

West Virginia Department of Human Services

# Temporary Lodging of Children in Foster Care

Bureau for Social Services

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# INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

## Mission, Vision, and Values

The Bureau for Social Services (BSS) mission is to promote the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and vulnerable adults, supporting individuals to succeed and strengthening families. Our vision is for all West Virginia families to experience safe, stable, healthy lives and thrive in the care of a loving family and community. Our values include professionalism, integrity, excellence, relationships, and staff contributions.

## Philosophy

Safety is the paramount concern that must guide all child welfare services. When making decisions about a child, including those decisions regarding services provided, placement, and permanency planning, the safety of the child must be the foremost issue in determining what is in the best interest of the child and least restrictive.

A child is to be placed in out of home care only when appropriate and when efforts to rectify a family's situation have failed or when the child's safety is at risk. All possible resources should be considered in order to arrive at the least restrictive, appropriate environment for the child. West Virginia leads the nation in relative and kinship placement and priority consideration should be given to the child's relatives or fictive kin for the most suitable placement. If no appropriate relatives are available, the child will be placed in a resource home that best meets the child's needs.

## Definitions

Term	Definition
<b>Temporary Lodging</b>	Used when a child in foster care is spending the night in a hotel, motel, inn, Airbnb, Vrbo, cabin, or appropriately licensed day or sleepover camps, etc. due to no placement being available. Temporary lodging does not refer to a child staying the night in a hotel for routine travel purposes, such as travel to obtain evaluations or medical appointments for the child.

## Temporary Lodging

Temporary lodging is an absolute last resort and is only to be used when all other efforts for placement have been thoroughly exhausted. A foster child may only be temporarily lodged after determining there is no possibility of supporting the child, family, or placement provider with appropriate safety planning or added services and supports. Efforts to maintain the child in a kinship/relative home or in their current placement may include but are not limited to a child welfare worker or service provider making daily visits to the child's current placement, so long as these efforts are intended and sufficient to ensure the child's safety. Prior to making the determination for temporary lodging, the child welfare worker must be able to demonstrate that there is no possibility of supporting the child or placement provider with safety

planning, safety services, or additional services and supports, or that an attempt to do so through a safety plan has failed.

Children in foster care may only be temporarily lodged in limited circumstances, when all other attempts to secure appropriate placement for the child have been exhausted and failed. Prior to temporarily lodging a child in foster care, the child welfare worker must:

- Actively seek kinship/relative options, and ensure that **all** known, in-state kinship/relative options have been assessed.
  - Actively seeking falls in line with diligent search for relatives or kinship caregivers and the timeframes associated. If more than three months has passed since relatives of potential kinship caregivers have been contacted, the worker should engage those individuals again for possible placement. Active search for relatives or kinship caregivers should be ongoing until a foster care placement is obtained with a kinship/relative caregiver or a licensed foster care provider. (See *Foster Care* policy for information on the process and expectation around searching for relatives and kinship caregivers.)
- Ensure that a referral has been made to the region's placement unit.
- Ensure that a referral has been made to all child placing agencies.
- Ensure that a referral has been made to all emergency shelter care facilities that may accept a child of their age/gender and waivers for capacity and age have been requested.
- Ensure that a referral has been made to Emergency Foster Care, via the hotline (1-833-828-5437).
- Verify there is no availability with Department of Human Services (DoHS) emergency resource homes.

Once all known kinship/relative options have been considered and ruled out (due to CPS/APS history check, criminal history check, refusal to accept placement of the child, etc.), and the child welfare worker is unable to secure appropriate placement through the placement unit, child placing agencies, emergency shelter facilities, or emergency foster care, the child welfare worker must obtain approval for temporary lodging through their supervisor or on-call supervisor.

The approving supervisor must notify the district's social services manager (SSM), regional director, and deputy commissioner within 24 hours of the approval. For use of appropriately licensed day or sleepover camps prior to placing children, the deputy commissioner must be notified. The commissioner will notify the secretary and once the deputy commissioner receives notification that the secretary has been notified, the children can be placed accordingly.

Prior to approving temporary lodging, the supervisor must ensure there is sufficient staff to safely transport and supervise a child in temporary lodging. It is required that two staff must supervise a child during all hours of the day and night and be fully awake at all times. When utilizing providers for the supervision, at least one BSS staff is required to be on duty at all times. BSS staff is responsible for developing the schedule for shift coverage. This is not the responsibility of providers assisting.

In accordance with *Foster Care* policy, even in cases with temporary lodging, placement must be within the closest proximity to the children's home community and school as possible. Temporary lodging must

utilize hotels within the child's home county. The only exception for a child not remaining in their home county is if the child resides in a rural county that does not have temporary lodging accommodations. There may be situations where it is unreasonable to utilize a hotel and child welfare staff would need to consider lodging children at a day camp, sleepover camp, or using an Airbnb or Vrbo rental. This would be contingent upon the number of children requiring temporary lodging and the number of staff necessary to provide supervision for the children. The best interest and safety of each child and their needs must be considered. These situations require notification and approval from the appropriate deputy commissioner. Lodging **will not** occur without the approval from the deputy commissioner.

