

Section Nine

Safety



Babysitters

Unreimbursed Substitute Caregivers

*For the purpose of this section, supervision refers to in-home or out-of-home, unreimbursed childcare; **occasional care** means care provided once a week or less with no more than three occurrences regardless of the timeframe; **routine care** means care provided more than once a week, usually at designated times; short-term care means less than four hours.*

Responsible supervision of children in foster care is required at all times. The Child Protective Services standards regarding the supervision of children in the homes of their parents or relatives are not applicable to children in foster care placement. Standards of care for children in foster placement are stricter due to the uniqueness of their situation, past experiences and the need to ensure their safety in out-of-home placements. This is the primary basis for the pre-service preparation and in-service training program (Continued Parent Development) for foster families.

Foster parents must provide or arrange for care and supervision appropriate to the child's age, level of development and individual needs. A plan is established by the foster parent for the care and supervision of the child, as needed, by a competent and reliable adult in their absence due to employment, training, or for personal situations.

Substitute caregivers providing **occasional**, short-term, in-home/out-of-home childcare are not required to undergo CPS screenings. However, upon completion of the third occurrence of care for any foster child having been placed in the home (regardless of timeframe), the "occasional" provider becomes "routine" and is subject to the requirements below.

Substitute caregivers providing **routine** in-home/out-of-home childcare are required to complete Form 316 and submit to CPS screenings, Sexual Offender's Registry, Pardons and Parole and Department of Corrections screening prior to providing care for the child.

Unreimbursed Routine Substitute In-Home/Out-of-Home Caregivers

This form is used to document routine substitute caregivers. The foster parent provides or arranges for care and supervision appropriate to the child's age, level of development and individual needs. A plan is established by the foster parent for the care and supervision of the child, as needed, by a competent and reliable adult in their absence due to employment, training, or for personal situations.

Foster Parent Name: _____ County: _____

Substitute Caregiver (SC) Name: _____

SC Address: _____ SC Zip Code: _____

SC Phone Number: _____ SC Cell Number: _____

SC Maiden or Previously Used Name: _____

Case Manager: _____

Review Form 29, DFCS Safety Agreement and any additional supervision, safety and discipline guidelines with the substitute caregiver. Ensure that two copies are signed (Copy 1 to the SC; Copy 2 to DFCS Case Manager).

Completed by the Substitute Caregiver:

Sign below to indicate your agreement to follow the supervision, safety and discipline standards as outlined in Form 29 and as instructed by the foster parent.

☐ I agree to follow the supervision, safety and discipline standards as outlined in DFCS Form 29 and instructed by the foster parent.

☐ I do **not** agree to follow the supervision, safety and discipline standards as outlined in DFCS Form 29 and instructed by the foster parent. Therefore, I understand that I cannot be a substitute caregiver.

Unreimbursed Substitute Caregiver Signature _____ Date _____

Forward completed form and 1 signed copy of Form 29 to the case manager who will complete the CPS, Sexual Offender's, Pardons and Parole and Department of Corrections screenings.

Internal DFCS Use Only:

☐ CPS Screening Completed ☐ Department of Corrections Screening Completed

☐ Sexual Offender's Registry Screening Completed ☐ Pardons and Parole Screening Completed

☐ All screenings are negative for the unreimbursed substitute caregiver listed above.

☐ Other _____

Completed by: _____ Date: _____

DIVISION OF FAMILY AND CHILDREN SERVICES
GA DHS (REV. 3/28/2005) Form 316
File Original in Foster Parent Record. Provide a Copy to the Foster Parent.

Foster parents must be reasonably assured that any substitute caregiver possesses the necessary skills to manage the parenting and/or special needs of the child left in their care and is aware of and agrees to follow agency guidelines regarding supervision, discipline and other safety needs of the child.

Note: Children are not left in the care of other minors. Persons providing reimbursed or non-reimbursed care for children must be at least eighteen (18) years of age or older.



Supervision of Older Youth

Generally speaking, reliable and competent youth, 13 years and older, may be left under their own supervision under certain circumstances and for short periods of time so as not to jeopardize their safety and well-being. At this stage in their lives, many youth are able to benefit from experiences that foster a sense of responsibility, independence and self-control. Situations requiring youth to be home alone after school hours or when foster parents are attending to short-term personal matters are acceptable within the limitations indicated.

