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|  | INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY | |
| | Chapter 8: Out-of-Home Services | Effective Date: July 1, 2017 |
| | Section 1: Selecting a Placement Option | Version: 9 |

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| STATEMENTS OF PURPOSE |
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The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) will consider the following factors, if applicable, when identifying placement options for a child:

1. The noncustodial parent’s suitability and willingness to care for the child;
2. The possibility of other suitable and willing relatives as a placement;

Note: A noncustodial parent should be considered prior to exploring placement options. If there is not a suitable noncustodial parent, suitable and willing relatives should be considered prior to considering other placement options.

3. The placement type recommendation of the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) Assessment (see separate policy, [5.19 Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths \(CANS\) Assessment](#));
4. The least restrictive environment available to provide for the child’s individual needs;
5. Proximity to his or her own community. Whenever possible a child will be placed within his or her own community and school district and within close proximity to his or her parent, guardian, or custodian;
6. Placement with siblings and whether there is a compelling reason that placing siblings together would not be in the best interest of one (1) or more of the children;
7. The child has been identified as a victim of human trafficking and/or domestic violence; and
8. The child is a member of, or eligible for, membership in an Indian (Native American) tribe. For additional information, see separate policy [2.12 Indian Child Welfare Act \(ICWA\)](#).

The Family Case Manager (FCM) and Child and Family Team (CFT) should carefully determine what placement would be in the best interest of the child, unless an immediate placement decision must be made due to an emergency removal. DCS must submit all placement recommendations to the court. For further guidance, see separate policies, [8.4 Emergency Shelter and Urgent Residential Placement Review and Approval](#) and [5.7 Child and Family Team Meetings](#).

Note: As soon as possible after the emergency situation, the CFT should determine which placement option will be in the best interest of the child.

The CFT will discuss the identified permanency plan at each meeting, in addition to the second permanency plan, if concurrent planning. For further guidance, see separate policy, [5.15 Concurrent Planning – An Overview](#).

Code References

1. [IC 31-34-1-3.5 Victim of Human Trafficking](#)

2. [IC 31-34-4: Temporary Placement of Child Taken into Custody](#)
3. [IC 31-34-6: Detention of Alleged Child in Need of Services](#)
4. [IC 31-34-6-2: Placement with relative or de facto custodian; evaluation; background checks](#)
5. [IC 5-26.5-1-3: "Domestic violence"](#)
6. [IC 34-6-2-34.5: "Domestic or family violence"](#)
7. [IC 35-42-3.5: Human and Sexual Trafficking](#)

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| PROCEDURE |
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When pursuing a placement, the FCM will:

1. Conduct a diligent search for any noncustodial parents. See separate policies, [4.0 Diligent Search](#) and [5.6 Locating Absent Parents](#);
2. Conduct a criminal history background check if a noncustodial parent is identified as a potential caregiver and there are **concerns** regarding the noncustodial parent's ability to keep the child safe. See separate policies, [13.5 Conducting Background Checks for Unlicensed Placements](#) and [13.6 Evaluation of Background Checks for Unlicensed Placements](#);
3. Ask the family if the child is a member of, or eligible for, membership in an Indian (Native American) tribe. See separate policy [2.12 Indian Child Welfare Act \(ICWA\)](#);

Note: During the assessment, a [Family Network Diagram](#) is created to identify extended family members. The FCM should use this [Family Network Diagram](#) as a tool to support his or her search for potential relative placements.

4. Facilitate the convening of a CFT Meeting to:
 - a. Discuss the needs of the child,
 - b. Review the Tool [8.A Placement Needs Summary](#) and CANS services and placement recommendations to determine which of the following is the most appropriate placement type for the child:
 - i. Relative Family or Foster Family Home; or
 - ii. Residential Treatment Center, Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility or State Hospital. This level of placement requires approval of the Residential Placement Committee,

Note: In cases of human trafficking, many children run away from their placements and return to their trafficker or a similar situation from which they came. Also, if placement with a noncustodial parent or other relative is being considered, the child should not be placed until it is determined that the potential placement is not the trafficker or associated with the trafficker. For further guidance, see separate policy [2.21 Human Trafficking](#) and/or send questions to dcshumantraffickinginformation@dcs.in.gov.

