

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

**Policy Chapter:** Substitute Care  
**Policy Number:** 6.04.00  
**Policy Name:** Caregiver Approval for Custody Cases

**Original Effective Date:** 11/01/1996  
**Revision Dates:** 12/01/2015, 02/14/2011, 05/26/2005  
**Current Revision Date:** 03/01/2022  
**Approved by:** Cynthia G. Weiskittel

**PURPOSE:** To ensure children are placed in the least restrictive setting possible, that provides for safety and stability and; to ensure consistency in the process by which agency staff assesses caregivers for potential placement of children, per Ohio Administrative Code 5101:2-42-18.

**SCOPE:** This policy applies to all cases when a qualified relative or non-relative is identified for potential placement of children. This policy also applies to all Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services (CCDCFS) staff.

**DEFINITIONS:** Please note that when any of the following terms are used throughout this document the definition is as follows:

**Child** - As defined in Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) 5101:2-1-01 - any person under eighteen years of age, or a mentally or physically handicapped person under twenty-one years of age.

**Caregiver** – is defined in pertinent part as:

Relative as defined in the OAC 5101:2-1-01

- (1) Individuals related by blood or adoption
  - a. Grandparents, including grandparents with the prefix “great” “great-great” or “great-grand”
  - b. Siblings
  - c. Aunts, uncles, nephews, and nieces including such relative with the prefix “great” “great-great” or “great-grand”
  - d. First cousins and first cousins once removed
- (2) Stepparents and stepsiblings
- (3) Spouses and former spouses of individuals named in paragraph (1) of this definition
  - a. A qualified non-relative, which is defined as a non-relative adult whom a child or the current custodial caretaker of a child identifies as having a familiar longstanding relationship or bond with the child or the child's family that will ensure the child's social and cultural ties. (Defined by H.B. 279)

## POLICY

CCDCFS believes that, when safely possible and in the child's best interest, children should be placed with their family. Staff identifies relatives and qualified non-relatives at the first point of contact and continuously engages families throughout the case in order to support and build relationships. If it is determined that a child is no longer safe in his/her home and CCDCFS obtains legal custody, relatives and non-relatives (with a court approval when prior to adjudication) are explored as potential caregivers for child placement. CCDCFS always strive to place sibling groups together when at all possible and in the best interest of the children.

## PROCEDURES

- I. All relative or non-relative caregivers being considered for placement will be referred to Kinship Caregiver Assessment and Resources Unit (KCAR) for assessment of eligibility for placement under minimal OAC standards. KCAR will make recommendations, and Worker of Record (WOR) and supervisor will make final placement decision based on child's best interest. KCAR will use the JFS Form 01447, *Assessment of Relative or Nonrelative Substitute Caregiver*, to assess eligibility and provide a recommendation to WOR and supervisor.
- II. Initial Screening & Assessment
  - A. The WOR completes and submits KCAR Referral Assessment Form to KCAR for searching and screening of all adults in the potential caregiver's home via public databases, including the National Sex Offender Registry <https://www.nsopw.gov>, and the State Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS).
    1. If a child must be removed from his or her home immediately (after regular business hours), the WOR may submit an emergency referral to KCAR and place the child with the potential caregiver, if there are no known safety concerns, and KCAR will initiate the required assessments no later than the next business day.
    2. Along with an assessment of the caregiver's abilities and resources, KCAR will also provide potential caregivers with information regarding Kinship Support Program (KSP), Ohio Works First (OWF), certification as a foster caregiver, adoption, caregiver's rights, and supportive services if the placement is approved.
    3. If a potential caregiver is found to have a social service history, this WILL NOT automatically disqualify the caregiver as a placement.
    4. KCAR will make a placement recommendation on whether the potential caregiver meets minimum OAC standards and complete the Request for Rehabilitation Standard Form, (if required), to be provided to the WOR and supervisor. Based on needs of the child, WOR and supervisor will make a final determination on whether the social service history or criminal history poses a safety threat to the children. If so, the senior manager is notified and signs off on the denial of placement. The WOR documents the denial in an activity log.

5. Denial: If at any point during the screening process the WOR and supervisor deny the potential placement, the WOR and supervisor must document the denial and notify the potential caregiver immediately.

