



# State of South Carolina

## Department of Social Services

### Policies and Procedures: Child Welfare Services

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| <b>Subject:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | 400 Family Preservation Services                                      |
| <b>Authority:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | S.C. Code Section 63-7-10                                             |
| <b>Standards:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <a href="#">Guiding Principles and Standards (GPS) Practice Model</a> |
| <b>Application:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Child Welfare Services Staff                                          |
| <b>Purpose:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                       |
| Based upon an understanding that all children deserve a safe and stable home, the purpose of Family Preservation Services (FPS) is to support and strengthen families in need of services to mitigate safety concerns and reduce risks of harm. This policy addresses the criteria in which FPS cases can open, the case transition process, timeline, treatment planning, case closure, and team leader and case manager roles and responsibilities. The procedures outlined in this policy embody the GPS Practice Model as well as federal law and policies governing Child Welfare Services.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                       |
| <b>Policy Statement:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                       |
| FPS are short term, family centered, services made available to support and strengthen families. DSS may provided FPS under the following circumstances:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                       |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. At the conclusion of a Child Welfare Services investigation that results in an indicated case decision when the Family Advocacy and Support Tool (FAST) suggests safety concerns can be mitigated and risks of harm reduced by the provision of services. DSS makes reasonable efforts to avoid removing the child from the home of the parents during service delivery; however, when necessary to best serve the child's interests, the child may reside in the home of a non-custodial parent or with kin or fictive kin during service delivery if the custodial parent is in agreement;</li><li>2. For a period of time after a child is reunified with a parent following foster care placement;</li><li>3. In an indicated case involving a child in foster care and a sibling who resides in the parent's home (foster care retains case management); and</li><li>4. At the conclusion of an unfounded case decision, if the FAST or Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) tool, as part of a comprehensive assessment, suggests the family may benefit from services to stabilize the family and prevent the occurrence of abuse, neglect, or harm to children, the parent may voluntarily accept services. Refer to <a href="#">Policy 301: Child Welfare Services Investigations</a> Section N for a description of criteria that is needed for these cases.</li><li>5. The report does not allege child abuse, neglect, or harm, but based upon an assessment of the needs of the family, DSS has determined the child is at imminent risk of removal to foster care unless services are provided to prevent removal. Before providing FPS, the case manager and team leader must consult with the County Director</li></ol> |                                                                       |

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immediately after receiving a report or before calling in the report. The County Director shall document approval or disapproval of FPS in writing. If the County Director approves FPS, DSS Intake categorizes the report as Unfounded, Category IV, documents the case as "Family Preservation Services No Investigation Needed," and DSS provides ongoing case management. In these cases, within 24 hours of an FPS service line opening, a Child and Family Team Meeting (CFTM) is to be conducted. Note: If a child is at imminent risk of removal and the County Director has approved the opening of an FPS service line with no investigation needed, county staff will call in a report to intake to be screened in as "Family Preservation Services No Investigation Needed."

If an Investigations case is being indicated and no FPS are being recommended by DSS staff, then [DSS Form 3062: Team Leader Case Consultation](#) must be completed and signed by the County Director and legal representative to approve no FPS on an indicated case. The team leader will link the completed form in CAPSS and document the decision in case dictation.

Unless extenuating circumstances are documented, FPS cases shall conclude within 90 days of the case decision or within 90 days of court ordered reunification.

**Policy Administration:**

The division of Child Welfare Services' Office of Safety is the owner of this policy. The Director, or the Director's designee, shall review this policy annually from the date published in the Child Welfare Services Policy Manual, or as needed due to changes in law or practice.

