

	<b>GEORGIA DIVISION OF FAMILY AND CHILDREN SERVICES</b> <b>CHILD WELFARE POLICY MANUAL</b>			
	<b>Chapter:</b>	(10) Foster Care	<b>Effective Date:</b>	August 2014
	<b>Policy Title:</b>	Relative/Non-Relative Care Assessments (R/Non-RCA)		
	<b>Policy Number:</b>	10.5	<b>Previous Policy #:</b>	1004.1.6- 1004.1.8

## CODES/REFERENCES

N/A

## REQUIREMENTS

The Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) shall assess any relative who expresses interest in being a resource for the child using the [Relative/Non-Relative Care Assessment \(R/Non-RCA\)](#) form, unless court requirements or preliminary Child Protective History and Criminal Records Checks (CRC), restrict or prevent such relative from being considered as a placement resource.

For non-relatives wishing to serve as a placement resource for a child, DFCS shall encourage them to become foster parents. (See [Initial Family Evaluation Components](#))

DFCS shall conduct a state (Georgia Crime Information Center (GCIC) and national (National Crime Information Center (NCIC)) Live Scan criminal records check for all relatives and adults, 18 and older, residing temporarily or permanently in the relative's homes and having access to the child.

Prior to an emergency placement with a relative, the Social Services Supervisor must review and approve the initial Home Safety Check and preliminary Criminal Records Checks (CRC) and Child Protective Services (CPS) screenings.

The Social Services Case Manager (SSCM) and/or Comprehensive Child and Family Assessment (CCFA) Provider shall complete the R/Non-RCA within thirty (30) days of the emergency placement with the relative or within thirty (30) days of the request/referral if an emergency placement is not made.

The County DFCS office with legal responsibility for the child shall notify the County DFCS office where the relative resides prior to placement to obtain placement approval from that County Department. The County DFCS office that conducted the study and will ultimately have to supervise the home if placement is made shall have responsibility for recommending approval of the R/Non-RCA.

## PROCEDURES

Prior to placing a child with a relative, the SSCM will:

1. Contact the relative by telephone to determine their interest and suitability in being a placement resource, to explain the process, to determine if an immediate placement is

possible and to obtain names and contact information for other relatives.

- a. Obtain as much demographic information on the child, parents and relatives as possible and document on the Person Detail page of the GA Statewide Automated Child Welfare System (Georgia SHINES).
2. Document in the Narrative section of the Contact Detail page in the Georgia SHINES the relationship (by blood, marriage or adoption) between the child and the relative. This requirement includes establishing paternity through DNA testing or legitimation for paternal relatives. (See [Establishing Paternity via Legitimation or Paternity Acknowledgement](#)).
3. In coordination with the SSS, determine whether DFCS or a CCFA provider will complete the R/Non-RCA. If the relative resides in another county, the SSCM shall notify and/or coordinate with the other county to arrange when, where, and by whom a R/Non-RCA is to be conducted as well as who will provide supervision if the placement is approved. If the relative resides out-of-state, follow the procedures in [Placement of Georgia Children into Other States](#) regarding placing a child out-of-state.
4. If emergency placement is needed, schedule a home visit for the same day to complete the initial [Home Safety Check](#).
5. Discuss the possible relative placement with the child, when age and developmentally appropriate, and ask for their feelings regarding the potential placement. Explore any potential issues that may prevent placement or cause a disruption.
6. Conduct, review and assess the following screenings on the relative caregiver and any household member age 18 and older:
  - a. DFCS Protective Services Records;
    - i. GA Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SHINES) Child Protective Services (CPS) history
    - ii. SHINES External Documents
    - iii. IDS Online Master Index
    - iv. PSDS
    - v. IDS Placement Central
    - vi. County Master Files
  - b. Sexual Offender Registry;
    - i. Sex Offender Search
    - ii. Predator Search
    - iii. Absconder Search
  - c. Board of Pardons and Parole;
  - d. Department of Corrections Offender Query;
  - e. Child Abuse and Neglect Registry in any other state the prospective caregiver and/or their adult household members have resided in the past ten (10) years;
  - f. SUCCESS;
  - g. ACCURINT to obtain any other states the caregiver or adult may have resided;
  - h. Any Foster and Adoptive Home policy violations, if applicable.
7. If the relative caregiver is disqualified based on unsatisfactory screening results:
  - a. Provide the Administrative Case Review (ACR) request information if the disqualification is due to substantiated CPS in Georgia (See [Administrative Case Review](#)).
  - b. Direct them to contact the other state agency directly for information on history provided from other states.
  - c. If the County Department desires to approve the relative despite the history,

