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|  | <b>DIVISION OF FAMILY AND CHILDREN SERVICES<br/>CHILD WELFARE POLICY MANUAL</b> |   |                        |  |
|   | <b>Chapter:</b>   | (14) Resource Development                               | <b>Effective Date:</b> |  |
|   | <b>Policy Title:</b>  | Caregiver Safety Screening at Initial and Re-evaluation |                        |  |
| <b>Policy Number:</b>   | 14.3  | <b>Previous Policy #:</b>                               | 1014                   |  |

### CODES/REFERENCES

Title IV-E of the Social Security Act Section 471(a)(20)(B)  
Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006

### REQUIREMENTS

*The Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) shall check any child abuse and neglect registry for information on any prospective foster or adoptive parent and on any other adult living in their home for such information, before the prospective foster or adoptive parent may be finally approved for placement of a child, regardless of whether foster care maintenance payments or adoption assistance payments are made on behalf of the child:*

1. *DFCS shall check any child abuse and neglect registry it maintains for such information.*
2. *DFCS shall request any other State in which any such prospective parent or other adult household member has resided since age eighteen (18), to check any child abuse and neglect registry maintained by such other state for such information*
3. *DFCS shall comply with any such request to check its child abuse and neglect registry that is received from another State.*

**NOTE:** The State of Georgia does not maintain a child abuse and neglect central registry, however, it conducts Child Protective Services (CPS) screening in lieu of a registry to cooperate with other requests from other states in support of the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006.

DFCS and Child Placing Agencies (CPAs) shall conduct Child Protective Services (CPS) screening of each prospective and existing caregiver and their adult household members (18 years of age and older) at:

1. Initial application
2. Re-evaluation
3. Placement or replacement of a child, including respite care ([See policy 10.7 CPS screening of Placement Resources](#))

DFCS shall screen applicants and their adult household members by checking the following databases at initial evaluation and re-evaluation:

1. DFCS Protective Services Records
  - a. Georgia SHINES (Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System)
  - b. IDS Online Master Index (Only required at initial evaluation)
  - c. PSDS (Only required at initial evaluation)
  - d. IDS Placement Central (Only required at initial evaluation)

- e. County Master Files (as applicable)
- 2. Sexual Offender Registry
  - a. Sex Offender Search
  - b. Predator Search
  - c. Absconder Search
- 3. Board of Pardons and Parole
- 4. Department of Corrections Offender Query
- 5. Child Abuse and Neglect Registry in any other state the prospective caregiver and their adult household members have resided since age 18
- 6. Foster and Adoptive home policy violations

DFCS shall disqualify any prospective or existing caregiver from serving as a placement resource if safety screening reveals any of the following circumstances apply:

- 1. The prospective or existing caregiver or an adult household member has a substantiated CPS history where they were named as the maltreater
- 2. An applicant has a history of unsubstantiated CPS investigations that revealed concerns related to safety or parental protective capacity
- 3. An applicant, who has previously been a caregiver, or an existing caregiver, has two or more discipline or other serious policy violations
- 4. An applicant, who has previously been a caregiver, had his/her home administratively closed due to the caregiver's unwillingness to recognize the need for change or failure to cooperate with the agency
- 5. The name of a prospective or existing caregiver or an adult household member appears on a Sexual Offender Registry in Georgia or any other State
- 6. The prospective or existing caregiver or an adult household member has a history of violent crimes or crimes against children
- 7. Unsatisfactory results from any safety screening source

## PROCEDURES

**For DFCS homes, the Resource Development (RD) team will:**

- 1. Direct applicants, existing caregivers, and all adult household members to complete the CPS History Request Form and return it to the designated RD team member within five (5) business days.
- 2. Upon receipt of the CPS History Request, Prior Service History, and Address History forms, determine the need to request CPS screening from other states. If out-of-state screening is needed, do not proceed with the Georgia CPS screening until clearance is received from the other state(s). The CPS history from the other state(s) must be considered prior to Georgia giving a CPS clearance.
- 3. Complete all required safety screening utilizing applicable sources
- 4. Document the results of the screening in the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (Georgia SHINES) in the Family Evaluation, including the databases screened, the date screening was conducted, and results for all caregivers and adult household members.
- 5. Notify applicants, existing caregivers, and applicable adult household members of the agency's decision to deny them to continue the application process or to continue to serve as a caregiver. Initial notification may be via telephone, but must be immediately followed by a written closure letter to the family.

