Department of Health & Human Services
DHHS
NEBRASKA

Division of Children and Family Services

State of Nebraska
Pete Ricketts, Governor

Division of Children and Family Services Protection and Safety Procedure Update #02-2015	
Regarding:	Voluntary Placement Agreements Eliminated; Informal Living Arrangement Clarified
Date Effective:	March 13, 2015
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Issued by:	Tony Green, Acting Director

Philosophy

DHHS believes that children should remain with their parents whenever it is safe for them to do so. When other arrangements must be made, placement with the non-custodial parent, relatives or others known to the child is the preferred option. Placements can be made via an informal living arrangement

Procedure:

A. Voluntary Placement Agreements will no longer be utilized.

B. Informal Living Arrangement:
Informal Living Arrangement means that the parent has made arrangements for a temporary and alternative place for their child to reside until child safety can be managed in the parental home.

Informal Living Arrangements should be for a temporary period of time that is agreed upon by the parent and temporary alternative caregiver.
There are two types of Informal Living Arrangements:

1. The first type of Informal Living Arrangement is when the parent arranges for a temporary alternative caretaker to care for the child due to the parent's hospitalization, incarceration or other situation resulting in the parent being unable to care for the child prior to any CFS involvement. Subsequently CFS becomes involved based on a report of child abuse or neglect accepted for assessment. In these situations, the CFS Specialist should follow the steps described below in item #2a-h, to approve the living arrangement.

2. The second type of Informal Living Arrangement occurs when there is a child abuse or neglect report and CFS accepts the intake for assessment. Completion of the safety assessment indicates that the child(ren) cannot safely remain in the parental home. The CFS Specialist will ask the parent if there are any individual(s), including the non-custodial parent, relatives, and others known to the child(ren) who the parent could contact to make temporary placement arrangements for the child(ren).

   The CFS Specialist will assist the parent, if needed, in contacting individuals identified that may help care for the child(ren). The CFS Specialist must complete an assessment of the potential temporary alternative caregivers to determine that there are no safety concerns if the child(ren) should reside with them.

   The CFS Specialist will assess the parent's level of agreement to cooperate with a plan for the child(ren) to temporarily reside out of the home. Once the parent has made an informal

living arrangement, the CFS Specialist will take the following steps in order to approve this arrangement. The CFS Specialist will:

a. Advise the parent that DCFS does not consider this foster care, and therefore, the parent is still financially responsible for the child(ren).
b. Advise the informal living caretaker that DCFS does not consider this foster care.
c. Complete the Suitability of Safety Plan Participant Form for every adult in the proposed caretaker's home;
d. Under Safety Interventions in the Safety Plan, designate "Family and Department agree to informal out of home placement with relative". An N-FOCUS modification will occur in 2015 and under the Safety Intervention in the Safety Plan the CFS Specialist will designate: "Family will place child with relative and DHHS determines this is a safe placement";
e. Encourage the parent to provide a consent for the temporary alternative caretaker to obtain medical care and assist with meeting the educational needs of the child(ren);
f. Document the child is "Unsafe" and complete the Out of Home Safety Plan;
g. Document the Safety Plan and Risk or Prevention Assessment and designate "Approved Living Arrangement" on N-FOCUS;
h. Designate "Non-Court Involved Child" for the Legal Status; and
i. Develop guidelines within the safety plan for parent and child contact.

When the parent and child leave the parental home together to reside elsewhere, the CFS Specialist will take the following steps:

a. Talk with the proposed caretaker to verify that he/she is willing and able to have the parent and child reside in his/her home;
b. Advise the parent and the proposed caretaker that DCFS does not consider this foster care and therefore, the parent is still financially responsible for the child(ren).
c. Complete the Suitability of Safety Plan Participant Form for every adult in the proposed caretaker's home;
d. Document the child is "Conditionally Safe" and complete the In Home Safety Plan. The child is "Conditionally Safe" because they remain with the parent with a plan to keep the child safe, even though the family may temporarily not be residing in the parental home;
e. Document the Safety Plan and Risk or Prevention Assessment on N-FOCUS; and
f. Designate "Non-Court Involved Child" for the Legal Status.

References:

Procedure Update #16-2013, Initial Assessment Process.