



February 16, 2010

Dear Valued Foster Care Providers:

I would like to thank those of you in attendance last Friday. I trust that all made it home safely in the inclement weather. As we discussed, the purpose of the meeting was to underscore the urgency I know we all feel regarding the safety and well being of children in our foster care system. I appreciate your input and your commitment to doing all we can to address this issue.

Since 2004 we have worked together to improve the care of children and families in Georgia. And those collective efforts have generated marked improvement in safety and permanency for children as evidenced by the following key indicators:

- Investigations completed more timely
- Overdue investigations dramatically decreased
- Repeat maltreatment consistently staying below the federal standard
- Children experiencing shorter lengths of stay in care
- Fewer children re-entering care

As we have been able to achieve permanency for large numbers of children, the children that remain in our care are those with more serious behavioral and emotional needs. For this reason, our collective expertise is required to assure that we meet the needs of these children, while keeping them safe.

Our data shows that 99% of the children in our care remain safe. But it is totally unacceptable that even 1% of the children are exposed to further maltreatment while in foster care. No child deserves to be hurt while in care. And we have a collective obligation to make sure that we protect them.

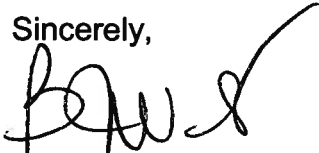
Given my concerns about this 1%, I am charging DFCS and challenging each one of you to launch with urgency a campaign to address the safety of children in foster care. We owe every child in foster care what we would demand for our very own children – the assurance that they will not only be safe but thrive and do well under our care. But I have confidence that we can do just that, if we stay focused. I therefore will be attending the Provider G meetings to help guide our collective focus and to ensure that nothing at DHS stands in our way. I feel confident that you will be exercising that same vigilance in your organizations.

As promised I am enclosing a copy of the new policy from the Office of Residential Child Care. This policy, as we discussed last week, is effective immediately and requires the closure of any home with a substantiation of serious maltreatment (as defined in the policy). If you have questions, please get in touch with Keith Bostick.

**NOTE:** We would like to invite the Directors of child placing agencies to attend a Casey Family Programs sponsored conference on February 24<sup>th</sup> with DFCS staff. You may RSVP for two slots to Shannon Hall by email at [smhall1@dhr.ga.gov](mailto:smhall1@dhr.ga.gov).

I thank you for your service to Georgia's children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B.J. Walker', with a large, sweeping flourish extending upwards and to the right.

B.J. Walker

BJW:chp

Enclosure



**B. J. Walker, Commissioner**

Georgia Department of Human Services · Office of Residential Child Care · Keith D. Bostick, Director  
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**TO:** All Child Placing Agencies (CPA) and Child Caring Institutions (CCI) with Foster Homes

**FROM:** Keith D. Bostick, L.C.S.W., Director, Office of Residential Child Care (ORCC)

**DATE:** February 10, 2010

**SUBJECT:**

Imposing Sanctions against Licensees for Failure to Remove Approval Status of Foster Homes with Substantiated Case(s) of Rule Violation(s) that Caused/Posed Harm to Children in Care

**POLICY:**

The Department of Human Services Rules and Regulations for Enforcement of Licensing Requirements authorizes the Office of Residential Child Care (ORCC) to impose sanctions, which include revocation of a license. Thus, the ORCC may seek to revoke the license of any Child Placing Agency (CPA) that continues to maintain approval status of a foster home after receiving written notification from the ORCC that rule violation(s) in the foster home:

- 1) Caused death or serious physical or emotional harm to children in care;
- 2) Poses an imminent and serious threat or hazard to the physical or emotional health and safety of children in care; or
- 3) Has a direct adverse effect on the physical or emotional health and safety of children in care.

**AUTHORITY:**

O.C.G.A. § 49-5-12

Rules of Department of Human Services, Chapters 290-1-6 (Administration) and 290-9-2 (Child Welfare Agencies)

Should you have any questions, please contact me at (404) 404-657-9001 - [kdbostick@dhr.state.ga.us](mailto:kdbostick@dhr.state.ga.us) or Michelle Daza at (404) 657-8980 – [medaza@dhr.state.ga.us](mailto:medaza@dhr.state.ga.us).

Thank you for your continued work with this Office and DHS in creating and effectively delivering services and supports to Georgia's children, families and their communities.