



South Carolina Department of Social Services

Child Welfare Services Manual

510.1 Entry into Foster Care Policy

Effective Date: 8/8/2018

PURPOSE STATEMENT

Children removed to foster care suffer significant trauma. The agency is committed to minimizing this trauma to the greatest extent possible through trauma-informed initial procedures when a child enters into care. Further, to provide for prompt and stable provision of resources throughout a child's stay in care, the agency is committed to making these procedures efficient and comprehensive. The following section describes the policies and procedures to be followed when a child enters foster care.

POLICY

1. The agency shall notify the parent, guardian, or other person exercising temporary or permanent control over the child as early as reasonably possible of the nature and location of the child's placement unless there are compelling reasons for believing that disclosure of this information would be contrary to the best interests of the child.
2. Within 30 days of removal, the agency shall exercise due diligence to identify, provide notice to, and engage the following relatives: all grandparents, all parents of a sibling of the child (where such parent has legal custody of such sibling), and other adult kin of the child (including any other adult relatives suggested by the parents), subject to exceptions due to family or domestic violence. Refer to [510.3: Family Visitation policy](#) for further procedures.
3. If a child is a member or is eligible for membership in a recognized tribe, the agency shall notify the tribe immediately by telephone and in writing.
4. Upon entry into foster care, a child's eligibility for Medicaid will be automatically assessed through a cooperative agreement with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).
5. Upon entry into foster care, a child support referral is electronically generated to the case manager for completion.
6. The agency shall seek to place a child in close proximity to the school in which the child is currently enrolled and shall maintain the child in his or her school unless it is

documented that this is not in the child's best interests. Refer to [510.6: Educational Needs](#) for further procedures.

7. The agency shall immediately arrange for as much contact and visitation between the child and his or her kin as is reasonably possible and is consistent with the best interests of the child. The agency shall not recommend parental visitation of less than two times per month unless such a schedule is documented in a signed court order. These visits shall be presumed to be unsupervised unless the agency documents that supervision is in the child's best interests. Refer to [510.3: Family Visitation policy](#) for further procedures.
8. Reasonable efforts shall be made to place siblings removed from their home in the same placement. Exceptions will be considered if a clear and convincing rationale is documented and approved that demonstrates that such a joint placement would be contrary to the safety or well-being of any of the siblings. This rationale must include reference to and copies of evaluations by professionals and documentation of siblings' preferences if age appropriate. Should siblings be separated, reasonable efforts shall be made to provide for frequent visitation or other ongoing interaction between the siblings, unless a clear and convincing rationale is documented and approved that demonstrates that such contact would be contrary to the safety or well-being of any of the siblings. Refer to [510.5: Preserving Sibling Connections](#) for further procedures.

PROCEDURES

A. Routes to Entry

1. Emergency Removal

- a. If a child enters DSS custody via emergency protective custody (EPC) and no placement alternatives were identified by law enforcement or the case manager, the foster care case manager immediately moves the child to a foster care placement (refer to Section 510.2: Placement of a Child for further details). As soon as possible, the foster care case manager shall notify the DSS attorney of the need to initiate a probable cause hearing.
- b. If a child enters DSS custody through an ex parte order, the case manager immediately requests law enforcement assistance and picks up the child. The foster care case manager immediately moves the child to a foster care placement.
- c. If law enforcement assistance is utilized to remove a child from his or her home, the case manager (whenever possible) speaks to law enforcement about the officers' willingness to use strategies to minimize the trauma of removal. Such strategies may include but shall not be limited to providing the child with an explanation of the removal process, limiting the number of officers facilitating the removal, or deploying officers in civilian clothes rather than police uniforms.

2. Non-Emergency Removal Order

1. If a child enters DSS custody through a non-emergency removal order, the case manager shall request law enforcement assistance as needed to pick up the child and the foster care case manager shall immediately move the child to a foster care placement.
2. If law enforcement assistance is utilized to remove a child from his or her home, the worker shall (whenever possible) speak to law enforcement about the officers' willingness to use strategies to minimize the trauma of removal. Such strategies may include but shall not be limited to providing the child with an explanation of the removal process, limiting the number of officers facilitating the removal, or deploying officers in civilian clothes rather than police uniforms.

