

ADMINISTRATIVE LETTER Children's Services #2-03

TO: COUNTY DIRECTORS OF SOCIAL SERVICES

SUBJECT: TEMPORARY PLACEMENT WITH SAFETY RESOURCES

DATE: March 3, 2003

EFFECTIVE DATE: March 15, 2003

ATTENTION: Children's Services Social Workers

Children's Services Supervisors

This letter is to provide you with procedures for temporary placements with safety resources whenever a Safety Assessment indicates that a child will be unsafe if allowed to remain in the home of the parent or caretaker. In order to facilitate placements across county lines, we have provided grids giving short descriptions of steps to take in specific situations referenced in this policy material.

In the past, temporary placements with a relative or other person identified by the parent during an investigative assessment was considered a "parent initiated placement". Since there was no requirement to assess these placements, most county Departments of Social Services did not complete an assessment prior to placing the child in the home.

As child welfare knowledge has expanded, we have realized that such temporary placements need assessment by the social worker if the safety of the child is to be protected. Once a DSS social worker makes the determination, using the Safety Assessment as a guide, that the child cannot safely remain with the parent or caretaker, the agency has effectively taken responsibility for a safe placement. Consequently, the term "parent initiated placement" is no longer a useful or accurate term. Advice from our child welfare attorneys has confirmed that the agency has a responsibility to assess any safety resource a parent identifies, and to do so prior to leaving the child in the care of a safety resource.

It is the responsibility of the County Department of Social Services to assess the suitability of the Safety Resource. Therefore, temporary placements with a Safety Resource shall not be made without proper assessment of the proposed Safety Resource.

The following procedures must be followed whenever the Safety Assessment indicates that the child cannot safely remain with the parent or caretaker and a Safety Resource is identified to care for the child on a temporary basis:

When the Safety Assessment reveals that the child cannot safely be left in the care of the parent or caretaker, Part II of the Safety Assessment, the Safety Response, is completed. The safety resource identified by the parent must be someone that **both** the

parent and social worker believe will safely care for the child while temporarily away from the parent. Because of the crisis nature of this situation for the parent, the social worker should help the parent identify someone that will reasonably be expected to protect the child. Providing the parent with information from the Initial Kinship Care Assessment in the decision making process can help ensure that whomever is selected will protect the child. The investigating county social worker should briefly discuss the items in Table #1 with the parent. These items are taken directly from the Initial Kinship Care Assessment.

Situation #1

Table #1 lists those steps that the investigating county worker should follow when the safety resource that is identified lives in the investigating county or in another county that is within driving distance of the investigating county.

Once the safety resource is identified, a check of the Central Registry must be conducted and the formal Initial Kinship Care Assessment, which includes a home visit, must be completed with that person. An assessment of the safety resource's home environment must take place prior to the child being left in the care of the safety resource. While the Initial Kinship Care Assessment instrument states that the assessment may be completed within 24 hours, when use of a safety resource is required, the Initial Kinship Care Assessment must be completed before the child is left in the care of the safety resource. The Initial Kinship Care Assessment should be followed by the full Kinship Care Assessment within 30 days if the child continues in the care of the safety resource.

Agencies must ensure easy access to the Central Registry so that information on possible prior abuse and neglect can be obtained. Supervisory personnel can be invaluable in such circumstances, obtaining and providing the information to the social worker at the time of the Initial Kinship Care Assessment.

If the proposed safety resource lives in another county and is within driving distance, the investigating county worker must conduct the Initial Kinship Care Assessment including making a visit to the home of the safety resource. The social worker should speak with the safety resource after the parent has gained this person's agreement to care for the child. The resource must be informed that the social worker will need to make a home visit to conduct the Initial Kinship Care Assessment. The investigating county social worker must contact the social worker in the safety resource's county for permission to

enter the county for the purposes of conducting the home visit and Initial Kinship Care Assessment. If the parent is unable to travel with the worker and child, the worker

should first seek written permission from the parent to transport the child alone. If written permission is not available, verbal permission must be obtained. The parent should accompany the worker to the home of the safety resource whenever possible.

