



INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY	
Chapter 7: In-Home Services Section 09: Travel and Extended Stays	
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POLICY OVERVIEW

A child’s participation in travel, vacations, and other activities away from home provides a child with normalized childhood experiences. The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) is legally responsible for a child in in-home care, including Informal Adjustment (IA) and In-Home Child in Need of Services (CHINS); therefore, it is imperative that DCS knows the whereabouts of a child under their care and supervision.

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PROCEDURE

To ensure the safety and well-being of a child in in-home care (IA and In-Home CHINS), DCS will require notification and/or approval of travel plans for **Extended-Stay Travel**, which is travel exceeding 72 hours. This includes the following types of travel:

1. Emergency Extended-Stay Travel;
2. In-state Extended-Stay Travel;
3. Out-of-state Extended-Stay Travel;
4. Out-of-country Travel; and
5. Blanket Travel.

DCS will follow local court protocol in counties where the court requires a court order or hearing for travel. Staff with the DCS Staff Attorney to determine if court authorization is required.

Note: If a child is currently involved with juvenile or adult probation, there may be additional travel requirements for that child.

Emergency Extended-Stay Travel

In the event of an emergency, which requires Extended-Stay Travel with the child out-of-state, the Family Case Manager (FCM) or, in the case of the FCM’s absence, the FCM Supervisor, Division Manager (DM) or Local Office Director (LOD), shall be contacted. When the local DCS office is closed (e.g., holidays, evenings, weekends) or the parent, guardian, or custodian is unable to reach the FCM or local office management, the parent, guardian, or custodian shall contact the DCS Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline by phone (1-800-800-5556) or email (DCSHotlineReports@dcs.in.gov) to report the emergency travel prompting an Information and Referral (I&R) to be generated to the DCS local office.

Once the I&R is generated from the Hotline and sent to the DCS local office, the FCM Supervisor will:

1. Contact the parent, guardian, or custodian to provide support and obtain additional information, including, but not limited to:
 - a. Purpose of travel,
 - b. Transportation and lodging information (e.g., vehicle license plate number, flight information, hotel, other accommodations),
 - c. Confirmation of the child's current location and/or planned destination,
 - d. Contact information for the adults accompanying the child, including the contact phone number, and
 - e. Expected date of the child's return.
2. Document the emergency travel information received from the parent, guardian, and custodian in the case management system; and
3. Notify the DCS Staff Attorney of the emergency travel.

On the next business day after the child's expected return from emergency, the assigned FCM will:

1. Verify with the parent, guardian, or custodian that the child has returned from the emergency travel;
2. Discuss the need to reschedule any missed service provider appointments for the child and family;
3. Document all travel details in the case management system; and
4. Notify the DCS Staff Attorney of the child's return from the emergency travel.

DCS Staff Attorney will notify the court of the emergency travel if required by the local court.

Refer to the Emergency Operations Plan for further instructions about ensuring the safety and security for all children under DCS care and supervision during an emergency or disaster.

Travel for In-Home CHINS

In-State Travel: DCS will require notification **at least seven (7) business days** in advance of in-state Extended-Stay Travel for a child involved in an In-Home CHINS, unless the travel is a recurring visit with the non-custodial parent.

Out-of-State Travel: DCS will require the following for out-of-state Extended-Stay Travel with a child involved in an In-Home CHINS:

1. Notification **at least seven (7) business days** in advance; and
2. Written approval from the LOD or designee unless the travel is a recurring visit with the non-custodial parent.

Out-of-Country Travel: DCS will require the following for out-of-country travel with a child involved in an In-Home CHINS:

1. Notification **at least six (6) weeks** in advance; and
2. Written approval from the DCS Regional Manager (RM).

The FCM will:

1. Engage the parent, guardian, or custodian during scheduled monthly visits to identify any upcoming travel;

Note: When traveling out of the country, a United States (U.S.) Passport may be required. Support the family in obtaining necessary documentation (if applicable). See passport requirements available on the U.S. Department of State-Bureau of Consular Affairs website.

