

 INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES	INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY	
	Chapter 6: Court	Effective Date: July 1, 2017
	Section 12: Involuntary Termination of Parental Rights (TPR)	Version: 9

STATEMENTS OF PURPOSE

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) may consider petitioning the court for Involuntary Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) when the parent, guardian, or custodian has not made significant progress toward the primary plan within six (6) months of removal under the Dispositional Decree.

Note: DCS will not sign the [Consent to Adoption \(SF 12582\)](#) until a prospective adoptive parent has been identified, and the period of appeal for the TPR has passed, or any final appellate opinion related to the TPR has been certified and the period for appeal has passed on any issues remanded to the juvenile court.

DCS will petition the court for Involuntary TPR when one (1) of the following occurs:

1. The court in a CHINS case has entered a finding that reasonable efforts for family preservation or reunification are not required; or
2. A child has been removed from the home and is in placement as a result of the child being an alleged CHINS for 15 of the most recent 22 months.

Note: The 15 months do not have to be continuous. DCS will not count trial home visits or runaway episodes when calculating the 15 months.

DCS will petition the court for Involuntary TPR when a Juvenile Delinquent/Juvenile Status Offender(JD/JS) child was removed from the home no less than 15 of the most recent 22 months, unless the compelling reasons for not filing for TPR are documented in the child's case file;

Note: DCS will consult with the child's Probation Officer in all JD/JS cases and:

- a. Follow the recommendations of the Probation Officer regarding TPR, and
- b. Follow local inter-agency agreements regarding procedure.

In a TPR Fact-Finding, DCS must show:

1. The reasons for the child's removal or out-of-home placement will not be remedied, or the continuation of the parent-child relationship poses a threat to the well-being of the child;
2. Termination of Parental Rights is in the best interest of the child; and
3. There is a plan for the future care and treatment of the child.

Code References

1. [45 CFR 1356.21 \(h\) \(4\)\(i\): Application of the Requirements for Filing a Petition](#)
2. [IC 31-34-21-5.6: Exceptions to requirement to make reasonable efforts to preserve and reunify families](#)

3. [IC 31-35-2: Chapter 2. Termination of Parent-Child Relationship Involving a Delinquent Child or a Child in Need of Services](#)

PROCEDURE

The Family Case Manager (FCM) will:

1. Seek counsel from the FCM Supervisor and the DCS Staff Attorney regarding the decision to file for TPR;
2. Request input regarding the decision to seek TPR from the Child and Family Team (CFT);
3. Request input from the child's Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) or Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA);
4. Ensure that a diligent search for any missing parent was conducted prior to the filing of the TPR petition. See policy [5.6 Locating Absent Parents](#) for more information;
5. Begin to identify, recruit, process, and approve a qualified prospective adoptive family for the child. It is best practice to search for relatives who are willing and able to adopt the child;
6. Check the status of any pending paternity cases. See policy, [5.5 Alleged Fathers](#);
7. Ensure the parent/guardian/custodian is provided with the [Advisement of Legal Rights Upon Taking Custody of/Filing a Petition on Behalf of a Child Alleged to be a Child in Need of Services \(SF 47114\)](#) to the hearing. See policy, [6.4 Providing Notice](#) for additional information;
8. Coordinate witnesses for the TPR Hearing with the DCS Staff Attorney; and
9. Attend the TPR Hearing.

If TPR is granted, the FCM will:

1. Enter the hearing and decree date of the petition in the case management system;
2. Complete the [Indiana Adoption Medical History Registry \(SF 13342\)](#).
3. Update the reason for lack of parental support and care in the case management to reflect that the parents' rights have been terminated; and
4. Set up a final "goodbye visit" between the child and the parents. If the child is seeing a therapist, attempt to arrange the visit so the therapist can be present.

The FCM Supervisor will:

1. Assist the FCM in filing the TPR; and
2. Ensure that the information is updated in the case management system in a timely manner.

The DCS Staff Attorney will file a petition for a TPR Hearing including the child's court approved permanency plan and provide proper notice regarding the TPR Hearing.

The Division Manager or DCS Local Office Director (LOD) will sign the [Consent to Adoption \(SF 12582\)](#) form for cases where a prospective adoptive parent has been identified and:

1. The period of appeal for the TPR has passed, or
2. Any final appellate opinion related to the TPR has been certified and the period for appeal has passed on any issues remanded to the juvenile court, and
3. The negotiations for Adoption Subsidy have been negotiated and finalized.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

Adoption Consents

The [Consent to Adoption \(SF 12582\)](#) form will be used for every prospective adoptive family approved to adopt a child in DCS care.

FORMS AND TOOLS

1. [Advisement of Legal Rights Upon Taking Custody/Filing a Petition on Behalf of a Child Alleged to be a Child in Need of Services \(SF 47114\)](#)
2. [Consent to Adoption \(SF 12582\)](#)
3. [Indiana Adoption Medical History Registry \(SF 13342\)](#)
4. [Case Plan \(SF 2956\)](#) – Available in the case management system

RELATED INFORMATION

Petition to TPR

The petition must outline the circumstances that caused the petition to be filed. The court is required to commence the TPR hearing not more than 90 days after such a petition is filed and complete the hearing not more than 180 days after such petition is filed.

Calculating When to File a Petition for TPR

The petition for TPR must be filed when the child has been removed from his or her home no less than 15 of the most recent 22 months. The individual filing the petition will:

1. Calculate the 15 out of the most recent 22 month period from the date the child was removed;
2. Use a cumulative method of calculation when a child experiences multiple exits from and entries into foster care during the 22 month period; and
3. Not include trial home visits or runaway episodes in calculating the 15 of the most recent 22 months since removal.

Note: If the 15 out of 22 is met but dismissal is appropriate, the TPR must still be filed and the information justifying dismissal must be submitted to the DCS Staff Attorney with the request to file the TPR.

Dismissal by DCS

A petition must be filed but may be dismissed on motion of DCS for one of the following reasons:

1. At the option of DCS, the child is being cared for by a parent or specified relative (e.g., step parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle, adult sibling or relative guardian);
2. DCS has documented in the [Case Plan \(SF 2956\)](#) another compelling reason for determining that terminating the parent-child relationship would not be in the best interests of the child;
3. DCS has not provided the services to the family deemed necessary for the safe return of the child to the child's home within the time period stated in the [Case Plan \(SF 2956\)](#); or
4. DCS has not provided the services as stated in the [Case Plan \(SF 2956\)](#) and the time for providing those services under the currently applicable plan has not expired.

Note: Do not start the clock over once the 15 of 22 has been met. Once the DCS obligation to file the TPR has been met and the dismissal has been granted, DCS will file a new TPR when the reason for dismissal no longer applies.

Court Denies Petition to TPR

If the court denies the petition to TPR, reasonable efforts for reunification and preservation must begin again.

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