



## INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY

**Chapter 8:** Out-of-Home Services

**Section 24:** Travel and Extended Stays

**Effective Date:** April 1, 2024

**Version:** 5

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### POLICY OVERVIEW

Participation in travel, vacations, and/or other activities away from a child's placement provides a child in out-of-home care with normalized childhood experiences. The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) is legally responsible for a child in out-of-home care, and it is imperative that DCS knows the whereabouts of a child under their care and supervision.

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### PROCEDURE

For the purposes of this policy, travel requests involving a child in out-of-home care may be initiated by the parent, guardian, or custodian (if on a trial home visit [THV] or placed with a non-custodial parent) or resource parent, hereafter referred to as the child's caregiver.

To ensure the safety and well-being of a child in out-of-home care, notification and/or approval of travel plans is required by DCS 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; and
5. Blanket travel.

**Note:** If a child is currently on probation (juvenile or adult) there may be additional travel requirements.

DCS will seek court authorization when:

1. A parent, guardian, or custodian object to the travel plans, or
2. Local court protocol requires court approval.

**Note:** Staff with the DCS Staff Attorney to determine if court authorization is required.

### **Emergency Extended-Stay Travel**

In the event of an emergency, which requires Extended-Stay travel with the child out-of-state, the FCM or, in the case of the FCM's absence, the FCM's 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 child's caregiver is unable to reach the FCM or local office management, the child's caregiver shall contact the DCS Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline (Hotline) by phone (1-800-800-5556) or email ([DCSHotlineReports@dcs.in.gov](mailto: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 child's caregiver 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,
  - e. Expected date of the child's return, and
  - f. Any need to re-schedule visits for the child and family.
2. Inform the parent, guardian, or custodian of the emergency travel and the expected return date of the child and document the contact with the parent, guardian, or custodian in the case management system;
3. Document the emergency travel information received from the caregiver in the case management system; and
4. Notify the DCS Staff Attorney of the emergency travel.

On the next business day after the expected return from the emergency travel, the assigned FCM will:

1. Verify with the caregiver to ensure the child has returned from the emergency travel;
2. Reschedule any missed visitations with the parent, guardian, or custodian;
3. Discuss the need to reschedule any missed service provider appointments for the child and family;
4. Document all travel details in the case management system; and
5. 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 regarding ensuring the safety and security for all children under DCS care and supervision during an emergency or disaster.

### **In-State Extended Stay-Travel**

For any in-state Extended-Stay travel with the child, DCS will require:

1. Notification via the Travel Request form **at least seven (7) business days** in advance; and
2. Written authorization from the LOD or designee.

The FCM will:

1. Collaborate with the child's caregiver during scheduled monthly visits to identify any upcoming in-state Extended-Stay travel with the child;
2. Inform the child's caregiver of their responsibility to submit the Travel Request form to request approval from DCS **at least seven (7) business days** in advance of any in-state Extended-Stay travel;

**Note:** If the travel requires a permission slip (e.g., school field trips), include the permission slip when submitting the Travel Request form.

3. Notify the DCS Staff Attorney of the travel plans if the local court requires court approval.
4. Obtain consent for the travel from the parent, guardian, or custodian utilizing the Travel Request form unless Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) has been ordered;

**Note:** If a parent, guardian, or custodian of the child objects to the child traveling or the local court requires DCS to file for authorization, a court order is also required.

5. Coordinate with the child's caregiver and/or service provider to ensure visitation and/or services that may be missed are rescheduled;

**Note:** Discuss any issues (e.g., visitation or distance of travel) regarding Extended-Stay and travel requests with the FCM Supervisor and the Child and Family Team (CFT) members (see policy 5.07 Child and Family Team Meetings);

6. Notify the child's caregiver, requesting the travel, of the travel decision once the travel decision is obtained; and
7. Document all travel details, including the original request, decisions, travel request to the court (if applicable), court order (if applicable), and notifications to all parties in the case management system.

**Note:** All travel details, including the Travel Request form, should be uploaded under "Travel Permissions" in the case management system.