**Policy Guidelines:**

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| <b>A. Case Transfers to Family Preservation Services</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. A member of FPS leadership shall be included in the Investigation Case Determination Consultation with the Investigations team before the case is transferred to FPS.</li><li>2. Within three days of the completion of the determination consultation or closure of the foster care service line, the Family Preservation service line shall be opened by a team leader, team coordinator, Deputy Director, or County Director and assigned to a case manager.</li><li>3. The transferring case manager and team leader shall hold an in-person case transfer consultation with the receiving FPS team leader and case manager regarding the case transfer to the receiving program area within three days of completion of the case determination consultation or closure of the foster care service line.</li><li>4. During the case transfer consultation meeting, the transferring team leader and case manager meet with the receiving FPS team leader and case manager to review the following:<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. All up-to-date, uploaded documents and dictation in CAPSS (Note: Refer to <a href="#">Work Aid 400.1: Documentation</a> for more information);</li><li>b. The physical file which must be completed and given to the receiving case manager along with answers to any outstanding questions;</li></ol></li></ol> |
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|                                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>c. The family's initial involvement with DSS, needs, and strengths based on the FAST;</li> <li>d. Kin involvement, family findings, and current services being provided to include CFTM and Family Permanency Plan (FPP) information, if applicable; and</li> <li>e. Engagement with the family to include current services being provided, successes, barriers, and court involvement. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. The Investigations case manager answers questions regarding next steps for their indicated case or provides guidance on the services the FPS are able to provide if the case is unfounded when the family voluntarily agrees to FPS.</li> <li>ii. Alternatively, the foster care case manager answers questions regarding next steps as it relates to service provision and court orders.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>5. In the event a new investigation is indicated while a FPS service line is already open through the fourth or fifth pathway, the following must occur:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The current FPS service line must be closed; and</li> <li>b. A new FPS service line must be opened with the associated investigation.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <p>B. Family Preservation Services Timeframes</p> | <p>FPS are intended to last for a period of no longer than 90 days following a case determination or case transfer following a child returning home from foster care. The FPS service line opening start date shall match the Case Determination Date in CAPSS or closure of the Foster Care service line.</p> <p>If the family has an unfounded case and participates in FPS voluntarily, the family may end participation at any time. Refer to the <a href="#">FPS Case Timeline Overview</a> in addition to the following for practice guidance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The FPS service line in CAPSS will open following the immediate closure of the investigation service line or foster care service line when the above criteria is met. If the receiving case manager is unknown at the time the service line is opened, then the referring case manager will have the service line in their name.</li> <li>2. Within the first business day following the opening of the FPS service line, the FPS case manager shall contact the family and kinship caregiver, if applicable, to make an introduction. If contact is unsuccessful within 72 hours, FPS team will follow <a href="#">Work Aid 400.3: Concerted Efforts to Locate and Engage Families</a>.</li> <li>3. During a FPS case, CFTM's shall be held during the following time frames and occurrences: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Within 25 calendar days (status) of an FPS service line opening;</li> <li>b. Within 90 calendar (permanency/case closure) of a FPS service line opening;</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |

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- c. Within six months (permanency/case closure) of an FPS service line opening, if applicable;
- d. Pre-Removal, if applicable;
- e. Special Call; and
- f. Case Closure.

Note: For additional guidance regarding the CFTM process, please refer to [Policy 1642: Child and Family Team Meetings](#), [Work Aid 16.5: Child and Family Team Meetings](#), and [Child and Family Teaming Timeline](#).

- 4. The FPS team leader, FPS case manager, and team coordinator or County Director shall request a legal consultation if any of the following circumstances are present:
  - a. At any point the conditions in the home become unsafe and all safety services from least to most intrusive have been exhausted;
  - b. After continued documented reasonable efforts, the family is still refusing services or fails to engage with the agency or community services; or
  - c. The family cannot be located following the process found in [Work Aid 400.3: Concerted Efforts to Locate and Engage Families](#).
- 5. Within 90 days of the case decision or within 90 days of reunification following foster care entry, a case consultation shall occur to determine whether safety concerns have been eliminated, risks of harm mitigated, and it is in the child's best interest to close the FPS case. The FPS case shall close unless the team coordinator, Deputy County Director, or County Director grants an extension of time because the home has not been made safe, risks of harm have not been mitigated, and it is not in the child's best interests to close the case or unless a Family Court Order prohibits case closure.
  - a. If a child is alternatively placed outside of the home, during the consultation, the placement shall be reviewed to determine whether an extension of the kinship caregiver agreement is needed.
  - b. Approval of the extension must come from the FPS team coordinator or County Director and be documented in the case consultation and the kinship caregiver agreement.
- 6. If the case remains open, at the four-month mark, a case consultation shall occur which includes the FPS case manager, FPS team leader, FPS team coordinator, the county deputy director, and a county attorney to determine whether safety concerns have been eliminated, risk of harm mitigated, and it is in the child's best interest to close the FPS case.
  - a. The FPS case shall close upon a determination that safety concerns have been eliminated, risks of harm are mitigated, and it is in the child's best interests to close the case.