The primary factor to consider in determining if youth may be left alone is their ability to function for short periods of time independent of a caretaker. The foster parent assures that the youth is aware of procedures to be taken in case of an emergency and has access to emergency contact numbers, including their own and a nearby relative, neighbor or friend. Other important criteria to consider include the following:



- Length of time in the home.
- Judgment and level of maturity or development.
- Demonstration of dependability, responsibility and trustworthiness.
 - History of emotional/psychological stability.
 - History of running away and other status offenses.
- History of delinquent behavior.
- History of alcohol and substance abuse.
- Number of youth present in the home and their relationship with each other.
- Gender, number and the relationship of the youth to be left alone.
- History of sexual acting out.
- School performance.
- Safety of the home environment (firearm safety, water safety, any other potential hazards, etc.).
- Youth's ability to readily access foster parent or other identified person should the need arise.

The foster parent and Case Manager together must determine the feasibility of leaving older youth alone in the foster home for short periods of time.

Water Safety

Drowning, according to the National Safety Council, ranks among the highest leading causes of accidental death for children and youth ages 0-24. Foster parents must take extra precaution with children when around large bodies of water. Foster parents whose primary or alternate residence (vacation home, country residence, etc.) has an in-ground or aboveground pool, must comply with the following requirements:

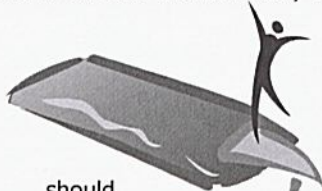
Requirements

- Verbally agree to and sign the Water Safety Agreement.
- Know or learn how to swim.
- Obtain the required CPR and First Aid training during the first year of approval and maintain certification.
- Complete a Basic Water Rescue class that is designed to prevent and respond to water emergencies within the first year of approval or as soon as the course is made available in your area.
- Provide some form of written verification (letter of verification, certificate, etc.) that the swimming, First Aid, CPR and Basic Water Rescue requirements have been completed.
- Enroll all children placed in the home, three (3) years and older, in a swimming class at the local YMCA or other free or inexpensive facility some time during the first year of placement in the home. The course must be taught



by a certified swimming instructor and should be retaken until the child learns to swim. The Case Manager should be contacted immediately if a child is unable to complete the required swimming or water safety course due to mental or physical challenges.

- Complete the child's swimming requirements within one (1) year of placement in the home.
- Refrain from allowing children who have not completed a course in swimming in or around pools and other large bodies of water unless closely supervised by an adult. Provide close adult supervision of children at all times.



should

Fences enclosing pools should be at least forty-eight (48) inches in height with vertical or horizontal openings that are no more than four (4) inches wide.

- Ensure that the pool or waterfront area meets local and/or state ordinances.
- Surround the pool with a fence that is enclosed on all sides (isolate the pool from the yard) and has a gate that locks. The fence be of sufficient height to prevent the entry of young children.

Aboveground pools- The structure of an aboveground pool may also be used to meet the fence requirement. When the structure is used as a fence, or a fence is mounted on top of the aboveground pool, the pool must be made inaccessible by removing the steps or ladder, or by surrounding the steps or the ladder itself with a fence and a gate that locks. The fence should be at least 48 inches in height, with vertical or horizontal openings that are no more than four (4) inches wide.

- Always provide direct adult supervision where bodies of water exist, this includes the freestanding "kiddy pools" that vary in depth.
- Have children wear a U.S. Coast Guard approved personal flotation device (life vest, jacket, etc.) when on a boat or other watercraft.

Although the water safety policy makes specific reference to swimming pools, extra safety precaution (i.e., close supervision, sensors, alarms, locks, etc.) must also be taken with lakes and ponds, especially ponds that are located on the same property as the foster home.

Guidelines

There are additional precautions foster parents can take to assure the safety of children in and around water. You are also encouraged to check with local medical facilities or go on-line (surf the web) to increase your awareness of water safety strategies for children. Additional steps that may be taken to ensure the safety of children in your care include the following:

- Never leave children unattended near any source of standing water, including bathtubs, swimming pools, hot tubs, or even large buckets of water for infants and toddlers. Children have drowned in as little as one to two inches of water!
- Install self-closing/self-latching devices on windows or doors leading to pool/lake area (if possible), as well as on pool gates.
- Drain and cover pools that are not to be used for an extended period of time.
- Remove pool cover completely when pool is in use to prevent children from getting trapped underneath.
- Remove portable steps to aboveground pools when the pool is not in use.
- Keep a cordless phone at hand (or install a pool-side jack) to prevent having to go indoors "briefly" to use the telephone, leaving children unsupervised.



