

	GEORGIA DIVISION OF FAMILY AND CHILDREN SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY MANUAL		
	Chapter:	(10) Foster Care	Effective Date: August 2014
	Policy Title:	Placement Resources	
	Policy Number:	10.4	Previous Policy #: 1004

CODES/REFERENCES

O.C.G.A. § 15-11-2

Title IV-E of the Social Security Act Section 471 (a)(22)

Title IV-E of the Social Security Act Sections 472 (c)(1) and (2)

45 CFR Parts 1355.20(a) and (a)(2)

REQUIREMENTS

The Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) shall identify a safe and appropriate placement resource for children requiring out-of-home placement. In order of preference, out-of-home placement options include:

1. Non-custodial parent (paternity must be established either through DNA testing or Paternity Acknowledgement);
2. Relative, as defined by blood, marriage or adoption including the spouse of any of those persons even if the marriage was terminated by death or divorce;
3. DFCS Family Foster Home or Adoptive Home, including a Relative Foster or Adoptive Home; Completion of the approval process for any relative to become an approved foster home should occur within 180 days of the placement of the child in the home;
4. Child Placement Agency (CPA) Family Foster Home or Adoptive Home; (See [Introduction to RBWO](#))
5. Child Caring Institution (CCI); (See [Introduction to RBWO](#))
6. Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility (PRTF), if temporary treatment is necessary.

NOTE: The Georgia Juvenile Code also allows for placement with [fictive kin](#). However, fictive kin must become foster parents if they wish to receive financial assistance for caring for a child in the custody of DFCS.

DFCS has developed and implemented standards to ensure that children in foster care placements in public or private agencies are provided quality services that protect the safety and health of the children. (See [Resource Development](#) and [Room Board Watchful Oversight](#) policy chapters and [Relative, Non-Relative Assessment](#) policy)

DFCS staff shall conduct an assessment of all policy violations in placement resources to ensure the continued appropriateness of the home for the placement of children in DFCS custody. (See [Policy Violations](#))

NOTE: Policy violation assessments are conducted by the Permanency SSCM for relative placements that are not foster homes; the Resource Development SSCM for DFCS foster homes; and referred to the Office of Provider Management for Child Placing Agency foster homes.

For Title IV-E purposes, foster family home is the home of an individual or family approved as meeting the standards established by the State licensing or approval authority(ies) that provides 24-hour out-of-home care for children. The term may include group homes, agency-operated boarding homes or other facilities licensed or approved for the purpose of providing foster care by DFCS. Foster families that are approved must be held to the same standards as foster family homes that are licensed. Anything less than full licensure or approval is insufficient for meeting Title IV-E eligibility requirements.

For Title IV-E purposes, Child Care Institution (CCI) means a private child care institution, or a public child care institution which accommodates no more than 25 children and is licensed by the State in which it is situated or has been approved by the agency of such State responsible for licensing or approval of institutions of this type as meeting the standards for approval except, in the case of a child who has attained 18 years of age, the term includes a supervised setting in which the individual is living independently. Children in Georgia age 18 and older are not eligible for Title IV-E funding. The definition of CCI for Title IV-E purposes may not include detention facilities, forestry camps, training schools or any other facility operated primarily for the detention of children who are determined to be delinquent.

PROCEDURES

Non-custodial parent

The Social Services Case Manager (SSCM) will ensure the following to facilitate the approval for a child to be placed with the non-custodial parent:

1. Grounds for dependency by the non-custodial parent do not exist and, therefore, no case plan with this parent is needed prior to placement.
2. Consideration has been given to the following:
 - a. Any current court orders related to the non-custodial parent's rights, obligations and/or restrictions related to the child;
 - b. The age, desires and needs of the child;
 - c. Any special needs of the child's and the non-custodial parent's ability to meet those needs;
 - d. The impact the abuse and/or neglect in the other parent's home will have on the child;
 - e. The extent to which the non-custodial parent was or should have been aware of the child's circumstances and any action taken to intervene;
 - f. The extent of the relationship between the non-custodial parent and child;
 - g. The level of cooperation between the parents regarding co-parenting and/or reunification with the custodial parent.
 - h. Before considering the biological father who is not the legal father as a placement resource, the County Department must determine if the court will require the father to first legitimate the child, thereby becoming the legal father.
3. An approved Relative/Non-Relative Care Assessment (R/Non-RCA) is on file for the non-custodial parent, including all required background checks, unless an emergency placement is made. If an emergency placement is made, the R/Non-RCA must be completed and submitted for approval within 30 days of the emergency placement. (See [Relative/Non-Relative Care Assessment](#)).
4. The non-custodial parent has the [financial and non-financial supports](#) to appropriately care for the child and meet the ongoing needs of the child.