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|                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>b. If the County Director and county attorney determine the home has not been made safe, risks of harm have not been mitigated, that it is not in the child's best interests to close the case, and that these concerns cannot be eliminated by the six-month mark, the County Director may grant an additional extension of time to provide services. DSS Form 3062: Team Leader Case Consultation must be signed and placed in linked files in CAPSS.</li> <li>c. If the FPS case will be opened longer than six months, the FPS team must schedule a CFTM with the family to determine if additional services are needed to help close the FPS case and if new goals need to be set.</li> <li>d. Following the six-month CFTM, it is determined the home has not been made safe, risks of harm have not been mitigated, and it is not in the child's best interests to close the case, the FPS team must submit a Court Information Sheet (CIS) to petition the court for relief (intervention or removal) within ten business days to their legal department. The FPS team leader links the CIS into CAPSS and documents the decision in case dictation.</li> </ul> <p>7. At the seven-month mark, a case consultation shall occur which includes the FPS case manager, FPS team leader, FPS team coordinator, and the County Director to determine how to meet the needs of the family, keep legal concerns in mind, and provide appropriate services.</p> <p>8. At the nine-month mark, a case consultation shall occur which includes the FPS case manager, FPS team leader, FPS team coordinator, the County Director, and Regional Director to determine how to meet the needs of the family, keep legal concerns in mind, and provide appropriate services.</p> <p>Note: For counties without a team coordinator, the County Director has the authority necessary for these decision points.</p> |
| C. Contacts, Service Planning, and Engagement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Within 25 days of the FPS line opening, the CFTM must be completed to assist with finalizing the FPP (<i>Note: Refer to Policy 1642, Work Aid 16.5, and Child and Family Teaming Timeline</i>).</li> <li>2. The FPS case manager is required to make a minimum of one face-to-face contact monthly with all active case recipients. In addition to monthly contact, it is recommended the FPS team make additional contacts based on the level of service intensity defined in the <a href="#">Service Intensity Chart</a>.</li> <li>3. If contact with the family is unsuccessful, the case manager and team leader will refer to Work Aid 3.2: Concerted Efforts to Locate Families within CAPSS dictation.</li> <li>4. During each contact and engagement with all active case recipients, the case manager:</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Documents identified needs;</li><li>b. Interviews the child(ren) or youth separately and alone during each visit and actively engages all children during each interaction and throughout the life of the case to include out of home placement with kinship care, DJJ, or any placement facility;</li><li>c. Engages parents and caregivers in conversation around changed behaviors by helping to identify parent or caregiver protective capacities;</li><li>d. Observes the family dynamics and home environment areas of strength for the family, then updates strengths on the FAST, as needed;</li><li>e. Listens for updates from the family on any progress made in services and activities outlined in the FPP and helps the family navigate any barriers that arise;</li><li>f. Engages service provides in an ongoing information gathering process to determine the family's progress on service goals; and</li><li>g. Collaborates with the family to review and make decision about the next steps for the family which can include:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>i. Making any necessary changes to the FPP;</li><li>ii. Service recommendations; and</li><li>iii. Returning the children home, maintaining the children in the home, or placement options with kinship caregiver, when applicable.