	INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE MANUAL	
INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES	**Chapter 8:** Out-of-Home Care	**Effective Date:** July 1, 2015
	Section 48: Relative Placements	**Version:** 3

POLICY [REVISED]

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) will consider placement with a suitable and willing relative caregiver if placement with a suitable and willing noncustodial parent is **not** possible. See separate policies, 8.1 Selecting a Placement Option and 5.4 Noncustodial Parents for additional information on noncustodial parents.

> **[NEW] Note:** When a child is a member of an American Indian/Alaska Native tribe and eligible under Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), be mindful that the ICWA placement preferences apply. See separate policy, 2.12 Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) for additional information.

[REVISED] Suitable and willing adult relatives (18 and older) to be considered for placement include but are not limited to:

1. Adult siblings including step- and half-siblings;
2. Maternal or paternal grandparents;
3. Adult aunts or uncles;
4. Adult cousins;

   [REVISED] Note: The individuals must be first or second cousins. All other cousins are considered **other** adult relatives.

5. Parents and extended family of siblings or half-siblings (i.e., adult siblings, grandparents, adult aunts or uncles, and adult cousins);
6. Former step-parents and extended family of former step-parents (i.e., adult siblings, grandparents, adult aunts or uncles, and adult cousins);
7. Other adult relatives suggested by either parent of a child including, but not limited to, extended cousins, great aunts or uncles (great or great-greats); or
8. Any other individual with whom a child has an established and significant relationship (see Practice Guidance).

[NEW] The following items must be completed prior to placing a child with a relative:

1. Determination of whether the potential relative caregiver is suitable and willing to accept the placement (see Additional Information below);
2. Required background checks (see separate policies, 13.5 Conducting Background Checks for Unlicensed Placements and 13.6 Evaluation of Background Checks for Unlicensed Placements);
3. Home visit; and
4. Relative Home Environment Check List (SF55106).

   Note: The Relative Home Environment Check List (SF55106) should be completed with the relative either prior to or at the time of placement to ensure the physical

environment of the relative's home is safe and appropriate for the child. The Relative Home Environment Check List (SF55106) is not meant to be used for licensing purposes. If the relative placement is considering becoming licensed, there are additional requirements that must be met in addition to completing the checklist. This information should be communicated to the relative placement when placing a child in his or her care.

[NEW] A determination of whether or not a relative caregiver is suitable and willing to take and sustain placement of a child will take place prior to or at the time of placement. Successful completion of the Relative Home Environment Check List (SF55106) is not the sole deciding factor in making a placement. It is important to make a determination based on the willingness, suitability, and sustainability of the relative placement.

When determining if a relative is suitable and willing, Family Case Managers (FCMs) should consider the following factors:

1. Child's wishes and/or concerns (if age appropriate);
2. Ability to meet the child's needs (including educational, cultural, and language);
3. Home size and environment (suitable sleeping arrangements for the child);
4. Background checks;
5. Frequency of contact between the child and potential relative caregiver prior to placement;
6. Sustainability of placement (i.e., is the placement a permanency option);
7. Ability to provide adequate supervision;
8. Willingness to work with DCS, child, and family toward the selected permanency plan; and
9. Medical/mental health issues or concerns regarding the relative caregiver or child.

Note: This is not an exhaustive list. There may be other factors to consider depending on the needs of the child and/or family.

Relative placements will be advised of support services available to them to promote the permanency, stability, and well-being of the child at the time of placement and throughout the life of the case.

[REVISED] Children placed with relative caregivers who already have obtained licensure will have a completed Individual Child Placement Referral (ICPR) consistent with his or her established level of care.

Code References

1. IC 31-34-6-2 Placement with relative or de facto custodian; evaluation; background checks
2. IC 31-9-2-117.3 Sibling
3. IC 31-9-2-107 Relative
4. 42 USC 671 (a)(29) Notification of Parents of Siblings

PROCEDURE [REVISED]

For emergency and non-emergency relative placements, the FCM will:

1. **[REVISED]** Assist the parent, guardian, or custodian in identifying possible suitable and willing relative placement options;

2. **[NEW]** Discuss DCS expectations of a relative placement with the relative caregiver to ensure the potential relative caregiver is aware of expectations and is suitable and willing (see factors above) to accept placement of the child;
3. Ensure the Statement of Attestation Regarding Relationship (SF52727) is completed by the relative requesting placement to affirm the relationship between the relative caregiver and child;

   Note: When placing a child with a relative who is not related to the child by blood, marriage, or adoption, the FCM must choose **other relative** for the individual's relationship with the child.

