

	GEORGIA DIVISION OF FAMILY AND CHILDREN SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY MANUAL			
	Chapter:	(5) Investigations	Effective Date:	July 2019
	Policy Title:	Temporary Alternatives to Foster Care		
Policy Number:	5.8	Previous Policy #:	N/A	

CODES/REFERENCES

O.C.G.A. § 15-11-133.1 Temporary Alternative to Foster Care

REQUIREMENTS

The Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) shall:

1. Prior to bringing a child(ren) into foster care consider whether there are reasonable temporary alternatives to foster care to minimize trauma.
2. Adhere to stipulations outlined in a temporary alternative to foster care (TAFC) order issued by Juvenile Court allowing a child(ren) to be temporarily cared for by a relative or fictive kin.
3. At its discretion, seek an order from the court for a child(ren) to be cared for by relative or fictive kin when:
 - a. An out-of-home safety plan recommending the child(ren) be cared for by a relative or fictive kin was presented to the parent, guardian or legal custodian to control safety threats, but a consensus could not be achieved; and
 - b. Continuation of the child(ren) in the home would be contrary to his/her welfare.
4. Complete the Kinship Assessment in accordance with [5.11 Investigations: Kinship Assessment for Temporary Alternatives to Foster Care](#).
5. Complete the Kinship Referral Form within 24 hours of the child(ren) entering the relative or fictive kin’s home to initiate supports.
6. Provide full disclosure via the Kinship Pathway to the relative or fictive kin caregiver(s) and upload a signed copy of the full disclosure form in the Georgia SHINES External Documentation.
7. Conduct a family meeting within 7-10 calendar days of the child(ren) entering the home of the relative(s) or fictive kin to:
 - a. Define the roles and responsibilities of the parent, guardian or legal custodian and relative(s) or fictive kin caregivers involved in the out-of-home safety plan;
 - b. Develop a plan with the parent, guardian or legal custodian and the relative or fictive kin caregiver(s) to minimize disruption to the child(ren)’s routine and ensure the child(ren)’s needs are being met;
 - c. Identify who is responsible for transporting the child(ren) to and from school, how medical needs will be addressed and any other well-being concerns;
 - d. Further explore the relative or fictive kin caregiver(s)’ ability to continue the care of the child(ren) on a short-term basis; and
 - e. Discuss the financial responsibilities of the parent, guardian or legal custodian and explain that the child(ren) is not in DFCS custody and the parent, guardian or legal custodian remains financially responsible for the child(ren).
8. Initiate service provision to address the safety concerns that prevent the child(ren) from

- remaining in the home and support the conditions for return and the relative or fictive kin caregivers while caring for the child(ren).
9. Work in collaboration with the parent, guardian, or legal custodian and the relative or fictive kin to meet the child(ren)'s educational, medical, and dental needs.
 10. Conduct purposeful contacts with the parent, guardian, or legal custodian, relative or fictive kin, and the child(ren) every 14 calendar days while the child(ren) remain in the relative or fictive kin's home.
 11. Engage formal and informal providers at a minimum bi-weekly to determine if the services remain sufficient to address the safety threats.
 12. Conduct collateral contacts to assess the parent, guardian, or legal custodian progress towards meeting the conditions for return.
 13. Initiate family preservation services.
 14. Conduct a 45th day meeting with the Kinship Coordinator, Social Services Supervisor (SSS), family, relative or fictive kin to assess the parent, guardian or legal custodian progress in meeting the conditions of return and next steps.
 15. Maintain confidentiality in accordance with policy [2.6 Information Management: Confidentiality/Safeguarding Information](#). Secure an authorization for release of information from the parent/guardian/legal custodian.
 16. Ensure that any child(ren) who is a member of a federally recognized Indian Tribe, or eligible for membership and has a biological parent who is an enrolled member, and is subject to removal, placement and/or any other legal action involving DFCS, is afforded all rights under the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) to promote the stability and security of Indian Tribes and their families (see policy [1.6 Administration: Indian Child Welfare Act \(ICWA\) and Transfer of Responsibility for Placement and Care to a Tribal Agency](#)).
 17. Prepare for and participate in all juvenile court hearings and make recommendations to the court regarding whether the child(ren) can safely return home (see policy [17.1 Legal: Juvenile Court Process](#) for timeframes for the TAFC hearings).

