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|   | <b>Contact:</b> Assigned Child Welfare Analysts  |                           |
|   | <b>Originating Office:</b> Child Welfare Field Operations Administration   |                           |
|   | <b>Subject/Title:</b> Unlicensed Relative Placements - County Plan Development   |                           |
|   | <b>Distribution:</b> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 60%;"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DHS Child Welfare Staff<br/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Agency Child Welfare Staff<br/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CSA Central Office Managers/Staff<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> Native American Tribes<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> Data Management<br/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DHS County Directors<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Services Staff<br/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other: Private Agency Executive Directors         </div> <div style="width: 35%;"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BCAL<br/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CWTI<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> SACWIS         </div> </div> |                           |

Placement with relatives is an important option for children requiring out of home placement and must be considered at the time of removal and placement changes. Since relatives are not typically licensed foster homes at the time of the placement, a number of mandatory activities must occur to ensure the placement is safe for the child. These mandatory steps are outlined in FOM 722-3 and PSM 715-2. Failing to follow these steps results in potentially unsafe placements that must be remedied. There are currently 1,666 children placed with unlicensed relatives that need to become licensed or appropriately waived from licensure. These placements must achieve licensure or obtain a waiver prior to June 30, 2013.

Relative placements must become licensed within 180 days from the date of placement. Refer to FOB 2012-011 for Licensing Benchmarks. If at any time the relative does not want to pursue licensure, or appears that he/she will not achieve the 180 day licensing timeframe, a Waiver of Foster Home Licensure-Relative Caregiver (DHS 875) must be immediately completed and entered into SWSS. Relatives are always encouraged to reconsider licensure even if a valid waiver is in place.

### Immediate Action Required

Child Welfare Field Operations will provide a monthly Unresolved Relative Placement report to assist DHS offices and private agencies with identifying relative placements that are not licensed and do not have a Waiver of Foster Home Licensure recorded in SWSS FAJ. DHS local offices and private agencies must review and remedy each case appearing on this report to ensure the relative placement is safe for the child. The Unresolved Relative Placement Report will be distributed via email beginning April 29, 2013.

To ensure that relative placements have been thoroughly accessed, local DHS offices and private agencies must take the following actions:

- Review the monthly Unresolved Relative Placement spreadsheet, which identifies situations where children are placed in unlicensed relative homes that are not currently enrolled for licensure with the Bureau of Children and Adult Licensing and do not have a Waiver of Foster Home Licensure recorded in SWSS FAJ.

- Immediately complete overdue home studies and determine whether to refer the family for licensure or pursue a waiver as required by FOM 722-3 and PSM 715-2. If barriers are identified which prevent a relative from being licensed, a determination regarding safety and best interest of the child must be made. If it is in the child's best interest to remain with the relative and the relative's home has been determined safe, a waiver must be immediately initiated and completed within 30 calendar days from the determination regarding safety. Annual renewal of licensing waivers is required to ensure unlicensed placements continue to be safe.

The following aids are attached for reference during the relative licensing/waiver process: *Relative Search and Placement Process*; *Relative Placement Flow Chart*; *Relative Licensing Certification Process Timeframes*; and *Relative Caregiver Waiver Process*.

### Required Responses

Each local office and private agency is expected to return the completed spreadsheets to their assigned child welfare analyst within **14 calendar days of receipt**. Private agencies are asked to copy their local DHS director/designee on their submission to the assigned child welfare analyst. Child Welfare Field Operations will facilitate phone conferences to answer questions relative to use of the spreadsheets and this process.

Using the attached *Improvement Plan: Unresolved Relative Placement's* template, DHS offices and private agencies must collaborate to develop a county-wide improvement plan which identifies procedures for:

- Engaging relatives in the initial Family Team Meetings
- Referring relatives to private agencies for licensure and engaging relatives in the licensing process.
- Communicating the status of relative licensure and/or waiver completion
- Monitoring timeframes of the initial home study and/or waiver completion
- Tracking and monitoring completion of annual waiver renewals

The plan must identify staff responsible for completing action steps in the improvement plan, which private agencies were involved in plan development and how all private agencies will be notified of the county procedures. The *Best Practices – Unlicensed Relative* job aid may assist with county-wide plan development.

DHS offices must return completed improvement plans to their Business Service Center Analysts by **May 17, 2013**. Child Welfare Field Operations, in coordination with Business Service Center Directors and Analysts, will review and monitor the improvement plans and track timely completion of relative licensing activities and waivers. Any questions regarding these instructions should be directed to your assigned child welfare analyst.