- submit a waiver for approval to the State Office via [DFCS-WAIVERS@dhr.state.ga.us](mailto:DFCS-WAIVERS@dhr.state.ga.us) outlining the history and reasons for the approval request.
- d. If a relative's CPS record is missing, lost or has been purged, conduct an interview with the caregiver to ascertain as much as possible about the nature of their CPS history (what occurred, who was involved, whether or not services were provided and any other information about the case).
    - i. Document the results of the interview with the caregiver on the Narrative section of the Contact Detail page in Georgia SHINES; and
    - ii. Submit to the State Office for review via the [DFCS-WAIVERS@dhr.state.ga.us](mailto:DFCS-WAIVERS@dhr.state.ga.us) mailbox.
  - 8. Conduct a home visit or have a CCFA provider conduct a home visit to:
    - a. Complete the initial Home Safety Check if an emergency placement is being sought (See [Practice Guidance](#) for components of the Home Safety Check).
    - b. Initiate the R/Non-RCA when an emergency placement is not being sought.
    - c. Discuss the following with the relative caregiver(s):
      - i. Requirements of the R/Non-RCA;
      - ii. DFCS Discipline policy and alternative forms of discipline;
      - iii. Firearm safety;
      - iv. Water safety requirements;
      - v. Safe supervision requirements and the need for childcare. Explain that all adult caregivers must be employed outside of the home to receive childcare services;
      - vi. The financial responsibility of the child (i.e., how they will manage) including the relative's income and resources and all [financial/non-financial supports](#) available if they accept placement of the child. The SSCM must help the family take a realistic look at the long range impact the child's placement may have on the family's circumstances and finances.
    - d. Obtain the relative's signature on the Caregiver Child Safety Agreement.
    - e. If the relative is interested in becoming a foster parent, discuss:
      - i. The requirements for becoming a Relative Foster Home and notify them that a Resource Development (RD) Case Manager will make contact with them to further explain and initiate the process;
      - ii. Funding options available to them pending approval as a foster home; **NOTE:** The relative must meet the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) degree of relationship to qualify for TANF or the Enhanced Relative Rate; and
      - iii. Document in the Narrative section of the Contact Detail page in Georgia SHINES whether or not the relative is willing to accept placement of the child pending approval as a foster home.
    - f. Provide the relative with contact information, the "Information Relative Caregivers Need to Know" found in the RCA/Non-RCA in SHINES and information regarding the legal process.
    - g. Review and obtain the relative's signature on the "Placement and Financial Responsibility Agreement" included in the RCA/Non-RCA found in SHINES;
    - h. Have the relative(s) and any adult household member age 18 and older sign the [Consent for Criminal History Records Check](#).

- i. If a placement is needed immediately, complete an [emergency NCIC check](#) with OIG. **NOTE:** A Live Scan GCIC/NCIC CRC **is required** within five (5) business days of the completion of the emergency check. If the agency fails to obtain the Live GCIC/NCIC CRC within the required timeframes, the child may have to be moved, per State Law;
- j. Ensure the relative understands that the following information will be needed to finalize the R/Non-RCA:
  - i. A medical statement for the primary caregiver(s);
  - ii. Drug screens for the primary caregivers;
  - iii. Satisfactory Live Scan (GCIC/NCIC) CRC on all adult household members ages 18 and older; (See [Criminal Records Checks](#))
  - iv. A Child Abuse and Neglect Registry Check in any state where the relative or household member age 18 or older resided within the last ten years.

