



# Qualified Evaluator Network (QEN)

Suitability and BQRTP  
Assessment Process Overviews

December 2025



# QEN Presentation Agenda

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- » Establishment of Suitability Assessments
- » FL Statute, Juvenile Rule, CFOP
- » Residential Treatment
- » Suitability for Residential Treatment
- » Qualified Evaluators
- » Types of Suitability Assessments & Time Frames
- » Components of a Suitability Assessment
- » Types of Recommendations
- » Behavioral Qualified Residential Treatment Program (BQRTP)



# Establishment of Suitability Assessments

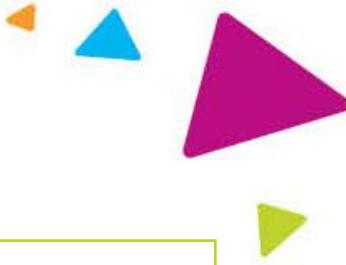
## **Created by a 2000 state legislative initiative intended to:**

- Prevent dependent children from being prematurely placed or maintained in residential treatment when it is no longer needed
- Ensure the least restrictive level of care for mental health treatment
- Support the child's due process rights under state law

## **QEN was established in July 2001 and is designed to:**

- Provide assessment services for children in the care and custody of DCF
- Adhere to all requirements set forth in S.39.407, F.S., J.R. 8.350 and CFOP 170-11
- Ensure support of state legislative initiative for the least restrictive level of care

# Rules and Requirements for Residential Treatment Placement



## **39.407, F.S.**

Under this subsection, before a child is admitted to a residential treatment setting, the child shall be assessed for suitability for residential treatment by a qualified evaluator who has conducted a personal examination and assessment of the child.

## **Juvenile Rule 8.350**

- Outlines the primary purpose of residential treatment is for mental health.
- Provides the court the authority to make the final determination of the child's placement.
- Sets the criteria for what information must be considered during the court hearing, one of which is suitability.

## **CFOP 170-11, Chapter 5**

- Provides the process for assessing, and if needed, placing dependent children into residential treatment centers, including specialized therapeutic group homes.
- Each Community-Based Care (CBC) agency will have a suitability referral process involving a multidisciplinary team (MDT).

# Residential Treatment

## » **Statewide Inpatient Psychiatric Program (SIPP)**

Intensive psychiatric services provided to children in secure residential settings designed to serve high-risk youth that fail to benefit from acute inpatient or traditional outpatient treatment settings.

## » **Therapeutic Group Home**

A residential treatment center that offers a 24-hour residential program, providing community-based mental health treatment and mental health support services to children who meet the criteria in S.394.492(5), F.S. or S.394.492(6), F.S. in a nonsecure, homelike setting.

**Residential treatment or residential treatment program** means placement for observation, diagnosis or treatment of an emotional disturbance in a residential treatment center licensed under **s. 394.875** or a hospital licensed under **chapter 395**.

# Suitable for Residential Treatment

**Suitable for residential treatment or suitability** means a determination that a child or adolescent has an emotional disturbance as defined in S.394.492(5), F.S. or a serious emotional disturbance as defined in S.394.492(6), F.S., and all the following criteria are met:

- A. The child requires residential treatment.
- B. The child needs a residential treatment program and is expected to benefit from mental or behavioral health treatment.
- C. An appropriate, less restrictive alternative to residential treatment is unavailable.

# Qualified Evaluators

## Residential treatment center placement

(other than a therapeutic group home or a hospital)

- Must be a psychiatrist or a psychologist licensed in FL
- Have at least 3 years of experience in the diagnosis and treatment of serious emotional disturbances in children and adolescents
- Have no actual or perceived conflict of interest with any inpatient facility or residential treatment center or program

Independent

Utilize FL Statute  
and Juvenile Rule

## Therapeutic group home placement

- Must be one of the following:
  - Psychiatrist licensed under chapter 458, F.S. or chapter 459, F.S.
  - Psychologist licensed under chapter 490, F.S.
  - Mental health counselor licensed under chapter 491, F.S.
- Have at least 2 years of experience in the diagnosis and treatment of serious emotional or behavioral disturbance in children and adolescents
- Have no actual or perceived conflict of interest with any residential treatment center or program

