



September 11, 2020

Child Welfare Services Manual Transmittal No. 2020-06

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: Kinship

Purpose

The purpose of this Child Welfare Services Manual Transmittal (CWSMT) is to announce Chapter 22: Kinship in the Child Welfare Policy Manual. The addition of Chapter 22 supports the agency's implementation of the Kinship Continuum.

Discussion

The Georgia Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) is responsible for ensuring the safety, permanency, and wellbeing of children served. When children cannot remain safely with their parents, DFCS recognizes that children thrive best with kin (relatives and fictive kin), and through the Kinship Continuum prioritizes kinship caregivers as the preferred and best option for children. This includes the use of voluntary kinship arrangements to prevent children from entering foster care, and kinship foster care placements when children must enter foster care. Research shows that kinship care reduces trauma to the children by maintaining their family connections, traditions, a sense of belonging, and identity. Further, kinship care increases placement stability and permanency for children and creates an opportunity to strengthen the family. The following sections of the Child Welfare Policy Manual have been created or revised to support DFCS' implementation of the Kinship Continuum.

Chapter 22 Kinship

22.0 Introduction to Kinship

1. Provides an overview of the kinship continuum.
2. Defines the types of kinship caregivers.

22.1 Use of Voluntary Kinship Caregivers in Child Protective Services

1. Incorporates provisions for considering a voluntary kinship arrangement when it is determined that an out-of-home safety plan is necessary to control safety threats that can be resolved or mitigated within a 90-day period.
2. Requires informed consent for the use of the voluntary kinship arrangement by the parent/legal guardian.
3. Requires completing a Kinship Assessment to assess the suitability of the voluntary kinship caregiver(s) to care for the child and to assess the physical home environment.
4. Requires conducting a Kinship Caregiver Needs Assessment within three calendar days of the Kinship Coordinator's initial contact with the kin caregivers to identify services or supports needed to successfully care for the child(ren) during the voluntary kinship arrangement.
5. Provide or arrange for individualized services to address identified needs based on the developmental challenges the family is experiencing in their everyday lives, within 72 hours of identifying the need.
6. Requires conducting a family meeting within 7-10 business days of the child entering the voluntary kinship caregiver's home to build consensus on the roles and responsibilities of the kinship caregivers, parents/legal guardians and DFCS.
7. Requires conducting purposeful contact(s) with the parent, voluntary kinship caregiver and the child every 14 calendar days while the child remains in the voluntary kinship caregiver's home.
8. Requires conducting a 45th day meeting to assess the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) progress in meeting the conditions of return.
9. Requires terminating the Voluntary Kinship Arrangement Consent Form within 90 days of the child entering the voluntary kinship caregiver's home.
10. Establishes procedures for the Regional Kinship Coordinator to support the voluntary kinship caregiver in caring for the child.
11. Provides procedures for supervisor oversight of voluntary kinship arrangements, including using LENSES reports to monitor and track service provision, purposeful contacts, 45th day meeting and the termination of voluntary kinship arrangements.
12. Provides practice guidance regarding:
 - a. Kinship Care Consideration
 - b. Out-of-State Voluntary Kinship Caregivers
 - c. Non-Custodial Parents and Voluntary Kinship Caregivers
 - d. When the Parent/Legal Guardian Moves In
 - e. Parent-Child Contact Recommendations
 - f. Addressing Barriers and/or Lack of Progress in Voluntary Kinship Care
 - g. Multiple Voluntary Kinship Caregivers
 - h. Full Disclosure
 - i. Power of Attorney

22.2 Use of Kinship Caregivers in Foster Care

1. Incorporates provisions for the use of kinship caregivers to care for children in foster care to maintain family connections, minimize trauma, and promote placement stability and a sense of normalcy.

