



State of South Carolina

Department of Social Services

Policies and Procedures: Child Welfare Services

Subject:	511 Group Care Utilization Management
Authority:	S.C. Code Section 63-11-10, <i>et seq.</i> , and S.C. Code of Regulations 114-590 through 114-595
Standards:	Guiding Principles and Standards (GPS) Practice Model
Application:	All Child Welfare Services Staff
Purpose:	This policy guides the decision making, approval, and utilization of short-term, high-quality treatment in a small facility to work with the entire family when therapeutic services are needed and cannot be met in a family like setting.
Policy Statement:	1. Children in foster care shall be placed in the least restrictive, most family like setting, with preference being given to placement with kinship caregivers whenever it is safe to do so. 2. Group care placement shall be utilized only when necessary to meet the individualized needs of the child and only for so long as such placement is necessary to meet the child's needs. 3. No child under the age of 12 shall be placed in group care without the prior approval of the Deputy State Director of Child Welfare Services or the Senior Child Welfare Services Director, based upon a showing of good cause for such placement as outlined in this policy. 4. No child shall be placed initially or remain in a therapeutic group care placement without written documentation supporting the conclusion that the child's treatment needs can only be met in a group care placement. 5. No child may be placed in a DSS office, hotel, motel, or other commercial location without prior approval of the Deputy State Director of Child Welfare Services or Senior Child Welfare Services Director, based upon a showing of good cause for such placement. 6. All group care authorization timeframes begin from the date the child is placed in group care.
Policy Administration:	The Child Welfare Services Operations and Permanency Divisions are the owners of this policy. The Directors', or the Directors' designee, shall review this policy at least annually from the date published in the Child Welfare Services Policy Manual, or as needed due to changes in law or practice.

Subject: Group Care Utilization Management

Policy Guidelines:	
A. Criteria for Therapeutic Level of Services – Moderate Group Care Utilization Management	1. The Moderate Group Care setting provides structured supervision and programming for children with treatment needs who are not able to be served in a regular foster family home (kinship or unrelated), or therapeutic foster home setting; 2. Children in this group care placement level have less intensive emotional or behavioral issues than those in a Qualified Residential Treatment Program (QRTP) or Enhanced Group Care; and 3. Children have a Care Coordinator within the program.
B. Criteria for Therapeutic Level of Services – Enhanced Group Care Setting Utilization	1. The Enhanced Group Care setting provides highly structured supervision and programming to serve children with treatment needs who are not able to be served in a regular foster family home (kinship or unrelated) or therapeutic foster home setting; 2. Children in this group care placement level have more intensive emotional or behavioral issues than those in Moderate Group Care but cannot be served in a QRTP; and 3. Children have a Care Coordinator within the program.
C. Authorization for Placing a Child in Group Care Under the Age of 12	1. DSS cannot place a child aged 12 or younger in a group care setting unless the Regional Director has given prior approval, and at least one of the following exceptions are met: a. The child requires a degree of clinical and medical support that can only be provided in group care, and the placement is a facility that has the capacity and specialized treatment to meet the child's needs. The determination of clinical need must be based on a decision issued by a Licensed Practitioner of the Healing Arts (LPHA) within the scope of their practice under SC State Law who is not a DSS employee. A physician must determine medical necessity. b. The child is the son or daughter of another child placed in group care (applicable to children ages 0-6 only). c. The child is a member of a sibling group of four or larger and reasonable efforts to secure a foster family home have failed. The group care facility must be able to accommodate the placement of the sibling group and maintain daily contact between the siblings. Group care placement shall not exceed 90 days; however, time-limited exceptions may be made if an extension of time is in the best interest of the child and the agency has documented intensive and ongoing efforts to secure a family-like placement for the siblings. d. The child has been removed and is in the legal custody of DSS and placed with a parent who is not in DSS custody, but who is temporarily in a residential group setting for treatment.

