




DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

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Policy Number:	SSA/CW #25-04
Policy Title:	Trauma Responsive and Appropriate Transport of Children in Care’s Belongings
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Approved By:	Dr. Alger M. Studstill, Jr.  Executive Director Social Services Administration
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Supersedes:	SSA/CW #24-01 Trauma Responsive and Appropriate Transport of Children in Care’s Belongings
Originating Office:	Out-of-Home Care
Summary of Change:	This policy has been updated to include definitions and language from the Family Law Article § 5-505.2 , a Luggage Inventory Tracker , and information related to CJAMS documentation.
Required Actions:	Local Departments of Social Services (LDSS) must ensure the belongings of children in out-of-home care are transported in a trauma-responsive and appropriate manner when children enter care, change placements, and exit care.
Key Words:	Children in care, out-of-home care, trauma-responsive, transport, luggage, personal belongings, duffle bags, backpacks, comfort items, trash bags, plastic bags.
Related Federal Law	N/A

Related State Laws	Md. Ann. Code Fam. Law Art § 5-505.2 (2024) Md. Ann. Code Fam. Law Art. § 5-501 (2024) Md. Ann. Code Fam. Law Art. § 5-525 (2024)
COMAR	N/A
State Plan Implications?	No

Purpose and Summary

This policy aligns with [Family Law Article § 5-505.2](#) and affirms existing practices of LDSS staff to use trauma-responsive procedures to ensure that all children in the care of the Maryland Department of Human Services are provided new luggage for the transportation of their belongings.

Every child in care 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 in care themselves, are disposable or unimportant. New and appropriate luggage to transport the personal belongings of children in care can contribute to them feeling valued and respected in circumstances that are otherwise traumatic.

Related Laws and Regulations

Family Law Articles [§ 5-501](#), [§ 5-505.2](#), and [§ 5-525](#) require Maryland to operate an out-of-home care program that protects and provides supportive services to children in care. Supportive services include providing safe transportation for these individuals and their belongings.

Definitions

Age Appropriate – Luggage is considered to be age appropriate when it supports a child in care’s age and needs.

- For young children (ages 0-10), smaller rolling suitcases or backpacks may be most suitable.
- For children in care (ages 11 and older), larger rolling suitcases or duffel bags may be most appropriate.

Child in Care – A child or young adult for whom the local department has responsibility for placement, care, custody, or guardianship.

Good Condition – Luggage is considered to be in good condition when it meets the following criteria:

- All zippers and closures are fully functional.
- There are no rips, tears, or holes that compromise the integrity of the luggage.
- Handles and wheels (if applicable) are securely attached and functional.
- The luggage is clean and free from significant stains or damage.

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); prescription and over-the-counter medications; and personal electronics.

Procedures and Timeframes

1. Providing Appropriate Luggage and Containers

- 1.1. The LDSS will not transport a child in care's belongings in trash bags, disposable bags, or other inappropriate containers.
- 1.2. The LDSS will provide each child entering care, changing placement, or exiting care with new luggage appropriate for transporting their personal belongings.
- 1.3. The LDSS is not required to provide additional new luggage to the child in care if the placement is changing and the luggage in possession is new or previously provided by the LDSS, *and* the luggage is in good condition.
- 1.4. When transporting children in care between placements, or when a child in care is exiting out-of-home care, the LDSS must ensure the luggage is in good repair and appropriate for transporting the belongings. If the luggage is not in good condition, then new luggage will be provided by the LDSS.
- 1.5. The new luggage provided to the child in care shall become the child's property and shall not be reclaimed by the LDSS or retained by the placement resource.

2. Assessment

- 2.1. When a child enters care, is moving from one placement to another, or is exiting care, the LDSS will assess the child's need for new and appropriate luggage, taking into account the child's age, mobility, the size and number of personal items to be transported, and preferences. When considering preferences, staff should make reasonable efforts to accommodate the child's wishes regarding the type or color of luggage, where feasible and appropriate, and in alignment with the policy's intent.

- 2.2. Children in care may 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 in care at any time.
- 2.3. 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.

3. Developing Procedures

- 3.1. Each LDSS must have procedures for maintaining, providing, storing, and distributing new luggage to children in 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. The procedures must require LDSS staff to use new luggage when transporting the personal belongings of a child entering care, changing placement, or exiting care. When transporting children in care between placements, the LDSS must ensure their luggage is in good repair and appropriate for transporting the belongings. If the luggage is not in good condition then new luggage will be provided by the LDSS.

4. Obtaining Appropriate Luggage Through Collaboration

- 4.1. 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. The LDSS may solicit and accept gifts, grants, and donations. If the LDSS is unable to collect appropriate luggage donations, luggage may be purchased using local flex funds.

5. Training and Implementation

- 5.1. Each LDSS shall ensure staff are trained and complying with the legal and policy requirements for transporting the belongings of children in care. The LDSS will also incorporate the requirements and processes into the onboarding of new employees. All placement providers, caregivers, and staff who work with children in care will communicate effectively to facilitate a trauma-responsive and smooth transfer of belongings and information when entering care, changing placements, and exiting care.

Alignment With Practice Model And Desired Outcomes

This policy aligns with the Integrated Practice Model (IPM) by affirming interventions that promote healing, resiliency, and prevent further trauma for individuals, families, and staff. This policy promotes the core IPM values of collaboration, advocacy, respect, and empowerment.

DOCUMENTATION

Each LDSS must report inventory data on a monthly basis in the [Luggage Inventory Tracker](#).

Any time a child enters care, changes placements, or exits care, the use of luggage should be documented in the electronic system of record. Questions related to the use of 'new luggage' will populate in the electronic system of record when initiating a new placement or living arrangement, and when exiting a removal episode.

Acceptable:



Not acceptable:



FORMS AND ATTACHMENTS

[Luggage Inventory Tracker](#)

RELATED INFORMATION

[Family Law Article § 5-505.2](#)