

NWF Health Network Policy & Procedure

Series: 200: Placement Services

Policy Name: Placement of Children

Policy Number: 202

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Regulations: 39.0138, F.S.
65C-28.024, F.A.C.
65C-38.003, F.A.C.
Public Law 103-382

Referenced Document:

200-200 x 1, Guiding Principles on the Placement of Children

200-213, Unlicensed Placements

Policy

It is the policy of NWF Health Network (NWFHN), to ensure that children are placed in a timely manner in the least restrictive and most appropriate setting in which they can be successful.

Procedures

A. Licensed Out-of-Home Care Placement.

1. The NWFHN Placement Specialist (Placement team) will be the point of contact (POC) for Child Protective Investigators (CPI) and Dependency Case Managers (DCM) when seeking placements in licensed foster homes, group homes or facilities. Placement team will be available twenty-four (24) hours a day, seven (7) days a week.
 - a. At first contact, Placement team will complete a *Placement Information Form (PIF)* (located in CoBRIS). The CPI or DCM will provide demographic information and all available necessary and pertinent information regarding the child's situation and immediate needs. This should include family, developmental, medical, behavioral and emotional information as appropriate. This information will assist Placement Team in selecting a safe and appropriate placement.
 - b. For subsequent placements, Placement team, in consultation with the CPI or DCM, will document current needs and updated information regarding the child's behavior, medical issues and other relevant factors as available on an updated PIF.
2. When contacted by a CPI or DCM, Placement Team will also document on the PIF the information made available by the CPI or DCM regarding the "reasonable efforts" made by the CPI or DCM to prevent removal or movement and identify a non-custodial parent, relative or non-relative placement.
3. Placement team will make immediate efforts to locate an appropriate licensed care setting by contacting foster homes or facilities. Placement team will continue to communicate with the CPI or DCM regarding the status of identifying a placement.

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- a. NWFHN will ensure compliance with the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA), by assuring that that every placement decision for children is made without regard to race, ethnicity, color or natural origin of the child or the adult with whom the child is to be placed.
 - b. Any potential substitute care providers will be given all relevant information about the child. In particular, they must be given abuse and neglect information, medical history available at time of placement, any behavior concerns regarding the child, whether a child has a history of sexual abuse as either a victim or perpetrator and the child's potential to victimize other children.
 - c. When a Child Placement Agreement (Behavior Management Plan or Care Precaution) is being implemented, Placement team will share the specific requirements of the plan with potential providers.
4. Once a placement has been identified, Placement team will contact the CPI or DCM and provide all information needed to facilitate the placement, including contact information for the placement and any special considerations or conditions.
5. The CPI or DCM will provide all documents available and required as a part of the Child Resource Record (CRR) to all substitute caregivers. Placement team will e-mail a copy of the PIF to licensed foster parents and group homes.
6. The Placement Specialist will enter the placement in CoBRIS which will populate an Admission and Movement Form. This form is sent by the Placement Specialist to NWFHN's Vouchering Unit for entry into FSFN to assure timely payment.
 - a. If the rate is greater than the traditional Board Rate or Provider Rate, funding approval must be obtained by Placement Leadership.
7. After the placement has been made, NWFHN Placement Specialist will follow up with the identified placement provider the next business day to ensure that the child's immediate needs are met. If additional services are needed the Placement Specialist will work with the CPI or DCM to address any unmet need.
 - a. Placement team maintain ongoing communication with the placement provider as well as with the investigator or case manager who has primary responsibility for the case. When a placement expresses a need regarding a child, Placement team take steps to ensure that the appropriate responsible individual is notified and that the needs are addressed. Similarly, when a DCM or CPI expresses a concern about some aspects of a provider's service such as communication or cooperation, Placement team assist in addressing those concerns, enlisting the help of Foster Family Support team.
8. Placement team will prioritize the following when matching a child with a prospective placement:
 - a. Placing the child in the least restrictive, most family like setting able to meet the individual needs of the child.
 - b. Placing all siblings together, when possible and appropriate. The client record will specifically describe the reason for placing any siblings separately.
 - c. Placing a child in close proximity (same county) to the parent and other significant family members.
 - d. Placing the child in the same school setting (same school district or zone) to minimize disruption to the child's education.

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9. The CPI is responsible for securing a shelter court order within twenty-four (24) hours of taking the child into custody.
10. DCF and CBC MDT facilitators will be included in the email identifying the placement provider so that an MDT can occur within the timeframes specified by the type of placement. The team will consider certain decisions related to the child, including initial and subsequent placement decisions, creating transition plans for such placement decisions, determining educational placement decision, and the placement of siblings in out-of-home care and whether the proposed placement is in the child's best interest.
11. DCF or CBC hosted MDT held will recommend the FFPSA level of care that is most appropriate for the child. The level of care options for licensed placements are: Family Foster home, Group Care setting (Safe House, At-Risk House, Maternity, or Other DCF Group Care Setting), or Other (i.e. Qualified Residential Treatment Program, Residential Treatment Center, APD Home, SAMH, etc.).

B. Relative/Non-Relative Placement.

1. Relative placement is defined as placement of a child with any person meeting the definition of "relative" outlined in Chapter 39, F.S. Specifically, "a grandparent, great-grandparent, sibling, first cousin, aunt, uncle, great-aunt, great-uncle, niece, or nephew, whether related by the whole or half blood, by affinity, or by adoption. The term does not include a stepparent."
2. Non-relative placement is placement of a child with an unrelated adult who is not licensed as a substitute care provider. When a child must be removed by the CPI or DCM from the home of the parent(s) or caregiver(s), relative and non-relative placement must be explored thoroughly and aggressively before children are placed in foster care. If there is a non-custodial parent, that parent should be contacted and interviewed first and is the placement of choice unless the safety and well-being of the child would be endangered. A diligent search must be conducted and documented for any parent whose whereabouts are unknown. The case file must contain documentation that non-custodial parents have been contacted and that other relative and non-relative alternatives to a licensed care placement have been explored.
3. Although the CPI is responsible for initial reasonable efforts in identifying and locating non-custodial parents, relatives or non-relative placements, the case manager assumes this responsibility once the case has been formally accepted by the CMO. Diligent search efforts will be ongoing until all known potential resources have been explored and documented.

C. Unlicensed Placements

NWF Health Network (NWFHN) ensures diligent efforts are completed to place dependent children in a safe, stable, and nurturing environment. In doing so, NWFHN and its contracted partners shall ensure diligent efforts to safely place a dependent child in need of placement with relatives, fictive kin, or in licensed placement as applicable and within accordance of Florida Statutes, Florida Administrative Code, Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) Operating Procedures (CFOP), and NWFHN Policy and Procedures.

When a child cannot be safely or appropriately placed to ensure the child's safety and well-being, and after all diligent efforts have been exhausted, NWFHN's Unlicensed Placements policy is followed. See *Operating Policy 200-213, Unlicensed Placements*.