

PA26-AC-07

DATE: August 18, 2026

TO: Children's Division and Foster Care Case Management

FROM: Sara Smith, Children's Division Director

SUBJECT: **Clarification on Placement Policy and Procedure**

OVERVIEW:

The purpose of this practice alert is to provide notification and clarification regarding placement policy and procedures. Placement procedures are in but not limited to the following sections of the Child Welfare Manual:

- CWM 4.2 Placements Overview
- CWM 4.2.1 Common Placement Types
- CWM 4.2.2 Initial Placement Activities
- CWM 6.9.1 Out of County Home Assessment
- CWM 6.13 Resource Development Worker Responsibilities
- CWM 6.16.2 Agency Arranged Relative Foster Care Due to the Children's Division Legal Custody
- CWM 6.18.1 Elevated Medical Foster Care

Resource Development Worker Responsibilities

Resource development workers are responsible for developing and maintaining safe and appropriate foster homes to meet the needs of children in foster care by ensuring all licensed foster homes comply with foster home licensing requirements. Resource development workers must ensure changes to foster care licenses and approvals are updated timely in FACES and the Foster Parent Portal, and assist staff in locating appropriate placement by:

- maintaining a list of available foster homes,
- making phone calls to locate placement,
- providing information to staff on the strengths and needs of foster parents,
- helping arrange pre-placement visits,
- providing information regarding potential placements to foster parents, and
- assuring foster home capacities are not exceeded.

The specific worker assigned to maintain and provide oversight of an individual foster family's license/approval or renewal will be referred to as the licensing worker in this practice alert.

Placement in a Licensed Foster Home

Staff making placement arrangements with a currently licensed foster home must obtain permission and approval for placement from the foster family's licensing worker or supervisor prior to placement. Within 24 hours of placement, the placing worker must send written notification to the foster family's residence county courtesy email box **and the foster home's licensing worker and supervisor.**

Emergency Placements

Staff making placement arrangements after hours must attempt to obtain permission and approval for placement from the foster family's licensing worker or supervisor. If permission or approval for placement cannot be obtained and placement is made after hours, written notification must be sent within 24 hours of placement to the foster family's residence county courtesy email box **and the foster home's licensing worker and supervisor.**

Emergency placement may not be made when:

- there is no active foster home license,
- the foster home license is on administrative hold,
- the proposed placement would cause the home to exceed capacity without an approved, signed capacity waiver, or
- the foster home does not have the required approval necessary to meet the needs of the child(ren) being placed (medical, elevated needs, etc.).

If emergency placement is made after hours and permission from the foster family's licensing worker or supervisor cannot be obtained, staff making placement arrangements must ensure the home is appropriately licensed and approved prior to making placement by reviewing the following information in FACES:

- All information available on the "Vendor Profile" screen under "license/approval information;"
 - ensure there is an active **foster care license prior to placement** when placing in a home that does not meet the definition of a "relative."
 - ensure the foster home has required approvals for placement (i.e. medical, elevated needs).
 - Ensure the "license status" information does not show any license/approvals on administrative hold.
- All "vendor type" licensing information;
 - Staff must expand the "License/Approval Information" and expand the "Vendor Type" or click on the "Vendor Type" to view the "Vendor Licensure/Approval and Renewal" screen to identify who the assigned licensing worker is. Staff may also click on the licensing worker's name to view the licensing workers contact information and their supervisor.
 - Review license capacity and placements to ensure the proposed placement will not cause the foster home to exceed their foster home license capacity. Staff may review this by expanding the "License/Approval Information" and viewing the "Total Capacity" and "Total Placed" information. Staff should also review the "Vendor Placement Record" to view other children's placement types.

Placement in a Relative Home

The Division may only place a foster child in an unlicensed home when the caregiver is a relative. In accordance with RSMo 210.565, only the following individuals are considered relatives:

- A grandparent. The status of a grandparent shall not be affected by the death or the dissolution of the marriage of a son or daughter;
- Any other person related by blood , affinity, or marriage; or
- A person who is not related to the child but **has a close relationship with the child or the child's family;**
 - Note: A foster parent or kinship caregiver with whom a child has resided for nine months or more is a person who has a close relationship with the child.

Note: A close relationship means the proposed caregiver is not a stranger or a mere acquaintance to the child or child's family, but rather, a person whom the family knows well. This may include but is not limited to neighbors, friends, a child's teacher, coach, babysitter, etc.

