

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES  
SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION  
311 WEST SARATOGA STREET  
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND 21201

DATE: December 1, 2009

POLICY: SSA # 10-16

TO: Directors, Local Departments of Social Services  
Assistant Directors of Social Services  
Local Department of Social Services

FROM: Carnitra White, Executive Director  
Social Services Administration

RE: Smoke Free Environment For Children In Foster Care

PROGRAMS AFFECTED: Out-of-Home Placement Services (Foster Care Services)  
and Resource Units

ORIGINATING OFFICE: Resource Development Placement and Support Services

ACTION REQUIRED OF: All Local Departments and Public Foster Families

REQUIRED ACTION: Implement Policy and Procedures To Ensure And  
Maintain a Secondhand Tobacco Smoke Free  
Environment For Foster Children

ACTION DUE DATE: December 1, 2009

CONTACT PERSON: Kevin Keegan, Director  
Resource Development Placement and  
Support Services  
410 767-7910

**Purpose**

This policy directive provides guidelines to ensure that all children in public foster family placements are residing in smoke free environments, free from the harmful and toxic effects of secondhand smoke.

**Background**

In recent years, the affects of secondhand smoke on children has been the topic of much research and discussion. Organizations such as The United States Department of Health and Human Services, The Center for Disease Control and Prevention, The American Lung Association and The United States Environmental Protection Agency all concur that children suffer from severe health problems resulting from the exposure to secondhand cigarette smoke. For this reason, the Maryland Department of Human Resources initiated a change to the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) 07.2.25.08A(17), to protect Maryland's foster children from the harmful effects of secondhand smoke.

**Documented Research Pertaining To Secondhand Tobacco Smoke**

The United States Environmental Protection Agency's Smoke-free Homes and Cars Program indicates that for families with children, if one smokes, the safest place to smoke is outside. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, children are powerless to protect themselves from the harmful effects of secondhand smoke, so it is recommended that all families with children maintain smoke-free homes and cars. \

**Effects of Secondhand Smoke On Children**

Recent studies have indicated that there are numerous carcinogens contained in secondhand smoke. The following list indicates some of the health related diseases known to be associated with the exposure of children to secondhand smoke.

- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)
- Pneumonia
- Bronchitis
- Asthma
- Cough
- Wheeze
- Phlegm
- Breathlessness
- Upper and lower respiratory tract infections
- Middle ear infections which could result in hearing loss

### **Requirements For Foster Families**

COMAR 07.02.25.08A(17), **Responsibilities Of A Foster Parent**, requires foster parents must "Provide an environment for foster children free from exposure to secondhand smoke." Accordingly, foster parents shall maintain a home in which those areas in which a foster child resides are smoke free. The foster parents shall prohibit all smoking in the presence of their foster child; however, the foster parents may designate a part of the house as a smoking area, provided that a foster child's access is restricted.

Smoking is prohibited:

- 1) In the foster family's home, except for designated smoking areas which will not be used by foster children;
- 2) In a foster family's vehicles while transporting foster children; and
- 3) When foster children are present in any home providing respite care or other "back-up" care, except in designated smoking areas which are not used by foster children.

### **Requirements for Local Departments**

The local department Recruiter/Pride Trainer, the foster family home worker and foster child's caseworker shall ensure that the foster home is in compliance and that the foster child is in an environment which is smoke free.

- Local Department Recruiters/PRIDE Trainers shall discuss smoke free environments and compliance with this Policy Directive during Information Meetings and during Pre-service Training. The foster family home worker shall make an assessment for compliance with this policy during the approval process, and scheduled home visits. During reconsiderations, the effects of second hand smoke shall be discussed with foster parents.
- During monthly visits, the child's caseworker shall:
  - 1) Assess to ensure that the child is free from exposure to secondhand smoke; and
  - 2) Note any concerns in progress notes in CHESSIE.