



State of South Carolina

Department of Social Services

Policies and Procedures: Child Welfare Services

Subject:	513 Out of Country Travel
Authority:	Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act (P.L. 113-183, S.C. Code Sections 63-7-20(27) and 63-7-25
Standards:	Guiding Principles and Standards (GPS) Practice Model
Application:	Child Welfare Services Staff
Purpose:	
To guide case managers, team leaders, team coordinators, County Directors or Adoption Administrators, Regional Directors, and State Office staff in requesting and authorizing approved caregiver(s) to include foster parents, licensed kinship caregivers, group home providers, and unlicensed fictive kinship caregivers to travel outside the country with children in DSS custody.	
Policy Statement:	
Caregivers for children in foster care shall use the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard, as defined in S.C. Code Section 63-7-20(27) in determining whether to allow a child to participate in age or developmentally appropriate activities. DSS' approval is required prior to any travel with a child outside the United States. Case managers, team leaders, team coordinators, County Directors or Adoption Administrators, Regional Directors, and State Office staff assist with and authorize requests for out of country travel from foster parents, licensed kinship caregivers, group home providers, and unlicensed fictive kinship caregivers.	
The Deputy State Director of Child Welfare Services has the authority to consider and approve travel requests that do not fall within the timeframes outlined in this policy.	
Policy Administration:	
The Division of Child Welfare Services Office of Permanency is the owner of this policy. The Director, or the Directors' designee, will review it at least annually from the date published, or as needed due to changes in law or practice.	
Policy Guidelines:	
A. Request and Approval for Travel	- Foster parents, licensed and unlicensed kinship foster parents, and group home providers shall notify the case manager and case manager's team leader, in writing, at least two months in advance of any travel outside of the country, and the case manager shall document this notification in CAPSS dictation. - If a passport is required for travel, an advance notice of six months shall be provided as it can take up to 12 weeks to receive a passport after applying.

	2. After being notified of the travel plans, the case manager consults with their team leader, team coordinator, County Director or Adoption Administrator, and Regional Director, if applicable, to determine if there are any case management issues or reasons why travel would not be in the best interest of the child by: a. Obtaining consent from biological parent(s) if Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) has not been achieved; b. Determining if the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard is followed with consideration given to the child's age, attachment to the current caregiver(s), and the developmental and educational benefit of the travel; c. Verifying the foster child has necessary travel documents (e.g., birth certificate, passport, etc.) (Note: Please refer to Section D below for more information about obtaining a passport); d. Planning for proper medication management while abroad; e. Reviewing relevant court orders for any restrictions or specifications related to travel; f. Considering relevant travel advisories issued by the United States Department of State (Note: Please refer to Section C below for more information about travel advisories); and g. Notifying the Guardian ad Litem for the child of the travel plans. 3. If concerns arise concerning a proposed trip, a Special Call Child and Family Team Meeting (CFTM) shall occur for the County Director or Adoption Administrator to resolve disputes, and include, at a minimum, the child who will be traveling out of the country, family, case manager, team leader, team coordinator (if applicable), and County Director or Adoption Administrator. Note: Refer to Policy 1642: Child and Family Team Meetings and Work Aid 16.5: Child and Family Team Meetings for practice guidance on conducting Special Call CFTM's. 4. If it is determined there are no issues with case management that would prevent the child(ren) from traveling, the case manager shall assist the caregiver(s) in completing DSS Form 1104: Child Welfare Services Out of Country Travel and Medical Consent Request to include the following information: a. Child's name; b. Child's date of birth; c. Child's CAPSS ID; d. Child's Medicaid number; e. Trip justification including the purpose, dates, and itinerary with departure and destination location(s); f. Child's case manager's name and contact information; g. Case manager's team leader's name and contact information; h. Caregiver(s) name(s) and contact information; i. Afterhours contact information; and
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	j. Signatures from the case manager, team leader, and County Director or Adoption Administrator. 5. The County Director or Adoption Administrator shall forward DSS Form 1104, on behalf of the county, to their Regional Director to sign. 6. The Regional Director, after signing, shall forward the form to the Child Welfare Services (CWS) Assistant Regional Operations Director and Operations Director to sign. 7. Once the form is completed with all necessary signatures, the CWS Operations Director shall send the completed DSS Form 1104 along with the following to the Administrative Assistant of the Deputy State Director of CWS for the Deputy State Director of CWS to determine whether to approve of the travel and grant permission for the caregiver(s) to consent to medical treatment for the child(ren) for the duration of the trip: a. Court order stating who the child is in the custody of; and b. Any supporting documentation from parent(s) relinquishing their parental rights or approving the child(ren) to travel with foster parent(s) or caregiver(s). 8. If approval is granted, the Administrative Assistant for the Deputy State Director of Child Welfare Services shall: a. Draft a letter for the Deputy State Director of Child Welfare Services to sign which authorizes the travel and grants permission for the caregiver(s) to consent to medical treatment for a child for the duration of the trip; and b. Notarize or have notarized the signed Travel and Medical Consent Letter. Note: The agency 24-hour HelpLine shall be listed in the letter for the caregiver(s). 9. All supporting travel documentation included with the request must be uploaded in CAPSS linked files by the case manager within five business days of receiving.
B. Notification to Caregivers	1. Once travel plans are approved, the Administrative Assistant for the Deputy State Director of Child Welfare Services sends: a. The original copy of the Notarized Travel and Medical Consent Letter with the seal, via mail, to the caregiver(s) authorizing them to travel with the child(ren) and consent to medical treatment for the duration of the trip; and b. A copy of the Notarized Travel and Medical Consent Letter to the requesting office via email. 2. The case manager shall upload the Notarized Travel and Medical Consent Letter to CAPSS linked files no later than five days after receiving the letter.

