



Nathan Deal, Governor

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Memorandum

To: Child Placing Agencies
From: Katherine Herren, Acting Deputy Director
Date: April 16, 2012
Re: Best Practices: Home Evaluation Attachments and Verifications

As you know there are several safety checks, attachments and verifications that must be gathered to complete a caregiver's initial home evaluation. In DFCS, we've learned that the entire process from inquiry through approval takes between six and nine months. Even in an expedited situation, home evaluations probably take at least two to three months to complete.

Most of the safety checks, attachments and verifications can be conducted by your agency or gathered by the prospective caregiver. Two key checks (CPS screens and criminal records checks) however must be accomplished by the DHS, Office of Inspector General (OIG) or DFCS. The turnaround time for results should be taken into account when planning your home evaluations. Submitting your requests timely will ensure that receipt of results is not a negative factor in the completion time of your home evaluations. To that end the following best practices are offered:

1. Completion of a caregiver application should be an indication that the prospective caregiver is interested in beginning the home evaluation process. At the same time a caregiver completes an application with your agency have them complete the criminal records check (CRC) and CPS screening form. Submit the CPS form via email at cpsscreening@dhr.state.ga.us and have the applicant begin the CRC process as soon as practicable.
2. On the application ask questions about the applicant's addresses over the last five years to determine whether or not an Adam Walsh CPS check is required. Initiate the other state's CPS request process immediately if indicated.
3. During the application or orientation process provide the prospective caregiver with a checklist of attachments and verifications that they must gather. Provide the caregiver with the Form 36 (Health Form), Form 44 (Financial Statement), Form 29 (Safety Form) or comparable forms used by your agency. Schedule the caregiver for drug screening and encourage them to make a medical appointment as soon as possible.
4. Don't wait for the home visit to determine what type of references will be required. Create a questionnaire or other process to identify during the application or orientation process whether the prospective caregiver has children living outside the home, worked in a child caring position, been a caregiver for any other agency or state or other circumstance that would require a reference be gathered. Additionally, have the applicant identify any personal references that they plan to use and provide your agency's process for reference submission.
5. Create a tracking process for yourself and the prospective caregiver to ensure that all attachments and verifications are gathered in a timely manner.

The caregiver home evaluation process is designed to be a thorough assessment process. Thus, it is not a quick process. Caregivers and staff can become easily overwhelmed with the steps and expectations so it is important to plan ahead so that the process doesn't become unnecessarily anxiety-producing or take longer than necessary.

If you have any questions about home evaluations, please contact your OPM monitoring team manager or consult Social Services Policy 1014.