

	<b>GEORGIA DIVISION OF FAMILY AND CHILDREN SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY MANUAL</b>			
	<b>Chapter:</b>	(14) Resource Development	<b>Effective Date:</b>	March 2015
	<b>Policy Title:</b>	Staff Restrictions on Being Caregivers		
	<b>Policy Number:</b>	14.25	<b>Previous Policy #:</b>	1014.6, 1014.7

<b>CODES/REFERENCES</b>
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N/A

<b>REQUIREMENTS</b>
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The Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) shall not allow its social services staff to serve as foster parents for children in DFCS custody. Exceptions to this requirement may only be granted by the DFCS Division Director.

DFCS shall not place children in a Child Placing Agency (CPA) foster home where the foster parent is an employee of the CPA.

**NOTE:** CPAs with staff serving as foster parents at the time this policy becomes effective must notify the DFCS Office of Provider Management (OPM) immediately. This includes homes with and without DFCS placements.

DFCS shall not allow caregivers to serve as a DFCS foster home and a CPA foster home simultaneously. Families may only serve as foster parents for one agency at a time.

DFCS shall allow its staff to serve as adoptive parents when there is no conflict of interest.

DFCS employees shall have their pre-service training, initial Family Evaluation, and subsequent re-evaluations completed/approved by an entity other than the local DFCS office in which they are employed (i.e., private agency, DFCS office in another county)

DFCS employees shall obtain approval from the DFCS Division Director to adopt children for whom they have provided social services (i.e., Investigation, Family Support, Family Preservation, or Foster Care services)

<b>PROCEDURES</b>
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1. DFCS employees may serve as a caregiver for a private CPA only if the placements are for non-DFCS children.
2. DFCS employees may serve as a caregiver for children to whom they are related. Such cases will be addressed on an individual basis and will require approval of the Director of Field Operations.
3. DFCS employees pursuing adoption of a child in DFCS custody will receive their pre-service training and have their Family Evaluation completed and approved by an entity other than the DFCS agency for which they are employed (i.e., private agency, other DFCS office).

4. DFCS employees desiring to adopt children that are or have been on their caseload must disclose all involvement they have had with the child's family to their County and Regional Director. Any possible conflicts of interest are to be discussed at the County and Regional level before making a recommendation regarding approval to the DFCS Division Director.
5. The Regional Director and County Director must disclose potential conflicts of interest to the DFCS Division Director in order to allow the DFCS Division Director to make an informed decision regarding whether or not to approve an employee's request to adopt a child for whom they have previously provided social services.

#### **PRACTICE GUIDANCE**

DFCS employees are restricted from serving as foster families. This restriction exists because of the potential for conflict of interest situations and serves as a protection for all parties involved. Waiver requests must include a recommendation from the County Director of the staff member involved. Waiver requests are submitted to the DFCS Division Director, with a copy to the Director of Field Operations. Only the DFCS Division Director may approve waiver requests.

DFCS employees may come into contact with a lot of families during their DFCS career. Some of that contact may involve participation in agency intervention that results in a child being removed from the custody of his/her family. For a DFCS employee to later become the new family for such a child can have the appearance of impropriety. Real or imagined, such negative perceptions of the agency's work can produce conflict that detracts from the agency's mission. However, DFCS employees know firsthand the importance of a child having consistent nurturing parental figures and family life. Consequently, it is only natural for DFCS employees to want to provide a stable, permanent home for a child whose family is unable or unwilling to do so. Therefore, DFCS must take every precaution to promote transparency when it comes to personal involvement in the lives of the families it serves. This requires employees to have open and honest dialogue with their leadership about their interest in adoption. It also requires employees to have honest self reflection about their feelings toward a child's family and their motives for adoption. To avoid the appearance of preferential treatment, prevent accusations of sabotage against co-workers, and to protect the employee's privacy, the adoptive process must not be handled by the office in which the employee is employed. It must be handled by an objective party with no motive other than to find the most appropriate family for a child in need.

#### **FORMS AND TOOLS**

N/A