



STATE OF GEORGIA
Division of Family and Children Services

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Child Welfare Services Manual Transmittal No. 2015-07

To: County Departments of Family and Children Services
DFCS Regional Directors
State Office Staff

From: Bobby Cagle, Division Director
Division of Family and Children Services

Re: Child Welfare Policy Manual: **Chapter 11: Adoption**

Purpose

The purpose of this Child Welfare Services Manual Transmittal is to release Chapter 11: Adoption, of the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services' (DFCS) **new** Child Welfare Policy Manual.

Discussion

DFCS is committed to improving outcomes for the children and families served in Georgia and recognizes that sound policies are the foundation for building and maintaining a solid framework for the practice of child welfare services. DFCS has redesigned and revised all child welfare policies to ensure they are aligned with federal and state statutes and are rooted in child safety, permanency and well-being. The policy development process included the following:

1. Review of existing policies;
2. Inclusion of existing County Letters and Memoranda;
3. Inclusion of federal statutes governing child welfare practice, including the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, the Social Security Act, etc.;
4. Inclusion of current state statutes governing child welfare practices;
5. Research of best practices and child welfare trends; and
6. Internal and external stakeholder contribution.

The new structure for each policy includes the following sections:

1. **Codes/References:** Applicable federal and/or state laws.
2. **Requirements** (policy statements): Actions/directives set forth based on the regulations, law or practice.
 - a. Requirements that are set forth by federal statute are stated exactly or as close as possible to the language in the legislation to ensure full compliance.
 - b. All *italicized* requirements are those outlined in Title IV-E of the Social Security

Act.

3. **Procedures:** A series of steps to accomplish the directives set forth in the requirements.
4. **Practice Guidance:** Provides staff practical guidance on how to effectively integrate good social work practice into their work to achieve positive family and child outcomes. This section also provides additional information, definitions and clarifications.
5. **Forms and Tools:** Relevant forms and tools for the specified policy.

New features of the Child Welfare Policy Manual include:

1. Consolidation of all Social Services Policy Manuals into a comprehensive Child Welfare Policy Manual.
2. All chapters have been organized by program area and subject matter.
3. All state and/or federal laws are referenced in the related policy.
4. Hyperlinks to related chapters and sections are provided for easy reference.

NOTE: Until all policies are uploaded to the Online Directives Information System (ODIS), some hyperlinks to other policies in the Child Welfare Policy Manual may not be operational.

Chapter 11: Adoption

The new Adoption chapter replaces the former 101 - 113 (excluding section 109) policies from the Adoption Service Manual and incorporates several key Title IV-E, Fostering Connections and Increasing Adoptions Act, Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), and Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) requirements. The policies in this chapter focus on providing adoption services to children that have a permanency plan of adoption. This new chapter includes the following highlights or changes:

1. Requires a check of the putative father registry during the diligent search process and where parental rights are in the process of being terminated (voluntary or involuntary).
2. Requires the county department to consult with the Adoption Exchange, State Permanency Unit where separation of siblings is being considered.
3. Requires that the Adoption Exchange, State Permanency Unit will be the entity to grant waivers for adoption cases where siblings are separated.
4. Requires weekly visitation between siblings that are not placed together post TPR/voluntary surrender.
5. Adds notification to the Adoption Exchange, State Permanency Unit when a child that fits the description of a Wait List child is surrendered/terminated.
6. Requires a Wait List child placed in a temporary foster home to be placed with an approved Wait List adoptive family within thirty (30) calendar days.
7. Updates the timeframes for initiating and completing a Child Life History.
8. Consolidates all policies related to Child Life History into one policy.
9. Increases the period of time a child in foster care is in a foster parent's home before the foster parent is required to be considered as an adoptive resource for the child from sixty (60) days to twelve (12) months for consistency with the Foster Parent's Bill of Rights (state law).

10. Incorporates a Foster Parent Consideration Staffing to explore the option of the foster parent being an adoptive resource within fifteen (15) days of receiving the special needs determination.
11. Adds a time frame for completing an Adoption Consideration Evaluation on a DFCS and/or CPA foster parent.
12. Requires staff to complete a face-to-face visit with the foster parent(s) as part of the process of completing an Adoption Consideration Evaluation on a DFCS or CPA foster parent.
13. Consolidates all policies related to child specific recruitment.
14. Incorporates the Title IV-E requirements regarding interjurisdictional adoptions.
15. Requires a notification [Non-Selection Letter] be sent to an out-of-state prospective adoptive family when they are not selected as an adoptive resource. The notice will include the prospective adoptive parents' right to a fair hearing.
16. Requires an Adoption Pre-Placement Staffing when there is an identified adoptive resource for a child.
17. Updates to include every child every month (ECEM) child visitation requirements during the post placement period until finalization.
18. Requires all post placement visitation occur in the home.
19. Updates the timeframe for notifying the Adoption Exchange, State Permanency Unit of household composition changes in an adoptive home.
20. Incorporates consulting with the State Permanency Unit when an adoptive family moves prior to finalizing the adoption.
21. Incorporates new state law which provides birth and adoptive families the option of entering into a post adoption contact agreement to permit continued contact between the birth relatives and the child.
22. Outlines the functionality and the limitations of the adoption reunion registry.
23. Eliminates the need for the county department's use of the United States Postal Service (USPS) to communicate with the State ICPC Unit by incorporating Georgia SHINES procedures for submitting the ICPC packet.
24. The state ICPC Unit will be the primary in Georgia SHINES on all adoption ICPC cases coming into Georgia, except where an adoptive home study is requested.
25. Establishes a policy to incorporate state law where DFCS is appointed by the court as an evaluator to complete a family evaluation for the purpose of adoption by a third party.

Implementation

The policy updates are effective upon the release of this manual transmittal.

Regional and County Leadership shall provide opportunities for staff to review and discuss the updated policies to ensure they are implemented into your practices. Please refer to policy [1.3 Information Management: Access, Distribution and Review of Child Welfare Policies](#) for the applicable requirements and procedures.

Questions may be directed to the Field Program Specialist in your region. Regional staff may submit questions to PPPDUnit@dhs.ga.gov.