

	GEORGIA DIVISION OF FAMILY AND CHILDREN SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY MANUAL			
	Chapter:	(14) Resource Development	Effective Date:	March 2015
	Policy Title:	Caregiver Safety Screening at Initial and Re-evaluation		
	Policy Number:	14.3	Previous Policy #:	1014

CODES/REFERENCES

Title IV-E of the Social Security Act Section 471(a)(20)(B)
Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006

REQUIREMENTS

The Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) shall check any child abuse and neglect registry for information on any prospective foster or adoptive parent and on any other adult living in their home for such information before the prospective foster or adoptive parent may be finally approved for placement of a child, regardless of whether or not foster care maintenance payments or adoption assistance payments are made on behalf of the child.

1. *DFCS shall check any child abuse and neglect registry it maintains for such information.*
2. *DFCS shall request any other state in which any such prospective parent or other adult household member has resided in the last five years to check any child abuse and neglect registry maintained by such other state for such information.*
3. *DFCS shall comply with any such request to check its child abuse and neglect registry that is received from another state.*

NOTE: The State of Georgia does not maintain a child abuse and neglect central registry; however, it conducts Child Protective Services (CPS) screening in lieu of a registry to cooperate with requests from other states in support of the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006.

DFCS and Child Placing Agencies (CPAs) shall conduct a Child Protective Services (CPS) screening of each prospective and existing caregiver and their adult household members (18 years of age and older) at:

1. Initial application;
2. Re-evaluation; and
3. Placement or re-placement of a child, including respite care (see policy [10.7 Foster Care: Placement and Re-Placement Safety Screenings](#)).

NOTE: For initial and reevaluations, a CPA may only obtain CPS history, policy violations, and other child welfare information through the State Office Special Investigations Unit (SIU). The SIU will conduct the screening for CPA foster homes and adoption agencies with an adoption services contract with the State of Georgia. **County DFCS offices are not permitted to respond to such requests.**

DFCS shall screen prospective and existing caregivers and their adult household members by checking the following databases at initial evaluation and re-evaluation:

1. Accurint®:
 - a. This search is used to verify address and household member information self-reported by caregivers.
 - b. The internal Accurint® Address & Household Composition Verification form is used to document the accuracy of information provided.
2. SUCCESS: This screening information is used to verify self-reported information from the caregiver's Financial Statement for Resource Parenting, including address, household member composition, income, and work information.
3. DFCS Protective Services Records:
 - a. Georgia SHINES (Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System);
 - b. IDS Online Master Index (Only required at initial evaluation);
 - c. PSDS (Only required at initial evaluation);
 - d. IDS Placement Central (Only required at initial evaluation); and
 - e. County Master Files (Only required at initial evaluation).

NOTE: Utilize a partial name search in Georgia SHINES.
4. Sexual Offender Registry:
 - a. Sex Offender Search;
 - b. Predator Search; and
 - c. Absconder Search.
5. Board of Pardons and Parole;
6. Department of Corrections Offender Query;
7. Child Abuse and Neglect Registry in any other state the prospective caregiver and their adult household members have resided within the past five years; and
8. Foster and Adoptive home policy violations.

DFCS shall disqualify any prospective or existing caregiver from serving as a placement resource if safety screening reveals any of the following circumstances apply:

1. The prospective or existing caregiver or an adult household member has a substantiated CPS history where they were named as the maltreater.
2. An applicant has a history of unsubstantiated CPS investigations that revealed concerns related to safety or parental protective capacity.
3. An applicant who has previously been a caregiver or is an existing caregiver has two or more discipline or other serious policy violations.
4. An applicant who has previously been a caregiver had his/her home administratively closed due to the caregiver's unwillingness to recognize the need for change or failure to cooperate with the agency.
5. The name of a prospective or existing caregiver or an adult household member appears on a Sexual Offender Registry in Georgia or any other State.
6. The prospective or existing caregiver or an adult household member has a criminal history that does not meet the background requirements as described in policy [14.2 Resource Development: Criminal Records Checks](#). or
7. There are unsatisfactory results from any safety screening source.

PROCEDURES

For DFCS homes, the Resource Development (RD) Case Manager will:

1. Direct applicants, existing caregivers, and all adult household members to complete the Child Protection Services History Request form and return it to the designated RD team member within five business days.
2. Upon receipt of the Child Protection Services History Request form and Prior Caregiver Service Report, determine the need to request CPS screening from other states. If out-of-state screening is needed, do not proceed with the Georgia CPS screening until clearance is received from the other state(s). The CPS history from the other state(s) must be considered prior to Georgia giving a CPS clearance.
3. Complete all required safety screening utilizing applicable sources.
4. Document the results of the screening in the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (Georgia SHINES) in the Family Evaluation, including the databases screened, the date screening was conducted, and results for all caregivers and adult household members.
5. Notify applicants, existing caregivers, and applicable adult household members of the agency's decision not to allow them to continue the application process or to continue to serve as a caregiver. Initial notification may occur via telephone, but must be immediately followed by a written closure letter to the family.

