

Qualified Evaluator Network (QEN)

ASSESSMENT PROCESSES:
SUITABILITY FOR RESIDENTIAL
TREATMENT & BQRTP

December 2025

Magellan
HEALTHCARE®



QEN Training Agenda

- » Establishment of Suitability Assessments
- » FL Statute, Juvenile Rule, CFOP
- » Residential Treatment
- » When & When Not to Request a Suitability Assessment
- » Suitable for Residential Treatment
- » Qualified Evaluators
- » Types of Suitability Assessments & Time Frames
- » Components of a Suitability Assessment
- » Types of Recommendations
- » Collateral Contacts
- » Behavioral Qualified Residential Treatment Program (BQRTP)
- » Statewide Identified Trends (Suitability Assessments and BQRTP)



Establishment of Suitability Assessments

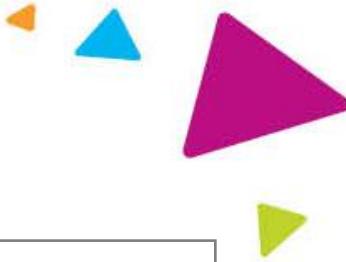
Created by a 2000 state legislative initiative intended to:

- 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.

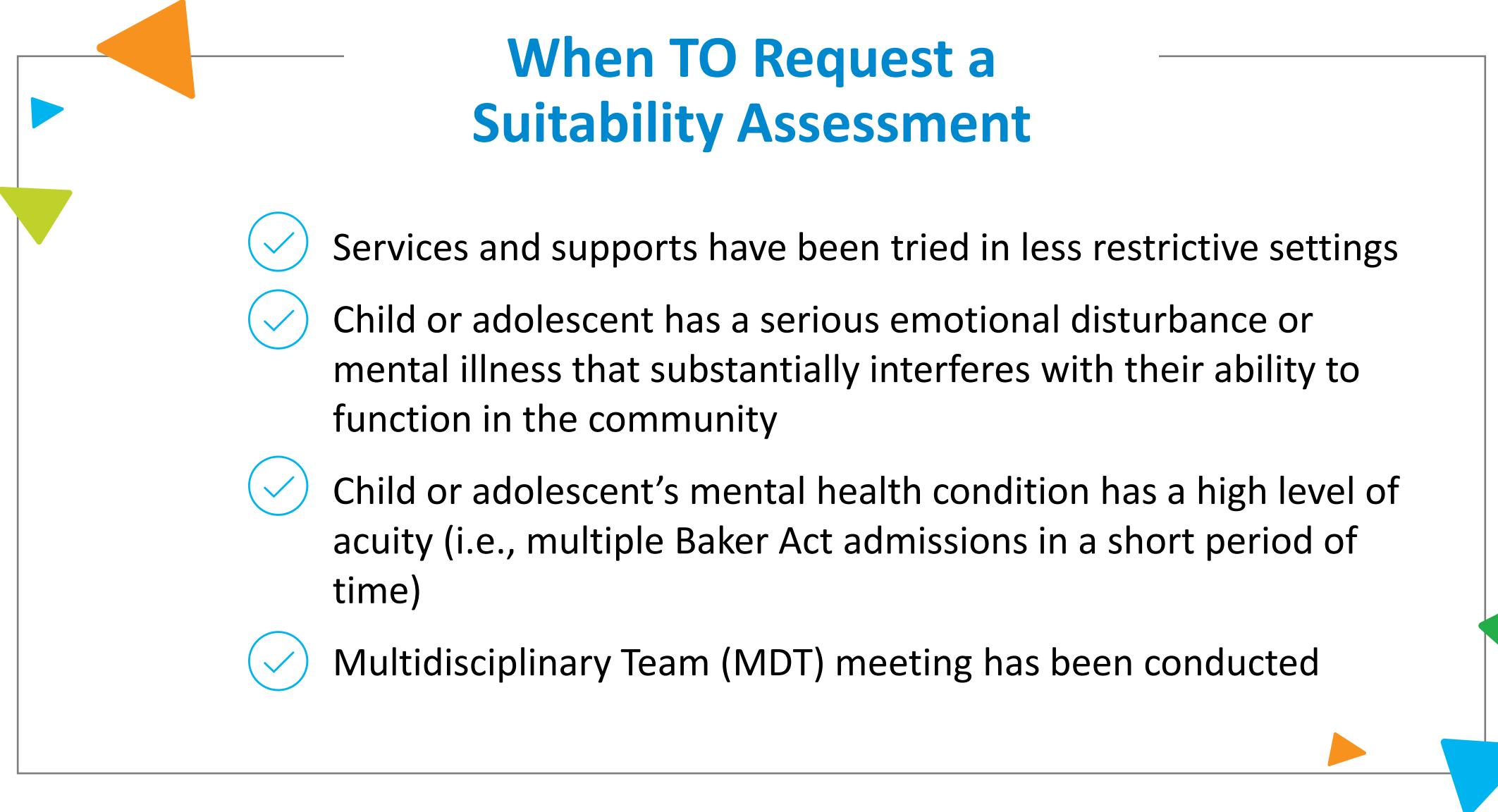
Under this subsection, before a child is admitted to a residential treatment setting, the child shall be assessed for suitability for residential treatment by a qualified evaluator who has conducted a personal examination and assessment of the child.

