



**State of Florida**  
**Department of Children and Families**

**Ron DeSantis**  
Governor

**Shevaun L. Harris**  
Secretary

**DATE:** October 20, 2023

**TO:** Community-Based Care Lead Agency CEOs  
Child Protection Directors

**FROM:** Kathryn Williams, Assistant Secretary, Office of Child and Family Well-Being <sup>KN</sup>

**SUBJECT:** Background Screening Clarification  
**DUE DATE:** Effective Immediately

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this memo is to clarify: (1) whether parents whose children were removed are required to submit fingerprints prior to reunification, (2) whether a current caregiver and household member(s) must submit new fingerprints if a parent is reunified in the caregiver's home, (3) when Level 1 licensure and relative/non-relative fingerprints expire, and (4) rescinds DCF Memorandum dated July 23, 2010.

**BACKGROUND:** Background screening requirements for parents and potential caregivers are outlined in section 39.0138(1), Florida Statutes. That statute requires local and statewide criminal history checks on parents but does not require fingerprints before a child can be reunified with a parent. While fingerprints are not mandated, in the DCF Memo dated July 23, 2010, the Memo provided that a criminal history background check is "permissible" when the Department is determining whether to place a child with a parent other than the current caregiver or for placement made through the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children. In contrast, the Memo provided that fingerprinting is required prior to placement of a removed child with a non-custodial parent. This permissive language has caused inconsistent practice across the state.

**ACTION REQUIRED:** Please share this memorandum with all staff who will be conducting background check and assessments for the purpose of reunification. In order to make the practice of fingerprinting prior to reunification consistent across the state, the following instructions are given:

1. Parents are not required to be fingerprinted prior to reunification, including for placements made through the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children.
2. If the parent is reunified in the child's current placement, the caregiver and household members are not required to submit to new background checks if they were included in the licensed or relative/non-relative home study and their backgrounds have not expired.
3. All Level 1 licensure and relative/non-relative fingerprints are valid for one (1) year.
4. The DCF Memo dated July 23, 2010 is rescinded, but the following guidance remains:
  - a. Fingerprinting is required prior to placement with a non-custodial parent.
  - b. Specific details of National Crime Information Center (NCIC) results (detailed national arrest shared and conviction history records from outside Florida) must not be provided to or shared with anyone other than authorized Department staff. Department employees are not to disseminate specific details of an NCIC records check nor refer to such record or details in the Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN). The Florida Crime Information Center system (FCIC) criminal history records are generally public record and may be disseminated. The exception is any portion of the report which is identified as a sealed or expunged record. Sealed and expunged records are NOT public record and may not be disseminated outside of the Department. Only that portion of the criminal history record which is not "sealed or expunged" is public record and may be shared with Community-Based Care agencies and referenced in FSFN.

**CONTACT INFORMATION:** Should you have questions about this communication, please contact Jessica Andrews, Director of Policy, at [jessica.andrews@myflfamilies.com](mailto:jessica.andrews@myflfamilies.com) or (850) 717-4671.

cc: Daniel May, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Office of Child and Family Well-Being  
April Rolle, Director of Strategic Initiatives  
Brooke Bass, Statewide Director of Protection & Safety  
Sharron Washington, Assistant Secretary, Office of Quality and Innovation  
Mario Rubio, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Office of Quality and Innovation  
Grainne O'Sullivan, Statewide Director, Children's Legal Services  
Stephanie Zimmerman, Deputy Statewide Director, Children's Legal Services