</li></ul></li></ul> <p>5. The case manager and team leader make concerted efforts to locate, interview, and engage any non-custodial or incarcerated parents monthly, if concerted efforts were not completed previously and must continue to engage non-custodial or incarcerated parents throughout the life of the case.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. The case manager informs the parent of the agency's involvement and gathers any critical information.</li><li>b. The case manager informs the parent of their rights.</li><li>c. The case manager connects the parents to available service providers located near them or in the facility, as needed.</li></ul> <p>Note: Information on the rights of custodial, non-custodial, or incarcerated parents can be found in <a href="#">DSS Brochure 3034</a> and <a href="#">DSS Brochure 2416</a>.</p> <p>6. The case manager and team leader assess the protective capacity of the non-custodial parents. If a child cannot remain safely in the home during the FPS case, if the custodial parent is in agreement, the FPS case manager makes concerted efforts to place the child with the non-custodial parent unless placement with the non-custodial parent would be contrary to the well-being of the child. If there is court involvement, the FPS case manager may recommend placement with</p> |
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|                                             | <p>a non-custodial parent by court order, over the custodial parent's objection. For more information, refer to <a href="#">Work Aid 3.5: Kinship Care During Investigations</a> and <a href="#">Work Aid 3.6: Safety Services and Planning</a>.</p> <p>7. In kinship caregiver placements, FPS will continue contact with the family and kinship caregiver offering services. See <a href="#">Policy 510.2: Placement of Child</a> and <a href="#">Policy 510.2.5: Placement with Kinship Caregivers</a>.</p> <p>8. It is preferred that FPS be provided to the parent without removing the child from the home. However, if it is necessary for a child to be placed with kin or fictive kin during a FPS case, reunification with the parent is the goal. See <a href="#">Policy 1651: Concurrent Planning</a> for more details.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| D. Ongoing Case Management Responsibilities | <p>1. Case actions, referrals, concerted efforts, and contacts with any case participant shall be entered into CAPSS case dictation within five calendar days of occurrence.</p> <p>2. Documents are uploaded into CAPSS linked files under the Case ID or Person case file within five calendar days of receipt.</p> <p>3. Case managers and team leaders will review Work Aid 16.9: Documentation and <a href="#">Work Aid 400.2: Team Leader Responsibilities</a> to ensure correct documentation and management of the FPS case.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| E. Ongoing Team Leader Responsibilities     | <p>1. The FPS team leader shall conduct case consultations monthly with each of their case managers regarding each of their cases. The FPS team leader shall utilize <a href="#">Policy 1644: Team Leader Case Consultation</a> and document the case consultation in CAPSS dictation within three calendar days of occurrence.</p> <p>2. The FPS team leader shall assign cases to FPS case managers in consideration of the service intensity based on the recommendations in the <a href="#">Service Intensity Chart</a>.</p> <p>3. The FPS team leader shall provide support to case managers throughout the life of the case during case consultations, through case reassignment, when necessary, and perform case actions when case managers are unable to do so. For more information, refer to <a href="#">Work Aid 400.2: Team Leader Responsibilities</a>.</p> <p>4. Case managers and team leaders shall review Work Aid 400.1: Documentation and Work Aid 400.2 to ensure correct documentation and management of the FPS case.</p> |
| F. Case Closure                             | <p>1. FPS case managers and team leaders work towards successful case closure with families in accordance with <a href="#">Policy 401: Case Closure During Family Preservation Services</a>.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