- c. Develop a permanency plan and second permanency plan, if concurrent planning. Both plans should include the possibility of siblings being placed together. For further guidance, see separate policy, [5.15 Concurrent Planning – An Overview](#), and
- d. Develop a Visitation Plan that is agreed upon by all parties if it has been determined that the siblings cannot be placed together or it is in the best interest for siblings to not be placed together. For further guidance, see separate policy, [8.12 Developing the Visitation Plan](#);

Note: The FCM should consider the appropriateness of visitation between siblings and ensure it is documented in the visitation plan.

5. Obtain approval by the DCS Local Office Director (LOD) or designee for children placed in placement types that are different from the CANS recommendation. For further guidance, see separate policy, [5.19 Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths \(CANS\) Assessment](#);
6. Submit the recommendation to the court after the recommendation is approved by all required DCS local office staff;
7. Contact the Regional Foster Care Specialist (RFCS) if the child will be placed in a licensed foster home. Provide as much information as possible regarding the child's placement needs for the purpose of finding an appropriate foster home. The information should include, but is not limited to:
 - a. Demographics,
 - b. Child preferences,
 - c. Whether the child is part of a sibling group and if the siblings should be placed together,
 - d. Whether the child has any behavioral needs that may affect placement (e.g., bedwetting, fire starting, animal cruelty, sexual abuse history, or probation),
 - e. Prior placement history,
 - f. Medical and/or psychological needs/concerns and history, and
 - g. Educational needs and enrollment details;
8. Facilitate the placement of the child after receiving information about the foster family home from the RFCS. For further guidance, see separate policy, [8.9 Placing the Child in Out-of-Home Care](#);
9. Document the placement in the Management Gateway for Indiana's Kids (MaGIK);
10. Complete the Individual Child Placement Referral (ICPR) for all paid placements in the KidTraks system and ensure the ICPR is delivered to the placement resource; and
11. Conduct the initial face-to-face contact with the child and placement resource within three (3) business days of placement.

When pursuing a Relative or Foster Family Home, the FCM will:

1. Identify all relatives who may be an appropriate resource for the child utilizing the completed [Family Network Diagram](#);

Note: In cases involving human trafficking, if placement with a noncustodial parent or other relative is being considered, the child should not be placed until it is determined that the potential placement is not the trafficker or associated with the trafficker. For further guidance, see separate policy [2.21 Human Trafficking](#) and/or send questions to dcshumantraffickinginformation@dcs.in.gov.

2. Ensure criminal history background checks are conducted on all unlicensed Relative Resource Homes. See separate policies, [13.5 Conducting Background Checks for Unlicensed Placements](#) and [13.6 Evaluation of Background Checks for Unlicensed Placements](#);
3. Identify foster families, if an appropriate relative cannot be located by working with the Regional Foster Care Specialist (RFCS) or Licensed Child Placing Agency (LCPA); and
4. Contact the family identified by the RFCS or LCPA to discuss the child's needs and the family's ability to care for the child. Consider services needed for the resource family to

meet identified needs and make referrals as necessary (see separate policy, [8.15 Services for the Resource Family](#)).

Note: Ensure the LCPA staff is included in communications with the foster parent.

For Residential Placement the FCM will follow all additional steps in separate policy [8.4 Emergency Shelter and Urgent Residential Placement Review and Approval](#).

Note: See separate policy, [9.1 Request to Place an Indiana Child in Another State](#) for information that must be submitted to the Central Office Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) Office for out-of-state placement with a resource parent or in a residential facility.

The FCM Supervisor will:

1. Assist the FCM in determining the appropriate type of placement for the child; and

Note: Obtain approval by the DCS LOD or designee for children placed in placement types that are different from the CANS recommendation. See separate policy, [5.19 Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths \(CANS\) Assessment](#).

2. Provide any additional assistance as needed to ensure the child is placed timely.

Upon contact by the FCM regarding the need for placement recommendations, the RFCS or the LCPA will:

1. Discuss, with the FCM, the child's placement needs including, but not limited to:
 - a. The CANS placement recommendation and/or known behavioral health and medical needs;
 - b. Anticipated visitation schedule and details;
 - c. Educational needs;
 - d. Sibling relationships and potential placement or service needs; and
 - e. Existing and/or anticipated services;
2. Evaluate the appropriateness of available placement options to meet the child's needs; and
3. Provide recommendations to the FCM regarding the child's placement.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

Indicators of Human Trafficking¹

If any of the following indicators or a combination of several indicators of human trafficking are observed during the course of an assessment, the FCM should complete the [Indiana Human Trafficking Screening Tool](#) and staff with his or her supervisor. The FCM and/or FCM Supervisor may send questions to dcshumantraffickinginformation@dcs.in.gov.