B. Initial Services for the Child

1. For the initial placement of the child, refer to 510.2: Placement of a Child.
2. For the initial formulation of the case plan for the child, refer to 510.4: Case Planning & Management.
3. At the time of removal, the case manager provides specific details to the child about where the child is being taken and how the initial placement process work
4. The case manager, in an age-appropriate manner, communicates with the child regarding the transition into foster care at the following times:
 - a. When a child is notified that he or she is going to be placed into foster care;
 - b. When a child and/or his or her possessions are physically removed from his or her home;
 - c. During the time period between removal and initial placement;
 - d. At initial placement;
 - e. At the first contacts with the child after placement; and
 - f. On an ongoing basis
5. The case manager discusses, at a minimum, the following topics with the child and shall provide the child with an opportunity to ask any questions about each topic:
 - a. The meaning and general structure of foster care and the child welfare system;
 - b. The reason for his or her placement into foster care (while reiterating that the child is not at fault for being removed from his or her family);
 - c. The child's relationship to his or her foster placement and the roles and obligations of the child, the foster placement, and child welfare professionals
 - d. The circumstances and context of the placement in which the child will be living (e.g., how the child's basic needs will be met, who will

- be responsible for meeting these needs, who the child may speak to when the child has concerns, who will be residing in the home, whether the placement has pets, and the rules of the placement);
 - e. The nature of the child's relationship to his or her parents and kin while in foster care;
 - f. The connections (e.g., friendships, personal items, spiritual practices, daily routines) that are important to the child and how to maintain these connections; and
 - g. How long the child can expect to be in foster care or the reasons that make this time frame unknown.
6. For information related to Safe Havens for Abandoned Infants, refer to Special Considerations below.
 7. For information related to voluntary placement, refer to [550.1: Voluntary Placement](#).
 8. For information related to voluntary relinquishment, refer to [Chapter 7: Adoption & Birth Parent Services](#).

c. Requirements at entry to foster care:

1. Obtain the child's belongings, including birth certificate, clothing, medication, schoolbooks, and any other item identified by the child as being important.
2. Provide each child with [DSS Form 30163: Foster Care Bill of Rights](#) and explain the rights to each child in an age-appropriate manner. If any of the children are 14 years or older or the provision of such a document is age-appropriate, the worker shall provide the child with [DSS Form : Youth's Rights Case Plan Addendum](#) and explain the rights to the child.
3. As soon as possible after removal, the foster care case manager shall obtain the child's long- form birth certificate and social security card. If a child's birth certificate indicates that the child is not a United States citizen, the case manager shall contact their county attorney to discuss procedures for obtaining proper documentation and to ensure proper immigration procedures are followed.
4. As soon as possible after removal, the foster care shall obtain the child's developmental history, recorded on [DSS Form 3057: Child's Developmental History Form](#), and identify any developmental delays that need follow up. The worker shall use [DSS Form 30242: Developmental Milestones Chart](#) as a guide in assessing delays.
5. The foster care case manager schedules the initial medical, dental, and mental health assessments as soon as possible based on the child's needs. However, an initial medical assessment or physical shall be scheduled within 24 hours of the child's removal; a mental health assessment shall be scheduled within 48 hours of the child's removal; and the dental assessment or exam shall be scheduled within 14 days of the child's removal. A comprehensive medical exam shall be scheduled within 30 days. Refer to [510.7: Health Needs & Medical Consent](#) for further procedures.
6. As soon as possible after the time of removal, the foster care case manager completes [DSS Form 30245: Education and Health Passport](#) with as much

information as is available. Refer to [510.6: Educational Needs](#) and [510.7: Health Needs & Medical Consent](#) for further procedures.

7. For children under the age of 3, the worker shall refer the child to BabyNet if any of the following apply:
 - a. The case has been indicated with the child as the subject;
 - b. The child has been affected by illegal substances or prenatal drug exposure; or
 - c. The child is suspected of having developmental delays or was born premature.
8. Note: The referral must be made within three business days of identification of the need. The referral must include either a court order or statement on agency letterhead verifying that DSS has custody. The case manager documents the referral to Baby Net in CAPSS. Refer to [510.7: Health Needs & Medical Consent](#) for further procedures.

D. Coordination with Foster Placement

1. At the time of placement, the foster care case manager provides such information to the foster placements as is necessary for the care of the child, including the nature of the maltreatment, medical and mental health history, relevant trauma history and any anticipated trauma based reactions, any behavioral problems, and any educational and cultural needs.
2. The worker shall give the completed [DSS Form 30245: Education and Health Passport](#) to the foster placement at the time of placement. Refer to [510.7: Health Needs & Medical Consent](#) for further procedures.
3. The worker shall provide contact information for the worker and his or her team leader, including emergency numbers.
4. The worker shall document the contact with the foster placement in CAPSS dictation.
5. For youth 14 or older, the worker shall begin transition planning and shall make appropriate referrals to the Chafee Program staff. Refer to [Section 510.4: Case Planning & Management](#) and [Section 530: Chafee Program](#) for further procedures.
6. The worker shall, in a trauma-sensitive and child-driven manner, take a photograph of the child upon entering foster care and place the picture in the case file.
7. As soon as possible after entry into foster care, the foster care case manager shall coordinate with the school to continue the child in the same school if possible and in the child's best interest. If the child can or should not remain in the same school, the case manager shall immediately enroll the child in school. Refer to [510.6: Educational Needs](#) for further procedures.
8. The foster care case manager shall begin gathering information, photographs, etc. at removal and shall begin the Life Book for the child.
9. During the first week of placement, and on a regular basis thereafter, the foster care case manager arranges a visit with the child's parents, siblings, or other significant adults, unless contrary to the welfare of the child, or as ordered by the court. Refer to [510.3: Family Visitation Policy](#) for further procedures.
10. If siblings have been separated, the worker shall arrange for frequent visitation or other ongoing interaction. The worker shall continue to explore options for

sibling reunification and sibling contact. Refer to [510.5 Preserving Siblings Connections](#) for further procedures.