2. Requires the use of the diligent search process to identify and locate kin who may be considered as a placement or permanency resource.
3. Requires completing a Kinship Assessment to assess the suitability of the voluntary kinship caregiver(s) to care for the child and to assess the physical home environment.
4. Establishes procedures for obtaining approval for the placement of the child into the kinship caregiver's home and providing placement notifications.
5. Requires conducting a Kinship Caregiver Needs Assessment within 72 hours of the foster care kinship placement to identify needs to support the kinship caregiver(s).
6. Requires providing full disclosure to the kinship caregiver(s) within ten calendar days of the foster care kinship placement.
7. Requires adherence to purposeful contact standards for foster care.
8. Requires determining the kinship caregiver's eligibility for Enhanced Relative Rate (ERR).
9. Requires providing or arranging for individualized services to address identified needs.
10. Requires referring the kinship caregiver to Resource Development within 30 calendar days of the Kinship Coordinator's initial contact with the kinship caregivers to initiate the initial home evaluation to become an approved kinship foster parent.
11. Provides procedures for supervisor oversight of foster care kinship placements.
12. Establishes procedures for the Regional Kinship Coordinator to assess, engage and support foster care kinship caregivers.
13. Provides practice guidance regarding:
 - a. Kinship Coordinator
 - b. Full Disclosure
 - c. Kinship Caregiver Needs Assessment
 - d. Success of Placement with Kinship Caregivers
 - e. Tips for Supporting Kinship Caregivers

22.3 Kinship Assessment

1. Incorporates provisions for completing the Kinship Assessment to assess the suitability of a kinship caregiver (relative or fictive kin) to provide temporary care for a child(ren) and to assess the physical home environment.
2. Requires the completion of a Kinship Assessment for:
 - a. Voluntary kinship arrangement
 - b. Temporary alternative to foster care (TAFC)
 - c. Temporary custody to a third party (Child Protective Services (CPS) cases)
 - d. Guardianship (CPS cases)
 - e. Foster care kinship placement
3. Allows an Abbreviated Kinship Assessment for the immediate placement of child in foster care with the Kinship Assessment completed within 30 calendar days of the placement.
4. Requires engaging all kinship caregivers and their household members face-to-face in the home and assessing the physical home environment.

5. Requires conducting safety screenings and criminal records check.
6. Requires obtaining approval from the County Director/Designee of the Kinship Assessment, when it for the placement of a child in foster care.
7. Establishes procedures for supervisor oversight of the Kinship Assessment process, including using LENSES report to monitor and track.
8. Adds practice guidance regarding Kinship Assessments Across County Lines.

22.4 Kinship Foster Home Evaluation

1. Incorporates provisions for completing a kinship foster home evaluation.
2. Requires that all components of the initial family evaluation follow the Structured Analysis Family Evaluation (SAFE) model.
3. Requires the SAFE Home Study be completed by a home study practitioner (HSP) who is certified in the SAFE model.
4. Requires the initial family evaluation process be supervised throughout by a supervisor who is certified in the SAFE model and has successfully completed the SAFE Supervisor Training.
5. Requires all home study interviews be conducted in the applicant's home.
6. Adds detailed supervisor procedures including meeting with the HSP following each home study interview and routinely assessing the foundational skills of the HSP (engagement and forensic interviewing skills; analytical and evaluation skills; and writing skills) and providing the education and support necessary to help the HSP strengthen skills as needed.
7. Provides practice guidance regarding the components of a SAFE home study, home study interviews, and mitigation.

22.5 Kinship Foster Home Re-evaluation

1. Incorporates provisions for completing a kinship foster home re-evaluation.
2. Requires that all components of the family re-evaluation follow the SAFE model.
3. Requires the family re-evaluation be completed by a HSP who is certified in the SAFE model.
4. Requires the re-evaluation process be supervised throughout by a supervisor who is certified in the SAFE model and has successfully completed the SAFE Supervisor Training.
5. Requires all home study interviews be conducted in the applicant's home.
6. Adds detailed supervisor procedures including meeting with the Caregiver Recruitment and Retention Specialist (CRRS)/CPA Resource Development (RD) staff to review the results of the safety screenings, criminal history records check and Caregiver Home Inspection Safety and Compliance Checklist.
7. Provides practice guidance regarding updating a SAFE Home Study and supplemental verifications (e.g. verification of income, immunization records for household members under 18 years of age, etc.).