Subject: Group Care Utilization Management

	2. The Group Care Management Coordinator must provide notification to the Child Welfare Services Assistant Regional Operations Director within one business day of approval.
D. Overview of Management Approvals	1. Team Leaders must request group care placements (new entries) via DSS Form 1563, continued stays via DSS Form 1563A, in addition to other required documents outlined in Section E of Work Aid 511.1: Group Care Utilization Management Process. 2. Approvals are valid for the following durations: a. New Entries: • Emergency approval is valid for up to five business days as approved by the County Director or Adoption Administrator • Provisional approval is valid for up to 30 days as approved by the County Director or Adoption Administrator in consultation with the Well-Being Manager b. In Care Entries (move to group care): • Provisional approval is valid up to 35 days as approved by the County Director or Adoption Administrator following the Placement Child and Family Team Meeting (PCFTM) in consultation with the Well-Being Manager. c. Approval beyond 35 days for a therapeutic group care setting may be granted by the Regional Director and Placement Team Coordinator. If approved, this is valid for 60 days. d. Continued placement in therapeutic group care settings beyond 90 days must be approved by the Child Welfare Services Assistant Regional Operations Director, Child Health and Well-Being Lead Clinical Specialist, the Placement Services Director, and the Child Welfare Services Permanency Director. If approved, this is valid for an additional 45 days. e. Continued placement in therapeutic group care settings beyond 135 days must be approved by the Child Welfare Services Directors of Operations and Child Health and Well-Being. If approved, this is valid for an additional 45 days. f. Continued placement in therapeutic group care settings beyond 180 days must be approved by the Deputy State Director of Child Welfare Services or the Senior Child Welfare Services Director. 3. For stays in a group care setting beyond 35 days, the following constitutes the basis for approval: a. DSS Form 1561 supports the therapeutic need; b. There are services being provided to the family and child that cannot be completed in a family-like setting; c. The CANS recommends a therapeutic level of care; and d. DSS Form 37509, the Universal Application, and DSS Form 37507 is thoroughly completed or updated with new information.

Subject: Group Care Utilization Management

	4. Any therapeutic group care placement beyond 90 days is an exception to this policy. Note: Please refer to Appendix A and B in Work Aid 511.1 for the GCUM New Entry and In-Care timelines.
E. Overview of Teaming and Shared Decision Making	1. The following placement decisions shall be informed by team decision making: - New Entries; - In Care Entries; and - Approval requests at group care stays extending beyond 35, 90, 135, and 180 day intervals. 2. Child and Family Team Meeting (CFTM) requirements are as follows: - When a child enters foster care, the following CFTMs shall occur: - Initial CFTM must occur within one business day; 25-Day CFTM must be facilitator led; - Every 90 days a CFTM must occur and be led by a skilled certified CFTM facilitator from placement staff; and - A Special Call CFTM can be requested by the family, provider, or DSS staff at any time during the active case. - When an in-care foster child moves to a therapeutic group care placement, the following CFTMs must occur: - Placement CFTM shall be held within 72 hours if not completed with the group care provider prior to the placement occurring; - Every 90 days a CFTM must occur and be led by a skilled certified CFTM facilitator from placement staff; and - A Special Call CFTM can be requested by the family, provider, or DSS staff at any time during the active case. Note: Please refer to Work Aid 16.5: Child and Family Team Meetings for additional practice guidance. 3. Joint case consultations must occur between CFTMs with internal and external partners for teaming to address placement approvals, service needs, and ongoing efforts to locate a family-like setting. The following is applicable for joint case consultations: - For new entries, a joint case consultation must occur no later than three business days from the emergency approval (Note: Emergency approval is considered to be the date placement is made into group care); and - Joint case consultations must occur no later than five days prior to a request for continued placement in therapeutic group care in accordance with the following: - They are co-led by the Placement Team and the applicable program area team lead;

