	GEORGIA DIVISION OF FAMILY AND CHILDREN SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY MANUAL			
	Chapter:	(1) Administration	**Effective Date:**	January 2020
	Policy Title:	Access, Distribution and Review of Child Welfare Policies		
	Policy Number:	1.3	**Previous Policy #:**	N/A

CODES/REFERENCES

N/A

REQUIREMENTS

The Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) shall:

1. Maintain the Child Welfare Policy Manual (CWPM) to:
   a. Define and affirm the requirements, procedures and practices in accordance with federal and state laws, and best practice.
   b. Guide agency staff in the provision of effective child welfare services.
2. Utilize the CWPM to promote staff proficiency in obtaining current and accurate information on the agency's child welfare policies essential to the successful operation of child welfare services;
3. Ensure that policies are formally reviewed within 30 calendar days of the release date to ensure consistency in both knowledge and application;
   a. Ensure a record of policy review is maintained for each policy release;
   b. Seek policy clarification, consultation, and support as needed to ensure staff proficiency

   NOTE: Policy updates are released electronically via Child Welfare Services Manual Transmittal (CSWMT), Child Welfare Services County Letter (CWSCL) or Child Welfare Services Memorandum.
4. Monitor the implementation of policies to ensure integration into practice.

PROCEDURES

The Child Welfare Manager/Administrator/Supervisor will:

1. Ensure staff have access to electronic releases of policy updates;
2. Ensure staff are knowledgeable on how to access policies and where to direct questions related to the policy.
3. Review each Child Welfare Services Manual Transmittal (CSWMT), Child Welfare Services County Letter (CWSCL) or Child Welfare Services Memorandum with each subordinate employee within 30 calendar days of issuance of the correspondence;

   NOTE: Policy review may occur during individual supervision or during monthly unit/team meetings.
4. Maintain a record of policy review for each policy release;
5. Coordinate with the Field Program Specialist (FPS) to:
   a. Provide opportunities to disseminate and discuss policy in staff forums;
   b. Conduct policy trainings and case reviews;
   c. Distribute and discuss policy updates in meetings (e.g. regional and county

supervisory team meetings, summits, county staff meetings or meetings of multiple social services units) as long as:

i. The meeting takes place no later than 30 days from the date the correspondence was issued;
ii. The meeting agenda includes the name or number of the correspondence;
iii. A list of attendees is maintained by the meeting facilitator; and
iv. Information in items i-iii is distributed to the County Director/Designee responsible for maintenance.

d. Seek policy clarification, consultation, and support from the FPS.
NOTE: The FPS may seek clarification from the Policy and Regulations Unit, as needed.

The County Director/Designee/State Level Director will:

a. Maintain a record of all policy correspondence to include the date received and the date(s) reviewed with staff to ensure implementation.
b. Provide opportunities for staff to read and discuss application of policies within 30 days of release;
c. Engage local partners and stakeholders to share policy changes, when applicable; and
d. Encourage Supervisory and Management staff to provide policy review to staff and ensure staff are reviewing policy

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

Accessing the Child Welfare Policy Manual

DFCS policies are developed and implemented to ensure that children and families are provided quality services that incorporate family centered practice principles integrated into the safety framework. DFCS child welfare policies are housed in the DFCS Child Welfare Policy Manual (CWPM) which is managed at the DHS Online Directives Information Systems (ODIS). To access the CWPM:

1. Go to: http://odis.dhs.ga.gov/
2. Select “Division of Family and Children Services”
3. Select “Child Welfare MAN3000”.
4. Select the specific policy from the “The Table of Contents”, which includes hyperlinks for:
    a. All child welfare policies by chapters and sections
    b. An Appendix section that has:
        i. All released Child Welfare Services Manual Transmittals
        ii. All released Child Welfare Services County Letters
        iii. All Forms and Tools

Searching the Child Welfare Policy Manual

The Child Welfare Policy Manual is searchable, so that a user can search the manual using a key word or phrase.

1. From the ODIS homepage, select “Search”,
2. From the Search page, select the “Division of Family and Children Services” to search the DFCS Policy Manual.

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3. Enter a key word or phrase into the “search here” box, then click on “Go” for a list of all of the policy sections, policy correspondence, and forms and tools where that key word or phrase is used.

Policy Guidance and Clarification

It is the responsibility of all staff to review policies, gain an understanding of the requirements and procedures, and ask questions for clarification. For additional policy guidance, questions or clarification, staff should reach out to their Regional FPS who have policy expertise. The Regional FPS will provide policy guidance within each program area, advise how policies impact the work, and support integrating new policy into practice. To obtain further support or clarification, the Regional FPS should contact the Policy and Regulations Unit (PPPDUnit@dhs.ga.gov) when needed. The Policy and Regulations Unit will provide ongoing support and consultation, including an overview of each policy release.

Electronic Mailing (Email) Lists

Policy updates are maintained on the ODIS site. Notification of new and revised policies are distributed via email to all DFCS staff from “DFCS Child Welfare Policy” in the form of a Manual Transmittal, County Letter or Memorandum to all staff. Due to staff turnover, it is extremely important to maintain accurate email lists to ensure all staff are able to receive such communication directly. It is the responsibility of each State, Regional and County manager to assure that all staff under their direct supervision receives any and all email that impacts service delivery.

Child Welfare Policy Format

The current format for the child welfare services policies utilizes the following sections:

1. Codes/References are applicable federal and/or state laws.
2. Requirements (policy statements) are actions/directives set forth based on the regulations, law or practice. Federally mandated requirements from title IV-E of the Social Security Act are identified in *italics*. Note that requirements set forth by federal law included in this section are stated exactly or as close as possible to the language in the legislation to ensure compliance with the intent of the law.
3. Procedures are a series of steps to accomplish the directives set forth in the requirements.
4. Practice Guidance is designed to provide staff with thoughtful and practical guidance on how to effectively integrate best practice into their work to achieve positive family and child outcomes. It may also provide additional information, definitions, and clarifications.
5. Forms and Tools provide applicable tools, forms and resources for the specified requirements and procedures. These are published to the ODIS website in Appendix C.

Types of Policy Correspondence

1. Child Welfare Services Manual Transmittal:
   Manual Transmittals are used to disseminate changes in child welfare policy to DFCS staff via email and are published to the ODIS website in Appendix A.
2. Child Welfare Services County Letter
   County Letters are used to disseminate mandated changes in policy or practice in advance of a manual transmittal, and to provide clarifications regarding policy and/or practice. County Letters are published to the ODIS website in Appendix B.
3. Child Welfare Services Memorandum

Memoranda are used to reinforce policy and/or practice, provide reminders, observations, or discussion of topics or issues.

FORMS AND TOOLS

Online Directives Information Systems (ODIS)

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