22.6 Waiver of Non-Safety Approval Standards for Kinship Foster Homes

1. This policy section has been relocated from 14.4 Resource Development: Waiver of Non-Safety Approval Standards for Relative/Fictive Kin Foster Homes. The

policy title has been changed to Waiver of Non-Safety Approval Standards for Kinship Foster Homes.

2. Updates kinship terminology to align with the kinship continuum.

22.7 Family Evaluation for Relative Adoptions

1. This policy section has been relocated from 14.12 Resource Development: Family Evaluation for Relative Adoptions. The policy title remains the same.
2. Updates kinship terminology to align with the kinship continuum.

22.8 Financial and Non-Financial Supports for Children in Foster Care or Who Have Achieved Permanency

1. This policy section has been relocated from 10.8 Foster Care: Financial and Non-Financial Supports for Children in Foster Care or Who Have Achieved Permanency. The policy title remains the same.
2. Replaces references to the Relative Care Assessment with Kinship Assessment.
3. Updates provisions for Enhanced Relative Rate (ERR) including:
 - a. Initiating the subsidy payments upon the approval of the Kinship Assessment or Abbreviated Kinship Assessment and the Enhanced Relative Rate Application and Agreement. Payments are effective from the first day of the child's placement in the caregiver's home.
 - b. ERR payments are terminated upon foster home approval of the kinship home and the initiation of the foster care per diem. If the caregiver does not complete the requirements for foster home approval within 120 days of the placement ERR will also terminate.
4. Adds a requirement for management of the ERR, Subsidized Guardianship (SG) and Non-Relative Subsidized Guardianship (NRS) case record, monitoring of payments, and completing the required subsidy reviews to align with current practice.
5. Adds procedures for the SSCM in conjunction with the Kinship Coordinator to discuss financial and non-financial supports with the kinship caregiver prior to the placement of the child in the home.
6. Updates procedures for the initiation of ERR/SG/NRS payments.
7. Updates procedures for enhanced supervisor oversight of the provision of financial and non-financial supports.
8. Adds practice guidance regarding:
 - a. Initial clothing allowance and sibling incentive.
 - b. Clarifies that parents and caregivers from which children are removed are not eligible to receive the subsidies.
 - c. Termination of ERR when the caregiver does not complete the requirement for foster home approval within 120 days of the placement in the home.
 - d. Add visual aids outlining the types and description of the financial and non-financial supports.
9. Updates the following Forms and Tools:
 - a. Enhanced Relative Rate Application and Agreement.
 - b. Subsidized Guardianship Non-Relative Subsidized Guardianship Application and Agreement.

- c. Renames the Guide to Relative/Non-Relative Caregiver Supports to Kinship Caregiver Supports.

22.9 Subsidy Reviews

1. This policy section has been relocated from 10.9 Foster Care: Six and/or 12 Month Reviews of Enhanced Relative Rate/Relative Care Subsidy/Subsidized Guardianship/Non-Relative Subsidized Guardianship Payments. The policy title has been changed to Subsidy Reviews.
2. Replaces references to the Relative Care Assessment to Kinship Assessment.
3. Adds a requirement to report suspected or known child abuse to the CPS Intake Communications Center (CICC).
4. Updates procedures for conducting the six month and annual subsidy review.
5. Adds a procedure for verifying school attendance during the subsidy review.
6. Adds a procedure to discuss and address Infant Safe to Sleep when there is an infant in the home.
7. Adds a requirement to terminate the subsidy when eligibility criteria are not met.
8. Adds procedures for supervisor oversight of the subsidy review process.
9. Adds practice guidance regarding subsidy review and renewal assessment.
10. Updates Forms and Tools:
 - a. Renames the form used for subsidy reviews from Subsidy or Court Review Six (6), Twelve (12) or Thirty-Six (36) Month to Subsidy Review.
 - b. Sample notices for the six-month and annual (12-month) subsidy reviews.
 - c. Adds Guidelines and Protocol for Infant Safe to Sleep.