If it is anticipated the child will be temporarily lodged for multiple days while alternative placement is secured, the SSM may email a request for approval for supervision of the child by a service provider. The SSM must email the request to their deputy commissioner, the BSS Payments mailbox [bsspayments@wv.gov](mailto:bsspayments@wv.gov), and the program manager who oversees the socially necessary services program at [bssnsprogram@wv.gov](mailto:bssnsprogram@wv.gov). Approval will be provided to Acentra to allow unlimited units as needed to avoid billing issues.

The provider will use Supervision for Temporary Lodging for Professionals code (CPS-FC 130701 or YS-FC 230701) to allow paraprofessionals to assist with providing the service. Transportation time and mileage will be available for reimbursement purposes in all cases, so Agency Transportation should also be referred to the agency providing supervision.

When utilizing providers for the supervision, one staff from the provider agency and one BSS staff are required to be on duty for each shift.

The process to locate appropriate placement must be repeated the following day and any subsequent days the child remains in DoHS custody, until an appropriate placement is secured. The child welfare worker must update referrals with new information gathered about the child's history, behaviors, specific needs, etc. Additionally, the child welfare worker must report daily to their supervisor all progress made towards securing appropriate placement. The worker's supervisor will be responsible for ensuring the information is shared with the district's SSM and deputy commissioner. Daily reporting must consist of all attempts at locating an appropriate placement including the following:

- Kinship/relative options, and contact or attempted contact such as:
  - Kinship/relative interest letters
  - Phone calls
  - Submitted home studies
  - APS/CPS checks, etc
- Denials from child placing agencies, emergency shelter facilities, and emergency foster care, and the reason(s) for the denials.
- Attempts to safely return the child to their home or attempts to place the child in a kinship/relative home with safety resources, or additional services and supports, if needed to ensure that placement would guarantee the child's safety.

Temporary lodging should be limited in use. If efforts to locate an appropriate placement by the child's worker, the worker's supervisor, and the district's SSM have been unsuccessful, the SSM must contact their regional program manager for assistance no more than 48 hours in temporary lodging; children aged five and under must be referred within 24 hours of staying in temporary lodging.

Regional program managers will assign a child welfare consultant to assist the district in locating an appropriate placement. The child welfare consultant will report to the regional program manager their efforts to assist in locating an appropriate placement. If the child welfare consultant is unable to locate an appropriate placement by the fourth day, or the second day for children aged five and under, the child welfare consultant will inform the regional program manager and the deputy commissioner.

During the child's stay in temporary lodging the BSS staff **must** do the following:

- Provide a summary for all rotating shift staff that includes the following:
  - Child's likes and dislikes.
  - Triggers.
  - Medications.
  - Appointment information.
  - Contact list; and
  - Other information that is necessary while caring for the child.
- Notify the child's assigned Aetna care manager to request:
  - Assistance in securing appropriate placement options.
  - An individualized special review for a child experiencing a crisis or placement disruption.
  - That the child be assigned to an intensive level of care management.
  - If the child does not yet have an assigned Aetna care manager, the child welfare worker must contact the care coordinator manager for their region, as well as the Aetna Liaison, Executive Director for Mountain Health Promise, and the Clinical Liaison.
- Ensure that the MDT team members, if applicable, are notified that the child is being temporarily lodged within 48 hours.
- Notify the MDT and the judge within 24 hours of any incident, including medical emergencies not limited to self-harm or attempted suicide, related to the youth. This also includes any physical incident resulting in medical attention and/or a call to law enforcement.
  - If an incident occurs while a non-primary BSS worker or service provider is responsible for supervision, the non-primary worker or service provider must make direct contact via a phone call to the youth's primary worker within 30 minutes of an incident or when emergency services arrive and take over the scene and the youth is receiving care. If the youth's worker is out of the office, then the supervisor is to be contacted via a phone call. If the worker's supervisor is not available, then contact via a phone call is to be made to the SSM. Within 12 hours of the incident, an email will be sent to the youth's primary worker, the worker's supervisor, the district SSM, and regional director, detailing the incident.
- Ensure children are provided necessary hygiene products and adequate time daily to take a shower or bath.