**NOTE:** Relatives accepting placement prior to completion and approval of the R/Non-RCA must be informed that placement is contingent upon a favorable R/Non-RCA including satisfactory Live Scan GCIC and NCIC results.
9. Encourage the relative(s) to participate in the Family Team Meeting (FTM) held within nine (9) days of the child's placement and at any point in the life of the case. The FTM provides an opportunity for family members to come together to discuss the critical issues and circumstances which led to the child's placement, what step/actions are required to reunite the child with the family and how each member can participate in assuring the child's safety, stability, permanency and well-being.
10. If an emergency placement is needed, discuss the initial Home Safety Check and preliminary CPS and CRC history checks with the SSS. This information must be reviewed and determined satisfactory by the SSS before placement is made. The SSS must approve the placement of the child and document the approval in SHINES.
11. Document the initial Home Safety Check findings in SHINES within 72 hours of the emergency placement of the child.

### **Relative/ Non-Relative Care Assessment**

Within thirty (30) calendar days of the child's emergency placement with a relative or the referral/request for consideration as a relative placement resource, the SSCM will:

1. Ensure completion of the R/Non-RCA including all necessary background checks, medical, drug screens, etc.; (See [Suggested Format for Relative/Non-Relative Care Assessment](#))
2. Complete the Relative Care Assessment tab in SHINES and submit the R/Non-RCA for approval; and
3. Notify the relative of the approval or denial of the R/Non-RCA. If the R/Non-RCA is not approved, make arrangements to move the child if the child has already been placed.

### **Documentation of Safety Screenings**

In the narrative of the R/Non-RCA, the CCFA Provider or SSCM will:

1. Document the results of the Criminal Record History Information (CHRI) Summary, Georgia and Other State's CPS history, Pardons and Parole (PP), Department of Corrections (DOC), and Sex Offender Registry (SOR) for every member of the household age 18 years and older.

- a. List each adult's name, the date of the screen, and whether or not they are eligible to proceed based on criteria established in [Criminal Records Checks](#), [Placement/Re-Placement Safety Screenings](#), and [Caregiver Safety Screening at Initial and Re-evaluation](#).
- b. Summarize any findings from the CPS screens, PP, DOC, and SOR for each adult. The PP, SOR and DOC results must state either "eligible to proceed as of (date of screening) or ineligible to proceed as of (date of screening)".
- c. Upon receipt of the GCIC/NCIC CHRI Summary, enter a statement that the person is "Statutorily Eligible to Proceed as of (date of screening) or "Statutorily Disqualified to Proceed as of (date of screening)".

**NOTE: Do not list or summarize any information from the CHRI Summary on the GCIC/NCIC screening tab in SHINES.**

### **Relative Placement Out-of-County**

When placing a child with a relative in another county, the SSCM will contact the County Department where the relative resides and:

1. Notify them of the desire to place the child with the relative.
2. Request a R/Non-RCA. If they are unable to complete the R/Non-RCA, approval may be granted for the legal county SSCM or a CCFA provider to complete the assessment.
3. If the initial home visit and home safety check are completed by the legal county SSCM or a CCFA provider, forward the information to the County Department where the relative resides. The County Department where the relative resides must be in agreement with and approve the placement before the child is placed.
4. Arrange or provide supervision of the placement if the placement is approved; however, the child's SSCM must be responsible for making the Every Child Every Month (ECEM) Contacts.

### **Seven Day Visit**

Within seven (7) calendar days of placement with a relative, the SSCM will:

1. Conduct a home visit with the relative(s) and child and interview all household members present, including the child, separately;
2. Assess how the child and relative(s) have adjusted to the placement including, but not limited to, any behavioral concerns and whether or not the child or relative is experiencing any problems that require the attention and action of the SSCM; and
3. Discuss possible permanency outcomes with the relative(s) and child (when age and developmentally appropriate) depending on the progress of the child's parents in resolving the safety concerns that led to the child's removal from the home.