22.10 Temporary Alternative to Foster Care (TAFC)

1. This policy section has been relocated from 5.8 Investigations Temporary Alternative to Foster Care to Chapter 22: Kinship. The policy title remains the same.
2. Replaces references to the Kinship Assessment for Temporary Alternative to Foster Care to Kinship Assessment.
3. Adds a requirement to initiate Family Preservation Services (FPS) within seven business days of the issuance of the TAFC court order for a child to be temporarily cared for by a kinship caregiver.
4. Adds a requirement to afford all rights under the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) to any child who is a member of a federally recognized Indian Tribe, or eligible for membership and has a biological parent who is an enrolled member, and is subject to any other legal action involving DFCS, to promote the stability and security of Indian Tribes and their families.
5. Adds procedures to develop an out-of-home Safety Plan and Safety Plan Support Person Agreement upon the issuance of a TAFC court order.
6. Adds procedures related to the dismissal of the TAFC court order including:
 - a. Conducting a case evaluation prior to recommending dismissal of the TAFC court order to complete a case evaluation to measure progress toward conditions of return.
 - b. Consulting with the SAAG to request further legal intervention when safety threats continue, and the child cannot safely return home.

- c. Engaging the parent/legal guardian and kinship caregiver to discuss progress and/or the need to seek further legal intervention and the child's transition home or to foster care.
- 7. Updates procedures for enhanced supervisor oversight of the TAFC court order.
- 8. Updates practice guidance regarding the 7-10 day family meeting, including adhering to confidentiality and protected health information (PHI) laws while preparing for, and conducting the meeting.

22.11 Guardianship in Child Protective Services

- 1. Incorporates provisions for the use of guardianship when it is the most appropriate plan to achieve permanency for a child in an open CPS case.
- 2. Allow the use of guardianship when the following case circumstances apply:
 - a. Chronic parental absence is demonstrated.
 - b. Chronic un-rehabilitated parental concerns.
 - c. A history of caretaking for the child(ren) by the proposed guardian.
 - d. Reasonable efforts were made to maintain the family unit and prevent the unnecessary removal of the child from the home.
 - e. A Kinship Assessment was completed confirming the ability of the proposed guardian to provide long term supervision and care for the child(ren).
- 3. Requires adherence to ICWA to any child who is a member of a federally recognized Indian Tribe, or eligible for membership and has a biological parent who is an enrolled member and is subject to removal, placement and/or any other legal action involving DFCS.
- 4. Requires conducting a case evaluation to track and measure progress toward case plan outcome achievement, prior to completing a petition for guardianship.
- 5. Requires providing full disclosure regarding guardianship to the parent/legal guardian and proposed guardian.
- 6. Requires obtaining County Director approval and Regional Director approval to seek guardianship.
- 7. Requires tracking CPS guardianship waiver requests and submit to the State Office Safety Section by the 5th working day of each month.
- 8. Establishes procedures for supervisor oversight when seeking guardianship in CPS.
- 9. Provides practice guidance regarding juvenile court guardianship and probate court guardianship.

22.12 Temporary Custody to a Third Party in Child Protective Services

- 1. Incorporates provisions for the use of temporary custody to a third party through juvenile court for a child in an open CPS case.
- 2. Allow the use of temporary custody to a third party, when the following case circumstances apply:
 - a. Insufficient progress in meeting the case plan outcomes or conditions for return.
 - b. Transfer of temporary custody is in the child's best interests.
 - c. The situation does not involve chronic or severe child abuse.
 - d. Reasonable efforts were made to maintain the family unit and prevent the unnecessary removal of the child from the home.

