

7%

The 7% Safety File Check

Seven questions every parent, foster parent, kinship caregiver, and advocate should ask before trusting the record.

What the data shows:

CT: safety tasks completed all 4 measures only 7% of the time • AZ: 93% of monitored group homes flagged for documentation concerns in 2024

Safety is not just what happened.

Safety is what the record can prove happened.

Speak Without Shame™ | Former foster parent · Adoptive parent · Children's advocate

Why this checklist exists

In Connecticut, DCF completed all four required safety measures only 7% of the time.

A child told them they were not safe. The child died within an hour of the visit.

In Arizona, 93% of monitored group homes had documentation concerns flagged in 2024.

These are not isolated failures. They are what happens when records are incomplete, inaccurate, or never built at all.

The child welfare system runs on records. Workers act on files. Judges rule on documentation.

Placements are made — and disrupted — based on what is written down.

If a child's words are not in the file, the system does not see them.

If a caregiver's explanation is missing, the accusation stands alone.

If safety tasks were skipped, the record may say they were done.

This checklist gives you seven questions to audit any record — the agency's or your own.

Use it proactively to build your file. Use it reactively when something feels wrong.

Who this is for

- ✓ Bio parents building a case record during reunification
- ✓ Foster parents documenting their role and concerns
- ✓ Kinship caregivers holding the line while the system moves slowly
- ✓ Advocates reviewing a file on behalf of a family
- ✓ Providers and group home staff auditing documentation quality

How to use this checklist

Go through each of the 7 questions. For every question where the answer is “no” or “unsure,” mark it as a gap. Count your gaps at the end. Use the scoring guide to decide your next step.

You can use this checklist on your own record, on an agency record you have received, or as a guide for what to document going forward.

For organizational support only. Not legal advice or case representation.

If you have an urgent safety concern, contact emergency, legal, or mandated-reporting resources.

1

Was the child actually seen?*Date, time, location, and who was present — not implied, not assumed, written down.*

- Is there a documented date AND time of in-person contact with the child?
- Is the location recorded (home, school, office, other)?
- Is the name of the worker or person present in the record?
- Was there meaningful one-on-one time with the child, separate from the caregiver?

A visit note that says "family seen" without date, time, or who was present is not a safety visit. It is a checkbox.

2

Was the child actually heard?*The child's words documented accurately — not summarized, not softened, not omitted.*

- Are the child's own words or statements included in the record?
- If the child expressed fear, distress, or a safety concern, is that documented directly?
- Were the child's words paraphrased in a way that changes their meaning?
- Was the child interviewed privately, without the caregiver present?

A record that says "child appeared fine" when the child said "I don't feel safe" is not a neutral record. It is an inaccurate one.

3

Were collateral sources contacted?*School, doctor, therapist, provider, foster parent, kinship caregiver — who was asked?*

- Is there documentation of contact with the child's school or teacher?
- Is there contact with medical or mental health providers?
- Were foster parents, kinship caregivers, or other household members interviewed?
- Were their statements or concerns included in the record?

A safety assessment built only on the parent's account and a worker observation is not a full safety assessment.

4

Were safety concerns tied to facts?*Not vibes. Not personality judgments. Specific, observable, dated facts.*

- Are safety concerns backed by specific observations with dates and times?
- Does the record avoid vague characterizations like "chaotic household" without evidence?
- If risk is assessed as low, is that supported by documented facts, not assumptions?
- Are any prior incidents or reports referenced with specifics, not just mentioned?

"Parent seemed agitated" is an observation. It is not a safety finding. The difference matters in court.

5

Were services requested and tracked?*Requested, approved, denied, delayed, ignored — is there a paper trail for each?*

- Are service requests documented with dates?
- Is there a record of whether services were approved, denied, or delayed?
- If services were recommended but not provided, is that gap in the record?
- Is there documentation of follow-up when services were not accessed or available?

A case plan that lists required services but has no documentation of whether they were actually provided is not a case plan. It is a wish list.

6

Were caregiver explanations included?*Or did the record only capture accusations and conclusions — with the caregiver's side missing?*

- Is the caregiver's response to any concern documented?
- Were explanations dismissed without being recorded?
- Does the record include what the caregiver said, not just what the worker concluded?
- If the caregiver disagreed with a finding, is that disagreement in the file?

A record that includes every accusation but none of the caregiver's responses is not a balanced record. It is a one-sided narrative.

7

Is there a follow-up trail?*Who was supposed to do what next, by when — and where is the proof it happened?*

- Does each safety concern or action item have a named responsible party?
- Is there a documented deadline or expected completion date?
- Is there documentation confirming follow-through or noting when it did not happen?
- Are gaps in the follow-up trail documented and explained, or simply absent?

*A safety plan without a follow-up trail is not a safety plan. It is a statement of intent.
Intent does not protect children.*

My Gap Count

Count every question where you answered "no" or "unsure."

1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>	6 <input type="checkbox"/>	7 <input type="checkbox"/>
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What your score means

0–1 gaps

Maintain your file.

Your record is in reasonable shape. Keep documenting consistently. Review this checklist again after any major case event.

2–3 gaps

Start organizing your record now.

You have meaningful gaps that could affect how your case is read. Use the 7% Safety File Builder Kit to close them before the next hearing.

4–5 gaps

You may have a narrative-risk problem.

Gaps at this level can allow incomplete or inaccurate narratives to take hold. This is the point where documentation becomes urgent, not optional.

6–7 gaps

The record is working against you.

At 6 or 7 gaps, the record as it exists may be telling a story that does not match reality. This needs immediate attention from an attorney, advocate, or documentation specialist.

Urgent safety concern

Do not wait.

If any question reveals an active safety concern involving a child, contact emergency services, a mandated reporter, or legal and advocacy resources immediately.

The system does not just fail children through bad decisions. It fails them through incomplete records, missed safety tasks, weak supervision, and narratives that erase what children and caregivers actually said.

A record that tells the truth can protect a child. A record that does not can endanger one. The 7% Safety File Check is the first step to knowing which one you are dealing with.

What to do next

If you found 0–1 gaps:

Keep your file current. Share this checklist with anyone who needs it.

If you found 2–3 gaps:

Download the 7% Safety File Builder Kit at FosterClarityNow.com.

If you found 4+ gaps:

Start with the File Clarity Review — a second set of eyes on your existing record.

If you have an urgent concern:

Contact emergency, legal, advocacy, or mandated-reporting resources now.

This is a free resource. Share it.

If you know a parent, foster parent, kinship caregiver, or advocate who needs this, send it to them. The only way documentation culture improves is when families demand it.

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Safety is what the record can prove happened.”***

FosterClarityNow.com • [Speak Without Shame™](#) • For organizational support only. Not legal advice.