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|  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>2. There are different paths to case closure outlined in <a href="#">Work Aid 401.1: Case Closure During Family Preservation Services</a> and should be reviewed for guidance on when to close out a FPS case.</li><li>3. Within five days of a CFTM recommendation to close a case, the case manager shall:<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Complete and mail applicable case closure notices to the following entities:<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>i. Parents, caregivers, or legal guardian</li><li>ii. Non-custodial parents; and</li></ol></li><li>b. Submit the case file to the team leader for review and final closure of the FPS service line if there is no court involvement. If there is court involvement, the team leader must consult with the county attorney for a determination whether the FPS line may be closed.</li></ol></li></ol> |
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| <b>Forms:</b>                      | <a href="#">DSS Form 2632: Child Welfare Search Effort Guide</a><br><a href="#">DSS Form 3062: Team Leader Case Consultation</a> |
| <b>Related Management Reports:</b> | SC-240-R01 – Family Preservation Services<br>SC-170-R01 – Family Preservation Open 9 Months or More                              |

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| <b>Glossary:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <p><b>Active Case Recipients:</b> includes children, parents, caregivers, non-custodial parents, kinship, and all household members.</p> <p><b>Behavior Changes:</b> observable actions, such as increase understanding of age-appropriate behaviors and use of appropriate behavior management strategies, of an individual or family's ability to modify circumstance that promotes the safety of a child/youth to enhance protective capacity.</p> <p><b>Case Transitions:</b> the transition of a case to another program area, case manager, or county office.</p> <p><b>Child and Family Team (CFT):</b> a group of family members, fictive kin, friends, professionals, and other invested stakeholders who join to strengthen a family and provide protection and a Family Permanency Plan for the child or youth to achieve safety, permanency, and well-being. The family chooses the members of the team. The Team also includes the child or youth when developmentally appropriate.</p> <p><b>Child and Family Team Meeting (CFTM):</b> are family-centered, culturally responsive, goal oriented, and problem-solving processes that bring together the Child and Family Team to make decision about the safety, permanency, and well-being of their children or youth through the development of an individual Family Permanency Plan. CFTMs are planned so that meaningful participation by all members is possible. Interpreter services are scheduled as needed.</p> |

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**Concerted Efforts:** comprehensive activities to gather contact information for known and unknown parents, maternal and paternal relatives, fictive kin, and any other significant adult connections who may provide support to both the child, youth, young adult, and family.

**Concerted efforts to locate and engage families:** the steps that must be taken and documented to locate and engage with the child, or youth and family as outlined in the [3.2 Concerted Efforts to Locate Families Work Aid](#).

**Contact:** an intentional face-to-face interaction between a case manager and a child, youth, or young adults in the care, custody, guardianship of SCDSS. The case manager monitor progress and services, promotes the timely achievement of case goals, and addresses safety, permanency, and well-being needs.

**CFTM Facilitator:** a DSS employee who is trained, skilled, and certified in coordinating meetings among the family, Case Manager, and other stakeholders.

**Engagement:** developing a successful working relationship through honesty, respect empathy and active listening.

**Family Advocacy and Support Tool (FAST):** an assessment tool to help identify safety concerns, underlying risks, needs and strength of families. The FAST is the initial intervention assessment tool designed to be utilized with families who are involved in a Child Welfare Services Investigation and families who are identified as needing FPS. The FAST assesses the family unit to determine child safety, identify risks, needs and assist case managers in identifying protective factors.

**Child and Adolescent Needs and Services (CANS):** an assessment tool which is strength-based, culturally responsive and family focused casework. The CANS produces the least stigma or label for the children and families served. It provides a communication basis for understanding the treatment needs of youth and making decisions about care and services. The CANS assesses the needs of children ages five and older to assist with matching services appropriately based on the child's identified needs.

**Family Permanency Plan (previously known as Treatment Plan/Placement Plan/Case Plan):** the sole collaborative plan that describes the reasons for agency involvement, the actions and services required to change behaviors, and the strategies to reduce safety concerns and risks that promote the safety, permanency, and well-being of the child or youth and family.

**Guardian/Caregiver:** any relative or any other person living, visiting, or working in the child's home or an employee or volunteer at an educational, recreational, medical, religious, therapeutic, or other such setting where children are present, or any person in any caretaking role with children, such as a babysitter.

**Indicated Determination:** there is a preponderance of evidence to believe, based on a report received according to S.C. Code Section 63-7-350, that abuse or neglect is more likely than not to have occurred.

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**Non-custodial parent:** the parent who does not have custody of the child or youth. This includes a parent who is not the primary custodian of the child or youth if there is a joint or shared parental relationship.

**Protective Capacities:** individual and family strengths, resources, or characteristics that directly affect the safety of the child by mitigating threats of serious harm or demonstrating that the child is being adequately protected by caregivers.

**Reunification:** the agency or court decision to return a child to their home of origin supported by evidence of behavior change and substantial lack of safety concerns.

**Safety Services:** actions, activities, tasks, or imposed situation that may be formal or informal; provided by professionals and non-professionals for the purpose of managing or controlling impending safety threats. Safety services must be capable of having an immediate effect; must be immediately available; must always be accessible; and must be sufficient to control impending danger.

**Service Intensity:** to be determined by the Service Intensity Chart based on the results of the FAST after the 25-day CFTM.

**Types of CFTMs for Family Preservation:** 25-Day, 90-Day (Status), 6-Month (Permanency), Pre-Removal, Special Call, and Closure.