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Casework Activity: Pre-placement Screening and Placement Plan for Potential Unlicensed Relatives

Revised September 8, 2009

Purpose

To ensure unlicensed relatives are willing and able to provide for the safety, well-being, and permanence of a specific child or sibling group, considering the needs of the individual child or group to be placed together,

Guiding Principles

When children cannot remain safely in their homes, the Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare (BMCW) is committed to minimizing trauma to the child and keeping the child immediately connected with family members. The first placement resource should be the non-abusing parent provided this parent has the protective capacity to care for the child, including protecting the child from the abusing parent, and is fit and willing to care for the child. Should the non-abusing parent not be an appropriate choice to care for the child, BMCW must actively seek and identify both maternal and paternal relatives to provide safe and appropriate care.

Placement of a child with a relative may occur as part of either a protective plan (based on present danger threats) or safety plan (based on impending danger threats). These placements can occur as part of a more informal, family agreed upon plan managed by CPS without legal intervention, or through the use of legal intervention (TPC/court order) following the detention of a child.

Placement with a non-abusing parent or relative should be explored immediately when the child is removed from the home to lessen trauma. Appropriateness of the placement of children with the parent/relative is later assessed for their fitness and willingness to care for the child's immediate and long-term needs.

Procedure for Initial Emergency Placement by Initial Assessment Social Worker

1. Upon taking physical custody of a child, the Initial Assessment social worker (IASW) interviews the parent and, if appropriate, the child, to identify:
 - The non-abusing parent;
 - Any potential relative caregivers, both maternal and paternal.

NOTE: Confirmation of adjudication of parentage is available through the KIDS child support database. Custody and visitation status is available through Family Court. Confirmation of adjudication/custody is not available from Family Court after hours; however, the parent may be able to provide copies of court orders. If no confirmation is available, the placement with the non-abusing parent is assessed for safety as it would be for other relatives (See number 3 below).



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2. The IASW contacts the relative and provides any information known about the child's needs and assesses the relative's willingness and fitness to care for the child immediately and for the short-term.
3. The IASW must conduct the following before the child is placed with the relative:
 - Criminal background checks on every adult household member (C-CAP);
 - CPS background check on every adult household member; and
 - A visit to the home to assess safety.

Documentation and Distribution of Protective Plan: When either an in-home or out-of-home protective plan is needed to control present danger threats, state policy requires that a copy of the protective plan is provided to the family and, when applicable, to the out-of-home care provider. This is essential to ensuring that all parties understand their specific role and responsibilities in controlling the identified present danger threats.

Relative Search

Objection of Parent to Search for Relatives

If a child's parent specifically objects to the search for relatives, the social worker identifying placement resources must, without contacting relatives, evaluate and address the parent's concerns by considering the following:

- The child's and the parent's or guardian's preferences about relatives;
- Whether any relatives have offered to care for the child;
- Whether placement with relatives would interfere with the case process; or
- In the case of an Indian child, the tribe's position on contacting relatives.

Notice to Alleged Fathers

If the father is alleged, the IASW will, within 30 days of case assignment, inform the Financial Assessment Services Team (FAST), whose staff will complete a referral to the child support agency for paternity determination.

The IASW informs the court of the alleged father's current or last known address. This should be done at least 10 days prior to the initial appearance on the CHIPS petition. This will allow the court to send the alleged father timely notice of the hearing.

Procedure Following Transfer to OCM

1. The IASW follows Case Transfer to Ongoing Case Management procedure (OCM 1).
2. The OCM will participate in the case transfer staffing with the IASW and read the initial assessment materials to obtain information regarding relatives and parents or other adults determined to be like kin.

Documentation: The OCM will document all information pertaining to the relative search in the eWiSACWIS record using a Case Note within two days. If a relative placement was chosen over the objection of the parent, this must also be documented.



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3. Upon transfer of a relative caregiver case from IA, OCM becomes responsible for completing further background checks as needed and assessing the fitness and willingness of the caregiver to meet both the short and long-term needs of the child. This is done in cooperation with the permanency consultant as detailed below.
4. For a child in need of out-of-home care, upon identifying a relative, the OCM telephones or contacts the person to determine the person's interest in being considered for placement and to obtain the information necessary to begin completing the *Unlicensed Caregiver Clearing Request*.
5. The OCM immediately submits a copy of the partially completed *Unlicensed Caregiver Clearing Request* to the permanency consultant assigned to the region to complete the screening process.
6. The permanency consultant will process background checks that have not been completed by the IASW at the initial placement (out-of-state, FBI, Dept. of Transportation, etc.) on the potential caregiver and all residents of the household over the age of 10 within two working days of receiving an *Unlicensed Caregiver Clearing Request*, conduct a provider search, and create a provider case in eWiSACWIS if one does not exist.
7. The OCM will schedule a joint home visit with the permanency consultant within five working days to:
 - Discuss the requirements and expectations of the caregivers;
 - Assess if the relative is fit/willing to care for the child both long and short-term;
 - Review the *Comparison of Kinship and Foster Care* information, explaining the benefits of becoming a licensed foster parent.
 - Ask if the caregiver would like to be referred to foster parent licensing.

