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Approved:	Cynthia Walcott, Deputy Commissioner	Effective: 5/3/10
Supersedes:	Family Services Policy 94	Dated: 1/11/06

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Purpose

To ensure that resource families have the information to meet the child's needs, clearly understand the working agreement for teamwork between themselves and the division, and their role on the family's support team.

Definition

Child and Family Support Team – A team of professionals and non-professionals, including the social worker, the resource family, the parents (and youth, if age appropriate) that are collaborating to assist the family in meeting the goals of the case plan.

Resource Family or Resource Parent – A relative or non-relative caregiver who is licensed as a foster parent. Also, an adoptive parent with an approved adoption homestudy.

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Policy

Making the Placement Decision

Identifying an appropriate placement for a child is the joint responsibility of the resource coordinator and the child's social worker, and at times, other members of the team. The choice of a placement of a child has critical impact on the child's safety and wellbeing.

In order to facilitate a resource family's informed decision, DCF staff must communicate comprehensively, known relevant information about the child and family, including:

- the reason for the child's need for a resource family;
- the primary family's and child's understanding of the reason for placement;
- the goal of the placement and the anticipated length of stay;
- the child's and family's history and summary of the current situation;
- the child's behaviors and needs, including medical and educational needs;
- any safety concerns related to the child's behavior **and a plan to minimize those risks**;
- any safety concerns related to the child's family **and a plan to minimize those risks**. The Domestic Violence Unit should be consulted to assist with safety planning when domestic violence is an issue;
- DCF expectations of the resource family in this situation;
- goal(s) and anticipated time frames of the case plan;
- the plan for the child's contact with family members and other persons (including a list of those whom the child may not have contact);
- the resource family's role on child and family support team; and
- supports that will be available to the resource family.

Updated information will be provided to the resource family as it becomes available.

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Child's Social Worker Preferred to Make Placement

For a child, being placed with new resource family is unsettling, and often frightening. The child's own social worker is in the best position to provide information, support and ensure continuity of services to a child and a resource family. Therefore, whenever possible, that social worker will:

- bring the child to the resource family's home;
- discuss the specifics of the child's situation;
- discuss the Placement Checklist and Medical Authorization form with the resource caregiver(s); and
- unless contraindicated by safety concerns, promptly convene a Shared Parenting Meeting with the resource family and the child's parents (see Family Services Policy #124).

Full Information to Resource Families

Shared Parenting Meetings provide a helpful structure and context for sharing and updating information among the social worker, the parent and the resource caregiver. (See Family Services Policy #124).

Safety Planning for Children Who Pose Risk

If the child exhibits inappropriate sexualized behavior or poses other risks to safety, special attention must be paid to the safety needs of others in the home. The social worker or resource coordinator must discuss these risks, and develop a plan to reduce them, with the resource caregivers.

Under no circumstances will children with concerning sexual behavior (i.e. substantiated perpetrators or delinquents adjudicated for a sexual offense) share a bedroom with other children or be placed with a family who also provides child care.

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Placement Checklist and Medical Authorization

DCF will provide the following documents upon or soon after placement with a resource family:

- Placement Checklist (FS-210) - 1-page document to provide resource families with information about the child.
- Medical Authorization - Authorizes caregivers to give routine and emergency services for child.

Resource Caregiver Access to Case Record

The resource family may review the case record for a child in their care. Before reviewing the record, they will be asked to sign a Statement of Confidentiality (FS-250).

Resource Family's Role on Child and Family Support Team


Resource families are valued members of the child and family support team. Their input should be sought and considered at all points, including during the development of the case plan.

It is important to note that the case plan for the child, including the case plan goal, is approved by the court.

Also, court orders often govern the plan for family contact. Depending upon the stage of the juvenile court case, the resource family may or may not have the opportunity to be heard in court on these matters. All districts will ensure that there are informal avenues for communication and conflict resolution when resource families disagree with the division's plans and strategies.

Resource Caregiver Rights at Court Hearings

DCF must give verbal or written notice of all post-disposition court hearings to the child's resource family. Resource families have the right to an opportunity to be heard, but not necessarily to be present during the entire court hearing.

