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PA #:

Social Security Administration (SSA) Benefits Procedure

This Practice Alert is to advise of changes made to Children's Division's (CD) procedure when applying as representative payee for children in alternative care that receive SSI, OASDI, or VA benefits.

The Social Security Administration (SSA) has the responsibility to appoint a payee based on the preferred payee order of selection. Relative caregiver is the preferred payee even when a child is in the custody of a social service agency.

1. What does the worker need to do?

- Discuss with the relative caregivers that they may be licensed for and receive both maintenance and a social security benefit on behalf of a relative child placed in their care.
- Let the relative caregivers know that a Social Security Specialist will contact them to discuss their option to be a representative payee for eligible children and how to apply.
- If a youth receiving SSI moves from the relative caregiver's home, the worker is responsible for notifying their Social Security Specialist in the Child Welfare/Title IV-E Unit. This is imperative to ensure the appropriate individual is considered as representative payee to avoid benefits being overpaid to incorrect individuals and to avoid the potential misuse of benefits.

2. How does this impact the relative placement provider?

- Social Security Specialists within the Child Welfare/Title IV-E Unit will review and take appropriate action on children in alternative care receiving a benefit and placed with a relative caregiver prior to making application for CD to be payee.
- The Social Security Specialist will make contact with the relative caregiver to confirm whether or not the relative caregiver chooses to apply as payee and provide them with information needed to proceed with an application to be representative payee.
- It is important for relative caregivers to disclose to the Social Security Administration that they are receiving a maintenance assistance payment to avoid a potential overpayment of benefits. The Social Security Income (SSI) program is an income-based program; therefore, the Social Security Administration may need to reduce the SSI benefit amount if the maintenance assistance is also federally funded.

***Note: This would only apply to a youth who receives SSI benefits. A youth's OASDI (Old Age, Survivor, and Disability Insurance) benefits would not be subject to reduction.*

- As the representative payee, the relative caregiver agrees to all responsibilities associated with serving as the representative payee, which includes reporting any of the following to their local Social Security Administration on behalf of the beneficiary:
 - 1) change in placement (the youth is no longer residing in their home),
 - 2) income earned,

- 3) information regarding banking or savings accounts,
- 4) hospitalizations,
- 5) incarcerations,
- 6) marriage or
- 7) death.

