



December 11, 2017

Child Welfare Services Manual Transmittal No. 2017-14

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

From: Virginia Pryor, Interim Director
Georgia Division of Family and Children Services

Re: Child Welfare Policy Manual: Criminal Records Checks for Substitute Caregivers Providing Routine Care for Children in DFCS Custody

Chapter 14: Resource Development
14.18 Supervision of Children

Chapter 19: Case Management
19.8 Criminal Records Checks

Purpose

The purpose of this Child Welfare Services Manual Transmittal (CWSMT) is to announce policy revisions made in response to 2017 legislative changes which modified the Official Code of Georgia Annotated (O.C.G.A.) § 49-5-115, Records Checks for Persons Supervising Children.

Discussion

As a part of its normal business operations, the Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) conducts fingerprint-based criminal history records check on individuals who provide services to children. Individuals screened by DECAL who provide short-term care (routine care) for children in DFCS custody are also subject to criminal history records check by DFCS. To eliminate duplication and expedite the substitute caregiver approval process, the state of Georgia enacted O.C.G.A. § 49-5-115 which authorizes DFCS to accept a letter issued by DECAL within the previous 12 months stating that the individual has submitted to a criminal record check (CRC) and received a satisfactory CRC determination from DECAL, in lieu of conducting a separate criminal records check. DFCS is still required to conduct the applicable safety screening outlined in 19.9 Case Management: Safety Screenings.

Below is a brief overview of updates being made in Chapter 14: Resource Development and Chapter 19: Case Management of the Child Welfare Services Manual to reflect the change in the law and in practice.

14.18 Supervision of Children

1. Requires CRC of the Georgia crime information databases on substitute caregivers providing routine care (more than once a week, usually at designated times) for children in DFCS custody.
2. Allows a letter issued by the DECAL stating that an individual has received a satisfactory CRC determination within the previous 12 months to be accepted in lieu of a separate CRC.
3. Clarifies that caregivers may receive 10 calendar days of paid respite care per fiscal year (taken individually or consecutively).
4. Requires caregivers to report any of the following to the County DFCS immediately but no later than 24 hours of the occurrence:
 - a. Any change of address;
 - b. Serious illness impacting a child placed in their home (e.g. flu, serious infections);
 - c. Injuries sustained by a child placed in their home (e.g. burns, cuts, bruises, fractures);
 - d. Accidents involving any child placed in their home (e.g. auto, bicycle, fall).
 - e. Change in household composition (e.g. gain or loss of household members).

19.8 Criminal Records Checks

1. Requires a name or Social Security Number based CRC of the Georgia crime information database on substitute caregivers providing routine care (more than once a week, usually at designated times) for children in DFCS custody.
2. Allows a letter issued by the DECAL stating that an individual has received a satisfactory CRC determination within the previous 12 months, to be accepted in lieu of conducting a separate CRC.

Implementation

This policy update is effective upon the release of this manual transmittal and is available on the Online Directives Information System (ODIS) at <http://odis.dhs.ga.gov/>.

Regional and County Leadership shall provide opportunities for staff to review and discuss the updated policy to ensure implementation. Please refer to policy [1.3 Administration Access, Distribution and Review of Child Welfare Policies](#) for the applicable requirements and procedures for policy review.

Please direct questions regarding this policy release to the Field Program Specialist in your region. Regional staff shall submit questions to the PPPDUnit@dhs.ga.gov.