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Division staff are responsible to notify resource parents of these court hearings. Notice may be verbal (See Family Services Policies 82 and 83.) The social worker should educate the resource parent about the court process and how best to express their point of view.

Decisions to Change a Child’s Placement

A change of placement is a major decision made on behalf of a child, with significant impact on a child’s wellbeing. The decision should be considered carefully and discussed with the child and family support team. The goal is to make the best informed decision that is in the child’s best interest.

When the social worker has concerns about the care the child is receiving in the resource home, those concerns should be addressed with the resource family, except for the rare instance in which such discussion would jeopardize the child’s safety.


Notice of Placement Change

Once a plan is made to move a child to a new placement, the division will notify a resource family, in writing 14 days in advance of the date of the move. (Written notice may be electronic.) Notice is not required when:

- The resource family has requested the child’s immediate removal.
- Their license has been suspended or revoked; or
- There is reason to believe that the child’s health or safety is in jeopardy, because:
 - the resource family is under investigation due to alleged abuse or serious misconduct;
 - an emergency situation exists that cannot be mitigated in another way.
When the child’s social worker believes that a child must be removed from the home under such circumstances, the district director must review and approve that decision.
- The child meets criteria for admission to the Woodside Juvenile Rehabilitation Center.

Opportunity for Review of Plan to Change Placement

If they request it, a resource family will be given an opportunity for a review of a planned or unplanned placement change for a child who has lived with them for at least 3 months. This includes circumstances in which the child has been recently removed from the resource family’s home.

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Resource families are not entitled to a review under the following circumstances:

- The child is free for adoption, the resource family does not intend to adopt the child, and the planned move is for the purposes of adoption.
- The removal was due to a substantiation for child abuse or neglect, license suspension or revocation, or a related criminal investigation or charge.
- The removal was due to the child’s placement at the Woodside Juvenile Rehabilitation Center or alternative detention program.

The district director will conduct the review, meeting face-to-face with the resource family to review the decision and to hear the resource family’s point of view.

The resource family may bring a support person, and at the discretion of the reviewer, other persons who may be able to provide information relevant to the review. The district director’s decision will be based on the child’s best interest.

If the resource family is not satisfied with the district director’s decision, they may ask for a second-level review by the commissioner or designee. The commissioner’s decision is final.

At each level, the review meeting will be held within 10 days of the request, unless the resource family agrees to another time frame. Following the review meeting, the reviewer will send a letter to the resource family within 5 days, informing the resource family of the decision, a brief rationale for the decision, and any further avenues for formal review. If the decision cannot be made in that timeframe because more information is needed, the letter will give an anticipated time frame for the decision.

Unless there are immediate issues that affect the child’s immediate interest, the district director will defer the decision to move the child until the review is held. The district director may direct that the child be moved at any time, if the concerns are about the child’s safety.

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District Office Tasks

Note: Depending upon team structure with a district office, the exact person who completes each of these tasks may vary. It is important that a person with a relationship with and knowledge about the child complete tasks that require that context.

- Contacts resource caregiver(s) identified as appropriate for the child, and discusses information listed in policy above.
- Plans for the child's transition to the home, including a pre-placement visit for the child whenever possible (with the child's family if appropriate).
- Provides completed Placement Checklist and Medical Authorization to resource family promptly.
- Provides Medicaid card or number for eligible children. Discusses need for any routine or follow-up appointments.
- If needed, requests that resource caregiver document information about the child's contact with family.
- Completes/updates Placement/Adoption form ***within three working days of placement.***
- Promptly updates resource family on newly available information about the child.
- Solicits resource caregiver's assessment of child's needs and progress.
- Completes Caregiver Responsibility Agreement when indicated.
- Provides written notice of placement change, if required.
- Ensures that foster parents are notified of any post-disposition court hearing.

District Director Tasks

- Evaluates, and if appropriate, approves requests to move a child without notice to a resource family.
- If a review of the placement change is requested, adheres to policy guidelines.