4. Complete the required emergency or non-emergency background check procedures for unlicensed placements (see separate policy, 13.5 Conducting Background Checks for Unlicensed Placements and 13.6 Evaluation of Background Checks for Unlicensed Placements);

   Note: FCMs may complete background checks on more than one (1) relative home, if necessary, to improve the chances of the child's placement in relative care. See Practice Guidance for further information.

5. **[REVISED]** Complete a home visit at the relative home where the child will be placed to:
   a. Complete the Relative Home Environment Check List (SF55106), and
   b. Assess the relative's suitability for placement by addressing any child or case specific concerns as well as any additional factors that are specific to the child or situation.

6. Obtain supervisory approval of and document in the Management Gateway for Indiana's Kids (MaGIK) any plans implemented to meet the requirements on the Relative Home Environment Check List (SF55106);
7. Address all items marked for follow-up on the Relative Home Environment Check List (SF55106) within 48 hours unless a documented supervisory approved plan for the requirement exceeds 48 hours;
8. Ensure the relative is provided the Financial Assistance Options for Relative Caregivers Brochure at the time of placement;
9. Ensure the relative caregiver has read and signed the Resource Parent Role Acknowledgment (SF54642);
10. Provide the relative caregiver with the Authorization for Health Care (SF54247) (form) and/or Authorization for Health Care (SF45093) (card);
11. **[REVISED]** Ensure any necessary service referrals are made for the child and relative caregiver to support the placement, including an ICPR, if appropriate;
12. Ensure a plan is in place for school-aged children to be transported to school with minimal disruption of the child's routine;
13. Advise the relative caregiver that either a Regional Foster Care Specialist (RFCS) or a Relative Support Specialist (RSS) will be in contact with him or her regarding further information about licensing, support, etc within five (5) days; and

    Note: In non-emergency relative placements, the FCM, RFCS or RSS will have more time to prepare the relative caregiver by explaining financial obligations and assistance, licensing requirements, safe sleep, water and fire safety, visitation, service referrals for the children, medical care, immediate and ongoing assistance available and to develop a plan for school transportation if needed.

14. **[REVISED]** Provide the RFCS or RSS with a copy of the Relative Home Environment Check List (SF55106) if follow-up is needed from the RFCS or RSS on identified items. Follow up that will exceed the 48 hour timeframe requires Supervisor approval (see Practice Guidance).

The RFCS or RSS will:

1. Assist the FCM, if needed, by following up on items that exceed 48 hours or other supervisory approved timeframes for items checked for follow-up on the Relative Home Environment Check List (SF55106) (see Practice Guidance);
2. Make contact with the relative caregiver within five (5) days to address the possibility of the relative caregiver becoming a licensed foster parent;
3. Advise the relative caregiver new fingerprint and background checks are required if he or she decides to pursue becoming licensed including, applying for new waivers for child protection and criminal history; and
4. Provide the relative caregiver with the Relative Resource Guide and discuss all financial assistance available to the relative and answer any questions the relative caregiver may have regarding obtaining the financial assistance.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

[REVISED] Other Relative Placements

This refers to placement with individuals who are not related by blood, marriage or adoption. This is an individual with whom a child has an established and significant relationship. The relationship with the child will be **other relative** and **must**:

1. Have the characteristics of a family relationship. The relationship should have the same characteristics or be similar to the relationship that the child has with an individual related to them by blood, marriage, and adoption;

2. Have existed prior to the agency's current involvement with the child or family; and

3. **[REVISED]** Be verified through interviews or attested by the written Statement of Attestation Regarding Relationship (SF52727) or oral designation of the child or of another person, including other relatives related to the child by blood, marriage, or adoption.

Former long-term foster parents may be considered as relative placements in cases where the child is the victim of repeat maltreatment or returning substitute care. FCMs should staff with the FCM Supervisor and Local Office Director (LOD) to determine which type of placement is appropriate, Foster Care or Relative Placement. Consideration should be given to the child's report of the relationship and the potential for permanency.

Credible evidence showing that the individual performs or has performed a substantial role in the upbringing or material support of the child should be documented in MaGIK. The placement recommendation should be staffed with the FCM Supervisor and LOD, if needed. DCS and the court must agree with the placement.

> **[REVISED] Note:** Placement with a suitable and willing relative related by blood, marriage, or adoption **must** be ruled out before considering any other out-of-home placement, with the first consideration being given to a suitable and willing noncustodial parent.