PROCEDURES

The Social Services Case Manager (SSCM) will:

1. Consult with the SSS to discuss:
 - a. An order from the court that DFCS conduct an assessment of the home of relative(s) or fictive kin when the court has issued a temporary order for a child(ren) to be cared for by that relative(s) or fictive kin.
 - b. An order from the court that DFCS investigate and report to the court whether the child(ren)'s removal from the home is necessary.
 - c. A TAFC order of the court that restrains or otherwise controls the conduct of a person.
 - d. Seeking an TAFC order from the court for a child(ren) to be cared for by a relative or fictive kin.
2. Conduct a purposeful visit with the parent, guardian or legal custodian, to discuss the decision to seek a temporary alternative to foster care arrangement, explain:
 - a. Due to being unable to achieve a consensus on the out-of-home safety plan, DFCS is seeking a TAFC requesting the court order that the child(ren) be cared for by a relative or fictive kin while he/she/they work on the identified safety concerns;
 - b. The court may issue this order without the parent, guardian, legal custodian being present (ex-parte). If an order is issued ex-parte this information will be relayed to the family and a copy of the order will be provided when available. Subsequent court hearings will require the parent, guardian, legal custodian be in attendance; and

- c. Input is needed in identifying appropriate relatives or fictive kin with whom the child(ren) are familiar, comfortable, and have an existing relationship who would be temporarily willing to care for the child(ren).
3. Consult with the SAAG when seeking a T AFC order from the court for a child(ren) to be temporarily cared for by a relative or fictive kin, if applicable.
4. Complete the Kinship Assessment prior to seeking an T AFC order from the court for a child(ren) to be cared for by relative(s) or fictive kin in accordance with [5.11 Investigations: Kinship Assessment for Temporary Alternatives to Foster Care](#).
5. Prepare to present the following information in court or provide to the SAAG, if the T AFC will be obtained ex-parte:
 - a. The reason DFCS is requesting a T AFC order;
 - b. Identification of the relative(s) or fictive kin who is willing to temporarily care for the child(ren) to ensure the safety of the child(ren) pending further court action;
 - c. Results of the Kinship Assessment;
 - d. Any DFCS recommendations to address the identified safety concerns;
 - e. A copy of the approved and complete Kinship Assessment; and
 - f. See policy [17.1 Legal: Juvenile Court Process](#) for additional guidance.
6. Conduct a purposeful face-to-face contact with each parent, guardian or legal custodian upon the issuance of the T AFC order by the court, to discuss:
 - a. A legally binding T AFC order has been issued by juvenile court;
 - b. A preliminary protective hearing will be held within five days of the date the court issued the T AFC order to discuss whether the child(ren) can return home;
 - c. Legal custody of the child(ren) remains with the parent, guardian, or legal custodian;
 - d. He/she remain financially responsible for the child(ren);
 - e. Opportunities for visitation and other methods of ongoing contact with the child(ren);
 - f. Transportation to/from school, including extra-curricular activities, while the child(ren) are being cared for by the relative or fictive kin; and
 - g. Transition of the child(ren) to the home of the relative or fictive kin, including informing the relative or fictive kin caring for the child(ren) of any upcoming medical/dental appointments.
7. Conduct a purposeful face-to-face contact with each child to discuss:
 - a. His/her feelings about being temporarily cared for by relative(s) or fictive kin;
 - b. The transition to the home of the relative or fictive kin; and
 - c. His/her feelings about residing outside of the home. Help him/her process feelings as appropriate.
8. Conduct a purposeful face-to-face contact with the relative or fictive kin caregiver(s) to discuss:
 - a. Any stipulations outlined in the court order concerning contact with the parent, guardian, or legal custodian;
 - b. Subsequent meetings and court hearings will be held, and he/she may be requested to attend or to testify in court;
 - c. The plan to transition the child(ren) into his/her home;
 - d. Opportunities for visitation and other methods of ongoing contact with the parent, guardian, or legal custodian and/or siblings;
 - e. Transportation to/from school, including extra-curricular activities;
 - f. Any upcoming medical/dental appointments; and
 - g. If assistance with childcare needed.
9. Conduct a family meeting within 7-10 calendar days of the child(ren) entering the home of the relative(s) or fictive kin with the:

