



NC DEPARTMENT OF
**HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES**

JOSH STEIN • Governor

DEV DUTTA SANGVAI • Secretary

LISA TUCKER CAULEY • Division Director, Human Services

January 15, 2026

DEAR COUNTY DIRECTORS OF SOCIAL SERVICES

**ATTENTION: DIRECTORS, CHILD WELFARE PROGRAM ADMINISTRATORS, MANAGERS,
SUPERVISORS, AND SOCIAL WORKERS**

SUBJECT: UPDATES TO SAFETY AND PERMANENCY POLICY

PURPOSE/BACKGROUND: IMPLEMENTATION OF UPDATED POLICY

REQUIRED ACTION: ☐ Information Only ☒ **Time Sensitive** ☐ Immediate

The NC Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Social Services (NCDHHS DSS) is committed to providing timely policy updates and guidance. Please review the following areas of updated policy:

SAFETY POLICY UPDATES

- **Child Fatality Review Process Policy**
 - In 2023, [N.C.G.S. § 108A-15.20](#) moved responsibility for all child fatality reviews to the Department of Public Health and a new [Office of Child Fatality Prevention](#) (OCFP).
 - As of June 30, 2025, NCDHHS DSS resolved all outstanding Intensive Child Fatality Reviews through a combination of in-person and desk reviews. NCDHHS DSS collaborated with OCFP to establish processes and a Memorandum of Understanding for data sharing. Additionally, NCDHHS DSS continues development of the Child Welfare Fatality Information System (CWFIS), which will streamline fatality notifications and integrate with PATH NC.
 - The Near Fatality and Fatality policy can be found [here](#) on DSS web.
 - The Fatality Notification Form ([DSS-5009](#)) has been updated to enable county users to efficiently provide needed information and minimize follow-up requests. Please delete all previous versions.
- **Intake Policy Related to Children Born to Families with an Open Foster Care Case**
 - When a child is born to a parent with an open Foster Care case, prior to termination or relinquishment of their parental rights, a new report must be made to assess the safety of a newborn in a household where other children have been removed.
 - For counties in PATH NC, the updated Intake Policy Manual is available [here](#); for counties not in PATH NC, use this [link](#). See updated SDM Screening and Response Instructions Manual [here](#). Updates are noted in red font.
- **Incarcerated and Pregnant Parenting Policy**
 - When a pregnant person is admitted to the North Carolina Correctional Institution for Women (NCCIW) and is expected to deliver during the period of incarceration, they must develop a plan,

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with the Department of Corrections, for the care of the baby until their release. NCCIW must contact the local County Child Welfare Agency if there are concerns of maltreatment or dependency once the infant is born.

- These updates are noted in red font, beginning on page 25 of [Appendix 4 Pregnancy Services](#).

PERMANENCY POLICY UPDATE

- **Assessing Minors in Foster Care for Transition to Adult Guardianship Services**
 - This policy provides a structured, person-centered framework to guide counties in planning and implementing transitions for youth in foster care who may require adult guardianship services. The new policy is notated in red font and can be found on pages 163-167 of the [Permanency Planning Manual](#).

Please ensure all staff are informed of these updates. Please contact your Regional Child Welfare Specialist with any questions.

Sincerely,



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CWS-05-2026