[REVISED] Relative Home Physical Environment Checklist

The Relative Home Environment Check List (SF55106) allows for a documented discussion to occur about potential safety concerns. This discussion should reinforce awareness of potential safety concerns regarding fire and water safety. The checklist indicates items that are minimum criterion for placement in a relative home. FCMs should use critical thinking skills when completing the checklist. The FCM should also assist the relative caregiver in finding solutions to any issues that may arise from the completion of the checklist. Requests for additional funding may be appropriate to assist in meeting a checklist item (e.g., carbon monoxide detector). Some items that cannot be met may be evidence that the placement is not suitable.

In the section for follow-up, the placing FCM is to indicate what action is required to complete the checklist requirement. FCMs should document what the plan is for achieving all required items.

All items marked for follow up should be reassessed by the FCM within 48 hours of the emergency placement unless there is a documented supervisory approved plan that follow through will exceed 48 hours. In situations where an FCM is unable to follow-up within 48 hours due to other responsibilities associated with a removal, the FCM should seek supervisory approval to have the RFCS or RSS assist. **Items will never be marked for follow-up that are immediate safety concerns for the child, as DCS should not be placing (or recommending placement to the court) if there are immediate safety concerns in the home.**

[REVISED] Supporting Relative Caregivers

It is important for FCMs to support all relative caregivers. FCMs must be mindful that relative caregivers may not have planned to take emergency placement of their relative's children. This is especially true in emergency, middle of the night placements. The FCM should be patient and exercise empathy for the relative caregivers and serve as a support to them by answering any questions and addressing any concerns they may have. It is the goal of DCS to have a child transition as smoothly as possible from his or her home into the relative caregiver's home. FCMs should complete timely service referrals for identified needs, such as child care assistance, individual or family counseling, home based casework, etc. for the relative caregiver or child. See separate policy, 16.2 Assistance for Unlicensed Relative Placements for additional information on financial assistance for relative caregivers.

Safe Sleeping

FCMs will talk to parents, guardians, and caregivers about safe sleeping for infants and will document the discussion in MaGIK. Refer to the below information for safe sleeping guidelines:

1. Always place babies on their backs to sleep. The back sleep position is the safest;
2. In December 2010, the Consumer Product Safety Commission banned the further manufacture of drop-side cribs (i.e., cribs that allow for the sides to be lowered and raised). These types of cribs should be avoided for children. See the following link for a picture of the new crib: http://onsafety.cpsc.gov/blog/2011/06/14/the-new-crib-standard-questions-and-answers/;
3. Place babies on a firm sleep surface, such as on a safety-approved crib mattress, covered by a fitted sheet. Never place babies to sleep on pillows, bean bags, quilts, sheepskins, or other soft surfaces;
4. Keep soft objects, toys, and loose bedding, out of the baby's sleep area. Do not use pillows, blankets, quilts, or pillow-like crib bumpers in the sleep area and keep any other items away from the baby's face;

5. Keep baby's sleep area close to, but separate from, where caregivers and others sleep. Babies should not sleep in a bed, on a couch, or armchair with adults or other children;
6. Consider using a clean, dry pacifier when placing the infant down to sleep, but do not force the baby to take it;
7. Dress babies in light sleep clothing and keep the room at a temperature that is comfortable for an adult; and
8. Reduce the chance that flat spots will develop on a baby's head by providing "tummy time" when the baby is awake. To reduce the chance of flat spots, change the direction that the baby lies in the crib, and avoid excessive time in car seats, carriers, bouncers, and swings. These items should also be placed/used on appropriate surfaces and should not be utilized in place of a crib.

Additional information regarding safe sleep is available on the following websites:

1. The American Academy of Pediatrics;
2. Healthy Children.org;
3. The National Institute of Health; and
4. The DCS Website.

FORMS AND TOOLS

1. Relative Home Environment Check List (SF55106)
2. Financial Assistance Options for Relative Caregivers Brochure
3. Relative Resource Guide
4. Resource Parent Role Acknowledgment (SF54642) (also located in the back of the Relative Resource Guide)
5. Authorization for Health Care (SF45093) (card)
6. Authorization for Health Care (SF54247) (form)
7. Statement of Attestation Regarding Relationship (SF52727)
8. Application for Criminal History Background Check (SF53259)
9. Triple I Follow-Up Action (SF53424)

RELATED INFORMATION

N/A