- a. Parent(s), guardian(s) or legal custodian(s);
 - b. Investigations/Family Preservation SSCM;
 - c. Relative or fictive kin caregiver(s);
 - d. Service provider(s); and
 - e. Child(ren) (if age appropriate).
10. Refer the family to formal/informal providers to address safety threats and any identified needs. Maintain ongoing contact with service providers to assess sufficiency and progress (see policy [19.17 Case Management: Service Provision](#)).
 11. Initiate family preservation services in accordance with policy [8.1 Family Preservation Services: Initiation of Family Preservation Services](#).
 12. Engage each parent/guardian/legal custodian, relative or fictive kin, and child(ren) by phone weekly in accordance with policy [8.2 Family Preservation Services: Purposeful Contacts in Family Preservation Services](#).
 13. Conduct purposeful face-to-face contacts with the parent, guardian, or legal custodian, relative or fictive kin, and the child(ren) every 14 calendar days or more frequently, if needed and in accordance with policy [8.2 Family Preservation Services: Purposeful Contacts in Family Preservation Services](#).
 14. Complete collateral contacts, including any service providers to assess safety, determine family functioning and measure progress toward conditions of returns in accordance with policy [19.16 Case Management: Collateral Contacts](#).
 15. Participate in a supervisory staffing, at minimum bi-weekly, to discuss the family's progress (see policy [19.6 Case Management: Supervisor Staffing](#)).
 16. Convene an FTM at any time, while the child(ren) remains in a relative(s) or fictive kin resource home to resolve issues or concerns (see policy [19.3 Case Management: Solution Focused Family Team Meetings](#)).
 17. Participate in court hearings and provide recommendations to the court regarding whether the child(ren) can be safely returned to the home in accordance with policy [17.1 Legal: The Juvenile Court Process](#).
 18. Document all activities related to the TAFC arrangement in Georgia SHINES within 72 hours of occurrence. This includes uploading all court orders, assessments, and reports.

The SSS will:

1. Monitor and track TAFC arrangements.
NOTE: This includes children with legal jurisdiction in other counties.
2. Ensure purposeful contacts are conducted with the family and relative(s) or fictive kin resource to gather information concerning service provision, safety, and progress towards meeting the conditions of return.
3. Ensure collateral contacts are occurring as frequently as necessary to assess and ensure safety, determine family functioning and measure progress toward conditions of returns as outlined in policy [19.16: Case Management: Collateral Contacts](#).
4. Conduct a supervisory staffing bi-weekly or more often as necessary to discuss case progress and ongoing assessment of the relative(s) or fictive kin resource (see policy [19.6 Case Management: Supervisor Staffing](#)).
5. Conduct a staffing prior to any court hearings with the SAAG and the SSCM to discuss case progress and any recommendations that will be made to the court.

The Regional Kinship Coordinator will:

1. Contact the relative or fictive kin within 48 hours of receiving the initial referral to introduce themselves and explain role to the family.
2. Complete a Kinship Caregiver Needs Assessment, within three calendar days of initial contact with the family, to identify needs that would hinder the relative(s) or fictive kin from adequately providing for the care or needs of the child(ren).
 - a. Initiate services to address an identified need in the relative or fictive kin caregiver's home; or
 - b. Inform the SSCM of the need to implement services in the relative or fictive kin caregiver's home.
3. Attend the 7-10 day family meeting to:
 - a. Support the relative(s) or fictive kin caregiver(s);
 - b. Provide the results of the Kinship Needs Assessment and provide insight on the child(ren)'s behavioral, medical, mental health, and educational needs while in the relative(s) or fictive kin home;
 - c. Address any conflicts between the relative(s) or fictive kin caregiver(s) and the parent(s), guardian(s), or legal custodian(s) that may negatively impact the TAFC; and
 - d. Obtain information that could influence the Kinship Needs Assessment.
4. Provide full disclosure to the relative(s) or fictive kin to assist the caregiver(s) in understanding their options and the implications of each option.
5. Upload the signed Full Disclosure Statement Form into the Georgia SHINES External Documentation.
6. Maintain face-to-face or telephone contact with the relative(s) or fictive kin weekly to provide resources and supports the relative(s) or fictive kin's family will need to assist in caring for the child(ren).
7. Participate in the 45th day meeting to provide an update on:
 - a. The ongoing needs assessment of the relative(s) or fictive kin caregiver(s); and
 - b. Status of any services that have been initiated.
8. Submit a case closure/transition plan at the closure of the TAFC.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

Temporary alternatives to foster care means measures that a juvenile court may order in lieu of removal of or placement of a child(ren) alleged to be dependent in protective custody which will prevent or reduce the trauma or removal; allow a child to be cared for by persons with whom the child has an existing bond or attachment; or that ensure the safety of the child pending further action by the court on the dependency complaint or petition. When utilizing TAFC, the intent should be to focus on the immediate safety issue and work towards implementing a control so that the child(ren) may return home. Unlike voluntary kinship arrangements a TAFC has judicial oversight and is not a voluntary arrangement. When DFCS initiates a TAFC arrangement, the obligation remains to work with a caregiver towards resolving the safety concern with court oversight so the child(ren) can return home.

