



Richard O. Brajer  
*Secretary*

Wayne E. Black  
*Director*

August 15, 2016

**DEAR COUNTY DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

**ATTENTION: CHILD WELFARE STAFF**

**SUBJECT: TEMPORARY PARENTAL SAFETY AGREEMENTS**

Safety resources have been used by county child welfare agencies, specifically Child Protective Services (CPS), to help ensure safety, permanence, and well-being for children and their families. In response to growing concerns regarding overuse of safety resources and the length of time children remain in safety resources, North Carolina has reviewed and revised its policy around this practice. This letter provides an overview of the policy changes, including the new policy with respect to “Temporary Parental Safety Agreements” that will be effective January 1, 2017.

Temporary Parental Safety Agreements are voluntary, short-term agreements made between a parent and a county child welfare agency during the assessment phase of a case when there is a safety threat to a child in his or her own home. The purpose of a Temporary Parental Safety Agreement is to develop a plan with the parent that imposes the lowest level of intrusiveness possible while assuring a child’s safety. In partnership with the parent, Temporary Parental Safety Agreements identify safety interventions, who is responsible and within what timeframe, to address each safety indicator identified on the safety assessment. Development of the Temporary Parental Safety Agreement will be incorporated into the Safety Assessment form and will also consider child vulnerability factors--a new feature of the Safety Assessment form.

When a Temporary Parental Safety Agreement requires the need to separate a child from the home and/or restrict a parent’s access to a child, a Temporary Safety Provider must be identified by the parent. To assess the identified Temporary Safety Provider’s ability to ensure safety, an Initial Safety Provider Assessment form has been developed and will replace the existing Initial Kinship Assessment form. The Initial Safety Provider Assessment form places an emphasis on a child’s needs and has been modified in response to feedback from county child welfare agencies about usefulness of the current Kinship Assessment form.

The new policy states interventions specified by Temporary Parental Safety Agreements that require the use of separation and/or restriction (usually with a Safety Provider) cannot extend beyond the CPS Assessment. Prior to making a case decision, the county child welfare agency must determine if the separation or restriction can be safely ended and if not, legal action must be pursued. With implementation of this new policy, all assessments, family and investigative, will have a completion timeframe of 45 days.

To communicate information and facilitate learning about these upcoming policy and practice changes regarding Temporary Parental Safety Agreements, the North Carolina Division of Social Services (the Division) is offering several opportunities. The first is a free, 90-minute webinar entitled "Safety Plans are Changing: What You Need to Know".

This offering, in partnership with the Jordan Institute for Families at the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work, will be held on Thursday, September 8, 2016, from 2-3:30pm. All county child welfare staff should participate, as the webinar will serve as a general overview on the topic, as well as to prepare county child welfare agencies for implementation of the practice changes.

The Division is also sponsoring live local events that will build upon the information provided in the webinar. These events, entitled "Safety Planning: Prepare Now for the 2017 Changes," will be held across the state utilizing a face-to-face, lecture-style format including exercises for practice understanding. These three-hour sessions will provide information regarding how the policy and practice changes will improve efforts to keep children safe while continuing to protect the rights of children and their parents. Policy requirements for utilizing "Temporary Parental Safety Agreements" will be explained. The additions and revisions to the Safety Assessment tool and the Initial Safety Provider Assessment tool will be reviewed in detail. The steps for county child welfare agency implementation of this new policy will be explored. Directors; child welfare program administrators/managers; child welfare staff from North Carolina county child welfare agencies, especially those in CPS Assessments and CPS In-Home Services; and court personnel including judges and attorneys who represent county child welfare agencies are encouraged to attend. Please refer to the attached schedule for the dates, times, and locations for these events. Attendees will need to register via NCSWLearn.

If you have any questions about this information, please contact child welfare policy consultant Arlette Lambert at (919) 527-6345 or [arlette.lambert@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:arlette.lambert@dhhs.nc.gov). You may also contact your Children's Program Representative for additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kevin Kelley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping "K" and "K" at the end.

Kevin Kelley, Section Chief  
Child Welfare Services

Attachments (1): Temporary Parental Safety Agreement Schedule of Events

CWS-05-2016