

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

**Policy Chapter:** Substitute Care  
**Policy Number:** 6.01.07  
**Policy Name:** Religious Practices and Participation of Children  
In Substitute Care

**Original Effective Date:** 07/10/1998  
**Revision Date(s):** 03/01/2021, 11/01/2017, 09/01/2014, 02/01/2013, 08/31/2009  
**Current Revision Date:** 04/01/2024  
**Approved By:** Jacqueline M. Fletcher

**PURPOSE:** To provide guidelines pertaining to religious practices and participation of children in out-of-home care in accordance with state rules and regulations governing out-of-home care.

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

**POLICY**

Every child has the right to enjoy freedom of thought, conscience and religion or to abstain from the practice of religion. Accordingly, CCDCFS demonstrates consideration for and sensitivity to the religious faith and customs of each child in out-of-home care and of each family receiving services from the agency.

**PROCEDURES**

- A. The assigned Child Protection Specialist (CPS) makes every effort to inquire and determine the religious background of the child in out-of-home care by consulting with the child's parent, prior guardian or legal custodian, as well as the child when appropriate.
- B. CCDCFS staff, in consultation with each child's parent, prior guardian or legal custodian, makes opportunities available to each child in out-of-home care to participate in religious activities.
- C. A child may be offered the opportunity to participate in religious activities but must not be coerced to do so.

- D. Caregivers allow the child in out-of-home care to practice the religious faith chosen by the child or by his/her parents unless it is documented in the case plan by CCDCFS that it is not in the child's best interest. Out-of-home caregivers are not permitted to subject the child to any form of religious coercion. Religious coercion may include, but is not limited to:
1. Being required to accompany the substitute caregiver or other residents of the home to religious services;
  2. Being given extra chores to perform or being required to read or listen to specific material in place of attending religious activities with the substitute caregiver;
  3. Being required to view or listen to specific religious oriented television programs, videos or music.
- E. Children in out-of-home care are not to be baptized or made to submit to any religious rituals or practices without the prior consent of the child, according to the child's age and functioning level, and the prior written approval of the child's parent or prior guardian or legal custodian.
- F. CCDCFS does not require a child in out-of-home care to receive non-emergency medical treatment that conflicts with the religious beliefs or practices of the child or the child's parents, without the specific written consent of the child's parent or prior guardian or legal custodian.
- G. If a child in out-of-home care requires emergency medical treatment that conflicts with the religious beliefs or practices of the child or the child's parent or prior guardian or legal custodian:
1. The out-of-home caregiver immediately contacts CCDCFS.
  2. The CPS, or other designated CCDCFS representative, notifies the parent or prior guardian or legal custodian of the child requiring emergency medical treatment when the treatment prescribed by the medical professional conflicts with the religious beliefs or practices held by the child or by the child's parents.
  3. If the child, depending upon his/her age, refuses treatment and the parent or prior guardian or legal custodian refuses treatment and the medical emergency is life threatening, CCDCFS contacts the Director or Designee, assigned Guardian ad Litem (GAL) and the Prosecutor's Office to seek a court order authorizing treatment.
  4. This policy does **Not** cover or include end of life decisions or Do not resuscitate (DNR) Orders.

**SEE ALSO:**

Ohio Administrative Code 5101:2-5-13  
Ohio Administrative Code 5101:2-5-16  
Ohio Administrative Code 5101:2-7-11