



**STATE OF GEORGIA**  
**Division of Family and Children Services**

**Nathan Deal**  
Governor

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Director

January 8, 2015

**Child Welfare Services Manual Transmittal No. 2015-02**

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

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

**Re:** Child Welfare Policy Manual: **Chapter 1: Administration**

**Purpose**

The purpose of this Child Welfare Services Manual Transmittal is to release Chapter 1: Administration, of the Georgia Division of Children and Family Services' (DFCS) **new** Child Welfare Policy Manual. This is the **ninth** chapter of the new Child Welfare Policy Manual being released. Additional chapters will be released in the near future upon approval.

**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 (CAPTA), 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 1: Administration**

This chapter consolidates the Administration chapters from the Child Protective Services (2100) and Foster Care Services Manual (1001) into one Administration Chapter for all child welfare program areas. The chapter is designed to provide information and guidance regarding the administration of child welfare services in Georgia and incorporates requirements from federal and state law as well as Georgia's practice framework to assist staff in their understanding of the integration of laws into the provision of services to the children and families. Policy changes and highlights included in this chapter are:

- 1. New policy on the Access, Distribution, and Review of Child Welfare policies to facilitate policy review and implementation.
- 2. New policy on Non-Discriminatory practices in child welfare services to ensure the agency and staff complies with provisions of the Civil Rights Act and Multi-Ethnic Placement Act-Interethnic Adoption Provisions (MEPA-IEAP).
- 3. New policy on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to ensure the agency and staff complies with related provisions.
- 4. New policies outlining the agency's commitment to ensure accountability and transparency in administration and provision of child welfare services. These include provisions for:
  - a. Monitoring and review of Georgia's child welfare programs including the Title IV-E programs;
  - b. Independent audits of Georgia's child welfare programs, including the title IV-E programs;
  - c. Public inspection of Georgia's Child and Family Services Reviews materials;

- d. Availability of Georgia's Child and Family Services Plans; Annual Progress and Services Review, etc. for public review and inspection.
5. New policy for specific goals in state law for children in foster care for more than 24 months and related steps to ensure goals are achieved.
6. Updated policy related to the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) incorporating provisions related to the title IV-E provision regarding the transfer of responsibility and care of a child to a Title IV-E agency or tribe with a Title IV-E agreement.
7. Updated Volunteer Services policy which replaces the former Chapter 60.
8. Updated Child Fatality Review (CFR) policy which requires partnering with the Georgia Bureau of Investigations, the new agency identified in the Juvenile Code responsible for the coordination of the CFR.

### **Implementation**

The policy updates are effective upon the release of this manual transmittal. Please note that although the policy changes will be effective immediately, they will be available on the Online Directives Information Systems (ODIS) at a later date.

Regional and County Leadership shall provide opportunities for staff to review and discuss the updated policies to ensure they are implemented into your practices. Questions may be directed to the Field Program Specialist in your region. Regional Field Program Specialist may submit questions to the [PPPDUnit@dhr.state.ga.us](mailto:PPPDUnit@dhr.state.ga.us).