Attachments: Best Practices – Unlicensed Relatives  
Relative Search and Placement Process  
Relative Waiver Process  
Certification Process  
Improvement Plan: Unresolved Relative Placements

## **Unlicensed Relatives Best Practices**

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Local DHS offices and private agencies were surveyed to determine best practices currently used in the field to ensure thorough relative assessments and/or waivers were completed. The survey identified the following best practices:

### **Family Team Meetings (FTM):**

- Initial Family Team Meetings are held prior to removal and include Child Protective Services (CPS), a foster care worker, a licensing worker, a Child Welfare Funding Specialist and relatives to discuss concurrent planning i.e. potential removal, potential placement with relatives, or maintaining own home placement with services.
- The child welfare worker conducting the FTM provides relatives with licensure information and the potential benefits to the children and family i.e. training, financial, and emotional services. The FTM facilitator focuses on permanency, safety and well-being.
- Private agency licensing staff attends FTMs to report on the status of relative licensure.
- At the initial FTM, CPS workers provide the relative with an explanation of concurrent permanency planning and the potential for permanency.
- At Placement Change FTMs, the foster care worker discusses concurrent permanency planning and the family's willingness to provide long-term permanency for the child.

### **Assessment / Engagement:**

- Child Welfare Staff need to be knowledgeable regarding the benefits of licensure, i.e. additional support, support groups, training, financial, etc.
- During the five-day case transfer meeting, the CPS worker and foster care worker discuss the results of the DHS-588, Initial Relative Safety Screen.
- The Initial Relative Home Study is completed within 10 days.
- Relatives are be engaged in the assessment process and staff make home visits together to complete assessments and paperwork throughout the case.
- To address relative's hesitancy in licensure, staff completes waivers to meet timeframes while relatives make the decision.
- If a relative pursues a waiver, staff revisits licensure each quarter. Families will initially decline licensure if they feel the children will return home quickly.
- DHS and private agency staff attend relative home visits together to assess the family.
- Foster care workers conduct quarterly relative search efforts and document those activities in the case plan.
- For change of placements, the foster care worker provides and reviews the DHS-972, Relative Agreement for Placement and Licensure, waiver options and DHS-PUB-114, Relative Caregiving: What You Need to know with the relative.

### **Collaboration between Local DHS offices and Private Agencies:**

- The licensing worker and the foster care worker have conferences outlining progress and addressing barriers.

## Unlicensed Relatives Best Practices

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- DHS first line managers obtain monthly status updates from the private agencies assigned to complete the relative licenses.
- Private agencies assigned to license the relatives attend all FTMs.
- A tracking process (spreadsheet) is developed and completed by the private agencies and returned to the local DHS offices monthly. Information collected includes case name, date placed, licensing status, effective date of license, status of waiver, etc.
- Bi-monthly to monthly meetings are scheduled between DHS and private agencies to review the status of unlicensed relatives.
- DHS has a contact person available to private agencies

### Training:

- Local office directors and managers engage staff in discussion on the importance of permanency planning beginning with a family's initial contact with CPS.
- Local office directors and managers engage staff in discussion regarding engaging families and relatives in the assessment process focusing on the importance of safety, permanency and wellbeing.
- CPS staff and Child Welfare Funding Specialists receive additional training on licensing rules and variances.
- CPS staff and Child Welfare Funding Specialists receive training in completing home studies and waivers.
- Policy on Foster Home Licensing Waivers (DHS-875) is reviewed to ensure licensing and foster care staff thoroughly completes assessments and the DHS-875.
- CPS staff are trained on concurrent planning.

### CPS Resources:

- DHS has a "tool kit" for CPS workers which includes the following:
  - DHS-588, Initial Relative Safety Screen
  - DHS-972, Relative Agreement for Placement and Licensure
  - PUB-114, Relative Caregiving, What You Need To Know

### Mentoring/Coaching:

- Supervisors discuss progress during monthly case consultations.
- Supervisors shadow staff to assess and provide feedback on engagement efforts with relatives.
- Supervisors attend FTMs to assist in the placement discussion.

### Tracking/Oversight:

- The status of relative licensure is reviewed two times per month.
- The initial relative home study is submitted with the Initial Service Plan for review.
- A tracking system monitors:
  - Waiver approval and denials
  - Waiver reasons
  - Completion of the initial relative home study

## Unlicensed Relatives Best Practices

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- Timeliness of licensure referrals

The MiTEAM case management model encourages the engagement of families in the decision making process when out of home placement is considered. Thorough assessment and licensure or appropriate waiver of licensure ensures the safety of the child's placement has been assessed and approved.

# Relative Search and Placement Process (PSM 715-2, PSM 715-4, FOM 722-3 and FOM 722-6)

Prior to Child Entering Out-of-Home Placement

If out-of-home placement is under consideration, CPS Worker engages family in identifying supportive relatives and documents information.

Family Team Meeting held to establish safety plan, including identifying relatives.

CPS Worker petitions for court intervention.