Child Indicators:

1. Child may not be able or willing to speak on his or her own behalf;
2. Child may not be able to speak English;
3. Child may not be allowed to speak to the FCM alone;

¹ State of Florida Department of Children and Families (2009). *Human Trafficking of Child Indicator Tool*. Retrieved from <http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/programs/humantrafficking/docs/HumanTraffickingOfChildrenIndicatoTool0109.pdf>.

4. Child may not have access to identification and/or travel documents;
5. Child may work long hours and receive little or no pay;
6. Child may not cooperate with the FCM during the interview (e.g., provide wrong information about identity and living situation);
7. Child may not attend school or has large gaps in his or her education history;
8. Child may live at his or her workplace or with his or her employer and many other people in a small area;
9. Child may have a **heightened** sense of fear and distrust of authority;
10. Child may have engaged in prostitution or commercial sex acts;
11. Child may have a significantly older boyfriend or girlfriend;
12. Child may be a runaway; and/or
13. Child may be in a public place (e.g., hotel) and found in possession of drugs/alcohol.

Relative Resource Homes as a Placement Option When Domestic Violence Has Occurred

Prior to approving a relative placement for any child under DCS supervision, the FCM will consider the following criteria:

1. The relative household members have no history of domestic violence;
2. The relative believes domestic violence has occurred and does not enable the violence;
3. The relative can and will protect child(ren) from the alleged domestic violence offender;
4. The relative will not reveal the whereabouts of the non-offending parent;
5. The alleged domestic violence offender does not have coercive control over the relative and/or family;
6. The relative and/or family does not fear the alleged domestic violence offender;
7. The family members will report any and all violations of the [Safety Plan \(SF53243\)](#); and
8. The relative and/or family has a good relationship with the non-offending parent.

FORMS AND TOOLS

1. [Tool 8.A Placement Needs Summary](#)
2. [Tool 8.B Separation and Loss](#)
3. [Family Network Diagram Guide](#)
4. [Safety Plan \(SF53243\)](#)
5. [Indiana Human Trafficking Screening Tool](#) – Available in MaGIK

RELATED INFORMATION

DCS Investigators

A referral may be made to a DCS Investigator to assist with locating an absent parent or relatives for placement consideration.

Placement with a Relative

[IC 31-34-6-2](#) requires the court to consider placing a child with a suitable and willing relative before considering any other placement option.

Out-of-Home Placement Philosophy

Out-of-home care will be used only when there is no other alternative to ensure a child's safety and well-being from abuse or neglect. DCS will diligently work to maintain familial connections through visitation and shared activities while a child is in out-of-home care. The parent of a child in out-of-home care is also afforded an opportunity to build on family strengths and learn essential skills in providing a safe, nurturing environment to which his or her child may return.

Eligible Placements

DCS will claim federal (Title IV-E Foster Care, Title IV-A Emergency Assistance, Title IV-E Waiver) reimbursement on behalf of eligible children who are placed in DCS licensed, IV-E eligible placements. Eligible placement settings include but are not limited to licensed relative homes, foster family homes, child-caring institutions, emergency shelters, group homes, and private secure facilities. Ineligible placement settings include those outside the scope of foster care, such as but not limited to unlicensed relative care, detention centers, correctional facilities, hospitals, and boot camps.

Child Placed with Noncustodial Parent

When a child is physically and legally removed from a custodial parent and placed directly with a noncustodial parent without any intervening out-of-home placement and DCS is given placement and care authority, removal has occurred from the custodial parent. The noncustodial parent is not considered a placement.

When a child has been removed from the custodial parent and placed in out-of-home care (e.g., foster family home) at least one (1) day and is then placed with the noncustodial parent, this is considered a Trial Home Visit (THV).

Confidentiality for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning (LGBTQ) Youth

FCMs should ensure that confidentiality measures are in place when evaluating placement of an LGBTQ youth. Except for cases where LGBTQ issues are relevant to abuse, neglect, removal, placement, or reunification, confidentiality must be maintained. In these circumstances, the youth's identification as an LGBTQ youth should be discussed with the supervisor. Staff should be mindful confidentiality is important and even more critical when working with youth identifying as LGBTQ. These youth may or may not be out, or only to certain individuals. It is up to a youth to determine to whom and how they come out. FCMs should stress to the proposed resource parent that it is critical that confidentiality and respect be honored in the way that an LGBTQ youth requests.