E. Coordination with the Parent(s) or Other Kin

1. As soon as possible after removal, the case manager inquires with the family and child to determine if any of the child's parents or legal guardians are currently in active duty or similar military service. If so, the case manager notifies the DSS attorney immediately in order to confirm compliance with the Service Members Civil Relief Act.
2. The worker shall make a referral for Family Engagement Services within two syhours of the child's entry into foster care and shall coordinate with Family Engagement Services staff in facilitating the following activities:
 - a. Initial and ongoing diligent search efforts (refer to Section 510.3 for further procedures);
 - b. The initial Child and Family Team Meeting; and
 - c. Development of the child and family's placement plan.
3. As soon as reasonably possible, the worker shall notify the child's parent, guardian, or other person who has temporary or permanent control over the child of the nature and location of the child's placement, unless there are compelling reasons to believe that disclosure of this information would be contrary to the best interests of the child.
4. The worker shall assess the child's family for needs for emergency assistance or services. FLEX funds may be used to provide emergency assistance if appropriate.
5. The worker shall conduct a diligent search for absent parents and other kin within 30 days of removal, refer to [510.2: Placement of a Child](#) for further procedures.
6. All contacts with the parents or other kin shall be documented in CAPSS dictation.

F. Financial Procedures

1. Within 3 days of entry into foster care, the foster care case manager completes the payment type and start date on the Placement Information Screen in CAPSS to confirm receipt of board payments.
2. "Board Pay" should be selected for the majority of children in regular foster home or group home settings.
3. The worker shall select "No Board Pay" if any of the following apply:
 - a. The child is in a therapeutic or residential placement paid by Medicaid or the Interagency System of Care for Emotionally Disturbed Children (ISCEDC);
 - b. The child is in a placement for which costs are covered by special state contracts;
 - c. The child is in an Alliance Human Services therapeutic home; or
 - d. The child is in a medically fragile placement that is not part of the Midlands project.
4. Upon receipt of the order placing the child in DSS custody or a voluntary placement agreement, the worker shall initiate the IV-E application process. Refer to [510.9: Foster Care Title IV-E Eligibility](#) for further procedures.

5. The foster care case manager shall obtain information regarding the child's income, assets, and health insurance coverage.
6. If the child receives Social Security benefits, SSI funds, Veterans benefits, or other income, the foster care case manager take steps to redirect these funds to the State Treasurer account with DSS county office as the payee.
7. If a child's resources exceed the board rate by \$2,000 in SSI payments or \$10,000 in non-SSI income, the funds must be placed in a "true trust account" under Social Security and Medicaid guidelines
8. If the child's family has been receiving Family Independence or SNAP benefits, the worker shall notify the financial assistance worker of the child's removal.
9. If the child's custodian has been receiving child support on behalf of the child, the worker shall notify the Child Support Services Division (CCSD) of the child's removal.
10. The case manager completes the Child Support referral in the Child Support tab in CAPSS on all Title IV-E Foster Care cases. A referral should be completed on both the mother and the father. CCSD also receives referrals for children in regular foster care.

G. Special Considerations

1. Child is an "Indian Child"

- a. If a child is a member or eligible for membership in a federally recognized tribe, the worker shall notify the tribe as soon as possible, but in all cases notice shall be given at least 10 days prior to the child's removal/merits hearing (refer to Appendix C: ICWA for notification procedures).
- b. In notifying the tribe, the worker shall invite a representative of the tribe to participate in all upcoming court proceedings.
- c. The worker shall also notify the DSS attorney for further action.

2. Immigration Status

- a. If the child is not a U.S. citizen, the worker shall immediately notify the DSS attorney.

