

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

CHILDREN'S DIVISION

P.O. BOX 88

JEFFERSON CITY, MISSOURI

May 30, 2006

MEMORANDUM**WHAT'S INSIDE:**

Foster Children's
Belongings - Return,
Maintenance,
Donation and/or
Destruction

TO: REGIONAL EXECUTIVE STAFF, CIRCUIT MANAGERS AND
CHILDREN'S DIVISION STAFF

FROM: PAULA NEESE, INTERIM DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: FOSTER CHILDREN'S BELONGINGS

REFERENCE: CHILDREN'S DIVISION

DISCUSSION:

The purpose of this memorandum is to introduce changes in policy in regard to the return, maintenance, donation and/or destruction of property belonging to children currently or previously in the Division's custody. Children in CD custody often come with few belongings but will accumulate items during their stay in care. These items should move with the child from placement to placement and should accompany the child upon reunification. However, there are times when the foster child leaves belongings behind (i.e. an emergency move or residential placement). In these instances, the items will often come to the local office for storage. This memorandum addresses policy and timeframes for storage and for the return or removal of the items.

1. RETURN OF BELONGINGS

When a child returns home or to a placement in which they may have their belongings (foster home/adoptive home/ILA), the items should be returned to the child. Copies should be maintained in the case file. A notification letter should be sent to or contact made with the child or family to make arrangements to transfer the belongings to the child/family. If the placement is not in the county or circuit where the belongings are kept (or arrangements can not be made to return the belongings), the items will be mailed to the child. Local E&E funds will need to be used to cover the cost of returning the items. This protocol should also be followed if a child ages out of the system and an address is known for the child.

Important papers such as the child's birth certificate and medical records are often needed by the family or child after the Division's case is closed. Return of these items will differ based upon the outcome of the case. These papers may be given to the parent when a case is closed due to reunification, to the child in an APPLA or ILA placement, or to a guardian in the case of a legal guardianship.

Copies of these papers must be kept in the case file. These papers may not be given out if the case is closed due to the parents' rights being terminated and the child is adopted.

2. MAINTENANCE / DONATION / DESTRUCTION OF BELONGINGS

Any important legal documents or papers (i.e. birth certificate, medical papers, etc.) should be kept in the child's case record in a separate section or envelope. Toys and clothing should be inspected for safety and usability. If they are safe and useable, clothing and toys may be donated to local charities, foster parent associations, or local resources; utilized in local office visiting rooms, or kept as a resource for foster parents and emergency placements. Those items deemed unsafe or not usable should be disposed of. Any concern with normal disposal of items should be addressed by the local office management and a plan for disposal should be developed.

Any items which do not fall under the category of clothing, toys or legal papers should be kept, donated or destroyed at the discretion of the local management staff. Any question as to what to do with a particular item can be directed to the Regional Office staff.

All belongings may be donated or destroyed, as outlined, if Division staff are unable to make contact with the child or family within 6 months of the child leaving custody.

NECESSARY ACTION:

1. Review this memorandum with all Children's Division staff.
2. Review revised Child Welfare Manual chapters as indicated below.
3. Any questions regarding this e-mail should be sent through normal supervisory channels.

PDS CONTACT:

Stefanie Wickers
573-751-1354
Stefanie.D.Wickers@dss.mo.gov

PROGRAM MANAGER:

Cindy Wilkinson
573-751-3171
Cindy.R.Wilkinson@dss.mo.gov

CHILD WELFARE MANUAL REVISIONS:

[Section 4 Chapter 5](#)
[Section 4 Chapter 5 Attachment D \(new\)](#)
[Table of Contents](#)

FORMS AND INSTRUCTIONS:

List or put N/A if not applicable.

REFERENCE DOCUMENTS and RESOURCES:

N/A

RELATED STATUTE:

N/A

ADMINISTRATIVE RULE: N/A
COUNCIL ON ACCREDITATION (COA) STANDARDS: N/A
PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT PLAN (PIP): N/A
SACWIS REQUIREMENTS: N/A

PN/SDW:js