If the caregiver is **interested in being licensed**, the permanency consultant will:

- Explain the requirements, home study process, and benefits of foster care licensing;
 - Identify any barriers to licensing;
 - Collect demographic and financial information;
 - Assess the physical environment of the home;
 - Begin filling out the *Unlicensed Caregiver Placement Information*; and
 - Provide a *BMCW Complaint Resolution* brochure.
8. The potential caregiver will be asked to verify that he/she is a relative of the child. This is done through birth certificates and marriage licenses showing a relative relationship through lineage or marriage, or a "like kin" relationship.



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NOTE: The term “like kin” is defined as a substantial relationship the child has with individuals who are unrelated to the child by either birth or marriage. The relationship with the child is emotionally significant, takes on the characteristics of a family relationship, and predates the out-of-home care placement. To determine whether a caregiver meets the “like kin” criteria, a 3-party staffing with the case manager, the assigned permanency consultant, and an Ongoing Case Management supervisor, or program manager is required.

9. The OCM and his/her supervisor and the permanency consultant will consult regarding the results of the joint home visit and all background checks within two business days of both receipt of the background checks and completion of the joint home visit. All parties must agree as to the suitability of the placement. If all parties cannot reach agreement the dispute will be elevated to supervisory and management level until resolution is reached.
10. The OCM will discuss the child’s needs with the supervisor/agency and identify the services and resources needed to support the caregiver prior to completing the Caregiver Child Placement Plan.

A. Unsuitable placement resource: If the potential caregiver is determined not to be suitable for placement, the OCM meets with the potential caregiver to explain the decision. The OCM also provides written notification outlining the reasons for denial as well as a copy of the BMCW dispute resolution process brochure.

Documentation: OCM documents the denial in the case head record as a case note. A copy of the letter is placed in the paper file. The permanency consultant documents the letter in the provider record as a case note and places a copy in the provider’s paper file.

B. Suitable placement resource: If the initial home visit and background checks were determined to be satisfactory, the OCM and permanency consultant conduct a second joint home visit with the potential caregiver within three days of the consultation, The purpose of this meeting is to:

- Gather information about the family using the *Unlicensed Caregiver Placement Information form* as a tool;

NOTE: The form is to guide the interview with the family to determine if they are a suitable placement resource for both long-term and short-term placement. The permanency consultant should use discretion as to what information is required at what stage of placement.

- Assess the potential caregiver’s motivation and commitment, capacity to meet the needs of the specific child or children;
- Address any discrepancies or potential placement barriers identified through the completion of background checks;
- Discuss the child’s progress and concerns if the child is already in the home;



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- Explain the concern for finding permanence for children and reducing placement disruptions as well as the ASFA guidelines; and
- Inform the potential caregiver of the requirements and benefits of foster care licensing.

Documentation: As a case note by the OCM in the family case head record and by the permanency consultant in the Provider record.

11. Placements where barriers to permanency are identified: In situations where a child is already in placement with the relative and barriers to permanency are identified, a staffing regarding decision making and coordination of related tasks will occur with the OCM and his/her supervisor and program manager and the permanency consultant and his/her supervisor and program manager. In person contact will occur with the OCM, permanency consultant and caregiver, along with supervisors/managers as necessary.

Documentation: The OCM will document the staffing as a case note on eWiSACWIS in the case head record. The permanency consultant will document the staffing in the provider record.

12. The OCM will assist any caregiver determined to be suitable for further consideration with correcting identified placement barriers that are not substantially related to the care of children.
13. Upon approval of the placement resource, the OCM immediately facilitates the completion of the Caregiver Child Placement Plan with the proposed caregiver to clarify, communicate, and record the specific expectations and responsibilities of the caregiver and BMCW staff in relation to each individual child.
14. The completed Caregiver Child Placement Plan will be signed by all parties in attendance. A copy must be placed in the case file and a copy must be sent to the caregiver.
15. The OCM makes a referral to the Kinship Care program to initiate payment.

NOTE: A foster care home study will commence as soon as the Foster Care and Adoption program receives a completed application or *Foster Home Study Request*.

Cross Reference

Guide to Assessing the Safety of a Placement (Relative or Foster Parent) – DHFS *Child Protective Services Safety Intervention Standards: Evaluation safety in unlicensed and licensed homes when placing a child in out-of-home care as part of a protective of safety plan*

OCM 1.00: Case Transfer from Initial Assessment to Ongoing Case Management Services and Immediate Responsibilities

Forms

Caregiver Child Placement Plan
Unlicensed Caregiver Placement Information