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.

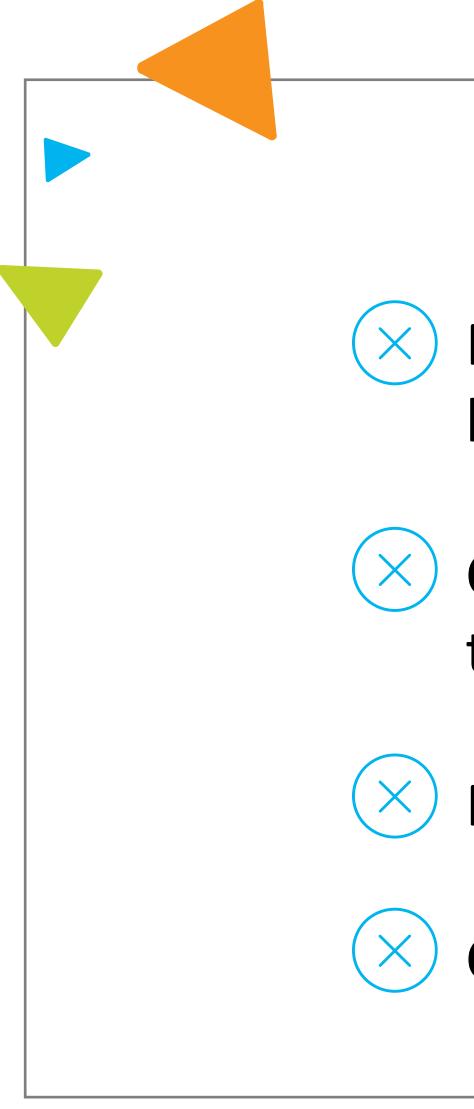
CFOP 170-11, Chapter 5

- 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).