## **PRACTICE GUIDANCE**

### **Local GCIC CRC Checks**

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) will conduct local GCIC checks for DFCS staff. Although a satisfactory local GCIC check is sufficient to make an initial placement with a relative, a Live Scan GCIC/NCIC is required prior to approval of the R/Non-RCA. Results of a local check may take 48-72 hours; therefore, if a placement is needed immediately, an emergency NCIC check will have to be obtained from OIG.

To obtain a local GCIC check, send the requests and consent forms to the OIG GCIC

Criminal History Specialist via email to [DFCS-GCIC@dhr.state.ga.us](mailto:DFCS-GCIC@dhr.state.ga.us) or via fax to 404-463-0873.

### **Emergency On-Call NCIC Checks**

The Background Investigations Unit Emergency On-Call Policy established by OIG must be followed by DFCS SSCMs in the event a child needs to be placed in a home under exigent circumstances. Exigent circumstances are defined as an emergency, a pressing necessity or a set of circumstances requiring immediate attention or involving situations where:

1. Time is of the essence;
2. The health and safety of a child is involved; or
3. Action is necessary to ensure the best interest of the child.

When an emergency check is completed, all fingerprint based criminal history background checks must be done within five (5) business days.

### **Components of Home Safety Check**

The Home Safety Check is a written preliminary assessment of the suitability of the caregivers, the home environment and initial impressions as to whether or not the caregivers can safely and appropriately meet the needs of the child(ren). The Home Safety Check for emergency relative placement should include:

1. Data Section
  - a. Date Evaluation Initiated;
  - b. Identify Child;
  - c. Relative Name and Spouse (if married);
  - d. Clarify Relative's Relationship to the Child;
  - e. Caregiver's address, telephone number, email address and if employed, where employed and work schedule;
  - f. Document if the residence is rented or owned, if the caregiver is the lessee or mortgage holder and if any special permissions are needed to allow additional residents to move in;
  - g. Reason for Evaluation;
  - h. Household Composition (Names, ages, gender, relationship to child and other household members, etc.);
  - i. Preliminary CPS and CRC results for all household members age 18 and older;
  - j. City and State within the last ten(10) years where the relative resided or adults age 18 and older resided within the last ten (10) years. (This information is needed to check the Child Abuse and Neglect Registry).
2. Home Environment
  - a. Appearance and State of Repair/Maintenance Issues;
  - b. Cleanliness;
  - c. Soundness of Physical Dwelling;
  - d. Appearance of Electrical Wiring System, Fixtures and Outlets;
  - e. Appearance of Gas Lines and Heating and Cooking Appliances;
  - f. Availability and Condition of Running Water Indoors;
  - g. Availability and Condition of Toilet Facilities Indoors;
  - h. Availability of working smoke alarms inside the house;
  - i. Environmental Hazards, excess waste (garbage, trash, animal feces, etc.);



- j. Dangerous porches, steps, doors, etc.;
  - k. Access to busy streets or highways;
  - l. Access to swimming pools, lakes, ponds, etc.;
  - m. Appearance of child safety proofing for young children.
3. Caregiver Protective Capacities
- a. Briefly assess the protective capacities of each caregiver;
  - b. Discuss the DFCS discipline policy. Document caregivers' current views on discipline, reaction to the policy and willingness to adhere to it. Review the [Caregiver Child Safety Agreement](#) and obtain signatures.
4. Discuss the following and document:
- a. What are the sleeping arrangements?
  - b. What is the educational plan for the children, if applicable?
  - c. What is the immediate childcare plan, if applicable?
  - d. What is the immediate plan for providing for the basic needs (food, clothing, etc.) of the child(ren)?
  - e. Discuss whether or not another household member will be serving as a caregiver;
  - f. If the family does not have a telephone, include a plan for emergencies and for emergency and routine communication with DFCS;
  - g. Discuss the case plan as it relates to visits/contacts from the parents and/or siblings not placed together; discuss any restrictions or allowable activities;
  - h. Does the family own a vehicle? If not, describe the mode of transportation readily available. Is the car insurance current? Does the family member identified as a driver have a valid driver's license? Does the family have required child restraint devices?
  - i. The presence of firearms and how they are stored;
  - j. Any other potential safety concern observed during the initial walk through of the home.