- Program emergency numbers for quick dialing.
- Clearly identify the deep and shallow ends of the pool.



- Equip the swimming pool or water area with such life saving devices as ring buoys, rescue tubes or other flotation devices such as "water wings", etc.
- Flotation devices should never be used as a substitute for proper supervision.
- Children should never be left unsupervised while in or near water simply because they know how to swim.

*Water or "bodies of water" for the purpose of this policy include streams, lakes, rivers, creeks, canals, swamps, oceans and flooded areas and all pools. Waterfront property includes property that is adjacent to or bordered by water.

Motor Vehicle Safety

Ensure foster parents' awareness and understanding of the following requirements regarding motorized vehicles and safety helmets:

1. Foster parents are required to transport every child placed in their care, under age 8 years, in a federally approved child safety seat that is used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.



The county director/designee for the county of legal responsibility may grant a waiver to this requirement upon receiving verification from the child's primary health provider (doctor) that the child has a medical condition that prevents the use of a child safety seat or that the child is greater than 4'9" (57 inches) in height.

2. Foster parents are required to transport children 12 years and under in the rear seat of the vehicle, with seat belts buckled up to protect them from air bag injuries.
3. Foster parents are prohibited from allowing children and youth under the age of 18 to ride in the bed of a pickup truck. The County Director/designee may provide *waivers* when children wish to participate in parades, hayrides and similar events.
4. Foster parents must contact the child's Case Manager and comply with all agency policy regarding the driving of motor vehicles by youth in placement prior to allowing the child to operate a motor vehicle.
5. Foster parents are required to take extra precaution in allowing a child under 18 years of age to operate or ride as a passenger on a motorcycle, a motorbike, an all terrain vehicle, a high-speed water craft or other similarly motorized vehicles. These high-speed vehicles can be particularly **challenging to operate; therefore, reasonable care and caution should be applied when considering a child's participation in such activities.**

Note: In responding to a foster parent's request for guidance, the Case Manager takes under consideration the child's psychological, medical and developmental needs and determines the type and safety of the vehicle and its suitability for the child, as well as the vehicle operators and supervision plan. Discuss any restrictions (i.e., no use of public roads, daytime riding only, no racing or hot-rodding) and other safety measures such as helmets, seat belts, flotation devices and any other manufacturer's recommended safety gear. Children should have reasonable opportunities to engage in play and wholesome recreational activities.

6. All children in care, regardless of age, must be individually secured (one child to a seat belt) by an appropriately fitting seat belt when being transported in a motorized vehicle.
7. Foster parents must never leave children 12 years and younger or children who are medically, emotionally, psychologically, or behaviorally challenged unattended in motor vehicles.



Bicycle Safety



1. Foster parents must provide a safety helmet for any child who is operating a bicycle or is riding as a passenger on a bicycle on a road, bicycle path or sidewalk. Helmets are also required for children when operating or riding as a passenger on other types of vehicles (excluding an automobile), i.e., all-terrain vehicles, motorbikes, small motor craft, etc.
2. Foster parents are required to provide helmets that are properly fitted and securely fastened.

Fire Arm Safety

1. All firearms in the foster home are kept under lock and key and are inaccessible to children at all times. As an added safety measure, any one of the reliable gun-safety mechanisms available commercially (trigger guard lock, etc.) may also be used.
2. All ammunition should be locked away and stored in a separate location from firearms in the home.
3. *Foster parents should never allow children in care to handle any type firearm.
4. Keys to locked storage devices are to be kept in the possession of an adult or reasonably secured from children.

**NOTE:* Youth ages thirteen (13) years and older, who have successfully complied with all applicable hunting license requirements for Georgia, may engage in hunting activities, while under the *direct supervision* of the foster parent or other approved adult. The foster parent/adult is also required to be in compliance with Georgia hunting license requirements. Georgia requires completion of a hunter education course (includes safety guidelines) for all persons born after January 1, 1961. The County Director/designee gives prior approval, taking under consideration the psychological and emotional capacity of the child as well as any developmental or behavioral needs. If parental rights have not been terminated, prior written approval must be obtained from the birth parent.

