The first 72 hours, in order.

A child just arrived — possibly at 2 a.m., possibly with a grocery bag of belongings. Feelings first, paperwork second; but the paperwork has clocks, and two of them are already running. Here's the sequence, with a PDF you can keep.

Last verified July 3, 2026 Sources: PAMMS 10.11 & 10.10 · O.C.G.A. §15-11-145 · medicaid.georgia.gov

Read this first

Most of the deadlines in a new placement belong to **DFCS**, not to you — your job in week one is mostly to **ask the right questions and write down the answers**. Every item below says whose clock it is. And one honest note before the boxes: a scared child does not need a perfect first night. Food, a bed, a calm adult, and low expectations beat any checklist.

STEP 1 · BEFORE THE CASE MANAGER LEAVES

Get these while a human is standing in your kitchen

- [ ] **The case manager's full name, direct number, and supervisor's number**
  Write them on paper, not just a phone. Georgia case managers carry heavy caseloads and turnover is real — the supervisor's number is the one families wish they'd gotten on night one. If calls go unanswered later, **here's the escalation ladder**.

- [ ] **Placement paperwork & the child's Medicaid number**
  Photograph everything you're handed. The Medicaid number matters before the card arrives — it's how a pharmacy or urgent care finds the child's coverage on day two.

- [ ] **Medications, allergies, and known medical needs — in writing**
  Ask directly: "Is the child on any medication, and do you have it with you?" If psychotropic medications are involved, **read this guide** before the first refill.

- [ ] **Ask: "Has the Health Check happened yet — and is dental scheduled?"** DFCS CLOCK
  Georgia policy directs a medical **Health Check within 10 calendar days of the child entering foster care** (PAMMS 10.11) — if the child just came into care, that clock is already running; if they moved to you mid-case, it may already be done. Ask which, and get the date.

- [ ] **Ask about the initial clothing allowance**
  A one-time, age-based clothing allowance exists, separate from the per diem — it must be used in the child's first six months in care and is **not** re-issued when a child changes homes. DFCS doesn't publish the amounts, so ask your case manager for the figure and how to spend it. **How it works**.

STEP 2 · THE FIRST 72 HOURS

The first 72 hours

- [ ] **Clothes, diapers, gear — for free, today** YOUR CLOCK
  "Arrived with nothing" is what Georgia's free closets exist for: the Foster Care Support Foundation (statewide, mail order), the Bloom Closet, and more. **Free gear, by county** — most serve kinship homes too.

- [ ] **If this is a new removal: the 72-hour hearing** COURT CLOCK
  A preliminary protective hearing happens **within 72 hours** of a child being placed in foster care (O.C.G.A. §15-11-145(a); next business day if it lands on a weekend or holiday). You likely won't attend this one, but knowing it's happening explains the week's chaos — and later hearings, **you have a right to be heard at**. **The whole court timeline**.

- [ ] **Call Georgia Families 360° if anything medical comes up early** YOUR CLOCK
  Every child in DFCS custody is enrolled in the Georgia Families 360° Medicaid plan (currently administered by Amerigroup). The member intake line — **1-855-661-2021**, 24/7 — can answer coverage questions before the card arrives. **The 360° survival guide**.

- [ ] **School: enroll immediately, or ask about school of origin** SHARED CLOCK
  A child in foster care has the right to **immediate enrollment** — even without records in hand — or to stay in their school of origin with transportation, whichever serves the child. Ask the case manager which is the plan before Monday. **School rights, explained**.

- [ ] **Start a daily log – tonight, not someday**
  One notebook or note-app thread: dates, calls, appointments, visit reactions, anything unusual. Veteran foster parents call documentation the habit that protects the child and you — and it makes every later form faster.

STEP 3 · THE FIRST TWO WEEKS

The first two weeks

- [ ] **Under 5? Confirm the Children 1st referral** DFCS CLOCK
  As part of the Health Check, children under five entering foster care are referred to **Children 1st** for developmental screening within the same 10-calendar-day window (PAMMS 10.11). Ask whether the referral went in.

- [ ] **Ask where the CCFA stands** DFCS CLOCK
  The Comprehensive Child and Family Assessment is the report that unlocks therapy and wrap-around services — referral goes out within a business day of the first hearing, and the completed CCFA is due back **within 25 calendar days** (PAMMS 10.10). Its recommendations are how counseling usually starts, so ask for them when it's done.

- [ ] **WIC, SNAP & CAPS childcare** YOUR CLOCK
  Foster children qualify for more than anyone tells you — including WIC, and priority-group status for the CAPS childcare subsidy if you work. **What you can actually get, and how to apply**.

- [ ] **Know the visit schedule before the first visit**
  Bio-family visits usually start quickly, and post-visit behaviors are normal, not a sign you're failing. Ask for the schedule in writing, and read up on **how reunification works** — it's the plan until a judge says otherwise.

STEP 4 · SET UP THE MONTH

Set up the month

- [ ] **Learn the per diem invoice rhythm**
  Georgia reimburses on a monthly invoice cycle — invoices submitted one month are paid the next, with direct deposit typically arriving around the 15th. Don't budget around week one. **The per diem guide**.

- [ ] **Learn the babysitting & overnight rules before you need them**
  Occasional sitters are fine under the prudent-parent standard; overnights past two nights need agency permission. Five quiet minutes with **the babysitting rules** now prevents a policy-violation headache later.

- [ ] **Line up respite before you're exhausted**
  Up to 10 days per fiscal year at the child's per diem, with prior approval — but only families who ask get it. **How respite works in Georgia**.

☐ **Save AFPAG's number in your phone**
1-877-804-6610 (AFPAG — the advocate you call before answering questions in any investigation). **More support**.

Names and numbers

CASE MANAGER _____ PHONE _____

SUPERVISOR _____ PHONE _____

AFTER-HOURS NUMBER _____ NEXT COURT DATE _____

CHILD'S DOCTOR _____ SCHOOL CONTACT _____

Notes

Sources & verification

PAMMS 10.11 — Medical, Dental, and Developmental Needs: Health Check within 10 calendar days of entering care; Children 1st referral for children under five

pamms.dhs.ga.gov ✓ **Jul 3, 2026**

O.C.G.A. §15-11-145(a) — preliminary protective hearing within 72 hours of placement in foster care (Official Code of Georgia Annotated, current through the 2026 Special Session; search the section number)

advance.lexis.com ✓ **Oct 18, 2026**

PAMMS 10.10 — CCFA referral and 25-calendar-day completion window pamms.dhs.ga.gov ✓ **Jul 2, 2026**

Georgia Families 360° — program page and member intake line (Amerigroup-era number; the CMO contract is in transition, so re-verify)

medicaid.georgia.gov ✓ **Jul 2, 2026**

PAMMS 9.1 / COSTAR — initial clothing allowance: age-based, first six months, not re-issued on placement moves; amounts unpublished

pamms.dhs.ga.gov ✓ **Jul 2, 2026**

> **We're not attorneys**
> This checklist summarizes court timing in plain language. It is not legal advice; ask your case manager or the child's attorney about your case.

Deadlines shown are DFCS's published policy, summarized in plain language — individual cases vary, and policy changes between our verification dates. When a date matters, confirm it with your case manager and write down who told you.