



May 8, 2019

Child Welfare Services Manual Transmittal No. 2019-06

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

From: Tom C. Rawlings, Division Director 
Georgia Division of Family and Children Services

Re: Child Welfare Policy Manual: Child Care and Early Education

Purpose

The purpose of this Child Welfare Services Manual Transmittal (CWSMT) is to announce updates to the childcare and early education services policies, incorporating changes to the process for submitting referrals for Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS).

Discussion

The Division of Family and Children Services is responsible for ensuring the safety, permanency and wellbeing of the children served. Access to early education supports the achievement of developmental milestones and increases school readiness for young children. The Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) is responsible for meeting the childcare and early education needs of Georgia's children and offers the CAPS program that provides valuable support for families with young children. CAPS is available for all children in DFCS custody. CAPS may also be provided during an open CPS case for a child living in the home of the primary caretaker, and for a child who moves to the home of a relative or other caregiver.

The CAPS referral process has been automated to allow submission via Georgia SHINES, therefore eliminating the need for staff to complete paper applications and allows for a seamless transfer of information between Georgia SHINES and Georgia Gateway. Data sharing between the two systems improves timely notification to DECAL and the accuracy of client information necessary to process CAPS applications and update notifications. Consequently, the following policies were updated to reflect the new referral process as well as other programmatic changes:

10.16 Foster Care: Childcare and Early Education

1. Clarifies that children under five years of age in an active foster care case shall be enrolled in an early care and education program licensed by the Department of

- Early Care and Learning (DECAL) and participating in Quality Rated, Georgia's tiered quality rating and improvement system (www.QualityRated.org).
2. Reminds staff that children in DFCS custody are categorically eligible for Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS).
 3. Requires staff to complete the required fields in Georgia SHINES to transmit a referral for the CAPS program **immediately** but no later than one business day of discovering regular childcare is needed.
 4. Requires staff to update the necessary fields in Georgia SHINES to reflect changes involving a child or caregiver receiving childcare services within 72 hours of the change to trigger a change request to DECAL.
 5. Identifies the Early Childhood Collaboration Director as the entity who would provide the waiver required to use state funds to pay childcare expenses for any purpose other than foster parent training.
 6. Highlights events impacting childcare that would require staff to update Georgia SHINES.
 7. Replaces references to the Early Childhood Education Form with the DFCS Head Start/Pre-K Referral Form.
 8. Removes content regarding the evaluation of informal childcare providers as this process is handled by DECAL.
 9. Identifies the Early Childhood Collaboration Unit as the point of contact for questions or inquiries related to Early Head Start and Head Start programs.
 10. Provides the CAPS Referral Georgia SHINES Job Aid in Forms and Tools to support staff in completing the CAPS referral and for providing updates to DECAL whenever there are changes involving the child or caregiver.

18.7 Support Services to Preserve or Reunify Families: Childcare Services

1. Clarifies that the provision of CPS CAPS is for children in an open CPS case with an identified safety threat.
2. Updates the age requirements for CPS CAPS eligibility to children 12 years old and younger or a child 13 years and older with a special need who is the subject of a court order requiring supervision.
3. Emphasizes that DFCS staff should explore all free childcare resources prior to submitting a CAPS referral. Provides examples of free resources in Practice Guidance.
4. Requires staff to complete the required fields in Georgia SHINES to transmit a referral for the CAPS program **immediately** but no later than one business day of discovering regular childcare is needed.
5. Requires staff to update the necessary fields in Georgia SHINES to reflect changes involving a child or caregiver receiving childcare services within 72 hours of the change to trigger a change request to DECAL.
6. Requires DFCS staff to inform the caregivers to apply for childcare services at www.gateway.ga.gov in order for eligibility to be determined by DECAL.
7. Removes the administrative role of DFCS staff as childcare is now administered by DECAL.

8. Added Practice Guidance on CAPS Overview, Childcare Programs, Priority Groups, CAPS Eligibility Criteria in CPS, Georgia Head Start, Early Head Start and Pre-K Programs.
9. Added the CAPS Referral Georgia SHINES Job Aid in Forms and Tools to support staff in completing the CAPS referral and for providing updates to DECAL whenever there are changes involving the child or caregiver.

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 regional Field Program Specialist (FPS). The FPS shall submit questions to the Policy and Regulations Unit at PPPDUnit@dhs.ga.gov.