- e. The parent/legal custodian is supportive of the custodial arrangement and demonstrates motivation to actively work a case plan.
 - f. The safety threats can be resolved within 90 calendar days.
 - g. An approved Kinship Assessment that demonstrates the proposed guardian has a history of caretaking for the child, adequate financial and other supports to care for the child, and collateral contacts support the proposed guardian's ability to provide care for the child.
 - h. There has been consideration of the age of the child (i.e. older youth) or the plan the child/youth has for his/her future (i.e. military, Job Corps, college etc.).
3. Requires adherence to ICWA to any child who is a member of a federally recognized Indian Tribe, or eligible for membership and has a biological parent who is an enrolled member and is subject to any other legal action involving DFCS.
 4. Requires conducting a case evaluation, prior to considering seeking temporary of custody to a third party.
 5. Requires providing full disclosure regarding custody to a third party to the parent/legal guardian and the proposed third party custodian.
 6. Requires obtaining County Director approval and Regional Director approval to seek temporary custody to a third party.
 7. Requires requesting a court ordered case plan when seeking temporary custody to a third party.
 8. Requires exhausting efforts to engage a parent/legal custodian to continue services voluntarily and obtaining County Director approval prior to closing a case when temporary custody is granted to a third party without the DFCS requested court ordered case plan.
 9. Establishes procedures for supervisor oversight for considering and seeking temporary custody to a third party.
 10. Provides practice guidance regarding:
 - a. Situations When Temporary Custody to a Third Party Is Not Appropriate
 - b. Juvenile Court - Temporary Custody to a Third Party
 - c. Case Closure
 - d. IV-E Eligibility

Chapter 5: Investigations

5.6 Investigations: Safety Resources

1. This policy section has been removed as DFCS has discontinued the use of Safety Resources with the implementation of Voluntary Kinship outlined in policy 22.01 Kinship: Use of Voluntary Kinship Caregivers in Child Protective Services.
2. All safety resource forms have been removed from Forms and Tools, including the Safety Resource Consent Form, Safety Resource: A Caregivers Guide, Safety Resource: A Caregivers Guide – Spanish, Helping Keep Children Safe: Your Rights and Responsibilities as a Safety Resource, and Helping Keep Children Safe: Your Rights and Responsibilities as a Safety Resource – Spanish.

5.11 Kinship Assessment for Temporary Alternatives to Foster Care

1. This section has been removed as the information has been consolidated with policy 22.03 Kinship: Kinship Assessment.

Chapter 8: Family Preservation Services (FPS)

8.1 Initiation of Family Preservation Services

1. Updates kinship terminology to align with kinship continuum.
2. Establishes the starting point for initiating FPS as the identification of need for FPS.
3. Updates the time frame for initiating FPS to within seven business days of the identification of the need for FPS from five business days of the case transfer staffing.
4. Removes the requirement to initiate FPS within five business days of the transfer staffing by order of the court when custody or guardianship is transferred to another party other than DFCS without non-reunification being ordered by the court.
5. Adds a requirement to initiate FPS within seven business days of the court ordering:
 - a. T AFC requiring a child to be cared for by a kin caregiver.
 - b. Temporary custody to a third party (CPS cases).
 - c. Guardianship and a case plan supervised by DFCS (CPS cases).
6. Notes that the FPS SSCM must conduct a purposeful contact with the child and family when initiating FPS, whether or not a joint visit is possible.
7. Adds practice guidance regarding Identifying the Need for Family Preservation Services

8.2 Purposeful Contacts with Families Receiving Family Preservation Services

1. Updates kinship terminology to align with kinship continuum.
2. Updates the timeframe for conducting a joint visit during the case transfer process.
3. Provides clarification that contact may be required for family members who reside outside the home based on the circumstances of the case.

8.4 Case Evaluation

1. Updates kinship terminology to align with kinship continuum.
2. Adds requirements to conduct a case evaluation prior to:
 - a. Terminating a Voluntary Kinship Arrangement Consent Form.
 - b. Recommending guardianship or temporary custody to a third party.
3. Updates procedure to include documenting the evidence to support that the case circumstances meet the established guidelines for an out-of-home arrangement (voluntary kinship arrangement, T AFC, temporary custody to a third party, and guardianship).
4. Updates procedures for supervisor oversight of the case evaluation process, including monitoring or tracking using Georgia SHINES reports.

