

Policy Number:	SSA/CW #24-01
Policy Title:	Trauma Responsive and Appropriate Transport of Children's Belongings
Release Date:	February 27, 2024
Effective Date:	March 05, 2024
Approved By:	Dr. Alger M. Studstill, Jr.  Executive Director Social Services Administration
Revision Date(s):	N/A
Supersedes:	N/A
Originating Office:	Office of the Executive Director Placement and Permanency Unit
Summary of Change:	N/A
Required Actions:	Ensure trauma-responsive and appropriate transport of belongings when a child or youth in care is initially removed, moving from one placement to another, or leaving foster care.
Key Words:	Children or Youth in Care, Transport, Luggage, Personal Belongings, Duffle Bags, Backpacks, Comfort Items
Related Federal Law	N/A
Related State Laws	Fam Law Art. §§ 5-501, 525
COMAR	N/A
State Plan Implications?	No



1. PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

This policy affirms existing practices of Local Department of Social Services (LDSS) staff to use trauma-responsive procedures to ensure that all children and youth in the care of the Maryland Department of Human Services are provided means for appropriate transportation of their belongings.

Every child and youth shall be treated and served with dignity and respect. The use of trash bags and disposable or other inappropriate containers sends a message that the belongings and by extension, children and youth themselves, are disposable or unimportant. New and appropriate luggage to transport the personal belongings of children and youth can contribute to them feeling valued and respected in circumstances that are otherwise traumatic.

2. RELATED LAWS AND REGULATIONS

Family Law Article §§ 5-502 and 525 require Maryland to operate a foster care program that protects and provides supportive services to children and youth in care. Supportive services include providing safe transportation for these individuals and their belongings.

3. DEFINITIONS

3.1 Child - Any person under the age of 18.¹

3.2 Luggage - Suitcases (including rolling suitcases), duffel bags, backpacks, or other luggage, taking into account the child or youth's age, mobility, preferences, and the size and number of personal items to be transported.

3.3 Personal Belongings - Personal belongings include important documents, including but not limited to a social security card, birth certificate, school identification, and medical records; supplies such as laptops and other materials necessary for school work; books; comfort items such as photos, favorite toys, blankets, and pillows; clothes and shoes; toiletries; glasses; orthodontic devices (retainers); prescribed and over-the-counter medications; and personal electronics.

3.4 Youth - A person between the ages of 14 and 21 years old.²

4. PROCEDURES AND TIME FRAMES

4.1 Providing Proper Luggage and Containers

The LDSS will not transport a child or youth's belongings in trash bags, disposable bags, or other inappropriate containers.

4.1.1 Removal The LDSS will provide each child or youth with new luggage suitable for transporting their personal belongings when entering care. Understanding that, at times, there may be an after-hours emergency removal, the LDSS will ensure that staff have access to new luggage after hours.

¹ COMAR 07.02.07.02

² COMAR 07.02.11.03(72)

4.1.2 Moving Between Placement or Exiting Care When transporting children between placements, the LDSS must ensure the child's luggage is in good repair and suitable for transporting the child's belongings. If the luggage is not in good condition then new luggage will be provided by the LDSS.

4.2 Assessment

When a child or youth enters care, is moving from one foster care placement to another, or is leaving foster care, the LDSS will assess the child or youth's need for new and appropriate luggage, taking into account the child or youth's age, mobility, preferences, and the size and number of personal items to be transported.

4.2.1 Bulky Items When children and youth have personal items such as linens, pillows, shoes, games, toys, etc., that do not fit or are too bulky for luggage, boxes or reusable storage bins may be appropriate for those items. Plastic trash bags and disposable bags are not to be used to transport any items for children and youth in care at any time.

4.2.2 Documents The LDSS shall ensure that any important legal documents, medical records, or information relevant to a child's well-being are kept in secure and labeled folders, envelopes, or binders and provided to the appropriate caregivers.

4.2.3 Appropriate Precautions Workers will take the appropriate health and hygiene precautions when transporting children, youth, and their belongings.

4.3 Developing Procedures

Each LDSS must maintain or develop procedures for providing, storing, and distributing new luggage to children and youth under this policy. The procedures must require child welfare staff to use new luggage when transporting the personal effects of a child or youth entering foster care. When transporting children between placements, the LDSS must ensure the child's luggage is in good repair and suitable for transporting the child's belongings. If the luggage is not in good condition then new luggage will be provided by the LDSS.

4.4 Obtaining Appropriate Luggage Through Collaboration

Each LDSS is encouraged to maintain on-going and regular collaboration with local non-profit and philanthropic organizations to maintain a predictable and adequate supply of new luggage donations, as well as look for opportunities to establish new local partnerships to meet the need. In the event that the LDSS is unable to collect appropriate luggage donations, luggage may be purchased using local flex funds.

4.5 Training and Implementation

All LDSS shall ensure staff are trained on assessment, new luggage, and transport procedures and requirements. The LDSS will also incorporate the requirements and processes into the onboarding of new employees. Resource parents, congregate care staff, and workers will communicate effectively to facilitate the smooth transfer of belongings and information during a placement change.

4.6 Record Keeping

All LDSS must maintain a record of all instances in which a disposable bag or container not meeting the definition of 'luggage' was used, the extraordinary or emergency circumstances related to such use, and an explanation for the failure to use appropriate luggage.

5. ALIGNMENT WITH PRACTICE MODEL AND DESIRED OUTCOMES

This trauma-responsive policy aligns with the Integrated Practice Model (IPM) in that it affirms interventions that promote healing, and resiliency, and prevent further trauma for individuals, families, and frontline staff. This policy promotes the core IPM values of Collaboration, Advocacy, Respect, and Empowerment.

6. DOCUMENTATION

The LDSS must document all services delivered to a child or youth in the electronic system of record.

Examples:

Do's:



Don't:

