



INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES

CHILD WELFARE POLICY

Chapter 8: Out-of-Home Services

Section 17: Respite Services for Resource Parents

Effective Date: October 1, 2024

Version: 3

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POLICY OVERVIEW

Respite care is available to resource parents to offer support, when necessary, to reduce placement disruption, improve family stability, and provide temporary relief of child caring responsibilities.

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PROCEDURE

For a child in out-of-home care, the Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) requires that a respite care provider be a licensed resource parent home or a licensed child caring institution (CCI). Exceptions to this requirement must be evaluated on an individual basis by the DCS Local Office Director (LOD) or designee. If the exception is granted, the approval must be documented in writing.

Note: DCS does not consider field trips and sleepovers to be respite care when the resource parent maintains care and control for the child while the child is absent from the resource home (i.e., the resource parent is available and willing to meet any of the child's needs which may arise).

DCS must review and approve all respite care requests. This allows for DCS to:

1. Know the current location and whereabouts of the child who is under the care and custody of DCS; and
2. Identify potential placement concerns.

Note: Identifying and addressing potential placement concerns with the respite placement helps to ensure the child's needs are met. Discuss with the current placement provider any medical needs, safety concerns, and/or behavioral considerations that may need to be considered.

When the child has therapeutic level placement needs, DCS requires the respite care be provided by a licensed therapeutic foster home or a licensed CCI equipped to meet the therapeutic needs of the child.

Note: A foster home on an involuntary placement hold is not eligible to provide respite care.

The FCM, Foster Care Specialist, or Kinship Navigator (KN) will:

1. Ensure the resource parent:
 - a. Understands requests for respite care must be preapproved and submitted to the FCM at least three (3) business days in advance unless emergency conditions exist. Requests may be in writing or orally;

Note: If emergency circumstances prevent preapproval of respite care, the resource parent must call the DCS local office to inform the contact person of the emergency and develop a plan that identifies where the child will stay. If the resource parent is unable to speak to DCS local office staff, the Indiana DCS Child Abuse Hotline (Hotline) must be notified of the emergency by calling 1-800-800-5556.

- b. Provides the respite care provider the DCS Hotline phone number (1-800-800-5556) and provides the following information about each child to be cared for:
 - i. Full name and date of birth;
 - ii. Medicaid number or other insurance information;
 - iii. Medical needs, including detailed medication instructions, doctor's contact information, preferred hospital, and known allergies, if applicable;
 - iv. School and/or daycare information;
 - v. The DCS local office phone number;
 - vi. A daytime phone number for the assigned FCM;
 - vii. A contact phone number for the resource parent;
 - viii. Pertinent information relating to the child's behavior; and
 - ix. Restrictions in contacting the parent, guardian, or custodian or any other individual.
 - c. Makes all arrangements with the respite care provider (e.g., length of stay, drop-off and pick-up times, pre-care visits, and any agreements regarding payment for respite care); and

Note: DCS will not pay for the cost of respite care for a child placed in a licensed resource home. Exchange in per diem or reciprocal respite services should be arranged between the resource parent and the respite care provider.

- d. Prepares the child for respite care (e.g., explains respite care to the child and arranges introductions and/or visits between the child and respite caregiver prior to respite care).
2. Document all requests, plans, and approvals for respite care services in the case management system;
3. Review all requests for respite care;
4. Seek input from the licensing worker, FCM Supervisor, Child and Family Team (CFT) members, and/or convene a CFT Meeting (see policy 5.07 Child and Family Team Meetings) if there are concerns regarding the length of the planned respite care, frequency of requests, or any other concerns;
5. Notify the resource parent if the request for respite care has been approved, and provide an explanation if the request is not approved;
6. Encourage the use of respite care when there are signs of extensive resource parent stress and/or potential for placement disruption;
7. Collaborate with the licensing worker to assist the resource parent with locating and/or coordinating the respite care, as needed. This may include review of the Child Care Plan and consideration of individuals listed for respite;

Note: Respite care is not considered a placement; however, when choosing a respite provider, the FCM and licensing worker should consider the same factors they would consider when identifying placement options, including caregiver capacity and ability. See policy 8.01 Selecting a Placement Option.

8. Ensure approval from the LOD or designee is obtained prior to respite for any unlicensed individual;
9. Consult with the Kinship Navigator in locating and coordinating respite for the unlicensed individual;

Note: The LOD or designee will be responsible for providing written approval of any non-licensed respite provider.

10. Verify arrangements with the respite care provider (e.g., length of stay and drop-off and pick-up times); and
11. Record the respite care as a temporary absence on the 'Placement Details' screen in the case management system.

The FCM Supervisor will:

1. Consult with the licensing worker, FCM, CFT, if there are concerns regarding the length of the planned respite care, frequency of requests, or any other concerns; and
2. Work with the FCM to secure LOD or designee approval if the intended respite provider is not licensed.

The Licensing Worker will:

1. Seek input from the FCM and FCM Supervisor if there are concerns regarding the length of the planned respite care, frequency of requests, or any other concerns;
2. Collaborate with the FCM to assist the resource parent with locating and/or coordinating respite care;
3. Consult with the FCM to review the Child Care Plan and consider individuals listed for respite; and
4. Ensure approval from the LOD or designee is obtained prior to respite for any unlicensed individual.

The LOD or designee will be consulted for approval when a potential respite provider is not a licensed resource parent home or licensed CCI. Approval of a non-licensed provider will be documented in writing.

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RELEVANT INFORMATION

Definitions

Licensing Worker

The licensing worker refers to the DCS Regional Foster Care Specialist (RFCS) or the Licensed Child Placing Agency (LCPA) worker.

Respite Care

DCS defines respite care as a temporary transfer of caregiving responsibilities with the specific intent of providing support to the resource parent.

Forms and Tools

- [Child Care Plan \(SF 54608\)](#)

Related Policies

- [5.07 Child and Family Team Meetings](#)
- [8.01 Selecting a Placement Option](#)

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LEGAL REFERENCES

N/A

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PRACTICE GUIDANCE – DCS POLICY 8.17

Practice Guidance is designed to assist DCS staff with thoughtful and practical direction on how to effectively integrate tools and social work practice into daily case management in an effort to achieve positive family and child outcomes. Practice Guidance is separate from Policy.

N/A

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