There are **no exceptions** to the relative definition. It is a violation of law and a significant safety risk to place a child in an unlicensed home when the caregiver does not meet the criteria above. Staff placing child(ren) in an unlicensed relative home must comply with the following policies for placement:

- CWM 4.2.2 Initial Placement Activities
- CWM 6.16.2 Agency Arranged Relative Foster Care Due to the Children's Division Legal Custody
- CWM 6.9.1 Out of County Home Assessment.

Relative foster homes are assessed and licensed for the specific relative child(ren) placed in their care. They do not have the same training or foster care licensing requirements as traditional foster homes. It is a violation of law and a significant safety risk to place a child in a home that is only licensed for relative placement when the child in need of placement is not a relative.

Medical Foster Care Services

The [Medical Foster Care Assessment Tool \(CS-10\)](#) is used by the child's case manager and medical professionals to document the diagnosed medical/developmental needs of the foster youth and obtain approval for medical foster care placement.

Children with medical needs require special care and attention to ensure their medical needs are met. It is critical for staff to ensure any potential relative or foster home being considered for placement has the appropriate training and skills necessary to meet the child's medical needs. When a child's medical needs are known prior to placement, training should be provided to potential foster homes prior to placement. If a child approved for medical foster care is placed in a resource provider home that is not contracted to provide medical foster care, the resource provider shall be given consideration to continue placement if they are able to meet the child's medical needs.

Both licensed relative and foster families may be approved as an "elevated medical needs home (MH)" to provide medical foster care for a specific child with a medical diagnosis. The family must complete medical training for the child's medical condition prior to the approval for "elevated medical needs" being approved in FACES. The family must also sign the [Amendment to Provide Medical Foster Care \(CD-344\)](#).

Medical Resource Home Providers agree with the following:

- *To provide care to foster youth with acute medical problems or severe physical/mental disabilities who have been determined eligible for medical foster care by the Division;*
- *To only maintain a total of 4 placements in the home;*
- *To maintain only 2 foster youth in the home simultaneously with acute medical problems or severe physical/mental disabilities who have been determined eligible for medical foster care by the Division.*
- *To participate in the screening process of the foster youth to be placed in the home by discussing the referral information and holding pre-placement visits;*
- *To schedule a comprehensive medical assessment for the foster youth to take place within thirty (30) days of the foster youth being placed in the home;*
- *To work closely with, and accept special training from, the health care professionals attending the foster youth in placement;*
- *To provide day-to-day implementation and monitoring of the medical or developmental treatment plan and services as agreed upon with other treatment staff;*
- *To participate in any training requested by the Division;*
- *To assist in training/education of the natural parent(s) on how to care for the specified foster youth, depending upon the involvement of the natural parent;*
- *To assist the child to understand and manage his/her condition; and*
- *To provide transportation for foster youth in medical foster care to and from necessary appointments, treatment facilities, medical care, daily activities, etc.*

Placement Searches

The Resource Service Directory is a tool to assist staff in searching for placement options with currently licensed foster homes. The information provided through this search tool is limited and relies on accurate data entry into FACES. Staff should be aware that depending on the type of search they conduct, they may receive information for both licensed relatives and traditional foster homes in the results.

Note: Searching for an “elevated medical needs home (MH)” through the resource service directory will return both licensed relative and foster homes with this approval type. When searching for non-relative placements, staff should select the “Foster Home (FH)” vendor type and check the “medical” specialized services to return traditional foster homes only.

Due to the limitations of the Resource Directory Tool and FACES, placement decisions should never be made based on the results provided by the Resource Service Directory alone. When a potential licensed foster family is identified through a Resource Service Delivery search, staff must obtain permission and approval and notify the foster family’s licensing worker prior to placement except when permission cannot be obtained after hours, per policy and as described above.

For questions or concerns, please contact:

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Kate Watson, Deputy Director, at Kate.Watson@dss.mo.gov

This Practice Alert remains effective unless the current policy has been rescinded or revised with contradictory guidance.

CHILD WELFARE MANUAL POLICY AND COLLATERAL DOCUMENTATION:

[CWM 4.2 Placements Overview](#)

[CWM 4.2.1 Common Placement Types](#)

[CWM 4.2.2 Initial Placement Activities](#)

[CWM 6.9.1 Out of County Home Assessment](#)

[CWM 6.13 Resource Development Worker Responsibilities](#)

[CWM 6.16.2 Agency Arranged Relative Foster Care Due to the Children's Division Legal Custody](#)

[CWM 6.18.1 Elevated Medical Foster Care](#)