Examples of the types of locking devices that may be employed to protect children from guns include the following:

Trigger Lock- blocks access to the trigger of the gun and prevents the gun from firing. Trigger locks cannot be used on loaded guns. The lock must be removed with a key and then the gun may be loaded, if necessary.

Lock Box – Locks the gun away and limits accessibility. The box must be unlocked for use. The key should not be accessible to children.

Plug/Rod Lock – blocks firing and cannot be used on a loaded gun. Lock must be removed to load gun.

Cable Lock – Prevents ammunition loading and firing.

Other locks – may lock safely and prevent firing of gun. Can be used on a loaded or unloaded gun and provides the homeowner with instant accessibility to the gun, if needed for safety. (A firearm dealer will be able to identify such a lock.)

Animal Vaccinations

Georgia law requires that all dogs, cats, and ferrets be vaccinated for rabies. Re-immunizations are required either annually or triennially depending on the vaccine. Foster homes with exotic animals or wildlife (chimpanzees, snakes, raccoons, large mammals) will require a health and suitability statement from a veterinarian, and approval by the DFCS Regional Director. However, any issues or concerns related to any pet (type, size, quantity etc...) should be thoroughly discussed and documented during the assessment and re-evaluation process.



Dogs



Children, unfortunately, are the primary victims of dog attacks, representing more than 60% of all dog bite cases, according to national statistics. While no specific breed of dog can legally be characterized as "vicious" or "dangerous dogs", it is important that foster parents are alert to the potential risks and consequences that are forever present with any pet animal. Children are usually bitten by dogs with whom they are familiar – their own, a neighbor's or the dog of a friend. The bodily areas usually attacked or bitten by dogs include the child's face, hands, neck and head. Listed in this section are breeds of dogs that, according to the American Veterinary Medical Association, are said to have higher incidences of bites than other breeds.

Some Georgia legislators have made several unsuccessful attempts to pass a law relating to "dangerous dogs." In the absence of State Law relating to the identification and proper maintenance of dogs that are considered to be "dangerous," the Department of Family and Children Services has instituted guidelines relative to pet safety in the foster home.


In the interest of the children placed in your home, foster parents are required to exercise reasonable safety precautions when children are around pets. The following should be exercised to promote the safety of the child:

Closely monitor children around pets.

1. Refrain from bringing into the home any type or breed of animal that has a known history of violence and/or aggressiveness toward people.
2. Safely secure animals that have displayed violent and/or aggressive behavior toward people inside a cage, pen, or fence that prevents a child from entering and the dog from escaping.
3. When acquiring a pet for the home, choose a breed or type of animal that has, at the least, a history of being people-friendly.
4. Provide opportunities and instruction to children regarding safe socialization habits with people-friendly breeds of animals.
5. Report immediately to the agency any acts of violence toward a child in care or others by an animal in the foster home.
6. **Carefully review the Appendix information and research other sources for information regarding animal safety.**

General Environmental Safety

Your home environment must continue to meet health and safety standards. Some of the areas that will be observed during monthly contacts and also at re-evaluations follow:

1. Soundness of physical dwelling (address all visible/known dangers: roofing, porches, steps, doors, windows, flooring, etc.)
2. Cleanliness (clothing, furnishings, waste: garbage, trash, animal feces, etc.)
3. Appearance of electrical wiring system, fixtures and outlets
4. Appearance of gas  lines and heating/cooking appliances
5. Availability and condition of running water indoors
6. Availability and condition of toilet facilities indoors
7. Appearance of household furnishings
8. Presence and appearance of external storage facilities and/or environmental hazards such as



- a. Inoperable vehicles
- b. Adequacy of fencing/gates
- c. Access to busy streets and/or highways

Carbon Monoxide

The number one cause of poisoning related deaths in the United States is carbon monoxide. Carbon monoxide may escape from the surrounding land on which a home is built, but it most commonly escapes from defective unvented heating sources in the home such as the following:

1. Gas ovens
2. Water heaters
3. Space heaters
4. Furnaces
5. Wood burning stoves
6. Fireplaces

To prevent problems or fatalities with these appliances, take particular care to see that they are properly maintained and functioning appropriately. The following DFCS requirements are to be observed:

- A carbon monoxide detector is an added safety device and is required in your home should you have an unvented, fuel-fired heater (kerosene, wood-burning, etc.).
- Gas heaters must be vented.

Second Hand Smoke

Particular caution should be taken when smoking in the home. Children who reside with smokers have more upper respiratory infections than most children. When medically fragile care is provided, a smoke-free environment is required.

