

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
DIVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES  
CHILD WELFARE SERVICES

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GOVERNOR

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December 20, 2017

DEAR COUNTY DIRECTORS OF SOCIAL SERVICES

SUBJECT: **URGENT**: POLICY AND PRACTICE ALERT: PRIVATE CUSTODY AGREEMENTS

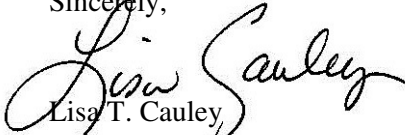
It has come to our attention that child welfare staff in some county Departments of Social Services may be facilitating the completion of private custody agreements between the parent(s) of children involved in Child Protective Services and other family members or other individuals, without the oversight of the Court. Counties thought to be facilitating such agreements have been contacted directly. This letter is a reminder that facilitating such private custody agreements without the oversight of the Court falls outside of both law and policy.

NCGS 108A-14(a)(11) provides that a director of social services has the duty and responsibility to "assess reports of child abuse and neglect and to take appropriate action to protect such children pursuant to the Child Abuse Reporting Law, Article 3 of Chapter 7B of the General Statutes." Article 3 of Chapter 7B of the General Statutes and DHHS policy set forth the duties and responsibilities of county Departments of Social Services related to the placement and custody of children involved in Child Protective Services. The use of agency resources to facilitate private custody agreements without the oversight of the Court does not fall within the provision of Child Protective Services, and is therefore beyond the scope of a County Department of Social Services' duties and responsibilities.

As a reminder, the goal of Child Protective Services is to support and improve parental/caregiver abilities to assure a safe and nurturing home for each child. In-Home Services engages families in the planning process while producing better outcomes of safety, permanence, and well-being for children, and encourages families to develop a support network that can assist them in planning for coping with future challenges.

If you have questions, please consult with your agency attorney or contact your Children's Program Representative.

Sincerely,

  
Lisa T. Cauley  
Députy Director

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