

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

DATE: October 1, 2010

Policy Directive #: SSA # 11-10

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: Window Covering Safety For Resource Homes – “Angel’s Law”

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 Compliance With Window Covering Safety

ACTION DUE DATE: October 1, 2010

CONTACT PERSON: Patricia Molineaux, Manager
Resource Development
410-767-7195

Purpose

This policy directive provides guidelines to ensure that all children in public resource family homes are free from the hazardous effects of corded window coverings. COMAR 07.02.25.05 is being re-written to provide that:

Window coverings. A window covering installed:

(1) Before October 1, 2010, shall not have exposed or unsecured cords, beads, ropes, or strings; or

(2) On or after October 1, 2010, shall be cordless.

Window-covering safety will be included in resource family training.

Background

Since 1991, the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) has received multiple reports regarding the strangulation of babies and young children who became entangled in the cording of certain types of window coverings, and these window coverings have been deemed one of the top five hidden hazards in the home.

About once a month a child between the ages of 7 months and 10 years old dies from window cord strangulation and another child suffers a near strangulation. Strangulation deaths can occur anywhere in the house where a window covering with a cord is installed. Children can wrap window covering cords around their necks, or can pull cords that may not be clearly visible but are accessible, and become entangled in the loops. These incidents can happen quickly and silently.

There have been numerous factory recalls of these products, including roman shades, vertical blinds and horizontal blinds, and roller and roll-up blinds. Most window blinds sold prior to November 2000 have inner cords (for raising the slats of the blinds) that can be pulled by a child, and which can entangle a child in the loop that forms.

In April 2010, "Angel's Law" Family Law § 5-505 was passed by the Maryland General Assembly as a result of a 2-year-old Maryland foster child who was strangled to death by the cord from a window covering in his home.

What are Corded Window Coverings?

Corded window coverings are window blinds or shades that include looped or single cords, ropes, chains, or beads. Examples include:

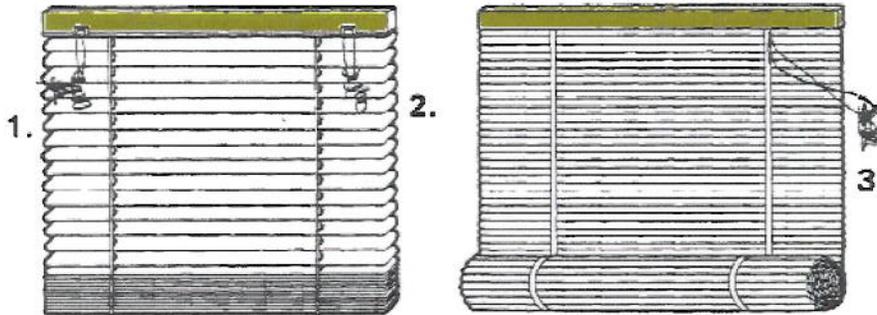
- Venetian blinds
- Mini blinds
- Vertical blinds
- Horizontal blinds
- Roman shades

- Pleated shades
- Roll-up shades
- Draperies

Requirements for Resource Families

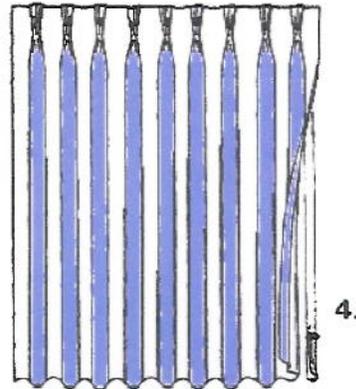
Examine all shades and blinds in the home. CPSC recommends the use of cordless window coverings in all homes where children live or visit. Make sure there are no accessible cords on the front, side, or back of the product.

Parents should know that children can strangle in window blind or drapery cords



To keep cords out of the reach of children, use these devices:

1. Clamp or clothes pin.
2. Tie the cord to itself.
3. Cleat.
4. Tie-down device.



Resource families should immediately remove or repair these types of window coverings. For a free repair kit, call the Window Covering Safety Council at 1-800-506-4636 or visit their website at windowcoverings.org.

