State of South Carolina
Department of Social Services

**Policies and Guidelines: Child Welfare Services**

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| **Title** | Significant Events |
| **Document No.** | 1601 |
| **Authority** | S.C. Code Ann. 63-7-1680; S.C. Code Ann. 63-7-2310; S.C. Code Ann. 63-7-25 |
| **Standards** | Guiding Principles and Standards (GPS) Practice Model |
| **Application** | All Child Welfare Staff |
| **Purpose** | |
| To establish clear guidelines for case managers supporting children in foster care as they participate in significant events involving their parents, guardians, siblings, maternal and paternal relatives, fictive kin, and any other significant connections. | |
| **Policy Statement** | |
| The South Carolina Department of Social Services (DSS), Division of Child Welfare Services staff shall utilize team leader consultations and Child and Family Team Meetings to collaborate and provide children in the custody of DSS the opportunity to participate in and attend significant events with their family of origin; unless participation is prohibited by court order or is contrary to a child's safety or well-being. | |
| **Policy Administration** | |
| The Division of Child Welfare Services' Office of Operations is the owner of this policy. The Operations Director, or their designee, shall review this policy annually from the date published in the Child Welfare Services Policy Manual, or as needed due to changes in law or practice. | |
| **Policy Guidelines** | |
| A. Significant Events | 1. Significant events are important occurrences that may have a long-term impact on an individual's life and helps to reinforce and preserve familial connections which include, but are not limited to:<br>a. weddings,<br>b. funerals,<br>c. graduations,<br>d. childbirths,<br>e. birthday gatherings of parent (s), guardian(s), sibling(s), maternal/paternal relatives, fictive kin, and<br>f. other significant connections of children in the legal custody of the Department.<br>2. A child's participation in a significant event is supplementary and does not replace court-ordered parent or sibling visitations. However, this interaction may be documented to demonstrate family engagement. |

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| | 3. A child's ability to participate in and attend significant events shall not be withheld as a method of punishment, discipline, or correction. |
| B. Case Management Activities for Significant Events | 1. A Team Leader Case consultation and/or a Special Call Child and Family Team Meeting (CFTM) must occur to determine a child's eligibility to participate in a significant event; unless the child's attendance is court-ordered.<br>2. Upon notice of an upcoming significant event for a child, case managers shall:<br>a. Determine the significant event type,<br>b. Project and review any anticipated financial obligations in coordination with the county or the permanency director, (any ordinary and reasonable associated costs should not serve as a barrier), and<br>c. Document the significant event in CAPSS dictation as a "Significant Event" within five (5) business days of receiving notification of the upcoming significant event, not to exceed the date of the event.<br>3. Case managers shall then conduct a Team Leader Case Consultation to determine how to inform the child of the significant event; particularly if the notification (and subsequent participation) could elicit a trauma response.<br>4. If necessary, case managers shall request assistance from the Child and Family Team (CFT) via a Special Call CFTM for team decision-making and planning (refer to Section D for Special Call CFTM guidelines). Case managers shall document:<br>a. The CFT's approval of attendance within five (5) business days of approving a child's attendance at an event, not to exceed the date of the event.<br>b. The CFT's determination that the child's participation in a Significant Event is contrary to the child's best interest.<br>5. If it is determined that a Special Call CFTM is not necessary, case managers shall notify all necessary parties (which may include the child) of the decision made during the Team Leader Case Consultation.<br>6. Case managers shall make all necessary arrangements for a child to attend a significant event, if the event is not contrary to the child's best interest.<br>a. Travel Plan: within five (5) business days of the event, to include:<br>i. Location of the event;<br>ii. Transportation information; and<br>iii. Time of pick-up and return.<br>7. Case managers shall encourage caregivers to document direct knowledge of happenings that occur during a child's |

