

MANUAL TRANSMITTAL

Arkansas Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Children and Family Services

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From:  Pat Page, DCFS Interim Director Expiration Date – Until Superseded

Subj.: Infants Born to Juveniles Who are in the Physical Custody of the Division of Youth Services

The Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) has the responsibility of coordinating services with the Division of Youth Services (DYS) to ensure that infants born to youth in the physical custody of DYS will be placed in a healthy, safe and caring environment upon discharge from the hospital.

The Division of Youth Services, although not the legal custodian of the juvenile or the infant, and not having the authority to make decisions regarding the infant, will make reasonable efforts that infants born to juveniles while in the physical custody of DYS will be provided a safe and caring environment prior to the infants being discharged from the hospital.

The DCFS Client Advocate will be the contact person on all cases that involve infants born to juveniles in the physical custody of DYS. The designated DYS staff will contact the DCFS Client Advocate once they have knowledge that a juvenile in their care is pregnant. The DCFS Client Advocate will be responsible for contacting the appropriate DCFS county staff and coordinating services with the appropriate DCFS county staff and DYS. DYS will not contact DCFS county staff on these issues but will coordinate services through the DCFS Client Advocate.

The DCFS Client Advocate will have the responsibility of tracking these cases and timeliness of services from referral to the placement of the infant in the most appropriate placement that is safe and in the child's best interest.

The following is the process that will be used to coordinate services between DCFS and DYS to ensure the health and safety of infants born to juveniles in the physical custody of DYS.

A. Initial Screening

1. At the time of intake into the DYS system, appropriate DYS staff shall, during the course of the juvenile's medical screening, inquire as to the status of pregnancy of female juveniles.
2. The medical screening and the resulting responses shall be recorded in the juvenile's permanent health record.
3. A juvenile known to be pregnant at the time of intake, or who responds to the inquiry in a manner which indicates that the juvenile is pregnant, will be referred to health care staff for an immediate evaluation and physical assessment.
4. The physical assessment shall be recorded in the juvenile's permanent health record and shall include, but not be limited to:
 - a. All special care instructions for the juvenile
 - b. The projected delivery date of the infant

B. Infant Care Plan

1. Upon determination of the level (trimester) of the juvenile's pregnancy and the projected delivery date, the DYS Case Tracker or appropriate intake staff shall document the following:
 - a. The projected delivery date of the infant.
 - c. Identification of the person(s) designated by the juvenile to assume care and custody of the infant after delivery.
 - d. The name and address of the infant's father, if known
 - e. Notification to the juvenile that the Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) will conduct a home study of designated caregivers for appropriate placement of the infant.
2. The DYS case tracker will contact the person(s) designated by the juvenile to assume care and custody of the infant(s) and verify at least the following information regarding the designee(s):
 - a. Designee(s) intent to care for the child
 - b. Name(s) of persons in the household
 - c. Age(s)
 - d. Address (include county)
 - e. Phone number
 - f. Occupation(s)
 - g. Relationship(s) to the juvenile
 - h. Social Security number(s)
 - i. Name and address of the father of the infant, if known
3. When the information is not obtained during the DYS intake process, the juvenile's current case manager/counselor will contact the designated caregiver to obtain the relevant information and forward the information to the DYS case tracker.
4. The DYS case tracker will copy and forward, at a minimum, the following information to the DCFS Client Advocate for appropriate action:
 - a. All appropriate information regarding the juvenile's expected delivery date
 - b. The information obtained regarding the juvenile's designated care giver
 - c. The juvenile's court of record
5. The DCFS Client Advocate will contact the appropriate DCFS county office to notify them of the referral from DYS. The Client Advocate will forward all information to the appropriate DCFS county office concerning the juvenile and designated caregivers. The DCFS Client Advocate will coordinate all information sharing between the county office and DYS. If the county office needs any additional information from DYS, the county must contact the DCFS Client Advocate.
6. The DCFS Client Advocate will track all referrals to the county office until the infant is placed with a designated caregiver or with DHHS. The DCFS Client Advocate will develop a log to track all referrals and maintain a status of the referrals.
7. The DCFS county office will contact the identified caregiver(s) to determine their willingness to take custody of the child at birth and to care for the child until the parent is released from DYS. The county office must explain to the prospective care giver that if their home study is approved DCFS will petition the court for them to take custody of the child at birth and DCFS would have no other involvement in the case. A prospective caregiver has the option of becoming a foster family **only** if they need assistance in the care of the child. If the juvenile identifies more than one possible

caregiver and the prospective caregivers live in different counties, the Initiating County will coordinate the services between the counties. It may be necessary for the Initiating County to contact more than one county office to conduct a home study if the initial home study is not favorable.

- a. The county office will conduct a home study on the family that is the most willing to take the infant and willing to work for the best interest of the juvenile. County office staff can use contracts for conducting the home studies if contracts are available.
 - b. Once a favorable home study is completed on a prospective caregiver, DCFS staff will explain to the prospective caregiver that DCFS will petition the court for them to obtain emergency custody of the child. The home study needs to be completed and approved, if possible, prior to the infant's birth. An approved home study is valid for six (6) months.
8. OCC must be contacted on each case and there must be court involvement for each case. The case should be identified as a FINS NON-DCFS INVOLVMENT IF POSSIBLE.
- a. If an appropriate caregiver is willing to take custody of the child DCFS WILL NOT take custody but will file a petition for dependency due to the parent being incarcerated.
 - b. The petition will ask for emergency custody to be given to the caregiver once the baby is born. Placement with the approved caregiver will be the requested placement and not placement with DHHS.
 - c. DYS will be responsible for coordinating visitation between the juvenile and the infant when the caregiver is given custody of the infant.
 - d. If there is no appropriate caregiver or if the identified caregiver is not willing to take custody of the child but expresses that they would like to become a foster parent for the child, DCFS will petition the court for custody of the infant and open the caregivers home as a provisional relative home if the approved caregiver is a relative. If the approved caregiver is not a relative and wants to become a foster parent for the infant, the infant will have to be placed in an approved foster home until the caregiver becomes an approved licensed foster home.

C. Release of infant

1. The DYS case tracker or the juvenile's current caseworker will notify the DCFS Client Advocate when the juvenile enters the hospital for delivery or immediately after the juvenile delivers the infant.
2. The DCFS Client Advocate will immediately notify the appropriate county office of the juvenile's entry into the hospital for delivery or immediately after the juvenile delivers the infant.
3. Upon notification, the county office will immediately notify the approved caregiver of the juvenile's entry into the hospital for delivery of the child.
4. DCFS shall be responsible for initiating any legal proceedings necessary to effectuate the placement/release of the infant(s).

THIS EXECUTIVE DIRECTIVE IS EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY

Submit Inquiries to: DCFS Policy Unit, phone (501) 682-8750

Or email at dhhs.dcf.policy.unit@arkansas.gov