

# **550.3 Pregnant & Parenting Youth in Foster Care**

**South Carolina Department of Social Services**

**Human Services Policy and Procedure Manual**

## **CHAPTER 5, Foster Care & Permanency Planning**

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550.3 Pregnant & Parenting Youth in Foster Care

## **PURPOSE STATEMENT:**

Youth who become pregnant in foster care or who enter foster care with a child require additional supports to meet their needs and to support their roles as parents. The following section sets forth the policies and procedures to be adhered to in providing services and supports to parenting or pregnant foster care youth.

## **POLICY:**

1. The agency shall make every effort to honor the wishes of the foster care youth who is pregnant; however, the safety of the infant will be of paramount concern.
2. The agency shall not seek custody of the child of a foster care youth solely on the basis of the youth's placement in foster care. However, agency staff shall make an intake report as set forth in [Chapter 2: Intake](#) whenever agency staff has reasonable cause to believe that the foster care youth's child is at substantial and imminent risk of abuse or neglect.
3. When possible, parenting youth and their children will be placed together in foster family homes.
4. Foster care maintenance payments made on behalf of a child placed in a foster family home or childcare institution, who is the parent of a son or daughter in the same home or institution, must include amounts which are necessary to cover costs incurred on behalf of the child's son or daughter. The foster parent or the institution should assist the minor parent in using the funds for the purposes allowed by IV-E regulations.

## **PROCEDURES:**

### **1. Initial Response**

- a. When the Foster Care/IFCCS Worker becomes aware of the possibility that a foster child may be pregnant, the worker shall coordinate a referral to a physician or the local health department to confirm the pregnancy.
- b. As soon as possible after confirming the pregnancy, the worker shall assist the foster care youth in obtaining prenatal services and related counseling on issues surrounding pregnancy.
- c. If parental rights have not been terminated, the worker shall notify the youth's parents that their daughter is pregnant.
- d. If the agency has reason to suspect a violation of law has occurred (i.e., incest), then the worker shall notify law enforcement.
- e. If the pregnant youth indicates a desire to relinquish the child for adoption, the worker and the child shall meet with Regional Adoptions staff.
- f. The worker shall contact school officials as needed to determine how the specific school handles educational services for pregnant youth.
- g. The worker shall meet with pregnant youth to discuss the following issues:
  - i. preferences, placement options, and plans for the care of the baby;
  - ii. array of resources available to the youth including parenting skills;
  - iii. identification of, and the role and involvement of the biological father with the baby and mother;
  - iv. rights of the alleged father to be informed by the agency about the pregnancy and challenge paternity; and
  - v. The pregnant youth's educational needs and future employment goals.

### **2. Ongoing Services for Parenting Youth**

- a. The Foster Care/IFCCS Worker shall confirm that the parenting youth's case plan is individualized to meet the youth's needs and goals. At a minimum, the youth's plan should include (in addition to other provisions):
  - i. various independent living strategies (budgeting, shopping, taxes, job hunting, leasing, etc.) to help prepare the parents towards self-sufficiency (refer to [Section 530](#));
  - ii. parenting skills classes for the teen parent;
  - iii. educational needs and/ or vocational goals;
  - iv. Input from the foster parents or others serving as part of the adolescent's resource network.

- b. The Foster Care/IFCCS Worker shall consider the following resources for the youth:
  - i. county health department programs (prenatal checkups, children's health clinics, early and periodic screenings, diagnosis, and treatment for children on Medicaid, immunizations, WIC, health education, screening for and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases, evaluation, and treatment of children with physical handicaps or chronic illness);
  - ii. agency services (i.e., Family Independence, Medicaid, transportation, Child Support Enforcement, general case management); and
  - iii. Family members or other kin.
- c. The Foster Care/IFCCS Worker shall continually assess whether there are safety or risk issues while the child remains in the youth's care. If the worker believes that the foster youth's child is at substantial and imminent risk of harm, the worker shall make an intake report as set forth in [Chapter 2: Intake](#).
- d. As long as the youth and child are placed together and no removal action is taken, the agency shall schedule Foster Care Review Board meetings and Permanency Planning hearings only for the youth.
- e. The Foster Care/IFCCS Worker shall defer to the mother's consent regarding medical treatment unless the mother refuses to consent to medical services for illnesses or injuries that are considered permanently harmful or life-threatening. If the mother refuses such medical services, the worker shall consult with the DSS Attorney to pursue court intervention.
- f. The worker shall document all contacts with the youth and child, as well as all efforts to support the youth-child relationship, in CAPSS dictation.

