

	<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>	Spiritual, Social, and Recreational Needs		
	<b>Policy Number:</b>	10.14	<b>Previous Policy #:</b>	1011.8, 1011.9, 1011.10

## CODES/REFERENCES

N/A

## REQUIREMENTS

The Division of Family and Children (DFCS) shall ensure each child in foster care has opportunities for:

1. Spiritual development in accordance with the wishes of the child and parents.
2. Family and community recreational activities for the development of special abilities and interests, such as hobbies, sports, music, scouting, art and crafts.

DFCS shall ensure each child in foster care has adequate supervision whenever a child is away from his/her foster home/facility (i.e., recreational activities). See [Supervision of Children](#) and [Graduated Independence](#).

## PROCEDURES

**DFCS Social Services Case Manager (SSCM) will:**

1. Ask the parents and child if the child has any religious affiliation and discuss any religious/spiritual ideals of the placement resource prior to allowing the child to attend services.
2. To the extent possible, allow the child to attend his/her own church, synagogue, or other place of worship.
3. Obtain parental consent before allowing a child to participate in significant religious rituals and activities. (e.g., Baptism)
4. Discuss with the parents and placement providers any extracurricular activities in which the child is currently participating or interested in participating.
5. Require caregivers to provide advance notification of any trips being planned for a child in care and request approval for such trips from the DFCS County Director or Designee.
  - a. The County Director or Designee may provide verbal approval for in-state trips up to three (3) days. The SSCM must document the verbal approval in the Contact Detail in Georgia SHINES, the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System.
  - b. The County Director or Designee must provide written authorization for in-state trips longer than three days, including granting the caregiver authority to obtain needed medical care for the child. The caregiver should contact the child's SSCM should a child require medical attention during a trip.
  - c. For trips involving out-of-state travel, written authorization must be obtained from the parent and/or Juvenile Court, when the child is in the temporary custody of DFCS. Written authorization may be granted by the County Director or Designee if the child

is in the permanent custody of DFCS.

- d. For trips involving out-of-country travel, follow the steps in subsection c above. In addition, a waiver must be obtained from the DFCS Regional Director.

**NOTE:** Since Georgia Medicaid will not cover any medical expenses incurred out-of-country, this factor needs to be considered before authorizing such trips. Additionally, there are issues of passport, immunizations, etc., which must be considered.

- e. If the local DFCS does not authorize a particular trip, the SSCM must arrange for a temporary placement during the time the caregiver is away.
- f. For out of town trips during which a child will not be in the care and supervision of his/her caregiver (e.g., school-related trips, conferences, sports competitions, etc.), the local DFCS must carefully evaluate whether the plan of supervision will be sufficient to ensure the safety of the child while away. The plan of supervision must be approved by the County Director or Designee and documented in the Contact Detail in Georgia SHINES.

## **PRACTICE GUIDANCE**

### **Spiritual Ideals**

Parents retain certain residual rights, even though DFCS holds temporary custody. Determining the child's religious affiliation is one of these. If the child is under voluntary placement authority, the parent is to advise DFCS on Form 5 (Voluntary Agreement to Place Child in Foster Care) of the child's religious affiliation. If the wishes of the parent and other family members are unknown, then the foster parent and the SSCM must plan how to best meet the spiritual development needs of the child. When appropriate, parents should be allowed to participate in religious activities that occur in their child's life.

### **Sports and Extracurricular Activities**

Participation in play is an important learning experience for all children to develop their social, emotional and intellectual skills. Children should be encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities. Many children in care may not have had previous experiences with engaging in such activities before placement and may need special help in learning to participate appropriately. When appropriate, parents should be allowed to participate in sporting and extracurricular activities that occur in their child's life.

## **FORMS AND TOOLS**

NA