



DCS Practice SOP

Out-of-Home Services

8.24: Travel (Out-of-Home Services)

Related Policy: N/A

Effective Date: January 1, 2026

Version: 1

Roles

- Family Case Manager (FCM)
- Regional Director (RD) / Assistant Regional Director (ARD)
- FCM Supervisor
- DCS Staff Attorney
- Local Office Director (LOD)

Procedure

Participation in travel, vacations, and other activities away from a child's placement gives a child in out-of-home care normal childhood experiences. The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) is legally responsible for a child in out-of-home care, and it is important DCS knows where a child is when traveling. 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 for **Extended-Stay Travel**, which is any 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.

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

DCS will ask the court for permission if:

1. A parent, guardian, or custodian does not agree to the travel plans, or
2. Local court protocol requires court approval for travel.

Emergency Extended-Stay Travel

In the event of out-of-state emergency extended-stay travel, the FCM or, in their absence, the FCM Supervisor, DM, or 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 caregiver shall contact the DCS Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline (Hotline) by phone (1-800-800-5556) or email (DCSHotlineReports@dcsc.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 completed 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 and/or flight information, hotel, other accommodations),
 - c. Confirm the child's current location and/or planned destination,
 - d. Contact information for the adults accompanying the child, including phone numbers,
 - 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 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 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;
4. Document the child's return and any rescheduled visits or services 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 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. A completed Travel Request form **at least seven (7) business days** in advance; and
2. Written approval from the LOD or designee.

The FCM will:

1. Work with the child's caregiver during monthly visits to identify any upcoming in-state Extended-Stay travel with the child;
2. Let the caregiver know about their responsibility to submit the Travel Request form for approval from DCS **at least seven (7) business days** in advance of any in-state Extended-Stay travel. If the trip 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 approval.
4. Get consent for the travel from the parent, guardian, or custodian using the Travel Request form unless Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) has been ordered;

Note: If a parent, guardian, or custodian of the child does not agree to the child traveling or the local court requires DCS to file for authorization, a court order is 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 References);

6. Notify the child's caregiver of the travel decision once it is obtained; and
7. Document all travel details, including the original request, Travel Request form, decisions, travel request to the court (if applicable), court order (if applicable), and notifications to all parties and in the case management system. 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. Work with the FCM to make sure the following have been completed:
 - a. Submission of the Travel Request form and any applicable permission slips, and
 - b. The travel request to the court (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 travel requires court approval; and
3. Forward the request to the LOD or designee for written approval.

The LOD or designee will:

1. Review requests for travel; and
2. Notify the FCM and FCM Supervisor in writing of the final decision within three (3) business days from receipt of the travel request.

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. A completed Travel Request form **at least seven (7) business days** in advance; and
2. Written approval from the LOD or designee.

The FCM will:

1. Work with the child's caregiver during monthly visits to identify any upcoming out-of-state Extended-Stay travel with the child;
2. Let the caregiver know about 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. If the travel requires a permission slip (e.g., school field trips), include the permission slip when submitting the Travel Request form.
3. Get consent from the parent, guardian, or custodian utilizing the Travel Request form unless TPR has been ordered;

Note: If a parent, guardian, or custodian does not agree 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. Work with the caregiver and service providers if visitation needs to be rearranged;

6. Discuss any issues regarding the travel requests with the CFT, if applicable (see References);
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 of the travel decision once it is obtained; and
9. Document all travel details, including the original request, Travel Request form, decisions, travel request to the court (if applicable), court order (if applicable), and notifications to all parties and in the case management system.

Note: 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. Work with the FCM to ensure the following have been completed:
 - a. Submission of the Travel Request form and any applicable permission slips , and
 - b. The travel request to the court (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 travel requires court approval;
3. Forward the request to the LOD or designee for written 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. Notify all parties of the decision within three (3) business days from receipt of the 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 does not agree to the child traveling or the local court requires DCS to file for authorization, a court order is also required. If court authorization **is not** required for out-of-state 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 RD or ARD.

The FCM will:

1. Work with the child's caregiver during 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. If applicable, support the family in obtaining necessary documentation (see Resources) 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). If the travel requires a permission slip (e.g., school field trips), 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 does not agree to the child traveling out-of-country or the local court requires DCS to file for authorization, a court order will be required.

5. Work with the caregiver and service providers if visitation needs to be rearranged;
6. Discuss any issues regarding Extended-Stay and travel requests with the CFT members, if applicable (see References);
7. Notify the FCM Supervisor and LOD of the travel request and forward the Travel Request form for review and 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 caregiver once the travel decision is obtained from the RD;
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 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 permission slips have been submitted, and
 - b. The travel request to the court (filed by the DCS Staff Attorney) if applicable.
2. Review and approve the travel request to the court if travel requires court approval;
3. Send the completed Travel Request form and the travel request to the court (if applicable), and RD for required approval; and
4. Ensure the FCM:
 - a. Receives the RD's written decision,
 - b. Work 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 RD for approval.

The RD or ARD 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 regarding 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.

Definitions

- [Foreign National](#)

Resources

- DCS Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline: 1-800-800-5556
- [DCS Emergency Operations Plan](#)
- International and Cultural Affairs (ICA) email - internationalandculturalaffairs@dcf.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](#)

Additional Information

- [Considerations for a Foreign-Born Child](#)

References

- [Policy 2.22 International and Cultural Affairs Services – Related Practice SOP](#)
- [Policy 8.12 Developing the Visitation Plan – Related Practice SOP](#)
- [Practice SOP 5.07 Child and Family Team \(CFT\) Meetings](#)