

	INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY	
Chapter 8: Out-of-Home Services Section 14: Internet Access and Use of Online Photos		
	Effective Date: January 1, 2026	Version: 4

POLICY OVERVIEW

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) has rules for internet use and online photos to protect the confidentiality and safety of children in out-of-home care.

POLICY STATEMENT

Internet Access

A child in out-of-home care may use the internet outside of school-related purposes if they are supervised by the resource parent or residential treatment staff while using any device with internet access (e.g., computer, phone, tablet, or gaming system).

Use of Online Photos

A child in out-of-home care **cannot** be shown, described, or identified as a foster child (in public media for any purpose without permission from:

1. The child's parent, guardian, or custodian; or
2. The child, if age and developmentally appropriate.

Note: If Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) has been granted and all appeals exhausted, DCS must give consent.

The use of online photos includes, but is not limited to:

1. Recruitment;
2. Training for resource parents;
3. Public awareness; and
4. Social media.

Except for extenuating circumstances (e.g., needing to make a report to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children [NCMEC], see policy [5.22](#)), DCS will only consent to the use of a child's photo or description if the child's parent, guardian, or custodian or the child (if age and developmentally appropriate):

1. Agrees to the use of the child's photo or description; and
2. Signs the Authorization to Use and Release Information, Story, Photos, or Video form.

Note: If TPR is finalized, DCS must decide whether sharing the photo or information is safe and not harmful to the child. Special consideration should be taken for youth 18 and older.

LEGAL REFERENCES

- [IC 5-14-3-10: Classified confidential information; unauthorized disclosure or failure to protect; offense; discipline](#)
- [IC 31-27-4.5-1: Foster parent's right to disclose confidential information; limitations; exceptions](#)