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C. Travel Advisories	The United States Department of State issues travel advisories, Levels 1-4, for United States citizens traveling abroad so travelers can make informed decisions when deciding to travel abroad. 1. The case manager, team leader, team coordinator, County Director or Adoption Administrator, and Regional Director, if applicable, shall consider the travel advisories when deciding to authorize a travel request. The following outlines what the different levels mean: a. Level 1 – Exercise Normal Precautions • This is the lowest advisory level which emphasizes there is some risk in any travel abroad. b. Level 2 – Exercise Increased Caution • There are heightened risks to safety and security with more advice from the Department of State to travelers. c. Level 3 – Reconsider Travel • Serious risks to safety and security exist and additional advice for travelers in this area is provided by the Department of State. d. Level 4 – Do not travel • This is the highest travel advisory due to greater likelihood of life-threatening risks. 2. No child or youth in DSS custody shall travel to a country with a Level 3 or 4 travel advisory.
D. Obtaining a Passport	1. All children and youth, regardless of age, must have their own passport to travel abroad. Generally, a passport is not necessary when travelling abroad by cruise. A birth certificate is typically an acceptable form of identification, but the case manager shall verify that documentation and other requirements are met to travel abroad. 2. The foster parent(s), caregiver(s), or other individual who applies for the passport on behalf of the child or youth is responsible for the associated fees. 3. For specific documentation required for a child or youth in DSS custody to obtain a passport, please refer to the United States Department of State website.
E. Critical Incident Reporting	1. If at any time during the trip abroad a Critical Incident occurs, the incident must be reported as specified in the Critical Incident Reporting Policy and Critical Incident Response Protocol Flow Chart. 2. If cellular service is not available, the Critical Incident must be reported as soon as service (whether cellular or Wi-Fi) is available. 3. The 24-hour Agency HelpLine (1-1-800-645-6789) may be contacted for emergency situations. 4. The United States Embassy (1-202-501-4444) in the country where the family is traveling may also be contacted in the event there is a

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	situation which requires embassy support such as lost or stolen passports, financial assistance, contacting home, coordinating, and resolving issues with visas, etc. Note: Please refer to the official list of embassies from the United States Department of State.
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Forms:	DSS Form 1104: Child Welfare Services Out of Country Travel and Medical Consent Request
Related Management Reports:	N/A

Glossary:
Caregiver: a person responsible for a child's daily care in a placement setting whom a child in the care, custody, or guardianship of the agency is placed for temporary or long-term care (i.e., foster parents, licensed kinship caregivers, group home providers, and unlicensed fictive kinship caregivers) Child and Family Team Meeting (CFTM): a family-centered, culturally responsive, goal-oriented, and problem-solving process that brings together the Child and Family Team (CFT) to make decisions about the safety, permanency, and well-being of children in the development of an individualized Family Permanency Plan (FPP) Critical Incident: an incident resulting in the imminent risk of suffering serious bodily or emotional injury of a child known to DSS