

**Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services
(CCDCFS)
Policy Statement**

Policy Chapter: Investigations
Policy Number: 2.07.01
Policy Name: Babies Born to Incarcerated Women

Original Effective Date: 12/06/2005
Revision Date(s): 10/01/2015
Current Revision Date: 10/01/2021
Approved By: Cynthia G. Weiskittel

PURPOSE: To ensure that babies born to incarcerated women are placed in a safe environment.

SCOPE: This policy applies to all Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services (CCDCFS) staff who receive a referral regarding a woman who is pregnant and due to give birth during her incarceration.

POLICY

Upon notice from a correctional or medical facility, CCDCFS initiates the home study process on the identified alternate caregivers for babies born to incarcerated women in accordance with Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) 5101:2-42-60.

PROCEDURES

- I. CCDCFS child protective services staff are responsible for the home study for the identified caregiver, and reporting their findings and recommendations to the correctional or medical facility in a timely manner to ensure that an appropriate plan is in place at the time of discharge of the newborn.
- II. If the woman is not an Ohio or Cuyahoga County resident, but is charged or sentenced in Cuyahoga County, CCDCFS initiates the home study. If the named caregiver is a resident of another county, WOR shall contact the county in which the caregiver resides, and request a courtesy home study.
- III. CCDCFS seeks custody of the infant if the incarcerated woman does not recommend a caregiver, or if the Worker of Record (WOR) does not recommend the caregiver as a result of the home study (and no other viable caregiver is available).

IV. Hotline Role:

- A. CCDCFS encourages correctional or medical facility representatives to contact the CCDCFS hotline at least two (2) to three (3) months prior to the mother's due date. If circumstances do not allow a two (2) to three (3) month lead time, CCDCFS encourages the correctional or medical facility representative to call the hotline as soon as possible with notice of the pending birth/due date.
- B. CCDCFS Hotline obtains the following documentation and information in writing from the referent:
 - 1. A signed release of information from the pregnant woman/mother allowing information sharing;
 - 2. Personal data: such as name, date of birth, social security number, previous address, all information on the father or the alleged father, and names of all children and their caregivers' information.
 - 3. Past and current information about the mother, such as, mental health, substance abuse or domestic violence should be obtained;
 - 4. If possible, a minimum of two (2) relatives or identified individuals that the pregnant woman/mother would like investigated as a placement option for the unborn infant/newborn;
 - 5. Any available information about the infant, especially if there are concerns or complications with the pregnancy/birth;
 - 6. Information on the pregnant woman/mother's incarceration such as date of incarceration, charges, sentence and parole review/release date;
 - 7. If incarcerated at the Ohio Reformatory for Women, does the pregnant woman/mother qualify for their Nursery Program; the Nursery Program allows the mother and infant to be placed together for up to eighteen months. (All information "1-6" must also be collected even if the mother is included in this program.)

V. Assessment/Investigation:

- A. The Worker of Record (WOR) and/or Kinship Caregiver Approval Resources (KCAR) Department completes the Caregiver Approval Form for the identified placement option(s) to guide recommendations and share them with the correctional or medical facility. (See policy 6.04.01 Caregiver Approval for Non-Custody Cases)
 - 1. WOR assures the caregiver has access to transportation and a car seat to pick up the infant.
 - 2. If the home study cannot be approved, the reason(s) is clearly documented in the Caregiver Approval Form.
- B. Safety and Family Assessments are required only if the baby has been born.

- C. If there are no concerns and the home study is approved, the case does not have to be transferred and is closed. The WOR provides resource information to the caregiver prior to case closure.
- D. The WOR contacts the correctional or medical facility and discusses the expected delivery/discharge date and shares all information necessary to ensure a smooth transition for the infant and caregiver.
- E. The WOR sends letters to the mother, correctional and medical facilities indicating the home study has been approved. The letter includes the name, address and contact information of the person responsible for picking the infant up from the hospital. The letter includes the extended services worker and supervisors contact information, if applicable.
- F. If the home study cannot be approved because of safety/risk concerns, concerns from the facility, or if the infant is in the custody of CCDCFS, the case is geographically assigned to an extended services unit.
 - 1. If at the time of the Joint Transfer Conference (JTC) the mother is being released within 48 hours or has already been released from the correctional facility, the case is geographically assigned according to the mother's address. (See policy 2.06.01 Joint Transfer Conference Policy for more information)

VI. Extended Services Case Management:

- A. The WOR ensures the correctional or medical facility knows to contact the hotline and WOR at the time the mother goes into labor and is transported to the hospital.
- B. If there is an approved home study, but concerns remain requiring CCDCFS involvement:
 - 1. The WOR contacts the identified caregiver and discusses the voluntary placement. The WOR serves as a liaison between the correctional or medical facility and the identified caregiver until the caregiver gets the infant from the hospital.
 - 2. The WOR and supervisor discuss service planning needs for the family and the WOR initiates a case plan.
- C. If there is no approved home study:
 - 1. The extended services WOR contacts the correctional or medical facility and explains the process to petition Juvenile Court for custody of the infant.
 - 2. The WOR requests information about the due date or discharge date to develop a plan to pickup the infant.
 - 3. A Team Decision Making meeting is held.
 - 4. An Agreement for Temporary Care (ATC) may be explored if:
 - a. It can be verified the incarcerated mother will be released within thirty (30) days of the infant's birth;
 - b. The environment the mother is returning to will not offer a safety or risk factor to the infant;
 - c. This option has been discussed and approved at the time of the Initial Custody/Safety Conference, but before the delivery and at the JTC, if possible.

VII. Cuyahoga County Jail Child Advocate Role:

- A. When the County Jail Child Advocate becomes aware that an inmate is pregnant, the advocate calls the hotline to request a home study. The WOR and advocate communicate to facilitate completion of the home study and make arrangements for the infant.

SEE ALSO:

Ohio Administrative Code

Section: 5101:2-42-60

Placement Services for Infants of Incarcerated Mothers

Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services Policies and Procedures Manual

Policy 2.06.01 – Joint Transfer Conference Policy

Policy 5.01.08 – Caseworker Contact Requirements for Children and Families Involved with the CCDCFS

Policy 5.02.02 – Case Reviews/Semi-Annual Administrative Reviews

Policy 6.04.00 – Caregiver Approval for Custody Cases

Policy 6.04.01 – Caregiver Approval for Non-Custody Cases

Policy 6.06.02 – Parental Background Reviews

Policy 6.07.02 – Out of Town Investigation (OTI) Interstate Compact on the Placement of (ICPC) Evaluation Process and Placement Supervision of Children from Other Jurisdictions

FORMS

Letter to Caregiver

Letter to Correctional or Medical Facility

Listing of Correctional and Medical Facility Contacts