2. Inform the parent, guardian, or custodian of the responsibility to communicate with the FCM regarding upcoming travel with the child during their monthly visit, via phone (voicemail messages are acceptable) or email;
3. Collect the following travel details from the parent, guardian, or custodian and document in the case management system:
 - a. Purpose of travel (e.g., vacation, field trip, summer camp),
 - b. Start and end dates of travel,
 - c. Travel destination,
 - d. Lodging information, including name, address, and telephone number,
 - e. Transportation information (e.g., vehicle license plate number, name of airline, flight number), and
 - f. Name and contact information for the adults who will accompany the child.
4. Discuss with the parent, guardian, or custodian any need to reschedule service provider appointments and/or visitation with the non-custodial parent due to travel, if applicable (see policy 7.04 Parental Interaction and Involvement);
5. Submit any out-of-state Extended-Stay Travel requests to the FCM Supervisor and LOD or designee for approval;
6. Submit any out-of-country travel requests to the FCM Supervisor and LOD or designee for initial consideration;
7. Coordinate with the DCS Staff Attorney to request court approval if the local court requires court approval;
8. Notify the parent, guardian, or custodian of the travel decision (from the LOD or designee for out-of-state travel Extended-Stay Travel or from the RM for out-of-country travel) once it is determined;

Note: Provide the written approval to the parent, guardian, or custodian if the travel request is approved.

9. Document all travel details, including approvals and notifications to all parties, in the case management system; and
10. Verify with the parent, guardian, or custodian that the child has returned from the travel.

The FCM Supervisor will:

1. Meet with the FCM, as needed, to discuss whether the safety and well-being needs of the child may be met during the requested travel; and
2. Review all out-of-state Extended-Stay Travel requests and out-of-country travel requests for initial consideration, and
3. Ensure the travel request to the court is completed if court authorization is required by the local court;

The LOD or designee will:

1. Approve or deny all out-of-state Extended-Stay Travel requests based on the safety and well-being of the child;

2. Notify the FCM and FCM Supervisor of the final decision within **three (3) business days** of receiving the out-of-state Extended-Stay Travel request and provide written approval, if approved;
2. Review all out-of-country travel requests for initial consideration and forward to the RM for final approval.

The RM will:

1. Approve or deny all out-of-country travel requests based on the safety and well-being of the child; and
2. Notify the FCM and DCS local office management staff of the final decision within **three (3) business days** of receiving the travel request and provide written approval for the out-of-country travel, if approved.

DCS Staff Attorney will notify the Court of the travel request if required by the local court.

“Blanket” Travel Requests

The DCS LOD may approve “blanket” travel requests, when applicable, for frequent in-state or out-of-state Extended-Stay Travel. Such requests should be in writing and include the following details:

1. Name of the child who will be traveling;
2. Name and contact information for each adult who will accompany the child;
3. Travel destination; and
4. Reason for frequency of travel.

Travel for IA

DCS will engage the parent, guardian, or custodian during scheduled monthly visits regarding any upcoming travel plans for a child involved in an IA.

Note: All travel plans will abide by the terms of the IA, including travel approvals and/or restrictions.

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RELEVANT INFORMATION

Definitions

Foreign National

A foreign national is any person (adult or child) who is born outside of the U.S. and has not become a U.S. citizen.

Forms and Tools

- DCS Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline: 1-800-800-5556
- [DCS Emergency Operations Plan](#)
- Focused Needs/International and Cultural Affairs (ICA) Referral - available in KidTraks
- ICA email - internationalandculturalaffairs@dcs.in.gov
- [U.S. Department of State-Bureau of Consular Affairs](#)

Related Policies

- [2.22 International and Cultural Affairs Services](#)
- [7.04 Parental Interaction and Involvement](#)

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LEGAL REFERENCES

N/A

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PRACTICE GUIDANCE- DCS POLICY 7.09

Practice Guidance is designed to assist DCS staff with thoughtful and practical direction on how to effectively integrate tools and social work practice into daily case management in an effort to achieve positive family and child outcomes. Practice Guidance is separate from Policy.

Considerations for a Foreign-Born Child

If the child's caregiver is a citizen of another country the Family Case Manager (FCM) will consult with International and Cultural Affairs (ICA) for guidance as needed. If the child or the caregiver is foreign-born, it is recommended to complete a referral in KidTraks to request a consult with the ICA division for any in-state, out-of-state or out-of-country travel. See policy 2.22 International and Cultural Affairs (ICA) Service for additional guidance.

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