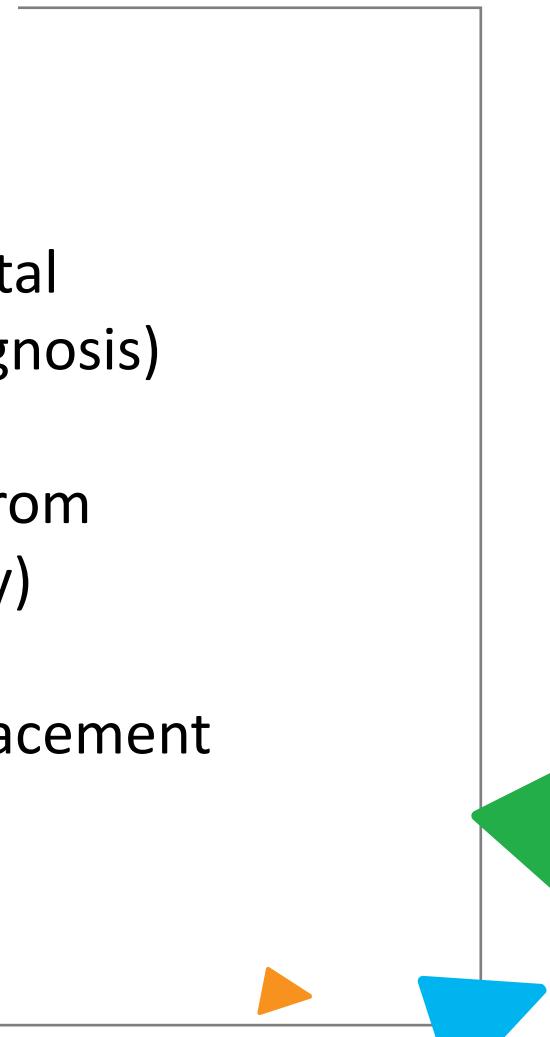
When TO Request a Suitability Assessment

- Services and supports have been tried in less restrictive settings
- Child or adolescent has a serious emotional disturbance or mental illness that substantially interferes with their ability to function in the community
- Child or adolescent's mental health condition has a high level of acuity (i.e., multiple Baker Act admissions in a short period of time)
- Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) meeting has been conducted



When NOT to Request a Suitability Assessment

- ✖ Primary purpose of treatment is not for mental health (i.e., substance use is the primary diagnosis)
- ✖ Child cannot effectively participate/benefit from treatment (i.e., due to age or cognitive ability)
- ✖ No identified and/or available community placement
- ✖ Child is doing well in a lesser level of care



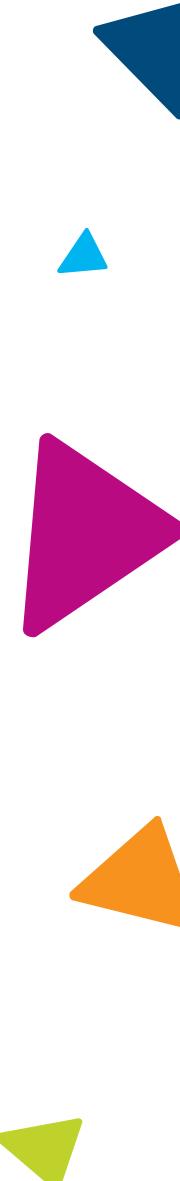
Residential Treatment

» **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

Types of Suitability Assessments and Time Frames

Type:

Initial Suitability Assessment



Time Frame:

Before a child can be admitted into a residential treatment center.

60-Day Review



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

90-Day Review



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

Out of State
60-Day Review



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

Out of State
90-Day Review



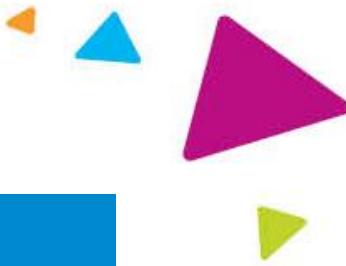
Every 90 days while the child remains within an OOS residential treatment center.