Whenever possible, in an effort to keep children from reaching any cords in which they could be entangled, resource families should avoid placing cribs, playpens, play yards, toy boxes, high chairs, or any climbing or climbable toys within reaching distance of windows in resource homes. Toddlers and young foster children must be closely supervised at all times and provided with an environment that is safe and free from hazards associated with corded window coverings. It is strongly recommended that cordless window coverings be used in the following areas:

- Bedrooms within the resource home designated for foster children;
- Play areas frequented by foster children; and
- Areas where foster children sleep or play in the back-up person's home.

All new and replacement window coverings acquired for a resource home shall be cordless.

Requirements For Local Departments

All Local Departments Shall:

- Review with all resource families the window safety requirements detailed in this policy directive regarding removing or repairing any window coverings in violation of Angel's Law. See Attachment A, "Letter to Foster Parents" for letter sent by DHR with foster parent statements;
- On or before April 1, 2011, visit all resource homes approved before October 1, 2010 to ensure that window coverings installed before October 1, 2010 do not have exposed or unsecured cords, beads, ropes, or strings (**visits may be conducted by a child worker or a resource home worker**);
- On or before April 1, 2011, assess all resource homes to ensure that window coverings installed on or after October 1, 2010 are cordless (**assessments may be conducted by a child worker or a resource home worker**);
- Monitor resource homes for compliance with window covering safety by including window covering safety visit contacts in resource home **assessments** and at **reconsideration**;
- **Document resource home visits in CHESIE:** Create a contact in CHESIE under the **Provider** with the reason being **Assessment** or **Provider Review**. Document in the **Comments Section** that the assessment or review has been conducted along with observations and details. Please refer to pages 5-7 for examples of CHESIE screen shots.
- Include window covering safety training, and information on the availability of the free repair kits for existing corded window coverings in pre-service and in in-service trainings.