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| | attendance at a significant event, by using one of the following methods:<br>a. The Child and Adult Information Portal (CAIP)<br>i. Be advised that all caregivers do not have access to CAIP. The CAIP is predominantly used by licensed foster parents, therapeutic foster parents, and kinship foster parents<br>ii. Actions in the CAIP auto-populate into the CAPSS Visitation Portal Tab.<br>8. If a caregiver (or another adult pre-approved by DSS) accompanies a child at a significant event and does not have access to the CAIP or KaleidaCare portals, case managers shall verify the child's participation and document the event in CAPSS.<br>9. Case managers shall document any notification of a critical incident occurring at a significant event, in accordance with Policy 1641: Critical Incident Reporting. |
| C. Team Leader Expectations | 1. Team leaders shall facilitate case consultations with case managers to discuss significant events and determine if a Special Call CFTM is necessary for team decision-making and planning.<br>2. Team leaders shall document case consultations.<br>***Note**: Refer to Policy 1644: Team Leader Case Consultation for additional documentation guidance.*<br>3. Team leaders shall participate in a Special Call CFTM, if necessary, to address any concerns over a child's proposed attendance at a significant event.<br>4. Team leaders shall support case managers in making arrangements for a child to attend a significant event.<br>5. Team leaders shall verify case managers document any critical incident(s) that occur during a significant event, in accordance with Policy 1641: Critical Incident Reporting. |
| D. Special Call Child and Family Team Meetings for Significant Events | 1. Case managers shall consult with applicable members of the CFT by convening a Special Call CFTM regarding a child's attendance at a significant event, when necessary. During the Special Call CFTM, the CFT shall consider the following when planning and determining if it is in a child's best interest to attend a significant event:<br>a. Age of the child;<br>b. The safety and well-being of the child;<br>c. The relationship between the child and their parent(s), guardian(s), sibling(s), maternal and paternal relatives, fictive kin, and other significant connections;<br>d. The expressed wishes of the child (when developmentally appropriate);<br>e. Recommendation(s) of the child's healthcare and/or mental health provider(s); |

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| | f. Type of supervision necessary to accompany the child; such as DSS staff, foster parent(s), relative(s), or another approved person responsible for a child's welfare);<br>g. Travel arrangements (when applicable, refer to Policy 513: Out of Country Travel for information on agency authorization for travel outside of the United States and consent to medical treatment while abroad.).<br>2. If the CFT collectively determines it is or is not in a child's best interest to attend a significant event, case managers shall document the decision made regarding the child's participation in a significant event. |
| E. Documentation | 1. When a child is approved to attend a significant event, the case manager shall include the following in CAPSS dictation:<br>a. Source of the notification;<br>b. Type of Significant Event and any financial obligations;<br>c. Participants involved as it pertains to the child;<br>d. Date and time of the planned or scheduled significant event;<br>e. Location of the significant event; and<br>f. Duration of the significant event.<br>2. After the event concludes, the case manager shall document in CAPSS dictation a detailed account of the event to include, but not be limited to:<br>a. Interactions between the participants;<br>b. Any concerns regarding the event; and<br>c. How concerns were addressed. |

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| **Forms and Related Documents** | N/A |
| **Related Management Reports** | N/A |

| **Glossary** |
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| **Caregiver:** a person responsible for the child's daily care in a foster placement setting (i.e. kinship caregiver, fictive-kin caregiver, foster parent, group care provider, etc.) |
| **Case Manager:** child welfare certified staff with a classification of Caseworker I or above |
| **Child:** a person under eighteen years in in the care, custody, or guardianship of DSS |
| **Child and Adult Information Portal (CAIP):** a virtual platform used to view and share health, education and well-being information about children in foster care. The CAIP is used by licensed foster parents, therapeutic foster parents, and kinship foster parents with access. |
| **Child and Family Team (CFT):** a team of family members, fictive kin, friends, professionals, and other invested stakeholders who join together to support a family |

and provide a protection and care plan for the child to achieve safety, permanency and well-being

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

**Fictive Kin:** a person who is not related to the child by blood, marriage, or adoption but who is known to the family, has a substantial and positive relationship with the child, and is willing and able to provide a suitable home for the child

**Guardian:** an adult, other than a parent, from whose placement and care the child was removed and with whom the agency is working toward reunification

**Parent:** mother or father, whether biological or adoptive, from whom the child was removed and with whom the agency is working toward reunification

**Sibling:** a child who has one or more parents in common biologically, through adoption, or through the marriage of their parents, and with whom the child lived before entering foster care

**Significant Event:** an important occurrence that could potentially have a long-term impact on an individual's life that helps to reinforce and preserve familial connections which include, but not limited to, weddings, funerals, graduations, births, or birthday events

**Visitation:** an intentional face-to-face interaction between a child and their parents, non-custiodial parents, guardians, siblings, other family members, or other significant person in the child's life