



July 1, 2020

**Child Welfare Services Manual Transmittal No. 2020-05**

**To:** County Departments of Family and Children Services  
DFCS District Directors  
DFCS Regional Directors  
State Office Staff

**From:** Tom C. Rawlings, Division Director   
Georgia Division of Family and Children Services  
Tom C. Rawlings (Jul 2, 2020 08:47 EDT)

**Re:** Child Welfare Policy Manual: Chapter 1: Administration

**Purpose**

The purpose of this Child Welfare Services Manual Transmittal (CWSMT) is to announce policy updates in Chapter 1: Administration to align with organizational and practice changes.

**Discussion**

The Georgia Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) is responsible for ensuring the safety, permanency, and wellbeing of children served and strives to make continuous improvements in the outcomes for children and families. DFCS recognizes that sound policies, guided by federal and state laws and rooted in best practice, support the framework for providing effective child welfare services. To that end, DFCS continually reviews and makes responsive changes to the Child Welfare Policy Manual (CWPM) to assure continued alignment with federal and state laws, organizational changes, and shifts in best practice and socio-cultural factors affecting children and families served.

Chapter 1: Administration provides an overarching framework for the administration of child welfare services in Georgia. Several sections of the chapter have been revised to align with organizational and practice changes and for consistency with other sections of the CWPM. The following highlights the key changes:

**1.0 Administration of Child Welfare Services**

1. Adds Prevention Services to DFCS' child welfare program areas;
2. Integrates the requirement to adhere to the agency's Vision, Mission, and Guiding Principles, which was previously a separate policy section;
3. Updates the list of partner agencies that provide services that are coordinated with the title IV-E program;
4. Enhances Practice Guidance to:

- a. Describe the three-pillar approach to achieving the agency's goals; and
- b. Describe the applicable child welfare programs under the title IV-E plan and the Child and Family Services Plan under subpart 1 of title IV-B of the Social Security Act.

## **1.2 Vision, Mission, Guiding Principles and Values**

1. Removes this section from the CWPM, as this is now integrated into policy 1.0 Administration of Child Welfare Services.

## **1.3 Access, Distribution, and Review of Child Welfare Policies**

1. Adds a requirement to utilize the CWPM to promote proficiency in obtaining current and accurate information on the agency's child welfare policies and procedures.
2. Updates requirements for policy dissemination and review.
3. Adds procedures for managers to ensure staff access to policy correspondence, and to coordinate with the Field Program Specialists (FPS) for policy dissemination, review, and consultation;
4. Adds procedures to clarify the role of the Office of Provider Management (OPM) in disseminating policy to Child Placing Agencies (CPAs) and Child Caring Institutions (CCIs);
5. Adds/updates the following Practice Guidance:
  - a. Accessing the Child Welfare Policy Manual through the Online Directives Information System (ODIS).
  - b. The available functions and features of ODIS that supports access.
  - c. The structure and organization of the policy section to support access and review of policy information.
  - d. Policy dissemination, guidance and consultation.

## **1.6 Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and Transfer of Responsibility for Placement and Care to Tribal Agency**

1. Updates Practice Guidance to provide additional resources to identify federally recognized tribes and tribal contact information;
2. Updates the number of federally recognized Indian Tribes.

## **1.7 Monitoring, Reviews, Reporting and Independent Audits**

1. Adds procedures for monitoring, reporting, conducting reviews, and arranging for independent audits of child welfare programs;
2. Updates the DFCS unit names to reflect current organizational structure and responsibilities;
3. Adds to Practice Guidance descriptions of the specific types of reviews and reports, including the title IV-E State Plan, and reporting tools available through Georgia SHINES.

## **1.8 Volunteer Services**

1. Updates requirements for the strategic recruitment, selection and retention of volunteers to support identified needs of the agency.

2. Updates procedures to clarify the role of the Volunteer Service Coordinator (VSC) in volunteer recruitment and selection.
3. Updates procedures for the application process and selection of volunteers.
4. Outlines the role of the immediate supervisor of agency volunteers.
5. Requires the secure maintenance of volunteer records.
6. Adds procedures for the VSC supervisor to support their role in coordination of the volunteer services program.
7. Updates Practice Guidance to provide succinct description of the volunteer services program and the recruitment and retention of volunteers.
8. Adds Practice Guidance for volunteers within RBWO programs.
9. Updates the Individual Volunteer Application and Statement of Confidentiality in Forms and Tools.

### **1.9 Public Review and Inspection of Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) Materials and Federal Plans**

1. Changes the policy title;
2. Updates the website address where plans and reports can be accessed;
3. Adds procedures for making plans and reports available for public review and inspection;
4. Adds to Practice Guidance descriptions of the various plans and reports available for public inspection.

### **1.10 Child Fatality Review**

1. Adds Procedures outlining the role of the DFCS Child Fatality Review Committee (CFRC) Representative;
2. Clarifies that disclosure of protected health information to the CFRC is permitted under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Privacy Rule.

### **1.11 Specific Goals in State Law for Children in Foster Care over 24 Months**

1. Adds a requirement for targeted solutions to be implemented by the Placement and Permanency Section to address permanency for children in foster care over 24 months;
2. Updates the DFCS unit names to reflect current organizational structure and responsibilities;
3. Adds Practice Guidance to describe roles and responsibilities of the designated DFCS units that supports the solutions for addressing permanency.

### **1.12 Review of Payments and Approval Standards**

1. Adds the stakeholders involved in the review of family foster home approval standards;
2. Updates the DFCS unit names to reflect current organizational structure and responsibilities;
3. Adds Practice Guidance on review of safety and quality standards; and
4. Adds to Practice Guidance descriptions of the OPM and the Caregiver Recruitment and Retention Unit (CRRU).

### **1.14 Emergency Operations Plan**

1. Updates Procedures to include discussion of emergency preparedness and evacuation protocols with caregivers in accordance with the safety and quality standards for family foster homes;
2. Updates the Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) Template in Forms and Tools.

### **1.15 Child Abuse Protocol**

1. Updates the link to the Child Abuse Protocol SharePoint site for the county annual submission of the local Child Abuse Protocol and the Child Abuse Protocol Annual Report.

### **Implementation**

This policy update is effective upon the release of this manual transmittal and is available on the Online Directives Information System (ODIS) at <http://odis.dhs.ga.gov/>.

Regional and County Leadership shall provide opportunities for staff to review and discuss the updated policy to ensure implementation. Please refer to policy [1.3 Administration Access, Distribution and Review of Child Welfare Policies](#) for the applicable requirements and procedures for policy review.

Please direct questions regarding this policy release to the Field Program Specialist in your region. Regional staff shall submit questions to the Policy and Regulations Unit at [PPDUnit@dhs.ga.gov](mailto:PPDUnit@dhs.ga.gov).