3. Infants Abandoned at a Safe Haven

- a. CWS staff shall immediately, upon receiving notice that a safe haven has taken physical control of a child less than 60 days old
- b. Notify foster care staff so that placement may be arranged; and
- c. Notify SLED for assistance in determining if the child has been reported missing.
- d. CWS or foster care case manager assumes physical control and arranges a placement for the child within 24 hours of the agency receiving notice. If the child is admitted to a hospital or hospital outpatient facility, the case manager assumes physical control within 24 hours of receiving notification that the child is ready for discharge.
- e. The foster care case manager, within 48 hours of the agency receiving notice of the abandoned infant, coordinates with the DSS attorney to file a petition requesting a hearing alleging:
 - i. The infant has been abandoned;

- ii. The court should dispense with reasonable efforts to preserve or reunify the family;
- iii. Continuation of keeping the infant in the home of the parent or parents would be contrary to the welfare of the infant; and
- iv. Termination of parental rights is in the best interest of the infant.
- f. The DSS attorney shall arrange for the hearing to take place within 30 to 60 days after the agency received notice that the child had been abandoned. The hearing shall be the permanency planning hearing for the child.
- g. The foster care case manager, within 48 hours of the agency receiving notice of the abandoned infant, coordinates with the DSS attorney and the Office of Communication and External Affairs to publish a notice regarding the child's abandonment in a newspaper of general circulation in the area where the child was abandoned and other broadcast and print media in the area. The notice must state:
 - i. the location of the safe haven; ii the circumstances of the abandonment; iii a description of the child; iv the date, time, and place of the permanency planning hearing; and v that anyone who wishes to assert his or her rights to the child must do so at the upcoming hearing.

Note: If the person leaving the infant identified anyone as being a parent of the infant, the notice must be sent by certified mail to the last known address of the person identified as a parent at least two weeks prior to the hearing.

- h. The foster care case manager shall coordinate with regional adoptions staff for coordination of placement and services.
- i. The foster care case manager attends and participates in the hearing on the petition.
- j. If the family court approves a permanent plan of adoption, the case manager coordinates with the DSS attorney to file a petition for termination of parental rights within ten days of receiving the permanency planning order. Refer to [Section 540.3: Relinquishment & Termination of Parental Rights](#) for further procedures.
- k. If the court does not approve a plan of adoption, the worker shall begin making efforts to finalize the plan approved by the court. Refer to [Section 520: Permanency Planning](#) for further procedures.
- l. The case manager shall otherwise manage the child's case in accordance with the policies and procedures set forth in this manual.

Documentation

- The child's demographic information, family composition, relationships, income, SSN, legal and placement data, medical and developmental information
- Results of diligent search efforts and notification to relatives

- Release of information forms for all medical, dental, vision, and educational providers
- Copies of referrals and applications for assessments and services
- Child support referral
- IV-E Application
- Verification of income
- Medicaid application and card
- Child's birth certificate, social security card, and immunization records
- Photo of the child
- Police reports for all addresses where child has resided
- Background check / CHRI on parents and/or caregivers
- Information contained in the Education and Health Passport
- Life Book information
- Best-interest determinations regarding sibling and school placement, if necessary
- Best-interest determinations regarding family visitation
- All contacts with clients and professionals

Collaboration

- foster care case manager
- foster care team leader
- Medicaid eligibility worker
- CWS assessment worker
- CWS assessment team leader
- Regional Adoptions Office
- biological parents
- foster parents
- service providers
- law enforcement

REFERENCES Legal Citations

42 U.S.C.A. § 671(a) (17): child support enforcement
 42 U.S.C.A. § 671(a) (21): health insurance for special needs children
 42 U.S.C.A. § 671(a) (27): immigration status verification
 42 U.S.C.A. § 671(a) (31): sibling connections
 42 U.S.C.A. § 675(1): school stability
 42 U.S.C.A. § 11432(g) (3) & 11434a (2): McKinney-Vento Act
 50 U.S.C.A. § 3901 et seq.: The Service Members Civil Relief Act
 45 C.F.R. § 1356.67: ICWA transfers
 S.C. Code Ann. § 59-38-10: school stability
 S.C. Code Ann. § 63-7-40: Safe Haven for Abandoned Babies
 S.C. Code Ann. § 63-7-630: disclosure to parent/guardian
 S.C. Code Ann. § 63-7-660: assumption of legal custody following EPC S.C. Code
 Ann. § 63-7-730: Expedited Relative Placement
 S.C. Code Ann. § 63-7-1680: provision of worker's card, fostering connections,
 disclosure to parent/guardian, visitation
 S.C. Code Ann. § 63-7-2310(A) (7): rights document
 S.C. Code Ann. § 63-7-2320 & 2330: kinship foster care, relative foster placement
 S.C. Code Ann. § 63-7-2370: provision of information to foster parents

Forms

[DSS Form 3057: Child's Developmental History Form](#)

[DSS Form 2738: Foster Care - Child Support Referral](#)

[DSS Form 30163: Foster Care Bill of Rights](#)

[DSS Form 30161: Youth's Rights Case Plan Addendum](#)

[DSS Form 30242: Developmental Milestones Chart](#)

[DSS Form 30245: Education and Health Passport](#)