Chapter 10: Foster Care

10.0 Introduction to Foster Care

1. Adds to the discussion prioritizing placement with kin caregivers to reflect agency focus on the kinship continuum.
2. Adds the completion of diligent search to locate absent parents and kin to align with kinship continuum.

10.1 Placement of a Child

1. Adds Georgia Code section 15-11-109(c) to Codes and References which includes the information that is provided to the caregivers at the placement of a child.
2. Updates kinship terminology to align with the kinship continuum
3. Replaces references to DFCS PRO Unit with the DFCS Care Coordination Treatment Unit to align with changes to the agency's organizational structure.
4. Updates procedures for documenting the date the picture was taken of a child entering foster care.
5. Replaces references to the Relative Care Assessment with the Kinship Assessment.

10.3 Changes in Placement

1. Updates kinship terminology to align with the kinship continuum
2. Updates requirements to include placements with a non-custodial parent as a valid reason for change of placement.
3. Updates requirements and procedures to prioritize kin placement when a child must change placements.
4. Adds a procedure to document when a decision is made not to place with kin.
5. Replaces references to the Relative Care Assessment with Kinship Assessment.

10.4 Selecting A Placement Resource

1. Adds a requirement to conduct a diligent search for absent parents, noncustodial parents, relatives and fictive kin to align with diligent search policy.
2. Notes that placement preference is given to kinship caregivers for alignment with the kinship continuum.
3. Replaces references to the Relative Care Assessment with Kinship Assessment.
4. Updates procedures for selection of a placement based on the order of placement preferences.
5. Adds procedures for the selection and documentation of the placement preferences, including the reason for selecting a non-kinship caregiver over a kinship caregiver.
6. Updates supervisor procedures to support prioritization of kinship placements.

10.5 Foster Care: Relative/Non-Relative Care Assessment (R/Non-RCA)

1. This policy section has been removed. The provisions of the policy have been consolidated with policy 22.3 Kinship: Kinship Assessment.

10.20 Preserving Sibling Connections

1. Updates kinship terminology to align with the kinship continuum.
2. Changes the timeframe for the initial sibling visit for siblings separated at initial or subsequent placement from five calendar days to as soon as possible but no later than seven calendar days.
3. Adds practice guidance regarding preserving connections between children who do not meet the legal definition of siblings but have established such a bond that they consider themselves to be siblings.

10.22 Permanency Planning

1. Updates kinship terminology to align with kinship continuum
2. Adds a requirement to explain the purpose of permanency planning.
3. Adds procedures for staffing with the Field Program Specialist and Regional Adoptions Coordinator when determining whether to pursue adoption of guardianship at the onset of the case.
4. Adds a requirement to consult with the Special Assistant Attorney General (SAAG) to determine if adoption or guardianship is appropriate as the initial permanency plan when it is assessed that reunification is not in the child's best interest at the onset of the case.
5. Adds practice guidance regarding Selecting Other Permanency Options from the Onset of the Case.
6. Notes that a concurrent plan should not be selected as a default plan but in conjunction with an assessment and using the Concurrent Planning Assessment Guide.
7. Updates the Concurrent Planning Assessment Guide in Forms and Tools.

10.23 Case Planning

1. Updates kinship terminology to align with the kinship continuum.
2. Replaces Relative/Non-Relative Care Assessment with Kinship Assessment.
3. Clarifies case planning requirements with non-custodial and incarcerated parents.
4. Adds practice guidance regarding Case Planning with Incarcerated Parents.

Chapter 19: Case Management

19.4 Case Transfer

1. Adds a requirement to transfer case responsibility in a manner that maintains continuity of services to the family and a clear direction for the case.
2. Adds a requirement to complete the case transfer process within seven business days of determining the need to transfer case responsibility.
3. Updates the timeframe to complete a transfer staffing from two business days to five business days of becoming aware the family has moved out of the county or out-of-state.
4. Updates the timeframe for conducting the joint visit from within five business days of the case transfer staffing to conducting a joint visit during the case transfer process.
5. Updates procedures for conducting a joint visit during the case transfer process.