Subject: Group Care Utilization Management

	ii. The Well-Being Team is required to attend and facilitate the completion of DSS Form 1561; iii. Group care providers are required to be invited; and iv. The County Director or Adoption Administrator attends and determines whether an Initial Approval will be requested of the Regional Director and Placement Team Coordinator.
F. Ongoing Search and Engagement for Non-Kin or Kin Foster Family Homes	1. Case managers must complete concerted efforts for family or fictive kin, bi-weekly, utilizing DSS Form 2632. 2. A placement coordinator must complete concerted efforts for a less restrictive, family-like setting, weekly, utilizing DSS Form 37509.
G. Child Does Not Meet Therapeutic Group Care Criteria – Placed in Therapeutic Placement	1. Children placed in a therapeutic setting under the 35-Day approval process whose assessments do not support the 35-Day criteria must have a Therapeutic Services Staffing to develop a transition plan to step the child into a family like setting. The transition plan must be submitted within three business days to the Child Welfare Services Operations, Child Health and Well-Being, and Placement Services Division Directors or their designee. 2. Any continued placement in a therapeutic group care setting beyond 35 days is an exception to the policy. An additional stay request can only be submitted by the Regional Director and Placement Team Coordinator for approval by the Directors of Child Welfare Services Operations and Child Health and Well-Being. 3. Any continued placement in a therapeutic group care setting beyond 60 days is an exception to the policy. An additional stay request may only be submitted by the Regional Director and Placement Team Coordinator and reviewed by the Directors of Child Welfare Services Operations and Child Health and Well-Being for approval by the Deputy State Director of Child Welfare Services or the Senior Child Welfare Services Director. 4. An administrative paper review with an option to request a special call case consultation if more information is needed shall occur, and the following documents shall be provided to the Child Welfare Services Operations Director: a. The child's completed Universal Application; b. Completed Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) Multipurpose Information Integration Tool; c. DSS Form 37507; d. Child and Family Team Meeting (CFTM) notes; e. DSS Form 37509; and f. DSS Form 1561.

Subject: Group Care Utilization Management

	5. If the request for group care is denied, the Child Welfare Services Operations and Child Health and Well-Being Directors or their designee returns with recommendations for the regional team to work with county staff regarding in-home services, kinship placement foster care, or non-kin foster care placement.
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Forms:	DSS Brochure 509: Group Care Utilization Management DSS Form 1561: Therapeutic Determination Plan (TDP) DSS Form 1563: Group Care New Entry Request DSS Form 1563A: Group Care Continued Stay Request DSS Form 2632: Child Welfare Search Effort Guide DSS Form 3062: Team Leader Case Consultation DSS Form 37507: Placement Exception Request DSS Form 37509: Diligent Efforts to Provide Licensed Foster Placement
Related Management Reports:	Accountability, Data, and Research (ADR) reports: Monthly Emergency Placement and Congregate Care Report

Glossary:

Group Care: means a residential organization including residential institutions and childcare institutions, licensed by DSS to provide temporary or long-term residential care for children on a year-round basis. The term also includes emergency shelters. Boarding schools that do not operate year-round nor offer services beyond those associated with school programs are not group care facilities. DSS further categorizes group care facilities into non-specified group care settings and specified group care settings.

- Moderate Level of Group Care Setting: Moderate group care programs provide supervision and programming required to manage children who for a variety of reasons cannot reside in a lesser restrictive community-based setting (foster home). These children present less intensive needs than those in a Qualified Residential Treatment Program (QRTP) or Enhanced Group Care.
- Enhanced Level of Group Care Setting: The purpose of Enhanced group care is to provide more extensive supervision for children who for a variety of reasons cannot reside in a lesser restrictive community-based setting (foster home) or in Moderate Group Care.

Child and Family Team Meeting (CFTM): a family-centered, culturally responsive, goal-orientated, problem-solving process that brings together the child and family team to make decisions about the safety, permanency, and well-being of their children in the development of an individualized Family Permanency Plan.

Family Permanency Plan (FPP): the sole plan for a family that is developed collaboratively with the child and family team to describe the reasons for agency

Subject: Group Care Utilization Management

involvement, the actions, and services required to change behaviors and reduce safety concerns and risks, and promote the safety, permanency, and well-being of the child and family.

Foster Family Home: the home of an individual or family licensed by DSS who provides 24 hour substitute care for the child in foster care that DSS deems capable of adhering to the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard; and, that provides foster care for no more than five children, subject to the following exceptions:

- a. To keep a sibling group together;
- b. To keep a child in their home community;
- c. To return a child to a home in which they were previously placed;
- d. To comply with a court order; or
- e. If it is in the best interests of the child as determined by the court.

Kinship Caregiver: a caretaker, protector, and nurturer of a child who is temporarily unable to live with their parent which may include an adult who is related to a child by blood, marriage, or adoption, as well as an adult who is not related by blood, marriage, or adoption, but who has a relationship with the child or their family (fictive kin).

Therapeutic Determination Plan (TDP): to identify what supports may be necessary to meet the needs of the child. The information and actions are required for formal consideration of a therapeutic level of care and will be the basis of the treatment plan.