

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

Policy Chapter: Substitute Care
Policy Number: 6.01.03
Policy Name: Placement into Out of Home Care Setting

Original Effective Date: 03/31/1995
Revision Date(s): 10/01/2015, 03/24/2006
Current Revision Date: 12/01/2018
Approved By: Cynthia G. Weiskittel

PURPOSE: To facilitate securing the most appropriate temporary home for a child; to provide child-focused criteria for placement decision making; to establish procedures to minimize the trauma of separation and to ensure caregivers meet each child's special needs and best interests.

SCOPE: This policy applies to all staff of the Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services (CCDCFS); Agency licensed & contracted foster parents, and private foster care agencies that provide contracted services to CCDCFS including relative caregivers who provide care for children in custody of CCDCFS.

POLICY

- I. CCDCFS assures that children who must be removed from their homes are cared for in a safe, stable, and nurturing family setting by caregivers who can meet their individual needs, including specialized needs for physical, emotional, or mental health issues.
- II. CCDCFS adheres to the guidelines established in the Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) Section 5101:2-42-05 in the development and implementation of Placement into Out of Home Care policy and procedures.
- III. CCDCFS will not delay or deny a child's placement into foster care based on the race, color, religion, or national origin of the child or the foster caregiver(s). (See CCDCFS Policy 6.01.09 Non-Discrimination in the Placement of Children/Multi-Ethnic Placement Act.)
- IV. A child's race, color, religion, or national origin cannot routinely be considered as a relevant factor in assessing a child's best interest. Only the most compelling reasons may serve to justify considerations of race, color, religion, and national origin. For each child's placement, the child's individual needs and the ability of the prospective caregiver to meet those needs are considered. Compelling reasons are likely to emerge only in unique individual

circumstances. In exceptional circumstances, consideration is narrowly tailored to advance the child's best interest. Even when the facts of a particular case allow consideration related to race, color, religion, or national origin, this consideration is not the sole determining factor. (See CCDCFS Policy 6.01.09 Non-Discrimination in the Placement of Children / Multi-Ethnic Placement Act.)

- V. CCDCFS does not deny any person the opportunity to become a foster caregiver on the basis of their race, color, religion, or national origin. (See CCDCFS Policy 6.01.09 Non-Discrimination in the Placement of Children / Multi-Ethnic Placement Act.)
- VI. CCDCFS complies with all aspects of the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978, 25 U.S.C.A 1901, et Seq as amended.

PROCEDURES

- I. Placement Decision Making Factors:
 - A. Decisions to remove children from their family of origin to ensure safety and well-being are made in a TDM/Staffing. (See CCDCFS Policy 5.02.01 TDM/Staffing).
 - B. Children are placed in the least restrictive environment possible and in a manner consistent with the child's best interests and special needs according to all the following factors:
 - 1. The placement is able to protect the child, provide a safe living environment, and be capable of meeting the child's specific needs and best interest.
 - 2. The placement is the least restrictive; most family like setting unless it is determined that such a setting would not be in the best interest of the child.
 - 3. All children requiring out of home placement are provided with ALL of following:
 - a. Nutritious, meals and snacks;
 - b. A pleasant, safe, and nurturing family atmosphere;
 - c. An orderly daily schedule that promotes positive participation in appropriate school and community activities;
 - d. Basic personal needs and an allowance, as appropriate;
 - e. The opportunity for religious observances in the faith of his/her choice; and
 - f. Opportunities to participate in activities consistent with his/her ethnic and cultural heritage.
 - 4. Efforts are made to ensure that all placements are located within close proximity to the home and neighborhood from which the child was removed or to the home where the child will be placed permanently.
 - 5. Efforts will be made to ensure that placement supports the likelihood of the child returning to their family of origin. Caregivers actively participate in family visitation and other forms of communication between the child and his/her family of origin.

- C. All placement decisions reflect a combination of all the above factors while weighing the benefits of each child's current attachments, social ties and relationships with the child's best interest and special needs.

