



QUESTIONS

EVERY JUDGE AND LAWYER
SHOULD ASK ABOUT
INFANTS AND TODDLERS
IN THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

BENCH CARD

PHYSICAL HEALTH

- Has the child received a comprehensive initial health assessment and ongoing health assessments? Were referrals generated or services initiated based on the identified deficits of the health assessment?
- Are the child's immunizations complete and up-to-date for his or her age?
- Has the child received hearing and vision screening? Has the child received regular dental screening and follow-up services? Has the child been screened for lead exposure? Communicable diseases? Do the current caregivers have the results of these screens and know how to follow up?
- Does the child have any allergies? Birth defects?
- Is the child receiving any over-the-counter or prescription medications, vitamins, or supplements?
- Does the child have a "medical home" coordinating comprehensive, continuous health care? Is medical information accessible to parents, caregivers, and providers?
- What type of medical and dental insurance does the child have? Is it sufficient? Do the parents have medical and/or dental insurance?
- How will the need for emergency care be met? Who are the people and/or agencies that can authorize care if a parent cannot be reached?
- Does the parent or caregiver have any concerns about the child's health or development?
- How is the agency or the foster placement assisting parents with participating in medical appointments?

DEVELOPMENTAL HEALTH

- Has the child received a developmental evaluation by a provider with experience in child development?
- Are the child and his or her family receiving necessary early intervention services, e.g., speech therapy, occupational therapy, education interventions, family support?
- Does the child have a consistent routine (for eating, bedtime, medications, etc.) and has the parent shared that information with the caregiver? How much time does the child spend watching TV or playing video games? How much time is spent reading to the child?
- How can the parent or caregiver be supported in creating a consistent routine for the child? How are the parents and caregivers communicating changes in routine and the child's preferences?

MENTAL HEALTH

- Has the child received a mental health screening, assessment, or evaluation?
- Is the child receiving necessary infant or early childhood mental health services?
- Is the child receiving any psychotropic medications? Has the reason for the medication been explained to the parent? Has a behavioral intervention been

implemented? What additional interventions are being used? How is it being monitored? Are any of the prescribed medications secondary to ameliorate the side effects of a primary medication?

FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDERS (FASD)

- Is there any evidence to suggest that the mother of the child drank alcohol or used drugs during pregnancy?
- Has the child been assessed for fetal alcohol spectrum disorders?
- If FASD is indicated, what services are being offered to the child and caregivers?

EXPOSURE TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

- Has the child been exposed to domestic violence? What are the consequences of the violence exposure for the child?
- Has an assessment been initiated or mental health services provided to the child exposed to domestic violence?
- Can the child be kept safe and together with the non-offending parent?
- Is there a safety plan in place to address domestic violence concerns related to the family, co-parenting, and visitation?

TRAUMA AND PARENTING

- Has a parent experienced unusual challenges related to poverty, childhood abuse, interpersonal violence, substance abuse, and mental health disorders?
- What additional services or assistance does the parent need in order to achieve reunification?
- Who does the parent depend on when he or she needs support or help?
- If the parent suffers from a mental health problem, has he or she had a psychological or psychiatric evaluation? Is the parent attending therapy sessions on a regular basis? If the parent is on medication, is he or she taking it as prescribed?
- Does the parent/caregiver use alcohol and/or illegal drugs? If so, when was the last time he or she used drugs? Is the parent attending a drug rehabilitation program?
- How has the parent made the home safe for the child?

FAMILY TIME

- How often are the child, parent(s), and siblings spending time together?
- Are visits supervised? By whom? Is this person able to offer coaching to the parent?

- (To the parent) Tell me about your last visit with [child's name]. What did you do together?

EDUCATIONAL/ CHILD CARE SETTING

- Is the child enrolled in an early childhood program that supports both cognitive and social/emotional development? If so, how many hours per week does the child attend? Is the schedule consistent? Does the program include a family component?
- Does the staff have a working knowledge of trauma-informed practices as they relate to children in child welfare in order to minimize or eliminate changes in the child care or educational setting and support the child and the family?

PLACEMENT

- Is the child placed with caregivers knowledgeable about the social and emotional needs of infants and toddlers in out-of-home placements, especially young children who have been abused, exposed to violence, trauma, neglect, or other adverse experiences?
- Do the out-of-home caregivers have access to information and support related to the child's unique needs?
- Are the out-of-home caregivers able to identify problem behaviors in the child and seek appropriate services?

- To what extent are the birth parents and out-of-home caregivers sharing parenting and updating each other on any changes in routine?
- Are all efforts being made to place the child with appropriate family members?
- Is there reason to believe the child could be a member of or could be eligible to be a member of a federally recognized tribe?
- Are all efforts being made to keep the child in one consistent placement and to minimize disruptions in the child's relationships and placements?
- Can the caregiver stay home with the child? If so, what services are available to support the caregiver? What training and support has the caregiver received in order to better meet the needs of a young child?

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Infant-Toddler Court Teams

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