**Section 301.60 Placement Selection Criteria**

a) All placement decisions will be made consistent with the safety, best interests and special needs of the child. When a child is removed from the care of a custodial parent, the placing worker shall explore whether the non-custodial parent would be a suitable caregiver for the child. If placement with the non-custodial parent is not consistent with the safety, best interests and special needs of the child or if the non-custodial parent is not a suitable caregiver for the child, placement in substitute care shall be considered.

b) Substitute care placement decisions consistent with the safety, best interests and special needs of the child shall be made in consideration of the following:

1) the least restrictive setting appropriate for the child that most closely approximates a family;

2) placement within reasonable proximity to the child's home when the permanency goal is return home, and within the child's school district, whenever possible, taking into account any special needs of the child and family, the importance of maintaining continuity of the children's educational and social relationships, and the availability of the service resources needed for the child and family;

3) the ability of prospective foster or adoptive parents to meet the needs of a child. Placement in a foster or adoptive family home shall not be denied or delayed on the basis of the race, color, or national origin of the child, or the foster or adoptive family home members, nor shall placement for adoption of a child be denied or delayed if an approved family is available either outside of the Department's region handling the case or outside of the State of Illinois;

4) preservation of sibling relationships; and

5) placement, if the child is of American Indian heritage, according to criteria described in 89 Ill. Adm. Code 307 (Indian Child Welfare Services).

c) Approval through the Department's Placement Clearance Process is required prior to all placements in licensed foster family homes and unlicensed relative homes.

d) When a private agency or DCFS worker fails to secure prior approval for a placement in a licensed foster family home or unlicensed relative home through the Placement Clearance Process or provides false or misleading information when requesting an approval, the Director may take progressive action including, but not limited to:

1) placing the worker's private agency or DCFS region on hold for cases; and

2) implementing progressive discipline for the DCFS worker.

(Source: Amended at 40 Ill. Reg. 666, effective December 31, 2015)