19.6 Supervisor Staffing

1. Requires bi-weekly supervisor staffing when using a voluntary kinship arrangement.
2. Requires a supervisor staffing when considering the use of court intervention.

19.9 Safety Screenings

1. Updates kinship terminology to align with kinship continuum.
2. Clarifies requirements for conducting safety screening to assess child safety.

3. Adds a requirement for documenting safety screening results in the Records Check Summary or Record Check Detail page in Georgia SHINES.
4. Removes Practice Guidance section “Ensuring Accurate Data in Georgia SHINES”
5. Removes Child Protective Services Information System (CPSIS)/Child Abuse Registry (CAR) screening requirements to align with the state legislative repeal of the child abuse registry.

NOTE: This provision was outlined in Child Welfare Services County Letter No. 2018-01 Repeal of the Child Protective Services Information System (CPSIS) (2020 Legislative Update).

19.13 Family Functioning Assessment (FFA)

1. Aligns the policy with the FFA in Georgia SHINES.
2. Adds a requirement to complete the FFA as part of the case evaluation prior to recommending guardianship or temporary custody to a third party in an open CPS case.
3. Updates practice guidance regarding information included for each area of family functioning.
4. Adds practice guidance regarding How to Tell When a Family is Functioning Well.
5. Updates the Family Functioning Assessment Tool in Forms and Tools.

19.15 Developing Contact Standards for Purposeful Contacts and Collaterals Contacts

1. Updates kinship terminology to align with kinship continuum.
2. Adds a requirement to continue to assess the sufficiency of contact standards to ensure child safety throughout the life of the case.
3. Adds procedures for determining how often purposeful and collateral contacts should occur.

19.20 Diligent Search

1. Updates kinship terminology to align with the kinship continuum.
2. Requires initiating diligent search prior to initial placement, subsequent changes in placement and prior to a judicial or citizen panel review.
3. Updates the requirement for documenting Diligent Search in Georgia SHINES to include the reason for not selecting a kinship caregiver for the placement of the child.
4. Adds procedures for supervisors to review the Diligent Search Report to ensure the information is entered in Georgia SHINES and accurate.

19.25 Drug Screens

1. Updates kinship terminology to align with the kinship continuum.
2. Adds to Forms and Tools Handout: The Effects of Substance Abuse on Behavior and Parenting.

The following policy sections were updated with kinship terminology to align with the kinship continuum:

1. 10.16 Foster Care: Childcare and Early Education
2. 10.17 Foster Care: Service Needs of an Immigrant Child

3. 10.27 Foster Care: Aftercare
4. 14.0 Introduction to Resource Development
5. 15.3 Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children: Placement of Children from Other States into Georgia (Georgia as the Receiving State)
6. 15.4 Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children: ICPC Expedited Placements
7. 17.11 Legal: Termination of Parental Rights

Policy Maintenance Updates

10.13 Educational Needs

1. Requires a Best Interest Determination (BID) be conducted within Georgia SHINES using the BID questionnaire.
2. Requires a BID placement letter be provided to a child's school upon enrollment or at the time of a placement change.
3. Clarifies that every child between five and 18 years of age shall receive a diagnostic educational assessment and consultation via the Educational Programming, Assessment and Consultation (EPAC) Unit within 30 business days of entering foster care.

10.21 Expectant or Parenting Youth in Foster Care

1. Adds a procedure to update Georgia SHINES when it becomes known that a youth in care is expectant and/or has given birth and for the supervisor to review the Georgia SHINES documentation to ensure it's aligned with the youth's status.
2. Adds to Forms and Tools the Georgia SHINES Job Aid: Documenting Expectant and Parenting Youth.

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 Policy and Regulations Unit at PPPDUnit@dhs.ga.gov.