



Georgia Department of Human Services
Aging Services | Child Support Services | Family & Children Services

MEMORANDUM

TO: All DHS DFCS Child Welfare Employees

FROM: Candice L. Broce, Commissioner

RE: Exemption From Immunization Requirements

DATE: June 1, 2022

As Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Human Services (DHS) and Director of the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS), I am exercising my legal authority to effectuate immediate policy changes regarding noncustodial and foster parents' authority to direct the religious upbringing of their children.

Effective immediately, no DHS DFCS agent, employee, or contractor shall seek immunizations for any child in DFCS' temporary custody if a noncustodial parent expresses a sincere religious objection to immunization of such child, barring extreme circumstances such as a specific and unusual medical need. "Child" is defined as any person under the age of twenty-one.

Once a noncustodial parent expresses a religious objection to immunization of their child to any DHS DFCS agency, employee, or contractor, such agent, employee, or contractor shall immediately notify the DHS Office of General Counsel (OGC) by email to Judy.Holdaway@dhs.ga.gov. OGC shall immediately notify the County Director and Special Assistant Attorney General (SAAG) assigned to that child's case that the noncustodial parent has expressed a religious objection to immunization. Absent a lawful court order to the contrary, all DHS DFCS agents, employees, and contractors shall comply with the noncustodial parent's religious objection to immunization of their child in DFCS' temporary custody.

Furthermore, and also effective immediately, no DHS DFCS agent, employee, or contractor shall require immunization of any child of a caregiver living in the household where a child in DFCS custody has been placed if such caregiver expresses a sincere religious objection to immunization of their other child. For the purposes of this policy change and in accordance with the Georgia Children and Youth Act (O.C.G.A. § 49-5-1 et seq.) and the Juvenile Code (O.C.G.A. § 15-11-1 et seq.), the term “caregiver” includes a relative caregiver, fictive kin, foster parent, Child Placing Agency, or Child Caring Institution.

Any provision of any existing policy which now conflicts with these changes stands repealed only to the extent of such conflict.