Table #1

<p align="center">Situation</p> <p align="center">The agency has received a valid CPS Report</p>	<p align="center">Responsibility of Investigating County</p>	<p align="center">Responsibility of County where Safety Resource Resides</p>
<p>Parent identifies safety resource lives in same county, or parent identifies safety resource who lives in another N.C. county that is within driving distance of the investigative county.</p> <p>The social worker should inform the parent about what the DSS considers to be necessary elements in a Safety Resource. Since the parent is likely to be in crisis, the worker may also need to help the parent identify and evaluate options. The criteria to be evaluated are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource is willing to provide care and age-appropriate supervision to the child • Has sufficient financial resources to meet the child's basic and immediate needs • Will protect the child from maltreatment; will report 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have parent contact the safety resource to determine if he/she is willing to provide temporary care for the child. If so, inform them that a visit by the investigating social worker will be required in order to assess the placement. 2. Check Central Registry for history of substantiated reports against proposed caregiver. 3. Request permission to enter the county in order to conduct assessment of safety resource. (Contact on-call worker after business hours, contact agency CPS unit during working hours.) 4. Make a home visit to the proposed resource with the parent and child and conduct the Initial Kinship Care Assessment. If parent is unwilling or unable to accompany the worker, the worker should first seek written permission from the 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide any relevant information that is known about the proposed safety resource which could effect the safety of the child. 2. Approve the worker from the investigating county to conduct the assessment of the safety resource.

<p>indicators of further maltreatment to DSS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child will have reasonably private sleeping space • Home is free of objects and conditions which constitute obvious fire or safety hazards • Home has functional plumbing • No resident of household has criminal history that precludes family caring for child • No resident of household has been substantiated for CPS • Alcohol/drug use by family members, if any does not present a risk of harm to the child • Caregivers are mentally and physically able to provide appropriate care 	<p>parent to transport the child alone. If written permission is not available, verbal permission must be obtained.</p> <p>5. If the placement cannot be approved, and/or the caregiver cannot identify an appropriate safety resource, take the child into temporary custody and file a petition for non-secure custody.</p>	
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Situation #2

Table #2 provides steps to take if the safety resource lives in another county and does not live within driving distance. The worker should speak with the safety resource after the parent has gained the resource's agreement to care for the child. The resource must be informed that a social worker from the resource's county must make a home visit and conduct the Initial Kinship Care Assessment. The resource must also be informed that the other social worker will be contacting the resource within a short time to make the visit and complete the assessment.

The investigating county worker should then contact the agency where the safety resource lives to arrange for a worker from the county where the safety resource lives to make an immediate home visit and conduct the Initial Kinship Care Assessment. The investigating county worker must remain with the child until the other county's social

worker calls providing information about the person's suitability to care for the child. If the home visit and Initial Kinship Care Assessment are positive, the investigating county worker asks the safety resource to come for the child. If the worker in the county where the safety resource resides finds that the safety resource is not suitable, another safety resource must be identified by the parent. If the parent cannot identify another safety resource, temporary custody of the child should be taken and a petition filed by the investigating county for non-secure custody.

Table #2		
Situation	Responsibility of Investigating County	Responsibility of County where Safety Resource Resides
<p>The agency has received a valid CPS Report</p>		
<p>Parent identifies safety resource who lives in another N.C. county but is not within driving distance.</p> <p>Note: the social worker should inform the parent about what the DSS considers to be acceptable in a Safety Resource. Since the parent is likely to be in crisis, the worker may also need to help the parent determine and evaluate options. The criteria to be evaluated are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource is willing to provide care and age-appropriate supervision to the child • Has sufficient financial resources to meet the child's basic and immediate needs • Will protect the child from maltreatment; will report indicators of further maltreatment to DSS 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have parent contact the safety resource to determine if he/she is willing to provide temporary care for the child. 2. The social worker should speak to the potential resource person stating that a social worker from that county must make a home visit and conduct an assessment, and that this social worker would be calling them shortly. 3. Check Central Registry for history of substantiated reports against proposed caregiver. 4. Contact the county DSS where the resource home is located and request an immediate home visit and assessment. The investigating social worker must remain with the child until the other county calls providing information about the suitability of the placement. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide any relevant information that is known about the proposed safety resource which could effect the safety of the child. 2. Contact identified safety resource prior to conducting home visit. 3. Conduct the Initial Kinship Care Assessment at the proposed Safety Resource home. 4. Immediately notify the investigating county regarding the suitability of the resource home.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child will have reasonably private sleeping space • Home is free of objects and conditions which constitute obvious fire or safety hazards • Home has functional plumbing • No resident of household has criminal history that precludes family caring for child • No resident of household has been substantiated for CPS • Alcohol/drug use by family members, if any does not present a risk of harm to the child • Caregivers are mentally and physically able to provide appropriate care 	<p>5. If the placement is suitable, arrange for the resource person to come to pick up the child</p> <p>6. If the placement is not suitable, and the parent is unable to identify a suitable safety resource, take the child into temporary custody and file a petition for non-secure custody.</p>	
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Situation #3

Table #3 provides steps to take in cases where a family is found in North Carolina and a CPS issue is present, but the family names a safety resource that resides in another state that is **within driving distance** of the investigating county, the investigating county worker should contact the other state to obtain permission to enter the state with the child. The NC social worker should then make the home visit and conduct the assessment. If the parent is unwilling or unable to accompany the social worker and child to the safety resource, the worker should obtain the parent's written permission to transport the child alone. If written permission is not obtained, verbal permission must be obtained. If there is an indication that the safety resource is not appropriate, and the parent cannot identify another safety resource, a petition for non-secure custody must be filed.