II. Meeting a Child's Specific Needs:

- A. CCDCFS places each child in a setting where his/her specific needs are met by caregivers who are able to do so.
- B. CCDCFS provides each child, according to his/her age and ability, with all relevant information pertaining to their out of home placement PRIOR to their move to that placement including a pre-placement visit when circumstances allow.
- C. CCDCFS shares all information known about the child with the prospective caregiver including specific information required by OAC 5101:2-42-90. (See CCDCFS Policy 6.02.02 Required Information for Out of Home Care Providers.)
- D. CCDCFS provides each child age 14 and above a copy of the Foster Youth Rights Handbook in accordance with OAC 5101:2-42-90. The Worker of Record (WOR) will review the handbook with the child and obtain a signature from the child. The WOR will then attach the signature page to the case plan (initial or amendment) and submit to the court.
- E. If a child is placed outside of Cuyahoga County, the (WOR) communicates the child's information as outlined in OAC 5101:2-42-90 to:
 - 1. The school district in which the child will be enrolled upon placement;
 - 2. If applicable, the juvenile court in the county in which child is being placed. (See CCDCFS Policy 6.02.02 Required Information for Out of Home Care Providers.)

III. Ensuring Placement in Least Restrictive Settings:

- A. No child is placed in a more restrictive setting than is necessary to meet their specific needs.
- B. The following list represents the order of least restrictive to most restrictive placements for a child in the custody of CCDCFS:
 - 1. Suitable relative home that can accommodate all siblings needing placement unless extenuating circumstances exist which require siblings not be placed together;
 - 2. Suitable court-ordered, non-relative/interested individual home that can accommodate all siblings needing placement unless extenuating circumstances exist which require siblings not be placed together;
 - 3. Certified family foster home located within reasonable proximity to the child's family and home community that can accommodate all siblings needing placement unless extenuating circumstances exist which require siblings not be placed together;

4. Independent living setting, as appropriate for the age and ability of the child;
5. Group Home;
6. Emergency Shelter;
7. Residential Center;
8. Medical or educational facility according to the child's specific special needs.

IV. Congregate/Residential Care:

- A. Before any child is placed in Congregate/Residential Care, the following procedures are followed:
 1. When possible, the WOR will obtain a complete psychological assessment and statement from the child's psychologist or therapist who is recommending Congregate/Residential Care.
 2. A Case Review staffing is held to determine the appropriateness of placement into a Congregate/Residential setting. (See CCDCFS Policy 5.02.01 TDM / Staffing).
 3. Once the decision for Congregate/Residential Care is confirmed, the WOR requests the placement in person and attends interviews with the Placement Department staff.
 4. Whenever possible, the WOR facilitates and attends with the child, at least one pre-placement visit to the facility and makes every effort to include the child's parents, relatives, current caregiver, or any person significant in the life of the child. (See CCDCFS Policy 5.01.02 Case Plan & Family Service Plan.)

V. Maintaining a Child's Proximity to His /Her Community:

- A. CCDCFS makes every effort to place a child within Cuyahoga County and within their own neighborhood when the need for out of home care is temporary and the goal of the case plan is reunification.
- B. The geographic location of any prospective caregiver will not cause the delay or denial of a child's placement whether it is temporary or permanent.
- C. Placement staff will exhaust all Cuyahoga County resources and document such efforts prior to identifying an out of county temporary placement.
- D. Circumstances which may necessitate placement outside of Cuyahoga County include:
 1. Reuniting a child with siblings currently residing outside of Cuyahoga County;
 2. An appropriate emotional bond or relationship exists between the child and a potential caregiver who resides outside of Cuyahoga County;
 3. The child must leave Cuyahoga County to insure his/her safety and well being;
 4. No resources currently exist which are able to meet the child's immediate needs despite an exhaustive, well documented search.

VI. Supporting Reunification of the Child and His /Her Family:

- A. When the case plan goal is reunification, a child is placed in a setting where the caregiver is able and willing to support and encourage reunification.
- B. If a child is inadvertently placed in a setting where reunification is not encouraged or supported, the WOR and other appropriate agency staff works with the foster family to encourage their understanding and acceptance of reunification. If this effort is unsuccessful, and the caregivers continue to be unsupportive of reunification, the child must be moved to a more appropriate setting.
- C. Temporary caregivers are expected to facilitate the process of reunification through direct and indirect contact with the child's parents during family visits, meetings, service provider appointments, case conferences, administrative case reviews, and court hearings, etc.

SEE ALSO:

Ohio Administrative Code:

Section: 5101:2-42-05

Section: 5101:2-42-90

Section: 5101:2-42-65

Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978, 25 U.S.C.A 1904, et seq, as amended

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

Policy 5.01.02 – Case Plan / Family Service Plan

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

Policy 5.02.01 – TDM / Staffings Policy

Policy 6.01.04 – Sibling Policy

Policy 6.01.09 – Non-Discrimination in the Placement of Children/Multi-Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA)

Policy 6.02.02 – Required Information for Out of Home Care Providers

Policy 6.05.01 – Family Visits