### **3. Placement of the Youth and Child**

- a. Unless removal proceedings or voluntary placement is pursued, the Foster Care/IFCCS Worker shall place the youth and child together. The worker shall place the youth and child in a foster family home if one is available and appropriate.
- b. If the youth and child are placed together, the worker shall contact the State IV-E Coordinator to confirm that the board payment for the youth includes the additional amounts which are necessary to cover costs incurred on behalf of the child's son or daughter.
- c. If, after the worker has made reasonable efforts to place them together, the child may no longer be placed with the youth, the Foster Care/IFCCS Worker shall explore one of the following options to confirm the child's IV-E eligibility:

- i. completing a voluntary placement agreement with the youth (refer to [Section 550.1: Voluntary Placement](#) for further procedures); or
  - ii. Consulting with the DSS Attorney to file a removal petition.
- If a youth and child are separated under one of the above mechanisms, the worker shall make at least reasonable efforts to reunify the youth and child. The child will be entitled to all procedural requirements afforded to other foster children under federal and state law and this manual.

## **SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS:**

### **1. Child in Foster Care Planning Marriage**

- a. If a youth aged 16 or 17 wishes to marry, the Foster Care/IFCCS Worker shall staff the case with his or her supervisor to determine if agency consent to the marriage is in the child's best interests. Prior to facilitating such a staffing, the worker shall determine whether the youth's prospective spouse is 16 or 17 and whether the prospective spouse is obtaining the proper consent.
- b. If pregnancy or birth of a child has been established by a physician's report, the worker shall only have the authority to consider consent if the youth in care is a parenting or pregnant female.

### **2. Child Requests an Abortion**

- a. If a pregnant youth is under the age of 17 and indicates a desire to seek an abortion, the worker shall inform the youth of the need to obtain consent from the child's parent or grandparent (if rights have not been terminated). The agency, as the child's legal guardian, shall not consent to an abortion.
- b. If the minor cannot obtain the requisite consent, the worker shall refer the youth to Regional Adoptions staff, who shall (within 48 hours) assist the minor in petitioning the Family Court for the right to obtain an abortion (refer to [Section 410.02: Birth Parent Services – Service Plan](#)).
- c. If consent for an abortion is obtained, the worker shall consult with Medicaid staff regarding any abortion procedure coverage.

### **3. Involvement of the Child's Father**

- a. If the child's father has been identified (or established through paternity tests or acknowledgment of paternity) and the father is seeking ongoing involvement with the baby, the Foster Care/IFCCS Worker shall involve the father in case planning and visitation.
- b. If in the best interests of the youth and child, the worker shall complete a child support referral on behalf of the mother.

### **DOCUMENTATION:**

- ♦ Contacts with child and family
- ♦ Correspondence with professionals and agency staff
- ♦ Medical records
- ♦ Copies of youth and child's plan

### **COLLABORATION:**

- ♦ Foster Care/IFCCS Worker
- ♦ Foster Care/IFCCS Supervisor
- ♦ Adoptions Specialist
- ♦ DSS Attorney
- ♦ Biological Family
- ♦ Family Court
- ♦ Medical & Counseling Providers
- ♦ School Staff
- ♦ Law Enforcement

## **REFERENCES:**

### **Legal Citations:**

45 C.F.R. § 1356.21(j): IV-E payment amounts

S.C. Code Ann. § 20-1-10 et seq.: marriages

S.C. Code Ann. § 44-41-10 et seq.: abortions

### **Tools:**

### **Forms:**

### **Practice Guidance:**

## **REVISION COMMENTS:**