**For CPA homes, CPA staff will:**

1. Upon receipt of the CPS History Request, Prior Service History, and Address History Forms, determine the need to request CPS screening from other states.
  - a. If necessary, request CPS screening from other states
  - b. Attach the other states' CPS response to the CPS History request, if applicable
  - c. Suspend the Georgia CPS clearance until the clearance is received from the other state(s), if applicable
2. Submit the completed CPS History Request, Prior History, and Address History forms via e-mail to the State Safety Services Director's Office at [cpsscreening@dhr.state.ga.us](mailto:cpsscreening@dhr.state.ga.us) or fax the form to 770-359-4641. Include the results of the CPS response from other state(s), if applicable. DFCS will conduct the CPS screening utilizing its CPS database and provide a summary of the results to the CPA.
3. Conduct a name search in the following databases:
  - a. Sexual Offender Registry
    - i. Sex Offender Search
    - ii. Predator Search
    - iii. Absconder Search
  - b. Board of Pardons and Parole
  - c. Department of Corrections Offender Query
4. Document the results of the name search in the applicant's or existing caregiver's file. The CPA Director or designee will review all findings.
5. Notify applicants, existing caregivers, and all adult household members of the agency's decision to deny them eligibility to continue the application process or to continue to serve as a caregiver.

**Unsatisfactory CPS Screening Results on Non-relative Caregivers**

1. Caregivers who are disqualified due to substantiated CPS history should be provided with the Administrative Case Review (ACR) request information ([See policy 5.8 CPS Administrative Reviews](#))
2. Caregivers disqualified due to history provided by other states should be directed to contact the other state agency directly for information.
3. If a caregiver's CPS record is missing, lost, or has been purged, conduct an interview with the caregiver to ascertain as much as possible about the nature of their CPS history (what occurred, who was involved, whether or not services were provided, and any other information about the case).
4. Document the results of the interview with the caregiver on the Contact Detail page in Georgia SHINES and submit to the State Safety Services Director's Office for review. The narrative should be sent to [cpsscreening@dhr.state.ga.us](mailto:cpsscreening@dhr.state.ga.us)

**Unsatisfactory CPS Screening Results on Relative Caregivers**

1. Relative caregivers who are disqualified due to substantiated CPS history should be provided with the Administrative Case Review (ACR) request information ([See policy 5.8 CPS Administrative Reviews](#))
2. Caregivers disqualified due to history provided by other states should be directed to contact the other state agency directly for information.
3. Relative caregivers may also receive a secondary CPS review from the State Safety Director's Office upon request. County Directors may make an initial CPS clearance decision (including results of CPS history from other states), but must request

concurrence from the State Safety Director's Office within ten (10) business days of the decision.

4. If a caregiver's CPS record is missing, lost, or has been purged, conduct an interview with the caregiver to ascertain as much as possible about the nature of their CPS history (what occurred, who was involved, whether or not services were provided, and any other information about the case).
5. Document the results of the interview with the caregiver on the Contact Detail page in Georgia SHINES and submit to the State Safety Services Director's Office for review. The narrative should be sent to [cpsscreening@dhr.state.ga.us](mailto:cpsscreening@dhr.state.ga.us)

## **PRACTICE GUIDANCE**

Caregiver safety screening should be initiated as soon as a prospective caregiver's application is received. Safety screening increases the agency's ability to ensure children are placed in safe and secure environments. The results of the screening assist in determining a caregiver's protective capacities and are used to determine a prospective caregiver's eligibility to continue with the approval process or an existing caregiver's eligibility to continue as a placement resource. Applicants who have lived in other states since age eighteen (18) may not proceed with the approval process until the results of CPS screening from those states have been received and examined.

### **Screening IDS**

The Internal Data System (IDS) is a legacy system that preceded the current Statewide Automated Child Welfare information System (Georgia SHINES). Now that we have Georgia SHINES no additional information is being added into IDS. Consequently, screening in the legacy system (IDS Online, PSDS, and IDS Placement Central) only needs to be completed once for each individual. Whatever is found during the initial screen will always remain the same. See [CPS policy 4.4 Screening Case Participants](#) for more information regarding the screening process.

### **Approval and Denial**

Notification of denials should be provided to the prospective or existing caregivers in an empathetic and supportive manner. Prospective or existing DFCS caregivers who wish to dispute a denial decision should be provided an opportunity to discuss the decision with the DFCS County Director or designee. Prospective or existing CPA caregivers who wish to dispute a denial decision should be provided an opportunity to discuss the decision with the OPM Director or designee.

### **Placement Safety Screening**

Prior to placement or replacement, including respite, of any child into a DFCS or CPA foster home the County Department must conduct the DFCS Protective Services records check, as outlined in the second requirement of this policy. Each office should develop a process for handling placement safety screening after hours, on holidays, and in emergency situations to ensure the screenings are conducted **prior** to the placement of children. The screening is not required for the return of a child to a foster home after respite, unless the child is entering a new placement. In addition, it is only necessary to check out-of-state Child Abuse and Neglect Registries when there is a new adult household member who has resided in another state since the previous screening. For more information regarding placement safety screenings see [Foster Care policy 10.7 CPS Screenings of Placement Resources](#).

**FORMS AND TOOLS**

CPS History Request Form  
Prior Service History Form  
Address History Form

Pending  
Pending  
Pending

DRAFT