

**DRAFT**  
**Child Welfare Parents & Caretakers**  
**Policy and Process**  
September 19, 2007

**BACKGROUND**

Under the BadgerCare Plus (BC+) initiative, effective January 1, 2008, health care benefits will be available to qualifying parents and caretaker relatives of children who have been temporarily removed from the home and are under the custody of the child welfare system. These health care benefits are intended to help the caretakers overcome any medical problems that contributed to the children being removed from the home. Besides meeting the regular BC+ eligibility criteria, these caretakers, whom we are calling "Child Welfare Parents & Caretakers" (CWPC), must also be cooperating with a permanency plan that includes family reunification as a goal.

**POLICY**

Health care benefits through the BadgerCare Plus program are available to the parent or caretaker relative from whose home a child was removed and placed in either foster care or Kinship Care by a court order if all of the following conditions are met:

- The caretaker is cooperating with the permanency plan that is in place for that child, provided that family reunification is one of the goals of the plan.
- The caretaker continues to exercise responsibility for the care and control of the child.
- The caretaker meets all the other BC+ eligibility criteria.
- For the above conditions, the following definitions are to be used:
- The permanency plan is defined under either sections 48.355 or 938.38 of the Statutes, and may be for any period of time.
- "Cooperating with the permanency plan" means that the caretaker's response to the agency's assistance has not resulted in the courts determining that reunification will no longer be the permanence goal. That is, if the agency determines that the permanence goal should no longer be reunification and requests that the court change the permanence goal, the temporary absence requirements are no longer met when the court agrees with the agency.
- "Exercise responsibility for care and control of the child" means that either legal custody remains with the caretaker or that it is planned that the child will be returned to the caretaker when the court order expires.

This policy applies to children placed by child welfare agencies in foster care, treatment foster care, shelter care, Kinship Care or group homes. It also includes children placed in residential care centers (RCC's), institutions for mental disease and other medical institutions by a child welfare agency. It does **not** include children placed in a public institution, such as a Type 1 or 2 Juvenile Correctional Institution.

In the case where a child is placed with a Kinship Care relative, if the child's parent (or other caretaker) is eligible as a Child Welfare Parent, the Kinship Care relative may also qualify for BC+ as the caretaker of this child. The Kinship Care relative and the parent may be simultaneously eligible as the caretaker for the same child.

Eligibility for the qualified parents/caretakers will be determined as if the children were still in the home. That is, they are still considered to be caring for a child under age 19, the BC+ group size remains the same and the children's income is budgeted according to the BC+ criteria. In cases where child support payments are paid by the parent, while the child is out of the home,

the child support income needs to be entered in CARES as the child's income. The child support obligation is to be entered in CARES for the parents.

## **PROCESS**

Given the nature of the family situations when children are removed from the home, we expect there may be difficulties relying on the parents to provide us with timely information concerning their children. Thus, these procedures are to be followed by the Child Welfare (CW) and Income Maintenance (IM) Agencies. Note: Failure to report a change in circumstances would still be a client error subject to recovery.

### ***Removal from the Home***

#### CW Agency

When a child or children are removed from the home, the CW agency is to send a written communication to the IM worker or change center providing the following information about the removal.

- Identifying information of all children removed from the home. (Name, DOB, SSN)
- Identifying information of all caretakers in the home. (Name, DOB, SSN)
- Address of the home.
- Date of removal
- Children's placement status.
  - A living arrangement under child welfare supervision (e.g., foster care)
  - A living arrangement not under supervision of the child welfare agency (e.g., placement in a Juvenile Correctional Institution)
- Whether family reunification is a Permanency Plan goal (A very small number of placements do not include reunification as a goal.)
- SACWIS Case Name
- Contact information. (CW agency contact name and telephone number.)

Some living arrangements under CW supervision include Kinship Care or Independent Living. If either of these situations occurs, CW should provide additional information to IM about the arrangements and whether it's likely that another request for benefits for the child will be submitted. This will help IM agencies coordinate benefits and eligibility between the CARES cases.

#### IM Agency

When the CW agency sends information concerning children removed from the home, the IM agency needs to take the following actions:

- Identify the case and worker assigned to the case and pass the CW information on to the worker. If the Kinship Care relative has an open case, the information must also be shared with that person's case worker.
- Send the CW contact identifying information about the CWPC's CARES case and the assigned IM caseworker or an IM contact person. This lets the CW agency know that IM is expecting updates for any changes in the child's placement or permanency plan.
- Change the living arrangement codes in CARES for the children to indicate the placement arrangement.
- Enter the effective date of the change in the living arrangement in CARES.

- Indicate in CARES whether reunification is a goal of the permanency plan.

### ***Changes in Circumstances***

#### CW Agency

Whenever any of the following situations occur, the CW agency must send a written communication to the IM agency informing them of the change in circumstances.

- Child is returned to the home.
- The court orders that reunification is no longer a permanency plan goal.
- The child's placement changes, such as
  - The child moves from foster care to kinship care,
  - The child is placed in a JCI.
- The effective date of the change.

#### IM Agency

When the CW agency sends information concerning a change in circumstances, the IM agency needs to take the following actions:

- Identify the case and worker assigned to the case and pass the Child Welfare (CW) case information on to the worker. If the Kinship Care relative has an open case, the information must also be shared with that person's case worker.
- If there was a change in the placement, change the living arrangement codes in CARES for the children to indicate the new placement arrangement.
- Enter the effective date of the change in the living arrangement in CARES.
- If reunification is no longer a goal, enter the change in CARES.
- After entering the information, redetermine eligibility for BC+.
- In the case of children returning to the home who are eligible for BC+, take the needed steps to insure a transition in eligibility from foster care to BC+. There must be no gaps in health care coverage. In the case of children being denied BC+, issue a manual negative notice for the closure of the Foster Care Medicaid.

Whenever any of the following situations occur, the IM agency must send a written communication to the CW agency informing them of the change in circumstances.

- The CWPC's BC+ case has closed for a calendar month.
- Change in address for the CWPC.
- The children have been determined eligible for BC+ after returning to the home. Send the CW agency the effective date for BC+ eligibility.
- If the children are not eligible for BC+, send the CW agency the date of the eligibility determination. The CW agency should terminate the foster care Medicaid with proper 10-day notice.