### III. JFS 01447 *Assessment of Relative or Nonrelative Substitute Caregiver*

- A. Once a caregiver has been cleared through the initial screening steps, the KCAR Assessor meets with the caregiver(s) to assess the safety of the home, share known information regarding the child needing placement, and completes the JFS Form 01447, *Assessment of Relative or Nonrelative Substitute Caregiver*. The form is completed and approved in SACWIS by the KCAR Assessor and KCAR Supervisor. The WOR completes this process on all identified caregiver(s).

### IV. Fingerprinting & Background Checks

- A. For an emergency placement, the supervisor requests LEADS checks on all adults 18 years and older living in the caregiver's home. KCAR refers those adults to be fingerprinted with WOR follow-up. If the potential placement is with a non-relative, the WOR must gain court approval prior to the placement if the child has not yet been adjudicated. The WOR will request this approval with the assigned APA at the time of the requested emergency custody/placement .
- B. WOR and supervisor shall decide to approve or not approve the child's placement with the relative or non-relative caregiver within thirty (30) calendar days from the date the assessment was initiated. If the Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) or Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) background check results and/or alleged perpetrator background check results have not been received within thirty (30) calendar days from the date of the assessment was initiated, the WOR and supervisor shall make a final decision to approve or not approve the placement of the child, no later than five (5) business days from the date the agency receives the BCI and FBI background results and/or alleged perpetrator background check results.
- C. For a planned placement, KCAR refers the caregiver(s) and all adults in the home to have BCI and FBI fingerprints completed at the agency and KCAR Assessor or Supervisor obtains the results prior to placement.
- D. If the potential caregiver has a child(ren) residing in the home who are 12-18 years old, KCAR inquires about any Juvenile Court history. The WOR and supervisor make final determination if there are concerns related to this information that may lead to the denial of the placement. The WOR must consult with a supervisor regarding the decision to deny placement. The WOR completes the steps for denial as previously outlined in this policy.
- E. Once the fingerprint results are received, the KCAR Assessor reviews the results and determines if there is any new information.
  1. If, after an emergency placement, the fingerprint results of any adult household member reveals a disqualifying offense (whether this is an felony offense less than 5 years from the date of the conviction or an automatic disqualification), the information is shared with the WOR's chain of command and an emergency Team Decision Making meeting (TDM, i.e. staffing) is called to discuss potential placement disruption or change in placement.
  2. If the fingerprint results of any adult household member reveal a non-disclosed disqualifying offense, the rehabilitation standards may be

applied and approval of a Deputy Director is required. The information is shared with the WOR's chain of command and a decision regarding next steps is made (e.g. application of rehabilitation standards, TDM, placement change).

- V. The WOR monitors the child's placement every month by ensuring the caregiver's needs are met in providing for the care of the child and that the household and caregiver continue to provide safe and stable placement for the child. The appropriateness of the placement is also reviewed at each Semi-Annual Review (SAR).
- VI. Updates to the JFS 01447 *Assessment of Relative or Nonrelative Substitute Caregiver* are needed:
  - A. If the relative/non-relative caregiver moves to a new address;
  - B. If any new adults move into the home or any youth between 12-18 years old moves into the home, the agency shall conduct complete background checks;
  - C. If a child is placed with a caregiver for 12 consecutive months, the WOR shall submit a new KCAR Referral Assessment Form so that KCAR can complete a reassessment of the home to assure that the placement continues to meet the requirements outlined in this policy.

**SEE ALSO:**

- Ohio Administrative Code Section 5101:2-1-01
- Ohio Administrative Code Section 5101:2-7
- Ohio Administrative Code Section 5101:2-33-2
- Ohio Administrative Code Section 5101:2-42-18
- Ohio Administrative Code Section 5101:2-42-65
- Ohio Administrative Code Section 5101:2-48

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

- Policy 5.01.08: Caseworker Contact Requirements for Children and Families Involved with the CCDCFS
- Policy 5.01.09: Family Search and Engagement Activities
- Policy 5.02.01: TDM/Staffings Policy
- Policy 6.06.02: Parental Background Reviews

**FORMS**

Family Tree

JFS 01447 Assessment of Relative or Nonrelative Substitute Caregiver