CPS Worker establishes a list of supportive relatives to assess potential for placement

Child is Placed in Out-of-Home Care

CPS considers the following placement factors prior to completing the Initial Relative Safety Screen, DHS-588:

- Safety of Home
- Character of the caregiver (Assessment of CPS and Criminal Clearances)
- Meets the needs of the child
- Keeps siblings together
- Lives in close proximity where the child was residing
- Willing to provide permanency for the child.
- Ability to work collaboratively with the parent(s)

Case Transfer Meeting held with CPS Worker and Foster Care Worker

CPS completes Initial Relative Safety Screen, DHS 588 for relatives identified for placement

Case Transferred to Foster Care

Foster Care Worker or identified Child Welfare Specialist completes 2 home visits and begins gathering assessment information for DHS 3130A

Foster Care Worker or identified Child Welfare Specialist completes the DHS 3130A within 30 days of placement for initial placements or prior to placement if a change of placement occurs.

Foster Care Worker inquires with parents, child, youth, identified relatives about other potential relatives.

Foster Care Worker completes and sends identified relatives the DHS-990, DHS-989 and DHS-988

Throughout The Case

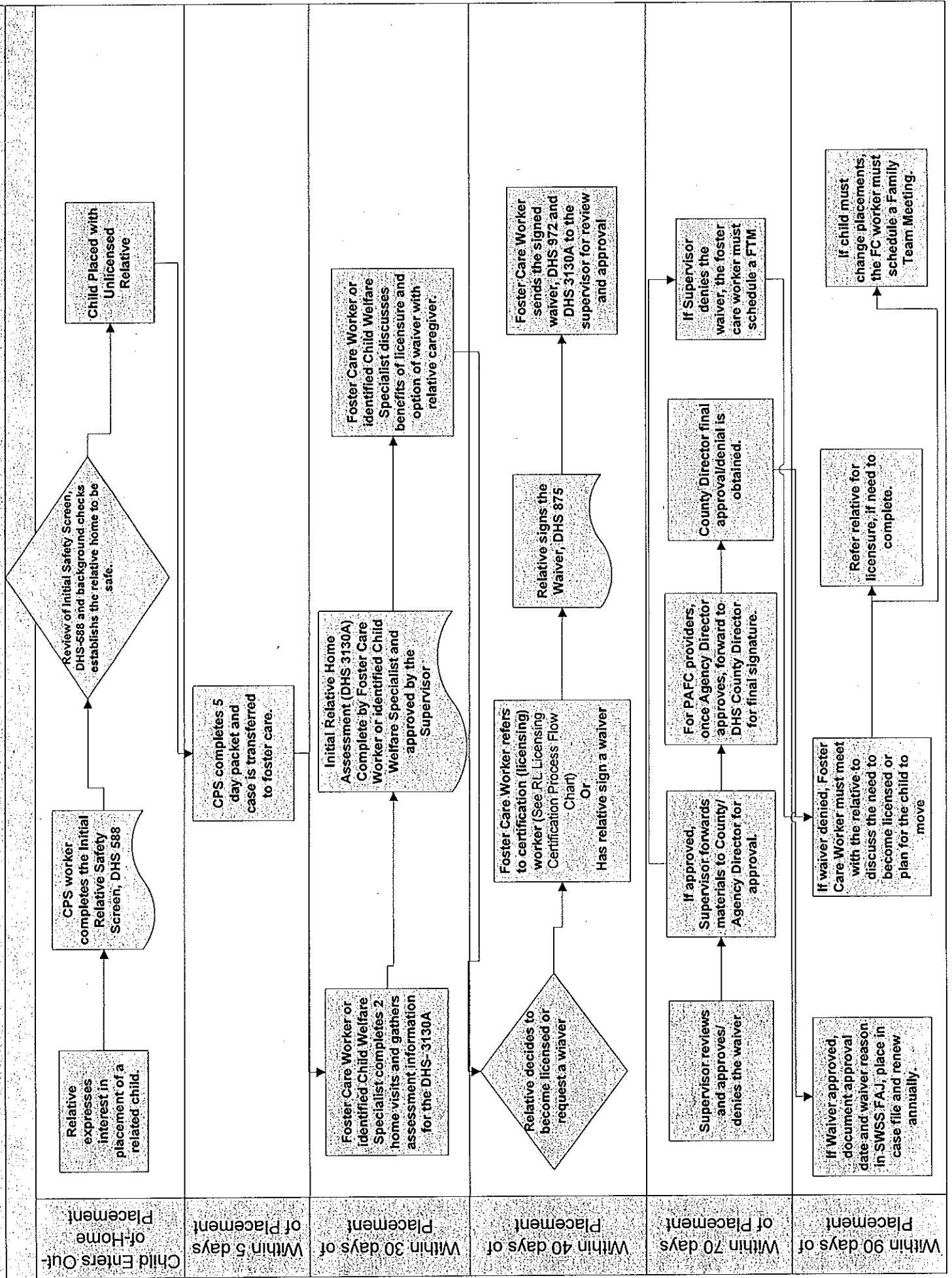
Foster Care Worker continues to pursue identification and notification of relatives.

Foster Care Worker engages and assesses identified relatives to preserve family connections, assess for possible placement or other supports.

Case Closure

Permanency Achieved. Foster Care Worker assisted in preserving family connections

# Relative Caregiver Waiver Process (PSM 715-2 and FOM 722-3)



# Relative Placement Flow Chart