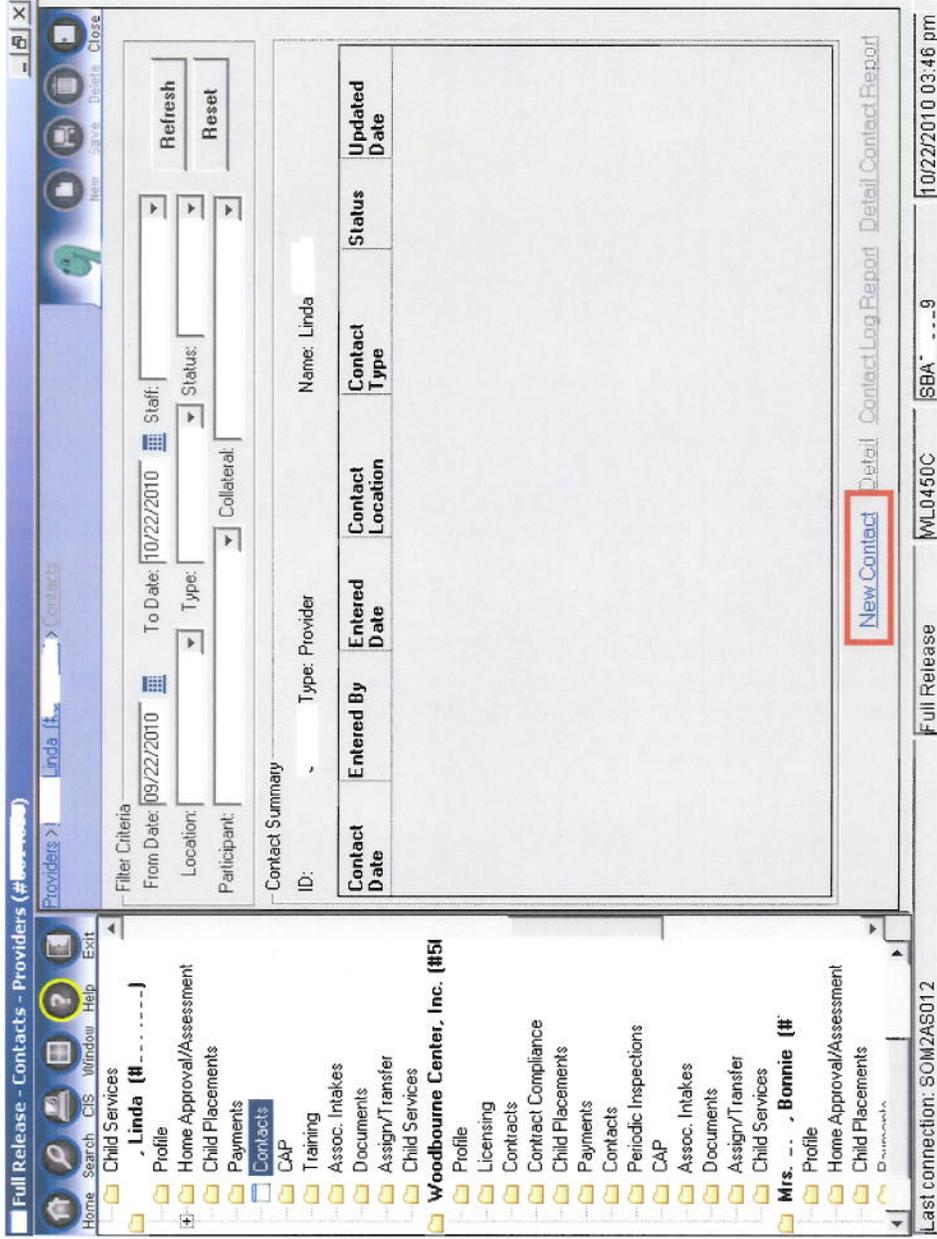


Figure 1-Create a new Contact for the Provider

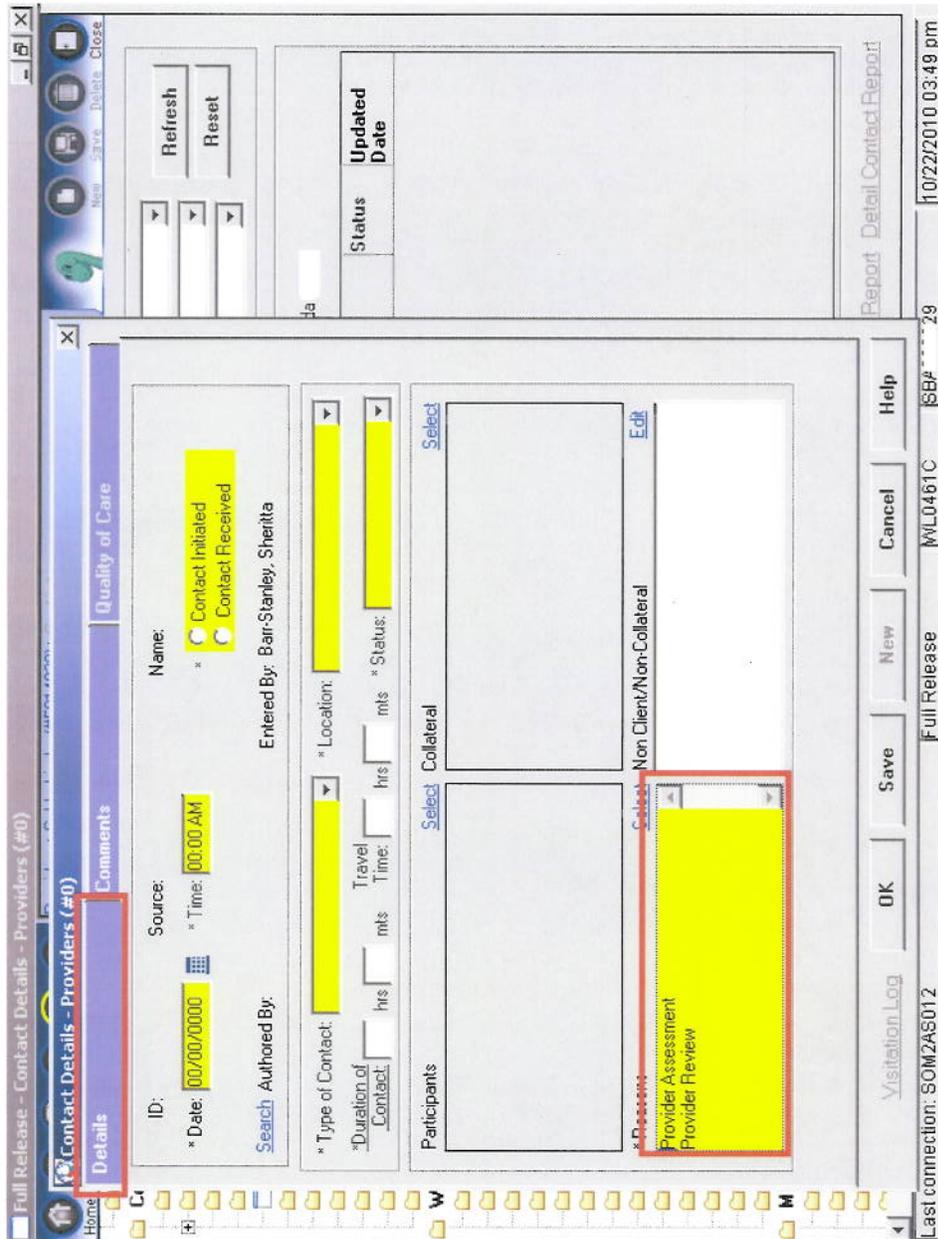


Figure 2-Under the Details tab, select one of two reasons: Provider Assessment or Provider Review