Table #3 also lists steps to take If the safety resource in the other state is **not within driving distance** of the investigating county, the NC worker should contact the other state to request a courtesy home visit to conduct the Initial Kinship Care Assessment or its equivalent. If the other state is unable to respond to the request immediately, the NC

social worker should ask the safety resource to come for the child. At the time of the resource's arrival, the NC social worker should obtain as much information about the resource as possible, and once it is determined that the resource is suitable, allow the resource to leave with the child. If the safety resource is unable to come for the child, an alternative safety resource must be identified. If no alternative safety resource can be identified, the agency must take petition for non-secure custody. (See Table #3)

Table #3

<p>Situation</p> <p>The agency has received a valid CPS Report</p>	<p>Responsibility of Investigating County</p>	<p>Responsibility of County where Safety Resource Resides</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The parent lives in NC but only has potential safety resources in another state, and the safety resource is within driving distance. • NC worker should discuss items to be considered in identifying appropriate safety resource. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The county may call the state to request a courtesy interview by them with the proposed safety resource. If the other state cannot conduct such an interview in a timely manner, the NC social worker should ask the other state for permission to enter the state to make the home visit with the parent and child and conduct the Initial Kinship Care Assessment. 2. If parent is unwilling or unable to accompany the worker, the worker should first seek written permission from the parent to transport the child alone. If written permission is not available, verbal permission must be obtained. 	<p>N/A</p>

Situation #4

Lastly, Table #4 lists steps that may be taken in those cases where a family is in transit from one state to another and law enforcement contacts the county DSS for assistance, but no CPS issue is present, the county DSS should assess the needs of the children, asking law enforcement to contact any relatives the parents or caretakers have identified in the other state.

While no child protective services issue may be present in these instances, the county DSS social worker should talk with the relatives who come for the child, ascertaining as much information as possible from them to determine minimum sufficient care for the children. In this instance, the DSS social worker may need to facilitate the return home or to assess the need for any other services provided by DSS. An example of such a

situation is when a family is traveling in North Carolina from another state and, during a routine traffic violation stop by law enforcement, it is discovered that the parents have an outstanding warrant for their arrest. Law enforcement officials are required to take the parent(s) into custody. Depending on the relationship between local law enforcement and local DSS, either agency representative may contact relatives in the other state to request that the relative come for the children. DSS should assess the need for any other services to help the relatives and children. If no relatives can be identified, the North Carolina county DSS must take whatever steps are necessary to ensure the protection of the children.

Table #4

<p>No CPS Issue has been identified, but services are needed</p>		
<p>This situation may occur due to several circumstances, but most commonly:</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The parent is from another state and is traveling through NC and is detained. Law enforcement calls DSS. Parent contacts potential resource or gives investigating social worker permission to do so. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Social worker asks resource to come to pick up the child. 2. Social worker interviews resource person when they arrive and conducts as thorough an assessment as possible. 	<p>N/A</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The parent lives in NC but only has potential safety resources in another state, and the safety resource is within driving distance. 	<p>If the resource is within driving distance, the NC social worker should speak with the proposed safety resource and request that this person come for the child, getting as much information from the safety resource as possible when the resource arrives. If the safety resource is unable to come for the child, the worker should contact the other state for permission to enter it to take the child to the safety resource.</p>	<p>N/A</p>

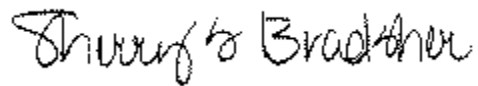
While the logistics of temporary care of children with safety resources is difficult, ensuring that a child is protected involves a thorough assessment of the temporary resource. Reciprocity and cooperation among county agencies must be a priority if

agencies are to accomplish their mandates of protecting children during all investigative assessments.

We are in the process of collecting after hours telephone numbers for all county Departments of Social Services and will provide that to you as soon as we obtain these.

Please begin implementing these procedures with the effective date of this Letter. If you have questions, please contact your Children's Program Representative, or the Policy and Community Based Programs at (919) 733-4622.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sherry S. Bradsher". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Sherry S. Bradsher

Deputy Director

Attachment

[Printable Version](#)

Cc: Pheon Beal

Paul Lesieur

Children's Program Representatives

Children's Services Team Leaders