

## Child Care Protection

The Family Independence Act of South Carolina assures parents that they may not be sanctioned for a work program requirement if appropriate child care is not available.

The following issues will be considered in determining that you are unable to obtain adequate child care:

- Appropriate child care within a reasonable distance from your home or work place is unavailable.
- Informal child care by a relative or other arrangements are unavailable or unsuitable.
- Appropriate and affordable formal child care arrangements are unavailable.

### Definitions:

- **Appropriate Child Care:** Child care which, in the opinion of the agency and with the understanding of the parent, is suitable for the development and nurturing needs of the child.
- **Reasonable Distance:** A fair and practical distance to a child care facility that will not prohibit or interrupt FI Work Program participation.
- **Unsuitability of Informal Child Care:** Informal child care providers that do not comply with health and safety requirements developed by the Department of Social Services (DSS).
- **Affordable Child Care Arrangements:** Arrangements determined affordable by DSS based on market rate survey of child care providers.

## FAMILY INDEPENDENCE

### Reporting Requirements and Fraud Penalties

Report any changes in your status within 10 days. If you don't, you may be considered withholding information, and DSS can recover any benefits paid in error.

Report this information by either writing a letter, calling DSS Connect at 1-800-616-1309, or by using the Change Report Form for recipients of FI benefits/services, DSS Form 12119, to report.

Reporting changes is key to receiving your benefits. Changes you must report within 10 days include:

- Obtaining a job.
- Losing a job.
- Change in residence.
- Persons leaving or entering your home except:  
When you learn that a member of your family temporarily living away from home will not return to your home; you must **report this change within five days.**

### FI Fraud Penalties:

- You may be subject to prosecution for fraud if you knowingly give false, incorrect or incomplete information in order to receive or try to receive or help someone else receive FI benefits.
- You will be required to pay back all or part of the FI benefits received improperly for any person.

DSS Brochure 3735 (MAY 15)  
Edition of MAY 00 is obsolete.

South Carolina  
Department of  
Social Services

Family  
Independence  
Application  
Information

Your Key to  
Economic  
Independence

The purpose of the Family Independence Program is to provide financial assistance while providing people with the skills and confidence needed to get jobs and take responsibility for their lives and their families.

FAMILY INDEPENDENCE

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### Applicant Support Services

The Department of Social Services is committed to providing support services to applicants who appear to be eligible for Family Independence (FI) benefits.

The Applicant Support Services are to assist you in the following ways:

- Conducting the initial job search.
- Obtaining employment.

These services may include:

- Child care.
- Work related expenses.
  - Tools
  - Uniforms
- One time expenses.
  - Rent
  - Utilities
  - Auto Supplies
  - Repairs

If you get a job during the application period and the income from this job makes you ineligible for the FI check, you could be granted up to four months of Applicant Support Services, with the exception of child care.

You must complete the application interview and provide DSS with information on your income and resources. You must appear to meet the FI income, resource and time limit eligibility criteria.

**Talk to your local DSS office if you need help with any of these services.**

**Caution: If you intentionally give false information to be eligible, we will ask you to pay back the money.**

### Child Support Cooperation and Assignment of Rights to Child Support

By applying for, accepting and cashing the FI check, you automatically assign to the State any rights you have to child support money and already established spousal support money.

If you receive FI you must cooperate with DSS in establishing paternity and obtaining support for your child(ren) unless this action would be against the best interest of the child(ren).

Cooperation in establishing paternity and obtaining support may be against the best interest of the child if:

- The action would bring physical or emotional harm to the child or to you.
- At least one of the following circumstances exists:
  - The child was conceived as a result of incest or rape.
  - Legal adoption proceedings are pending in court.
  - You are currently being assisted in resolving the issue of whether to keep the child or give him/her up for adoption.

You will need to supply DSS with information to support your “good cause” claim. An investigation may be necessary, depending on your situation and the information you provide.

### Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is battering or subjecting a victim to extreme cruelty by:

Physical acts that resulted in, or threatened to result in, physical injury to you or a member of your family.

- Sexual abuse
- Sexual activity involving a dependent child
- Threats of, or attempts at, physical abuse
- Mental abuse
- Neglect or deprivation of medical care

If you are a victim of domestic violence, you may be exempt from work, child support and/or time limit requirements if it is determined that you are unable to cooperate/participate in such activities, as a result of being subjected to domestic violence.

You don't have to tell DSS that you are a victim of domestic violence unless you want to. However, if you decide to tell your worker about your situation, you may do so at any time.

**Help is available. We can refer you to a local domestic violence counseling agency. They will be able to help you plan for the safety of you and your family and to provide counseling and other support services. Please contact your local DSS office.**