8. Verify with the child's caregiver the child has returned from the travel.

The FCM Supervisor will:

1. Partner with the FCM to ensure the following have been completed:
  - a. The Travel Request form and any applicable permission slips have been submitted, and
  - b. The travel request to the court (to be filed by the DCS Staff Attorney) if the child's parent, guardian, or custodian objects to the child traveling in-state or the local court requires DCS to file for authorization.
2. Review and approve the travel request to the court if the travel will require court approval; and
3. Forward the request to the LOD or designee for written approval.

The LOD or designee will:

1. Review requests for in-state Extended-Stay travel; and
2. Notify the FCM and FCM Supervisor of the final decision within three (3) business days from the receipt of the travel request and provide written notification.

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

### **Out-of-State Extended-Stay Travel**

For out-of-state Extended-Stay travel, DCS will require:

1. Notification via the Travel Request form **at least seven (7) business days** in advance; and
2. Written authorization from the LOD or designee.

The FCM will:

1. Collaborate with the child's caregiver during scheduled monthly visits to identify any upcoming out-of-state Extended-Stay travel with the child;
2. Inform the caregiver of their responsibility to complete the Travel Request form and request approval from DCS **at least seven (7) business days in advance**, whenever possible, of any out-of-state Extended-Stay travel;

**Note:** If the travel requires a permission slip (e.g., school field trips), include the permission slip when submitting the Travel Request form.

3. Obtain consent from the parent, guardian, or custodian utilizing the Travel Request form unless TPR has been ordered;

**Note:** If a parent, guardian, or custodian of the child objects to the child traveling out-of-state or the local court requires DCS to file for authorization, a court order will be required.

4. Notify the DCS Staff Attorney of the travel plans if the local court requires court approval.
5. Coordinate with the child's caregiver and visitation service provider if visitation needs to be rearranged;
6. Discuss any issues regarding Extended-Stay and travel requests with the CFT, if applicable (see policy 5.07 Child and Family Team Meetings);
7. Submit the Travel Request form requesting out-of-state Extended-Stay travel to the FCM Supervisor for approval;
8. Notify the child's caregiver, requesting the travel, of the travel decision once the travel decision is obtained; and
9. Document all travel details, including the original request, decisions, travel request to the court (if applicable), court order (if applicable), and notifications to all parties in the case management system.

**Note:** All travel details, including the Travel Request form, should be uploaded under "Travel Permissions" in the case management system.

10. Verify with the child's caregiver that the child has returned from the travel.

The FCM Supervisor will:

1. Partner with the FCM to ensure the following have been completed:
  - a. The Travel Request form and any applicable permission slips have been submitted, and
  - b. The travel request to the court (to be filed by the DCS Staff Attorney) if the parent, guardian, or custodian objects to the out-of-state travel or the local court requires DCS to file for authorization.
2. Review and approve the travel request to the court if the travel will require court approval;
3. Send the completed Travel Request form and travel request to the court to the LOD (or designee) for required approval, if applicable; and
4. Ensure the FCM:
  - a. Receives the LOD (or designee) written decision,
  - b. Coordinates with the DCS Staff Attorney to request court approval (if applicable), and

- c. Notifies all parties of the decision within three (3) business days from receipt of the travel decision.

The LOD or designee will:

1. Review requests for out-of-state Extended-Stay travel; and
2. Provide written notification for the travel request if approved within three (3) business days from the receipt of the travel request and document the decision in the case management system.

**Note:** If a parent, guardian, or custodian of the child objects to the child traveling out-of-state or the local court requires DCS to file for authorization, a court order is also required for out-of-state Extended-Stay travel. If a court authorization **is not** required for out-of-state Extended-Stay travel, the LOD or designee will:

- a. Review the Travel Request form;
- b. Approve or deny the travel request based on the safety and well-being of the child; and
- c. Notify the FCM and FCM Supervisor in writing of the travel decision.

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

### **Out-of-Country Travel**

For Out-of-Country travel, DCS will require:

1. Notification via the Travel Request form **at least six (6) weeks** in advance; and
2. Written authorization from the Regional Manager (RM).