Reconsideration

A separate, 2nd independent evaluation that is conducted if it has been determined that 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



Input from individuals familiar with the child's conditions



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



Recommendation from child's treating clinical professional



Summary of findings and recommendations



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

Types of Recommendations

Psychiatric Residential Treatment
Center (PRTC/SIPP)

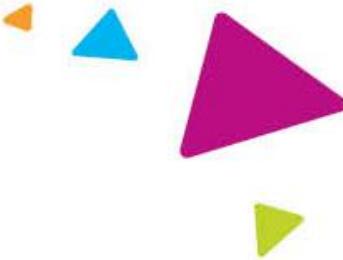
Therapeutic Group Home (TGH)

Non-Residential

Behavioral Qualified Residential
Treatment Program (BQ RTP)

Collateral Contacts

Input is essential to the assessment process



Input can be provided to the QE in several ways:

- Email
- Telephonic
- Written summary



Appointment information should be provided to the collateral contacts, so they can reach out to the assigned QE.



For collateral contact information to be incorporated into the report, it is important that they reach out to the QE prior to the assessment being completed.



Examples of collateral contacts:

- Assigned guardian ad litem
- Current counselor/therapist
- Current caregiver
- Attorney ad litem
- Treating psychiatrist
- Behavior specialist

Behavioral Qualified Residential Treatment Program (BQ RTP)

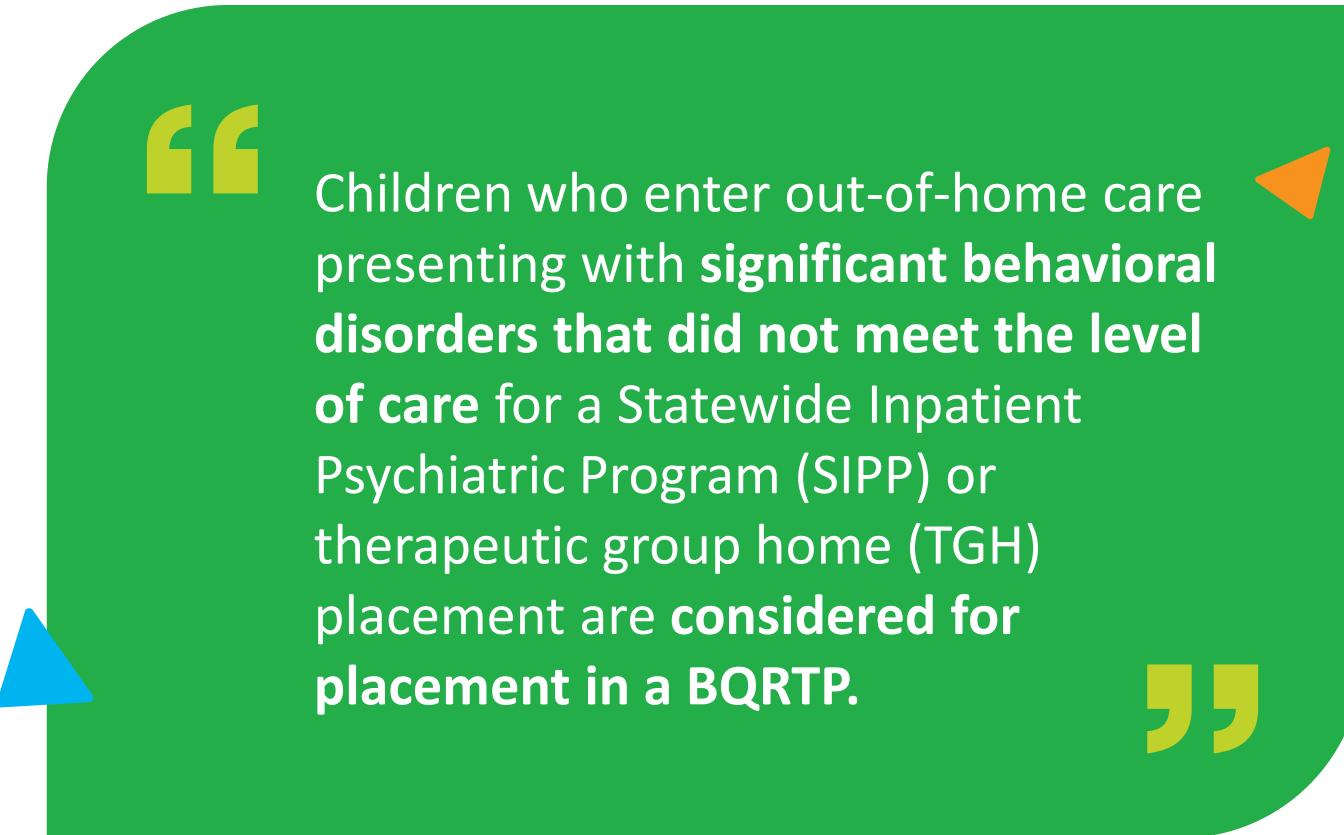
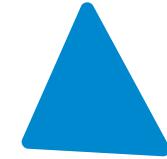
BQ RTP is a residential treatment facility licensed by DCF.