- Infants under the age of six months require the use of a baby tub.
- Children who require assistance bathing require the presence of two staff. Generally, children aged eight and older can bathe independently.
- Children who are not potty trained due to age or developmental disabilities require the presence of two staff for diaper changes.
- Children who have sexually acting out behaviors require the presence of two staff at all times. This means that one staff cannot leave for any amount of time for any reason including to pick up food, medication, do laundry, etc. This practice protects staff.
- Ensure that the child is being transported to and from school, on days when school is in session.
  - On days when school is not in session, the child welfare worker must ensure that the child is being provided with daily, age-appropriate activities.
  - If the child is not currently enrolled in school, or needs to be enrolled in a different school, the child welfare worker will ensure this occurs within three business days by sending a referral to [Education Recovery Specialists](#) so they may assist in beginning the transfer process.
  - Ensure that the child is receiving adequate meals and their hygiene needs are being met appropriately, including that the child is receiving any necessary medical care and/or prescribed medication(s). If the child has medication, the medication must be stored at all times with a medication log.
    - Medication lock boxes may be purchased by the local DoHS district office and should remain on-hand for use in emergency situations.
  - Initiate the medication log by indicating the information written on each prescription bottle, including the name and dosage of the medication, listed instructions for administering the medication, date and time the medication was administered, how much of the medication remains after the dose was given.
  - Both supervising staff must be present for the administration of the medication to the youth, and both must print and sign their name, verifying that the medication was administered to the youth as prescribed.
  - Over-the-counter medications or supplements should be treated in the same manner as prescribed medication, but in place of prescribing doctor, the log should indicate the reason the over-the-counter medication or supplement was administered.

Any staff member supervising a child in temporary lodging must complete the medication log required documentation and adhere to the following guidelines for a child's medication management:

- Staff must log detailed information of what medications are given to a child throughout the day.
- All medication must be separated according to the time of day that it must be given to the child (for example, AM/Lunch/PM).
- Medication must be consistently given at the same time, with very little variation, each day.
- Staff must document **who** gave the medicine to the child and at **what time**; and
- When a week of medication is left, the primary worker should be notified to ensure the medication is refilled before the medication runs out.

## Additional Guidelines for Staff

Staff must additionally do the following:

- Ensure that a child eats by doing the following:
  - Utilize a restaurant or order food through services such as “DoorDash”.
  - Prepare food for the child, if they are not able to or safe to do it on their own.
  - Have easy meals/snacks available for the child, such as microwavable foods, ingredients for sandwiches, and fresh fruits; and
  - Have healthy and appropriate foods available to the child and limit “junk food”.
- Ensure the child receives assistance with school work as needed.
- Provide for entertainment and exercise, which may include:
  - Age appropriate conversations and activities (worker should not be engaged or otherwise occupied with electronic devices for extended periods of time or lack attentiveness to the child).
  - Monitor and limit the amount of and content of television.
  - Ensure access to age/developmentally appropriate items such as books, crafts, video games and board games; and
  - As appropriate, take the child for a walk, go outside to play or utilize a hotel pool for exercise:
    - Staff must be aware of a child’s abilities, safety precautions, and any needs for security when doing these activities.
- Ensuring child safety:
  - Seek approval from the child’s worker prior to allowing access to tablets and/or phones.
  - Staff must seek permission to allow a child to have internet access while placed in temporary lodging. Allowing internet access is not generally appropriate because it is difficult for staff to consistently monitor a child’s activities while on a device and ensure that all content that is accessed is appropriate.
  - **Never** allow a child in a staff designated adjoining room with only one staff present.
  - If staff do not have an adjoining room, staff may not allow a child to be outside of their designated temporary lodging. There are exceptions for when a child wants to participate in activities such as a board game or cards with staff. Staff may not allow the child to sit/lay on staff designated beds, nor should staff ever lay/sit on a child’s bed.
  - **Never** engage in hand holding, hugging or other touching with a child in staff care, unless the child is young and holding their hand while walking is necessary for their safety; and
  - Have a detailed list of contacts for emergencies.

## Placement Disruption Plan

Temporary lodging should not occur more than once per child per episode of care. To avoid repeated temporary lodging, all children who experience temporary lodging must have a placement disruption plan documented and uploaded in the CCWIS within seven business days of appropriate placement being secured. The placement disruption plan should include a list of all known kinship/relatives, regardless of whether the kinship/relative has expressed an interest in being a potential caregiver for the child. Per *Foster Care* policy, no later than seven calendar days after a petition alleging abuse and neglect of a child

is filed, the department shall file with the court a list of all relatives and fictive kin of the child known to the department at the time of the filing. If an abuse and neglect petition is how the child entered care, then the child welfare worker may utilize this list as a starting point for the placement disruption plan. For every identified kinship/relative, the placement disruption plan should include a notation whether the kinship/relative is or is not willing to accept placement and care for the child. If the kinship/relative expresses an unwillingness to accept placement and care for the child, a notation should be made for the reason(s) why; this will allow for future reconsideration if there is a change in circumstances. The placement disruption plan should also note any conditions the kinship/relative may have for accepting placement and care of the child, such as time limitations. Kinship/relatives who may not be willing to provide long-term or permanent care of the child, may still be willing to accept short-term placement and care of the child and must always be considered for temporary placement prior to consideration of temporary lodging.

The disruption plan should be regularly updated as new kinship/relatives become known, and as the child continues to develop new relationships throughout their time in care.