

DSS Policy and Procedure Guide

Division 03: Child Welfare

Chapter 02: General Administration

Item 005: Overpayment Prevention for Runaways

Suggested changes send to: DSS PSOA

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Updates in Red

References: PPG 45-03-005

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Policy

The Department will ensure that foster care payment grants are suspended or stopped when a foster child has left an out-of-home placement without permission.

Purpose

This guide establishes responsibilities and procedures for Social Workers to prevent overpayments when foster children leave placements without authorization.

Procedures

Notification

When a care provider (county home, foster family agency, group home, relative/non-relative extended family home) notifies the assigned Social Worker (SW) that a child has run away, the SW shall ask the current care provider if the child may return to their home, if the child returns within 5 days.

- If the care provider agrees to the child returning, the SW must notify the care provider that they will receive payment for up to 5 days regardless of whether the child returns or not. The SW must also advise the care provider that should the child refuse to return to that placement, or a concern for the child's safety arises, they will be notified by the assigned SW that the child will not return and that the payment will end on the date of notification (not to exceed the 5 day limitation). If the care provider has agreed to hold the placement for the child's return, the assigned SW shall notify the identified EW **within 24 hours** via the ETA Foster Care Placement mailbox to suspend the foster care grant for five days. The email must include the subject line "Run away suspension of grant". The body of the email must include the child's name, date of birth, case number, name of care provider, and the date the child left the placement.
- If the care provider does not want the child to return to their home, the assigned SW must advise the care provider that payment will be stopped. The assigned SW must notify the identified EW **within 24 hours** via the ETA Foster Care Placement mailbox to end the payment as soon as they become aware that a care provider will not accept a child back into their home. The body of the email must include the child's name, date of birth, case number, name of care provider, and the date the child left the placement.

Subsequently, it is the assigned SW's responsibility to complete the appropriate actions listed below.

- If the child returns to placement within five days, the assigned SW will notify the identified EW via the ETA Foster Care Placement mailbox **within 24 hours**.

- If the child returns, but placement changes, the Foster Parent Resources SW will generate a SOC 158A to close the previous placement, create a new SOC 158A for the current placement, and notify the identified EW via the ETA Foster Care Placement mailbox.
- If the child does not return within five days, the assigned SW will complete a SOC 158A by the 7th day to close the placement and notify the identified EW via the ETA Foster Care Placement mailbox to terminate the foster care grant.
- The assigned SW may request an extension beyond five days, but it must be in writing and approved by the Social Work Supervisor and Program Manager. The assigned SW must notify the identified EW via the ETA Foster Care Placement mailbox when an extension is approved. An extension may not be approved for more than 14 days in a calendar month. If the child runs away more than once during the same month, the 14 days are cumulative, not per occurrence.