

	INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY	
	Chapter 8: Out-of-Home Services Section 01: Selecting a Placement Option	
	Effective Date: January 1, 2026	Version: 16

POLICY OVERVIEW

When a child needs to live somewhere else to stay safe, the Department of Child Services (DCS) will carefully review the situation to find the safest and most supportive place. The goal is to choose the least restrictive setting, keep care consistent, and help the child feel stable.

POLICY STATEMENT

When a child is removed from their home, DCS will find a safe and appropriate place for them to live. Before considering a relative, kinship, or foster care placement, DCS will first look at whether the child can safely live with a parent, guardian, or custodian. The goal is to keep the child's care consistent and place them in the least restrictive setting possible.

DCS will consider the following factors when identifying placement options for a child:

1. Noncustodial Parent: If a parent who does not have custody is able and willing to care for the child;

Note: DCS will always consider a noncustodial parent first before looking at other placement options.

2. Relatives or Kin: If there are other family members or close family friends who are suitable and willing to care for the child;

Note: If there is no suitable noncustodial parent, DCS will look at relatives or kin before considering foster care.

3. Siblings: Keeping siblings together, unless it would not be in the best interest of one or more children;
4. Tribal Membership: If the child is a member of, or could be a member of, a federally recognized Indian tribe;

Note: See policy 2.12.

5. Medically fragile or an infant under 6 months: Special care is taken for babies and children with serious medical needs;
6. Former Resource Parents: If the child has lived with foster parents before who may still be a good fit;
7. CANS Assessment: DCS will consider recommendations from the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) assessment;

Note: See policy 5.19.

8. Least Restrictive Setting: DCS will try to place the child in a setting that feels as normal and supportive as possible, while still meeting their needs;
9. Close to Home: DCS will try to place the child in their own community, school district, and near their parent, guardian, or custodian whenever possible; and
10. Victim of Human Trafficking or Domestic Violence: DCS will consider any experiences the child has had with trafficking or domestic violence.

Note: See policies 4.47 and 2.30.

LEGAL REFERENCES

- [IC 5-26.5-1-3: "Domestic violence"](#)
- [IC 31-32-2.5: Chapter 2.5. Right to Intervene in Child in Need of Services Proceedings and Termination of Parent-Child Relationship Proceedings](#)
- [IC 31-34-1-3.5: Victim of human or sexual trafficking](#)
- [IC 31-34-4: Chapter 4. Temporary Placement of Child Taken into Custody](#)
- [IC 31-34-6: Chapter 6. Detention of Alleged Child in Need of Services](#)
- [IC 31-34-6-2: Placement with relative or de facto custodian; evaluation; background checks](#)
- [IC 31-34-21: Chapter 21. Review of Dispositional Decrees; Formal Review Hearings](#)
- [IC 31-34-23-5: Placement of a child with a previous placement](#)
- [IC 31-9-2-42: "Domestic or family violence"](#)
- [IC 35-42-3.5: Chapter 3.5. Human and Sexual Trafficking](#)
- [465 IAC 2-1.5: Licensing of Foster Family Homes for Children](#)