5. The court is notified of the plan to place the child with the non-custodial parent.

Relative Placements

The SSCM will ensure the following to facilitate the approval for a child to be placed with a relative:

1. An approved R/Non-RCA is on file, including all required background checks, unless an emergency placement is made. If an emergency placement is made, the R/Non-RCA must be completed and submitted for approval within 30 days of the emergency placement. (See [Relative/Non-Relative Care Assessment](#))
2. Consideration has been given to the following:
 - a. The age, desires and needs of the child;
 - b. Any special needs of the child's and the relative's ability to meet those needs;
 - c. The impact the abuse and/or neglect may have on the child;
 - d. The extent to which the relative was or should have been aware of the child's circumstances and what was done to intervene;
 - e. The extent of the relationship between the child and relative;
 - f. The level of cooperation between the relative(s) and parents towards the goal of reunification.
3. The relative is notified of the requirements for becoming a foster parent.
4. The relative has an understanding of the [financial and non-financial supports](#) available to assist in caring for the child.
5. The court is notified of the plan to place the child with a relative.

DFCS Foster Home/Relative Foster Home

See [Resource Development Introduction](#) for requirements to become foster parents.

CPA/CCI/PRTF

See [RBWO Application Process](#) for placement in CPA/CCI.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

Relative Placement

Exploration of all possible relative placement resources is critical and must be expedited in order to maintain and promote family continuity. The child's extended family may also offer permanency to a child. The Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) recognizes that a fit and willing relative caregiver may be able to provide the best permanent living arrangement for the child. Such a placement plan honors and preserves the child's right to maintain ties with his/her family, provided that the safety and general well-being of the child is not jeopardized. Further, in preserving the integrity of the child's family ties, the agency is supporting and promoting his/her need to feel and experience a sense of belonging. Because state law no longer recognizes "live with fit and willing relative" (LWFWR) as a permanent placement for a child, if the agency wishes to secure permanency for a child with a relative, permanent guardianship with the relative should be the recommended permanency plan. (See [Permanency Planning](#))

Research has determined that children thrive best in their families. For many years it has been the practice of relatives to parent related children when the children's parents cannot. When children enter foster care, individuals related to the child (by blood, marriage or adoption, including the spouse of any of those persons even if the marriage was terminated by death or divorce) are considered first, over a non-related individual, as a placement resource for the child. Preserving relationships with family members is crucial to a child's sense of safety and well-

being. DFCS is committed to advocating and implementing a stronger partnership with extended family to better serve the needs of children who are placed in foster care. Supportive services are provided to the family with the intent of establishing and achieving a permanency plan for the child.

The intent of family continuity and permanency planning is to focus on achieving a level of stability in the child's life. By assuring that neglectful, abusive or other threatening situations are prevented, and that the child is safe and protected in a wholesome living environment, the child's permanency is assured. This approach recognizes and accepts that the prevailing problems/needs and other issues that led to the out-of-home placement of the child will require the support of a vast network of resources to help the family achieve reunification or another permanency plan for the child. This means that all persons concerned about the child's well-being (including family members, close friends, foster parents and other stakeholders) must work cooperatively in this regard.

A relative placement refers to placement in the home of a relative who does not receive a foster care per diem for the care of the child. The relative placement may be a non-paid placement or the relative may receive TANF or an Enhanced Relative Rate (ERR) Subsidy.

DFCS/CPA Family Foster Home

It is DFCS' preference that all relatives are approved as foster parents and receive a foster care per diem. The goal of relatives becoming foster parents is to ensure that the child has services to address his/her needs.

A non-related foster home (FH) is considered the least restrictive (most family-like) setting when relatives are not available or appropriate as a placement resource. This type of placement offers experiences inherent in family living which are regarded as essential in achieving maturity and the ability to initiate and sustain a family of one's own. A FH placement is appropriate for the majority of children who need out-of-home care. Children who have special needs, but can benefit from family life, can have their needs met in a FH. DFCS Foster Homes should be utilized prior to seeking placement in a CPA FH.

Types of foster homes include:

1. DFCS FH: Non-relative foster homes approved by DFCS for the temporary placement of children in foster care.
2. DFCS Relative FH: Relative foster homes approved by DFCS for the temporary placement of minor relatives.
3. CPA FH: Foster homes approved by a Child Placing Agency for temporary placement of children in foster care. Child Placing Agencies must make arrangements to assess the placement regarding the appropriateness of the room, board and watchful oversight ([RBWO](#)) that the prospective foster family will provide.

DFCS or CPA Adoptive Home

An adoptive home is approved for the foster care placement of a child for whom the established goal is adoption. Adoptive homes must meet the regular standards of care required for approved family foster homes and any conditions specified in that approval. See [Resource Development Safety and Quality Standards](#).

Child Caring Institution (CCI)

In Georgia, a CCI is any child-welfare facility which provides full-time room, board and watchful oversight (RBWO) to six or more children up to 18 years of age. Some CCIs are approved to care for youth up to age 21. The CCI must be approved through the Office of Provider Management (OPM) to serve children in DFCS custody. (See [RBWO Youth Served](#))

Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility (PRTF)

A Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility is a temporary non-hospital facility with a provider agreement with a State Medicaid Agency to provide intensive therapeutic intervention to a child to ensure safety and stability. PRTFs offer intensive behavioral health services to children in Georgia.

FORMS AND TOOLS

N/A