’s anonymity.
(3) Any needs or concerns the foster parent or facility may have expressed.
(4) The frequency and/or chronic nature of the conduct or condition being
addressed.

d. When corrective action is necessary, written follow-up within a pre-determined
time frame not to exceed 90 days must occur.
3. Documentation Requirements. The completed interview form, the case management organization’s response, if any, and follow-up tasks must be handled as follows:

   a. The completed interview form, department or contracted services provider response, if any, shall be placed in the child’s case record.
   b. A copy of the completed interview form shall be provided to the licensing staff and placed in the out-of-home caregiver’s licensing file.

   c. A copy of the completed interview form and record of any follow up shall be sent to the Children’s Network licensing unit. The Children’s Network will forward all exit interviews concerning Child Placing, Child Caring Agencies, and Group Home facilities to District/Region or Zone Program and include a copy in the families relicensing packet.

   d. A summary of exit interviews conducted shall be sent to the Department’s Office of Family Safety as requested by that office.

X. EXHIBITS:

A. Directions for the exit interview

B. Form for children ages 5 – 7

C. Form for children ages 8 – 18

D. Complaint form
EXHIBIT A
Directions for Case Management Organization Representatives to complete exit interviews on foster children

- This foster child exit interview does not need to be completed unless the child has resided in a licensed out of home placement for thirty (30) days or more.

- This is an interview that is to be conducted by a Case Management Organization staff member with the foster child. Explain to the child the purpose of the interview is to make sure children are living in safe placements, to help foster parents and staff do their best and to find a home they will feel good about.

- Prior to the interview, the representative will select the time and location of the interview. The interview should be done in a location that provides the staff member and child an opportunity to talk privately without placing the staff person at risk for allegations.

- The interview cannot take place in the home or facility the child has just exited.

- An audio tape of the interview may be made with the child’s consent in order to facilitate a complete transcription of the child’s responses.

- If the child is resistant or unresponsive, the interviewer may gently persist but should reschedule the interview if the child becomes upset or exhibits other behaviors of concern.

- Interviewers must be careful not to influence or lead the child in answering the questions through positive or negative facial expressions, body language or comments. Thanking the child for answering the question will encourage the child to answer but not bias the responses.

- Interviewers should record enough detail regarding a child’s comments to ensure it is in the context of the child’s age and individual circumstances regarding things such as bedtimes, chores, privileges, etc.

- Children who have medical or mental conditions that prevent them from being able to comprehend or answer all of the questions will be exempted from this interview process. However, efforts should be made to determine the quality of their care in any home they leave through other means, such as, unannounced visits to the home. This also is true for children under 5 years of age.

- Interviewers may record any additional observations about the child’s physical appearance or emotional state (positive or negative) that seem important.

- If during the interview the child reports an event that would require a call to the Hotline, the interviewer, as a Case Management Organization employee, is mandated to report it to the Hotline.

- The representative should ensure that the original interview form is placed in child’s case record with one (1) copy going into the licensing file for foster parents, one (1) copy going to the Lead Agency Quality Management Department, and (1) copy going to the Department if the child left a Child Caring Agency, Group Home, or Shelter.

- If there are potential licensing violations indicated in the exit interview, the form must also be forwarded to the DCF Licensing Specialist.

Revised August 2008
EXHIBIT B

YOUTH EXIT INTERVIEW
For AGES 5-7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County of Foster Family</th>
<th>County of Counselor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte ☐</td>
<td>Charlotte ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collier ☐</td>
<td>Collier ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hendry/Glades ☐</td>
<td>Hendry/Glades ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee ☐</td>
<td>Lee ☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Person Conducting the Interview: _______________________________ Work Phone:_____________________
Date of Interview: ______________   Location of Where Interview Took Place:____________________________
Child’s Name:________________________________________________________________________________
Child’s ID #: ____________________ DOB:_____________________________________________________________
Name of Foster Home Child Just Left:_____________________________________________________________
Date Placed in this Home: ______________________________________________________________________
Date of Removal from This Home/Placement: _______________________________________________________

Reason Child left Placement:
Reunified with bio/Family _____  Adopted _____  Independent Living _____  Disrupted _________
Other:__________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating (Please check one box)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please Respond Based on your Experience this Past Licensing Year

1.) I was comfortable in this foster home.
2.) The children in the home were nice to me.
3.) The foster parents helped me to do activities that I liked to do.
4.) They fed me healthy meals.
5.) I liked the way we got ready for bedtime.
6.) The foster mother was nice to me.
7.) The foster father was nice to me.
8.) I think this is a good foster home for other children.
9.) I felt safe living in this home.
10.) The foster parent helped me to understand why I had to leave.

Comments or Suggestions
(Please Explain Low Ratings: )

Revised August 2008
11.) The best thing I liked about living in the home was ____________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________________________

12.) The worst thing about the home was ____________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________________________

13.) If you did something right, what happened? ____________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________________________

14.) If you did something wrong, what happened? ____________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________________________

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS: ____________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Case Manager Signature ____________________ Date ___________ Supervisor Signature ____________________ Date ________
# YOUTH EXIT INTERVIEW
For AGES 8-18

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County of Foster Family</th>
<th>County of Counselor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte</td>
<td>Charlotte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hendry</td>
<td>Hendry/Glades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collier</td>
<td>Collier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glades</td>
<td>Lee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Person Conducting the Interview: ___________________________ Work Phone: ___________________________
Date of Interview: ___________________________ Location of Where Interview Took Place: ___________________________
Child’s Name: ________________________________________
Child’s ID #: ___________________________ DOB: ___________________________
Name of Foster Home Child Just Left: ___________________________
Date Placed in this Home: ___________________________
Date of Removal from This Home/Placement: ___________________________

Reason Child left Placement:
Reunified with bio/Family _____ Adopted _____ Independent Living _____ Disrupted ________
Other: __________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating (Please check one box)</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>So So</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Not Applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Please Respond Based on your Experience this Past Licensing Year

1). I was comfortable in this foster home
2) The children in the home were nice to me.
3) The foster parents helped me to do activities that I liked to do.
4) They fed me healthy meals.
5) Bedtime was a pleasant experience.
6) The foster father was nice to me.
7) I think this is a good foster home for other children.
8) I felt safe living in this home.
9) The foster parents helped me to understand why I had to leave.
10) The foster parents were concerned

Comments or Suggestions (Please Explain Low Ratings:)

Revised August 2008
<p>| | |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12.)</td>
<td>I was treated fairly by the foster parents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.)</td>
<td>The foster parents praised me when I was good.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.)</td>
<td>The foster parents treated me fairly when I did something wrong.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.)</td>
<td>I was treated like the other children in the home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.)</td>
<td>They let me bring all my belongings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.)</td>
<td>I was allowed to call my family and counselor when I wanted to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.)</td>
<td>Living in this home helped me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.)</td>
<td>I would not change anything about this home.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

20.) The best thing about this home was ________________________________

21.) They showed that they cared about me by ________________________________

22.) When I was good they would reward me by ________________________________

23.) When I did something wrong they would discipline me by ________________________________

24.) What else would you like to tell me about this home? ________________________________

25.) Was there anything the department could have done to make this placement better?

_____________________________________________________________________________________________

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS / SUGGESTIONS:

_____________________________________________________________________________________________

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