For CPA homes, CPA staff will:

1. Obtain a summary of CPS history, policy violations and other Child Welfare Information pertaining to prospective or existing caregivers from DFCS.
2. Conduct a name search in the following databases:
 - a. Sexual Offender Registry:
 - i Sex Offender Search;
 - ii Predator Search; and
 - iii Absconder Search.
 - b. Board of Pardons and Parole; and
 - c. Department of Corrections Offender Query.
3. Document the results of the name search in the applicant's or existing caregiver's file and print the screening results. The CPA Director or Designee will review all findings.
4. Notify applicants, existing caregivers, and all adult household members of the agency's decision to deny them eligibility to continue the application process or to continue to serve as a caregiver.

Unsatisfactory CPS Screening Results on Non-Relative Caregivers

1. Caregivers who are disqualified due to substantiated CPS history should be provided with the Administrative Case Review (ACR) request information (see policy [5.10 Investigations: CPS Administrative Reviews](#)).
2. Caregivers disqualified due to history provided by other states should be directed to contact the other state agency directly for information.
3. If a caregiver's CPS record is missing, lost, or has been purged, conduct an interview with the caregiver to ascertain as much as possible about the nature of their CPS history (what occurred, who was involved, whether or not services were provided, and any other information about the case).
4. Document the results of the interview with the caregiver on the Contact Detail page in

Georgia SHINES and submit to the State Safety Director's Office for review. The narrative should be sent to cpsscreening@dhs.ga.gov.

Unsatisfactory CPS Screening Results on Relative Caregivers

1. Relative caregivers who are disqualified due to substantiated CPS history should be provided with the Administrative Case Review (ACR) request information (see policy [5.10 Investigations: CPS Administrative Reviews](#)).
2. Caregivers disqualified due to history provided by another state should be directed to contact the other state agency directly for information.
3. Relative caregivers may also receive a secondary CPS review from the State Safety Director's Office upon request. County Directors may make an initial CPS clearance decision (including results of CPS history from other states), but must request concurrence from the State Safety Director's Office within 10 business days of the decision.
4. If a caregiver's CPS record is missing, lost, or has been purged, conduct an interview with the caregiver to ascertain as much as possible about the nature of their CPS history (what occurred, who was involved, whether or not services were provided, and any other information about the case).
5. Document the results of the interview with the caregiver on the Contact Detail page in Georgia SHINES and submit to the State Safety Director's Office for review. The narrative should be sent to cpsscreening@dhs.ga.gov.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

Caregiver safety screening is a significant component of the overall assessment process and should be initiated as soon as a prospective caregiver's application is received. The various databases accessed during the safety screening process should not be considered simply as "check-off" items. Information gathered from checking each of the databases increases our ability to ensure children are placed in safe and secure environments. Moreover, the results of the screening assist in determining a caregiver's protective capacities and are used to determine a prospective caregiver's eligibility to continue with the approval process or an existing caregiver's eligibility to continue as a placement resource.

When gathering information about a family, one must assess whether or not expanded Safety Screening is warranted. For instance, DFCS policy may only require checking CPS records in other states pursuant to the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act when a person has lived outside of Georgia within the last five years. However, based on information gathered about a family, you may decide that such a check is warranted on a person who lived in another state seven years ago. Good casework practice and good professional judgment may dictate that one go beyond minimum requirements when making safety assessments. For instance, an assessor should carefully assess whether checking another state's CPS records is warranted for applicants who live in Georgia but work in another state. Such a situation may present itself more often in Georgia counties that border other states and have applicants who engage in commerce, school, work, or other activities of daily living in both states. In any event, when out-of-state CPS checks are requested, applicants may not proceed with the approval process until the results of the CPS screening from those states have been received and carefully examined.

Screening IDS

The Internal Data System (IDS) is a legacy system that preceded the current Statewide Automated Child Welfare information System (Georgia SHINES). Now that Georgia SHINES exists, no additional information is being added into IDS. Consequently, screening in the legacy system (IDS Online, PSDS, and IDS Placement Central) only needs to be completed once for each individual. Whatever is found during the initial screen will always remain the same. See policy [4.2 Intake: Screening Case Participants](#) for more information regarding the screening process.

Approval and Denial

Notification of denials should be provided to the prospective or existing caregivers in an empathetic and supportive manner. Prospective or existing DFCS caregivers who wish to dispute a denial decision should be provided an opportunity to discuss the decision with the DFCS County Director or Designee. Prospective or existing CPA caregivers who wish to dispute a denial decision should be provided an opportunity to discuss the decision with the DFCS Office of Provider Management (OPM) Director or Designee.

Placement Safety Screening

Prior to placement or re-placement, including respite, of any child into a DFCS or CPA foster home, the County Department must conduct the DFCS Protective Services records check as outlined in the second requirement of this policy. Each office should develop a process for handling placement safety screening after hours, on holidays, and in emergency situations to ensure the screenings are conducted **prior** to the placement of children. The screening is not required for the return of a child to a foster home after respite, unless the child is entering a new placement. In addition, it is only necessary to check out-of-state Child Abuse and Neglect Registries when there is a new adult household member who has resided in another state since the previous screening.

FORMS AND TOOLS

[Accurint® Address & Household Composition Verification](#)
[Adult Household Member Screening Request Information](#)
[Child Protection Services History Request Form](#)
[Financial Statement for Resource Parenting](#)
[Financial Statement for Resource Parenting - Spanish](#)
[SUCCESS Information Verification](#)