




STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES
1500 Jefferson Street, SE • P.O. Box 40975 • Olympia WA 98504-0975

POLICY MEMO

June 27, 2023

TO: Child Welfare and Licensing Division Employees

FROM: Natalie Green, Assistant Secretary 
Ruben Reeves, Interim Assistant Secretary

RE: Changes to Child Welfare [4527. Kinship Care: Searching for, Placing with, and Supporting Relatives and Suitable Other Persons](#) and [45274. Placements with Unlicensed Relatives or Suitable Persons](#) policies

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

SUNSET REVIEW DATE: July 1, 2024

Purpose

The purpose of this memo is to provide guidance to Child Welfare (CW) and Licensing Division (LD) employees of the updated policy and procedure requirements to align with [House Bill 1227: Keeping Families Together Act](#) and [KW](#) Supreme Court decision.

These policies are under full review for further revisions, but the following changes will take effect July 1, 2023:

New Policy Requirements

- Caseworkers must:
 - Prioritize relative and suitable person placements for children or youth that are placed in out-of-home care throughout the life of the case.
 - Discuss, identify, and mitigate any immediate needs, including [concrete goods](#), with the relatives and suitable persons that could be barriers to placement.
 - Place children or youth in licensed foster care only when relatives and suitable persons placements are not available or appropriate, per the [Licensed Foster Care and Licensed Kinship Care: Placement and Support](#).
 - Follow the initial licensing memo. Notify the following within (7) calendar days when home studies are not approved:
 - Assistant attorney general (AAG)
 - Court
 - Report on the status of the licensure process during the entry of any dispositional orders in the case.
- LD workers must support relatives and suitable persons, as applicable during the:
 - Initial license
 - Home study
 - Foster care licensing process
 - Post-licensure

New Procedural Requirements

Prioritizing Placement with Relatives and Suitable Persons

Caseworkers must:

- Prioritize relative and suitable person placements for children or youth that are placed in out-of-home care by:
 - Parents, guardians, children or youth articulate specific placement preferences.
 - If DCYF disagrees with the parent's or guardian's placement preference:
 - Before the child is found dependent, the DCYF must give great weight to the stated preference of the parent and the youth. RCW 13.34.065(5)(c)(2)(B). If the child has been found dependent, DCYF shall follow the wishes of the parent regarding the placement of the child with a relative or other suitable person absent good cause pursuant to RCW 13.34.130. RCW 13.34.260.
 - If the parent objects to one particular relative or suitable other placement, ask the child's position, and continue to evaluate other potential relative or suitable other placements.
 - If a parent prefers a foster care placement and does not want relative placement, determine whether (1) placement with the relative would hinder reunification or (2) a foster care placement is necessary to prevent imminent physical harm due to child abuse or neglect, including that which results from sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, or a severe pattern of neglect because no relative or suitable person is capable of ensuring the child's basic safety. If either of these conditions is met, accept that preference while continuing to follow relative search policies, and placement with a relative should still be considered pursuant to RCW 13.34.260.
- Verify relatives' and suitable persons':
 - Are:
 - Willing to:
 - Be placement for children or youth and meet their health, safety, or welfare needs.
 - To facilitate child's or youth's visitation with siblings.
 - Able to meet any special needs of the child or youth.
 - Not hinder efforts to reunite the parent and child.
 - Meet their cultural, sexual orientation, gender identity expression, and other individualized needs, per the DCYF Administrative 6.04 Supporting LGBTQIA+ Individuals policy.
 - There are no safety threats. If there are risks, caseworkers must develop a Placement Support Plan and offer:
 - In-home services
 - [Concrete goods](#)
- Follow these policies and memos:
 - [Placement Out-of-Home and Conditions for Return Home](#)
 - [Licensed Foster Care and Licensed Kinship Care: Placement and Support](#)
 - Initial License Memo

Placing with Relatives and Suitable Person Placements

Caseworkers:

- For initial emergent placements made without a home study, caseworkers no longer need to obtain Area Administrator's approval on the Administrative Approval Request DCYF 05-210 form. Caseworkers must obtain this approval if the children have been placed for 120 days with an unlicensed relative or suitable persons and the home study has not yet been completed.

- Must complete the initial [health and safety visit](#) within seven calendar days of placement and ask the caregivers privately:
 - How the children or youth are adjusting?
 - If they:
 - Need additional services to provide appropriate care and supervision to meet the children's or youth's health, safety, and well-being needs?
 - Have any immediate needs or if there are any barriers to maintaining placement?

Supporting Relatives and Suitable Person Placements

Caseworkers must support relatives and suitable persons by the following, as applicable:

- Continue to assess relatives' and suitable persons':
 - Ability to provide safe care to children and youth.
 - Ongoing need for services.
- Use of Kinship Care Support funds per the [Concrete Goods](#) policy to provide goods and services to:
 - Meet the needs of children and youth in their care.
 - Remove barriers to home studies or foster care licenses.

Placement Concerns

Caseworkers must complete the following when placement concerns arise in relatives' or suitable persons' homes:

- Consult with their supervisor.
- Complete a Safe Child Consultation.
- Follow these policies and memos:
 - [Safety Assessment](#)
 - [Placement Moves](#)
- If it is determined there is no present or impending danger, but there is concern for risk:
 - Develop a Placement Support Plan DCYF 10-025 form.
 - Offer in-home services and [concrete goods](#), as applicable.
 - If the home is found to be unqualified for licensure, notify the court of this determination within (7) days by filing the Notice of Inability to Recommend Placement DCYF 09-025 from Licensing Division.

New Form

Placement Support Plan DCYF 10-025 (located in the Forms repository on the DCYF intranet)

Questions

If you have any questions, please contact Geene Delaplane, Kinship Care and Guardianship Program Manager, at geene.delaplane@dcyf.wa.gov or 360-688-0391.

Cc: Brenda Villarreal