A complaint/petition must be filed, and a hearing held within 5 days. Once the petition comes before the Juvenile Court, the child(ren) may be adjudicated dependent or the case may be dismissed. If the child(ren) is adjudicated dependent, the court has multiple disposition options under the law that may be exercised, including granting a protective order to control the situation, granting custody of the child(ren) to DFCS (Foster Care) or granting temporary custody to a third party.

Full Disclosure

Full disclosure must be provided to the relative/fictive kin when the child(ren) enters their home, this includes the following:

1. The TAFC arrangement is a protective order issued by the court, however legal custody remains with the parent(s), guardian(s), or legal custodian(s) and the parent(s), guardian(s), or legal custodian(s) remain financially responsible for the child(ren) while in the home of the relative(s) or fictive kin, unless modified by the court.
2. Ensuring that the relative(s) or fictive kin resource is willing to maintain the child(ren)'s safety and well-being.
3. Identifying the role the relative(s) or fictive kin resource will have in assisting the parent(s), guardian(s), or legal custodian(s) in achieving the conditions for return, while adhering to HIPAA and confidentiality standards.
4. Agency terms and definitions (i.e. relative and fictive kin caregiver, TAFC, conditions for return);
5. Explaining the available services.
6. Information on legal options and financial support.
7. How to access the Kinship Navigator Program.
8. The Kinship Pathway a guide to help relative(s) or fictive kin navigate DFCS and the short term and long-term implications for caring for a child(ren) who is unable to live with their parent(s), guardian(s), or legal custodian(s).
9. Decisions will be made with the family based upon individual needs of the child(ren) and family, while considering the factors of safety, permanency, and well-being.

Conditions for Return

Conditions for return are written statements related to the safety (present or impending dangers) and risk issues identified that justified implementing an out-of-home safety plan. These statements describe what needs to occur before the child(ren) can safely return to their home and are specific to a parent/guardian/legal custodian and/or the home environment. Statements must include:

1. The safety concerns and diminished caregiver protective capacities that created the need for the child(ren) to reside with relative(s) or fictive kin;
2. The specific conditions and circumstances required for the safe return of the child (based upon the type and degree of change that is needed);
3. How the changes will be implemented to achieve the safe and successful resolution of the safety concerns and the child(ren)'s return home; and
4. The parent(s)/guardian(s)/legal custodian(s) response to intervention and willingness to make the changes necessary for the child(ren) to return home.

Maintaining Sibling Relationships During Temporary Alternative to Foster Care Placements

Relationships that children have with their brothers and sisters are typically the longest lasting relationships of their lives. These relationships can take on even more importance for children that are in out-of-home care. Federal law strongly encourages keeping siblings together. More and more SSCM's are dealing with finding relative(s) or fictive kin resources for children from large families with multiple siblings. If it is not possible for a relative(s) or fictive kin resource to provide a home for all the children in a family, it is especially important that the siblings maintain contact through a variety of means such as visits, phone calls, emails, and social media. These ties are known to provide some stability and permanency for children and are strongly

encouraged. SSCM should work with the relative(s) or fictive kin and the parents to ensure that sibling bonds are maintained.

Kinship Coordinator

Kinship Coordinators are available to help relative or fictive kin caregivers identify and access the services they need to support the children they are caring for as a TAFC. The Kinship Coordinator provides caregivers with information about how to obtain health care, financial support, legal aid, emergency services, and more, as well as how to work with the court system. The Kinship Coordinator may also be able to link relative or fictive kin caregivers with support groups, counseling, and other community services. The Kinship Coordinator will also be responsible for partnering with the SSCM to ensure that the relative(s) or fictive kin have the services and supports they need to provide for the needs of the child(ren) while in the relative(s) or fictive kin's home. The Kinship Coordinator will be involved in the case at the beginning of the TAFC and assist the family until the TAFC is terminated.

45th day Meeting

The 45th day meeting serves to assist the SSCM, family and relative or fictive kin caregiver in ensuring that the case is progressing as needed to return the child(ren) home. The meeting should be used to discuss:

1. The parent(s)/legal guardian(s) progress toward meeting the conditions of return;
2. Any additional safety threats that exist;
3. Barriers to returning the child home;
4. Families' progress with services; and
5. Next steps to ensure permanency for the children.

The case manager and supervisor must be honest and transparent with the family about the status of their case. The 45th day meeting should strongly focus on resolving the safety threats that exist and prevent the child(ren) from returning home. The 45th day meeting can be combined with the 45th FPS FTM.

FORMS AND TOOLS

[Kinship Pathway](#)

[Caregiver Child Safety Agreement](#)

[Infant Safe to Sleep Guidelines and Protocol](#)