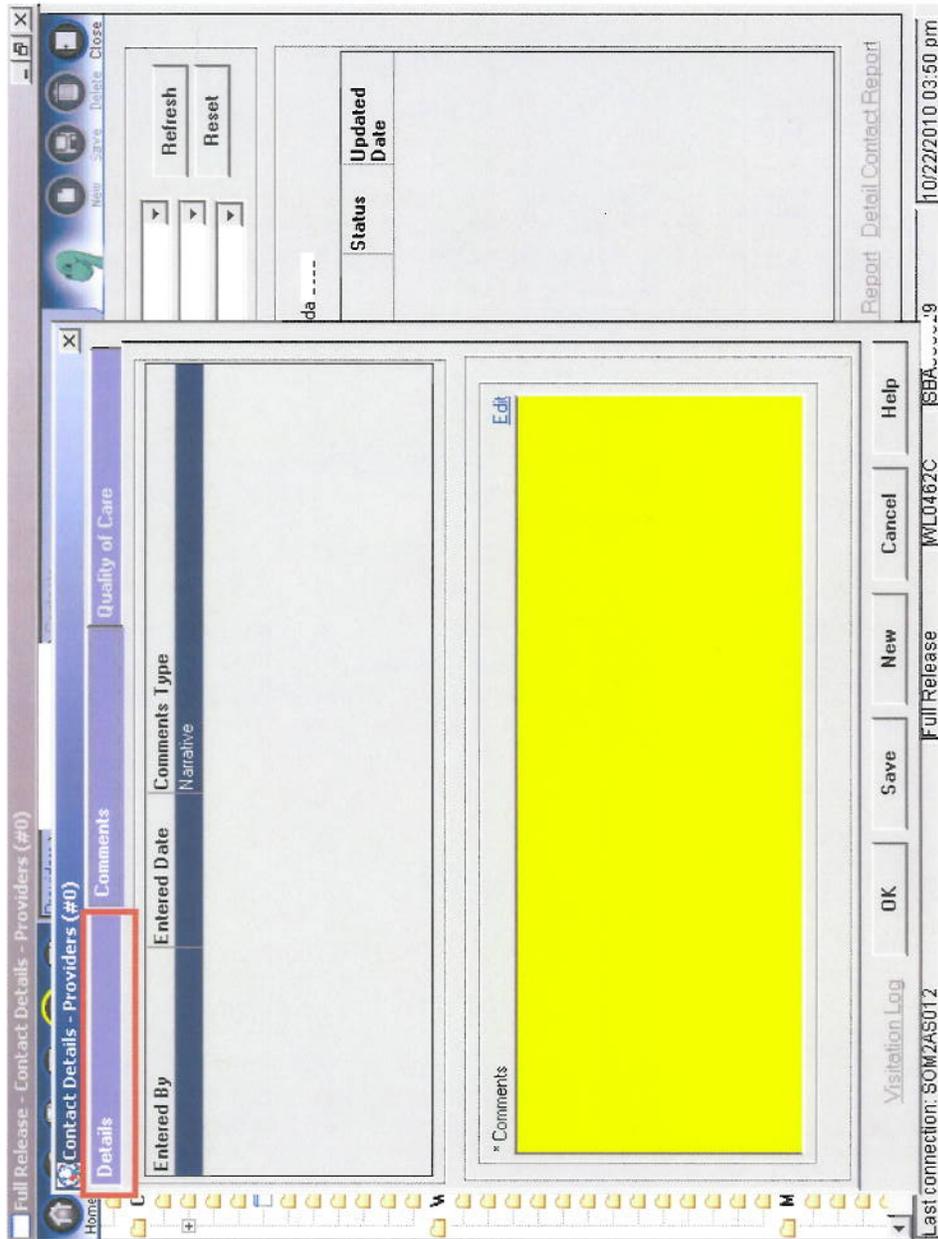


Figure 3-Complete the Comments tab

Attachment A

State of Maryland
Department of Human Resources



Maryland's Human Services Agency

Martin O Malley
Governor

Anthony Brown
Lt. Governor

Brian Wilbon
Interim Secretary

November 1, 2010

Dear Foster Parent(s):

The safety of children is a major concern for all of us at DHR. We know that foster parents share this concern. In April 2010, the Maryland Legislature passed "Angel's Law," which requires that all window coverings in public resource homes are safe for children.

"Angel's Law" requires that:

A window covering installed:

- (1) Before October 1, 2010, shall not have exposed or unsecured cords, beads, ropes, or strings; or**
- (2) On or after October 1, 2010, shall be cordless.**

All foster parents must be in compliance with the above requirements. Please immediately repair or remove any venetian blinds, mini blinds, vertical blinds, horizontal blinds, roman shades, pleated shades, roll-up shades, or draperies which have any cords, beads, ropes, or strings on the back, side, or front of the product which a child can reach. **Failure to comply may result in the removal of foster children from foster homes in violation of Angel's Law.**

Resource home workers will be ensuring that all foster homes approved before October 1, 2010 and have window coverings that were installed before October 1, 2010 do not have exposed or unsecured cords, beads, ropes, or strings. Please refer to the pictures on page (2) for some examples of these types of window coverings and ways to keep the cords out of the reach of children. Resource home workers will also assess all resource homes to ensure that window coverings installed on or after October 1, 2010 are cordless.

For a free repair kit, please contact the Window Covering Safety Council at 1-800-506-4636, or visit their website at windowcoverings.org. The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) recommends that cordless window coverings be used in all homes where children live or visit.

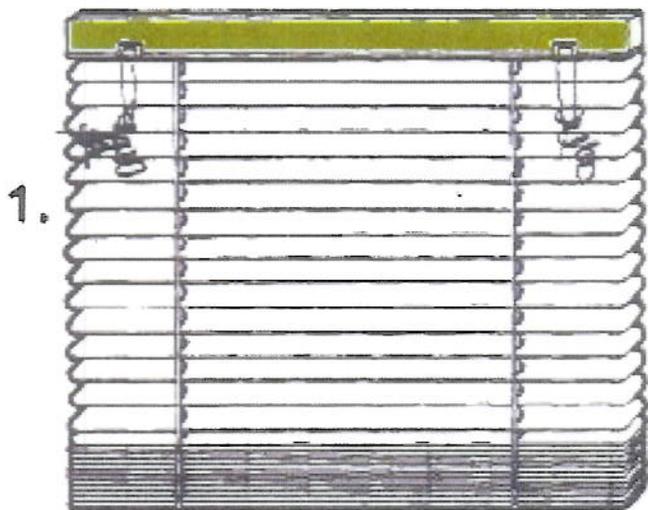
Sincerely,

Carnitra D. White
Executive Director
Social Services Administration

Enclosure (1)



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