### **Success of Relative Placement**

The success of placement with a relative can be positively impacted by:

- 1. The extent of the relative family's preparation for meeting the child's needs;
- 2. The relative family's familiarity with and commitment to abide by the agency's requirements regarding children in out-of-home placements;
- 3. The accuracy of the relative family's perceptions of the requirements for managing the child and his/her needs (i.e., medical, physical, emotional, educational, and/or behavioral issues); and
- 4. The open communication and information sharing between the SSCM and the relative family. (See [Placement of a Child](#))

Placement with a relative may not be appropriate when:

- 1. Abuse or neglect has been substantiated on the relative resource;
- 2. Safety concerns are identified;
- 3. They are unable to meet the minimum on-going needs of the child;
- 4. Parental interference in the placement would negatively affect the child;
- 5. They are not willing to accept the placement;
- 6. They are openly or passively hostile or negative toward the parents, child or DFCS;
- 7. They are unable or unwilling to protect the child from risks or harm from others;
- 8. They are unable or unwilling to comply with agency or court ordered visitation plans or

- goal of reunification; and/or
- Unsatisfactory criminal records checks are received.

### Relative/Non-Relative Care Assessment

An in depth Relative/Non-Relative Care Assessment (R/Non-RCA) is completed expeditiously on relative resources, non-custodial parents who wish to provide a home for a child in DFCS custody and non-relative caregivers interested in being a resource for a specific child. All domains and areas being evaluated pertain to the parent's/caregiver's home for purposes of considering it as an acceptable placement resource for a specific child or sibling group. (See [Suggested Format for Relative/Non-Relative Care Assessment](#))

The Relative/Non-Relative Care Assessment (R/Non-RCA) provides an assessment on the caregiver's ability to meet the safety, permanency and well-being needs of the child. A complete R/Non-RCA packet should include:

- The narrative of the assessment; (See [Suggested Format for Relative/Non-Relative Care Assessment](#))
- GCIC/NCIC fingerprint checks;
- CPS screenings;
- Residence check from the past five years;
- Child abuse and neglect registry checks;
- A medical statement for the primary caregiver(s);
- Drug screens on the primary caregiver(s);
- At least two references;
- [Caregiver Child Safety Agreement](#) form signed by the caregivers;
- The signed Placement and Financial Responsibility Agreement found in SHINES.

### Sample Documentation of Safety Screenings

	GCIC	NCIC	GA DFCS-CPS	Other State's-CPS	PP	DOC	SOR
Primary Caregiver : John Doe	Statutorily Eligible to Proceed as of 9/1/2013	Statutorily Eligible to Proceed as of 9/1/2013	Eligible to Proceed as of 8/1/2013	N/A	Eligible to Proceed as of 9/1/2013	Eligible to Proceed as of 9/1/2013	Eligible to Proceed as of 9/1/2013

*John Doe did not have a CPS, PP, DOC or SOR record.*

Secondary Caregiver: Jane Doe:	Statutorily Eligible to Proceed as of 9/1/2013	Statutorily Eligible to Proceed as of 9/1/2013	Eligible to Proceed as of 8/1/2013	N/A	Eligible to Proceed as of 9/1/2013	Eligible to Proceed as of 9/1/2013	Eligible to Proceed as of 9/1/2013
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*Jane Doe did not have a PP, DOC or SOR record. The Georgia CPS screen revealed two unsubstantiated investigations that involved her two nephews who lived with her briefly in 1999. The youth were unruly and refused to adhere to curfew. The reports did not reveal any protective capacity concerns regarding Mrs. Doe.*

### FORMS AND TOOLS

Suggested Format for Relative/Non-Relative Care Assessment  
[Consent for Criminal History Records Check](#)



## Background Investigations Unit Emergency On-Call Policy from OIG