The FCM will:

1. Engage the child's caregiver during scheduled monthly visits and identify any upcoming out-of-country travel with the child;

**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 child's caregiver of their responsibility to complete the Travel Request form and notify the FCM **at least six (6) weeks** in advance of any out-of-country travel with the child to allow sufficient time to obtain court authorization (if applicable);

**Note:** If the travel requires a permission slip (e.g., field trips), the child's caregiver should include the permission slip when submitting the Travel Request form.

3. Ensure travel information is complete on the Travel Request form and upload the form to the case management system;
4. Obtain consent from the parent, guardian, or custodian utilizing the Travel Request form (unless TPR has been ordered);

**Note:** If a parent, guardian, or custodian of the child objects to the child traveling out-of-country or the local court requires DCS to file for authorization, a court order will be required.

5. Coordinate with the child's caregiver and visitation service provider if visitation needs to be rearranged;

6. Discuss any issues regarding Extended-Stay and travel requests with the CFT members, if applicable (see policy 5.07 Child and Family Team Meetings);
7. Notify the FCM Supervisor and LOD of the travel request and forward the Travel Request form for further approval;
8. Coordinate with the DCS Staff Attorney to request court authorization for the out-of-country travel if the request has been approved by DCS (if applicable);
9. Provide a copy of the Travel Request form within one (1) business day of the court decision to the child's caregiver and the parent, guardian, or custodian (if applicable);
10. Notify the child's caregiver once the travel decision is obtained from the RM;
11. Document all travel details, including the original request, decisions, travel request to the court, court order, and notifications to all parties, in the case management system; and
12. Verify with the child's caregiver that the child has returned from the travel.

The FCM Supervisor will:

1. Partner with the FCM to ensure the following have been completed:
  - a. The Travel Request form and any applicable permission slips have been submitted, and
  - b. The travel request to the court (to be filed by the DCS Staff Attorney) if applicable.
2. Review and approve the travel request to the court if the travel will require court approval;
3. Send the completed Travel Request form and the travel request to the court (if applicable), requesting the travel, and RM for required approval; and
4. Ensure the FCM:
  - a. Receives the RM's written decision,
  - b. Coordinates with the DCS Staff Attorney to request court approval (if applicable), and
  - c. Notifies all parties of the court decision within one (1) business day.

The LOD or designee will:

1. Review the Travel Request form and travel request to the court (if applicable); and
2. Send the Travel Request form to the RM for approval.

The RM will:

1. Review the Travel Request form and the travel request to the court (if applicable) regarding out-of-country travel; and
2. Notify the LOD, FCM Supervisor, or FCM in writing of the decision within three (3) business days from the receipt of the travel request and document the decision in the case management system.

The DCS Staff Attorney will:

1. Submit the travel request to the court to seek authorization as required; and
2. Provide information regarding the court decision for the out-of-country travel request to the FCM.

### **"Blanket" Travel Requests**

The LOD may approve "blanket" travel requests, when applicable, for frequent in-state travel or out-of-state travel exceeding 72 hours for each instance. Such requests should be in writing and include the following details:

1. The name of the child who will be traveling;
2. The name and contact information for each adult who will accompany the child;

3. Travel destination and contact information; and
4. Reason for frequency of travel.

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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](#)
- International and Cultural Affairs (ICA) email - [internationalandculturalaffairs@dcs.in.gov](mailto:internationalandculturalaffairs@dcs.in.gov)
- [DCS Travel Unit](#)
- [8.F Tool: Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard](#)
- PPS Focused Needs/ICA Referral – available in KidTraks
- [Travel Request \(SF 57156\)](#)
- [U.S. Department of State-Bureau of Consular Affairs](#)

### Related Policies

- [2.22 International and Cultural Affairs Services](#)
- [5.07 Child and Family Team Meetings](#)
- [8.12 Developing the Visitation Plan](#)

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## LEGAL REFERENCES

N/A

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## PRACTICE GUIDANCE- DCS POLICY 8.24

*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 consultation 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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