Recommend least  
restrictive level of care for  
mental or behavioral health

# Suitability Assessments

## Type:

Initial Suitability Assessment



## Time Frame:

60-Day Review



90-Day Review



Out of State 60-Day Review



Out of State 90-Day Review



Before a child can be admitted into a residential treatment center

Within 60 days of a child's initial placement into residential treatment

Every 90 days while the child remains within a residential treatment center

Within 60 days of a child's initial out-of-state (OOS) placement into residential treatment

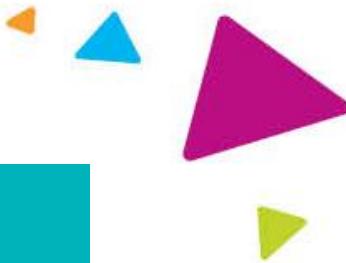
Every 90 days while the child remains within an OOS residential treatment center

## Reconsideration:

A separate, second independent evaluation is conducted if it is determined one or both of the following criteria have been met:

- The QE was not provided with the clinical record/supporting documentation at the time the suitability was conducted.
- The child's mental, emotional and/or behavioral health has significantly decompensated since the time of the assessment (i.e., Baker Act, self-injurious, high-risk behaviors, danger to self and others, etc.).

# Components of a Suitability Assessment



**Review of prior treatment records**



**Interview with child  
(In-person or via telehealth)**



**Input from individuals familiar  
with the child's conditions**



**Child and Adolescent Needs and  
Strengths (CANS) - Trauma  
Comprehensive assessment**



**Recommendation from child's  
treating clinical professional**



**Summary of findings and  
recommendations**

# Types of Recommendations

Psychiatric Residential Treatment  
Center (PRTC/SIPP)

Therapeutic Group Home (TGH)

Non-Residential

Behavioral Qualified Residential  
Treatment Program (BQ RTP)

# Behavioral Qualified Residential Treatment Program (BQ RTP)

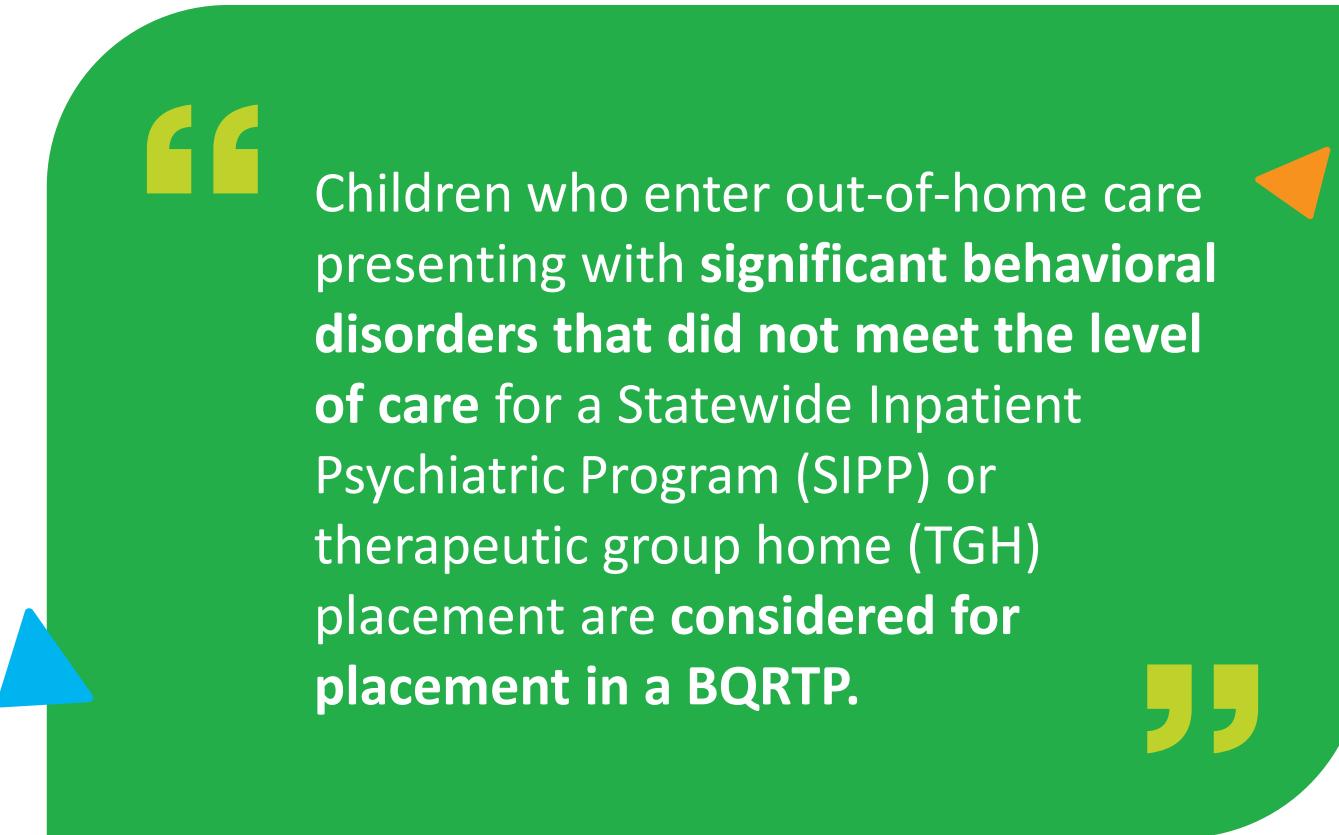
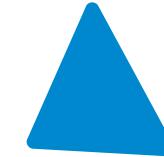
*BQ RTP is a residential treatment facility licensed by DCF.*