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

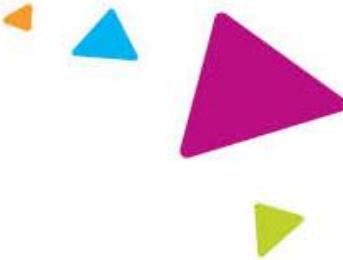
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Children who enter out-of-home care presenting with **significant behavioral disorders that did not meet the level of care** for a Statewide Inpatient Psychiatric Program (SIPP) or therapeutic group home (TGH) placement are **considered for placement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

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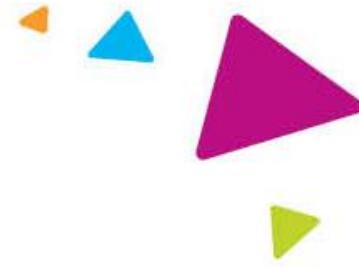
BQRTP Assessments



Type:	Components:	Time Frame:
Preliminary BQRTP Assessment	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Face-to-face interview or an attempt to interview the child2. Review of Comprehensive Placement Assessment completed during placement multidisciplinary team staffing3. Reasons supporting preliminary recommendation for placement	Child may be placed in a BQRTP based on the preliminary assessment recommendation.
Final BQRTP Assessment	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Face-to-face or telehealth interview with the child2. Review of prior treatment records and consultation with relevant parties3. Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) - Trauma Comprehensive assessment4. Short-term and long-term mental and behavioral health goals5. Recommendation from child's treating clinical professional6. Recommendations	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.
90-Day BQRTP Review	All Final BQRTP Assessment elements, plus review of treatment plans and progress notes	Every 90 days while the child remains within a BQRTP.

BQ RTP 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.



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



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



Identified Statewide Trends: Suitability Assessments

60-day hearing

- Court hearing timeframes
- Requirement for suitability to be part of the hearing

Referrals for children doing well in non-residential settings

Referrals where there is a non-consensus regarding a suitability being completed

MDT recommendation was for TGH or PRTC

- Suitability assessment was completed and recommended non-residential
- POC requests an assessment for BQRTP

Certain referrals may require Magellan to request DCF guidance

- MDT non-consensus
- 60-day review when child in residential beyond 60 days without a hearing
- 60-day review referral submitted when 60-day court hearing already held



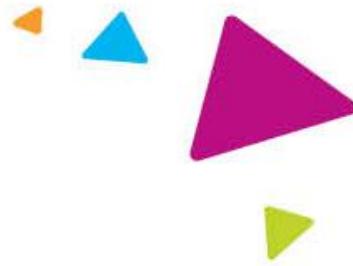


Identified Statewide Trends: BQRTP

- Confusion regarding referral process
- Misunderstanding of purpose of BQRTP
- Requests to assess for BQRTP, TGH and PRTC at the same time
- Final assessment submission timeframe
- Misunderstanding of need for Comprehensive Placement Assessment to be completed for a Preliminary Assessment Recommendation referral
- Preliminary referrals should not be submitted when child is on runaway status



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