Fire Safety

All families should have an established plan of action in case of a residential fire or other catastrophe. In order to minimize injury to members of your household, foster parents should take the following fire safety precautions:

- Install smoke detectors on all levels of the home, in the kitchen and near bedrooms. Check smoke detectors on a regular basis and change batteries twice a year, preferably during the fall and spring months when the time changes.
- Smoke detectors should be installed on the ceiling or 6 to 12 inches below the ceiling, if possible, every 40-50 feet on each floor of the home. Do not install detectors above "drop ceilings."



- Fire extinguishers may be kept in the kitchen area to be used in putting out cooking related fires. Familiarize yourself with manufacturer's instructions.
- Identify potential exit points in the home in case of a fire. Make household members aware of each.
- Inform newly placed children, depending upon their level of development, of the family's fire safety plan.

- Conduct a fire drill at least twice a year at least. Instruct family members how to exit a burning, smoke-filled structure: Stay low (smoke and heat rise), cover nose and mouth with a handy cloth, and crawl out.
- Consider keeping a strong hemp rope with a slipknot or some other safety device in a safe location for easy retrieval if rooms are located on an upper level. Check with your local fire department for additional information on how to safely exit from upper level areas of the home.
- Specify a meeting place outside the home for family members.
- Call or have neighbor's call 911 immediately.

Other sources for obtaining fire prevention measures include local fire, health and medical services, and County Extension Services.

SIDS & Back To Sleep



The Back to Sleep campaign is suitably named for its recommendation to place healthy babies on their backs to sleep. Placing babies on their backs to sleep reduces the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), also known as "crib death." SIDS stands for Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, is the sudden and unexplained death of a baby under one year of age.

Because many SIDS babies are found in their cribs, some people call SIDS "crib death." But cribs do not cause SIDS.

Facts About SIDS

- SIDS is the leading cause of death in babies after one month of age.
- Most SIDS deaths occur in babies who are between 2 and 4 months old.
- More SIDS deaths occur in colder months.
- Babies placed to sleep on their stomachs are much more likely to die of SIDS than babies placed on their backs to sleep.
- African American babies are twice as likely to die of SIDS as white babies. American Indian babies are nearly three times more likely to die of SIDS than white babies.

Hot Water Settings

The leading cause of deaths and injuries to children at home is accidents. Scalding from hot water is one of the most dangerous of these accidents. Small children are busy and can get to sinks or bathtubs quickly. They can burn themselves severely before they can get out of the water. Infants are unable to move away from hot water if it is accidentally left on too hot or the cold water is unintentionally turned off.

The following chart shows just how dangerous hot water can be.

Temperature	Time Required for Third Degree Burns
120°F	5 minutes
125°F	2 minutes
130°F	30 seconds
140°F	5 seconds
150°F	2 seconds
160°F	1 second

Severity of Burns

- First Degree Burns – A superficial burn of minimal depth
- Second Degree Burns – Burn extending through the epidermis and into the dermis
- Third Degree Burns – Entire thickness of the skin is burned
-

How can you tell what the hot water temperature is in your home?

First measure the hot water temperature. The best way to do this is to measure it in the morning, before anyone in your home has used any hot water. Turn on the hot water at the kitchen sink and let it run for 2 minutes. Then, using either an outdoor thermometer or a candy thermometer, hold the thermometer in the stream of the water until the reading stops going up. If your water-heater setting is at a safe level (between 120°F and 125°F, or 49°C to 52°C), you don't have to do anything. There is no advantage to setting the thermostat below 120°F (49°C). If your hot water setting is too high, here are some tips on how to find the thermostat and turn it down:

1. Gas hot water heaters usually have a thermostat outside the tank at the bottom. Electric water heaters usually have either two panels screwed to the top and bottom of the tank or one panel along the side of the tank. Thermostats are located under these panels.

2. The thermostat should be set on the "low" setting or within the "energy efficient range." If the temperature at the kitchen sink is too hot at this setting, adjust the thermostat to a lower setting.

After changing the thermostat setting, you can test the hot water temperature again about 24 hours later. If you test it in less than 24 hours, you will not get an accurate reading. Continue to test the water temperature and adjust the thermostat setting until the water is no hotter than 125°F (52°C). If you get it below 120°F (49°C), then turn it back up slightly.

Notes: _____