*Child's initial placement can occur with a preliminary assessment and does not require court approval.*

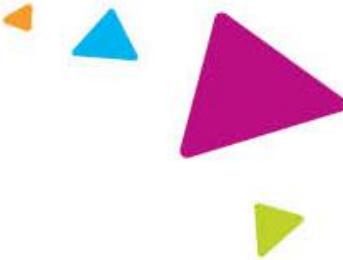
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Children who enter out-of-home care presenting with **significant behavioral disorders that did not meet the level of care** for a Statewide Inpatient Psychiatric Program (SIPP) or therapeutic group home (TGH) placement are **considered for placement in a BQ RTP**.

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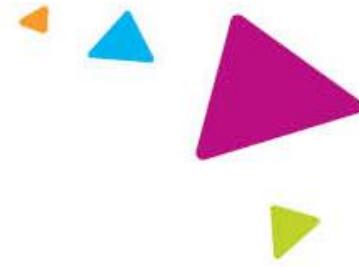
# BQRTP Assessments



Type:	Components:	Time Frame:
<b>Preliminary BQRTP Assessment</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Face-to-face attempt with the child</li><li>2. Review of Comprehensive Placement Assessment completed during placement multidisciplinary team staffing</li><li>3. Reasons supporting preliminary recommendation for placement</li></ol>	Child may be placed in a BQRTP based on the preliminary assessment recommendation.
<b>Final BQRTP Assessment</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Interview with the child</li><li>2. Review of prior treatment records and consultation with relevant parties</li><li>3. Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) - Trauma Comprehensive assessment</li><li>4. Short-term and long-term mental and behavioral health goals</li><li>5. Recommendation from child's treating clinical professional</li><li>6. Recommendations</li></ol>	If a child has been placed in a BQRTP on a preliminary assessment, the final assessment must be completed within 30 calendar days to continue placement.
<b>90-Day BQRTP Review</b>	All Final BQRTP Assessment elements, plus review of treatment plans and progress notes	Every 90 days while the child remains within a BQRTP.

# BQRTP Reconsiderations

*A separate, second independent evaluation if it is determined one or all the following criteria have been met:*



The QE was not provided with the clinical record/supporting documentation at the time the assessment/review was conducted.

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The child has experienced a decompensation in mental, emotional or behavioral health functioning.

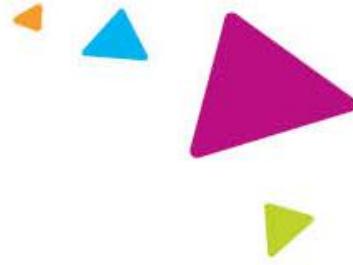
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The QE did not recommend a BQRTP, and the courts ordered the child to be placed in a BQRTP.

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