


**Department of Human Resources
Social Services Administration
311 W. Saratoga Street
Baltimore, MD 21201**

DATE: February 29, 2012

POLICY DIRECTIVE: SSA# 12-27
(Supersedes Policy SSA #05-04)

TO: Directors, Local Departments of Social Services
Assistant Directors, Services

FROM: Carnitra D. White, Executive Director
Social Services Administration 

RE: Maryland's Safety Assessment for Every Child-Out of
Home Placement SAFE-C OHP

PROGRAMS
AFFECTED: Out-of-Home Placement Services

ORIGINATING OFFICE: Out-of-Home Placement

ACTION REQUIRED OF: All Local Departments

REQUIRED ACTION: Implement Policy and Procedures

ACTION DUE: March 15, 2012

CONTACT PERSONS: Jill Taylor
Program Manager Out of Home Placement
410-767-7695
Jtaylor3@dhr.state.md.us

Purpose

The purpose of this policy directive is to provide guidelines to the local departments of social services on the Safety Assessment for Every Child Out-of-Home (SAFE-C OHP). The SAFE-C OHP replaces the use of the SAFE-C and the SAFE-C Group for children who reside in out-of-home placement. The SAFE-C will continue to be used for those children who are on trial home visits.

The SAFE-C OHP is a tool used to assess the safety of children in Maryland's child welfare system that are placed in out-of-home placement. This assessment is not meant to evaluate the appropriateness of the placement resource, but to assess for the safety of the living arrangement. This tool provides caseworkers with two critical decisions: whether a child is "safe" or "unsafe", and whether a change in placement or living arrangement is required.

This policy directive supersedes Policy Directive SSA# 05-4.

Background

The Federal Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (ASFA) and Maryland House Bill 1093, Children in Out of Home Placements (1998) identified child safety as the primary consideration in decisions made by local department caseworkers and supervisors. Code of Maryland Annotated Regulations (COMAR) established that the safety of all children in out-of-home placement is paramount when planning for a child regardless of living arrangement.

In 2001, Maryland introduced the SAFE-C that addresses the safety issues of children residing in their own home or when placed in a family foster home setting. In 2004, Maryland introduced the SAFE-C Group which expanded safety assessments to include group homes and residential facilities. The SAFE-C OHP is a uniform safety assessment which will allow local department caseworkers to have one safety tool to assess every child in out-of-home placement regardless of their type of placement.

Action Required

The SAFE-C OHP assessment shall be used for every child that becomes involved with out-of-home placement. The Safe-C OHP shall be used on all children with an active removal and placed outside the parent/guardians care. This assessment shall be used on all children in out-of-home placement up to their 21st birthday. This assessment shall be used on all children in out-of-home placement in every type of placement or living arrangement (kinship, regular foster homes, private treatment agency homes, group homes, and residential treatment centers) except for children on trial home visits with parents/guardians. When a child is placed with the parent/guardians for a trial home visit, a SAFE-C shall be used to assess their safety.

The SAFE-C OHP is designed with 12 questions to assess the child's safety in the resource placement. Questions 1 through 6 are specific to the child. These questions explore the child's ability and needs. Questions 7 through 12 are directed around the resource provider's ability to

protect or keep the safety of the child. Resource providers (all types) are mandated to sign the SAFE-C OHP assessment every time it is completed. The caseworker shall interact with the provider in a collaborative effort to complete the assessment. The assessment shall be completed while the caseworker is present in the resource placement. This assessment shall also be used to inform case planning and service delivery.

In situations in which the child is too young or disabled to speak with the caseworker, the caseworker shall observe the child in the placement and observe the interaction between the child and resource provider.

When a caseworker is answering the questions addressed in the SAFE-C OHP and a question does not apply to the child, the caseworker shall document that the question is not applicable and put a "Yes" in the box. At the point the SAFE-C OHP is completed, if all check boxes are answered "Yes", the child is considered safe. If one or more of the safety influences (questions 1 through 12) are answered "No," the caseworker must immediately remove the child from the resource provider. In this situation, immediately is defined as the child must leave the resource placement at the same time the caseworker leaves once the Safe-C OHP determines the child as unsafe. A child should never be left in a placement or living arrangement when there are safety concerns. **In no situation should a safety plan be completed on a child in out-of-home placement.**

When a child is removed from a placement or living arrangement due to safety concerns the caseworker shall:

- Notify the court and counsel immediately of the change in placement;
- Notify the resource home worker if this is an agency approved home of the safety concerns; or
- Notify the DHR Director of the Office of Licensing and Monitoring for private resource providers of the safety concerns;
- Notify the caseworkers of the other children in the placement resource if the safety concern deals with the resource provider immediately (within 24 hours).

The SAFE-C OHP assessment shall be completed at the following times:

Initial Placement in Out-of-Home:

At the time a child is initially placed in out-of-home placement, a SAFE-C OHP must be completed by the placing LDSS staff. At the time of placement the staff must seek feedback from the provider on questions 7 through 12 of the assessment. The LDSS staff must visually observe the child's sleeping arrangement. If the placing staff is not the out-of-home placement caseworker, the out-of-home placement caseworker must visit the child at the placement within 5 business days and complete a SAFE-C OHP.

Replacement:

A SAFE-C OHP must be completed at the time a child in out-of-home placement is replaced in another placement resource. The placing LDSS caseworker must complete the same steps at replacement that are required at the initial placement of a child.

Reconsideration:

The LDSS caseworker shall complete a SAFE-C OHP assessment every 180 days for children as part of the case reconsideration. This includes all children regardless of placement type or living arrangement. At the time of a case reconsideration, the caseworker shall complete a SAFE-C OHP assessment prior to completing the case plan and service agreement. The assessment results should be used to inform the case planning and service delivery process.

Circumstances which may place a child in jeopardy:

Anytime a caseworker observes a situation or a situation is brought to the attention of the local department which may place a child's safety in danger, a SAFE-C OHP must be completed immediately. If any of the questions are answered "No" the child must be immediately removed.

Documentation in MD CHESSIE

The caseworker is responsible for entering the finding from the SAFE-C OHP in MD CHESSIE within 2 business days of making the safety decision. The supervisor is responsible for approving the safety decision within 1 business day of the worker's submittal.