

	INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY	
	Chapter 8: Out-of-Home Services	Effective Date: September 1, 2021
	Section 01: Selecting a Placement Option	Version: 13

POLICY OVERVIEW

When out-of-home care is required to ensure the safety and well-being of the child, careful assessment and evaluation is needed to identify the least restrictive placement, maintain continuity of care, and promote stability.

PROCEDURE

An appropriate placement will be identified for a child upon removal from the home. In order to maintain continuity of care and the least restrictive placement, suitability of each parent, guardian, or custodian will be considered prior to considering relative, kinship, or foster care placement.

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. Placement with siblings unless there is a compelling reason placing siblings together would not be in the best interest of one (1) or more of the children;
4. The child is a member of, or eligible for, membership in an Indian tribe. For additional information, see policy 2.12 Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA).
5. The possibility of former resource parents as a placement;
6. The placement type recommendation of the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) Assessment. See policy 5.19 Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) Assessment;
7. The least restrictive environment available to provide for the child's individual needs;
8. Proximity to the child's community. Whenever possible, a child will be placed within the child's own community, school district, and in close proximity to the child's parent, guardian, or custodian; and
8. Whether child has been identified as a victim of human trafficking and/or domestic violence (DV). See policy 2.21 Human Trafficking for additional information.

When pursuing a placement, the Family Case Manager (FCM) will:

1. Ask the child (if age appropriate) and family if the child is of Indian heritage or if the child is eligible for membership in a federally recognized Indian tribe. See policy 2.12 Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) for additional information;
2. Conduct a diligent search for any noncustodial parents and relatives (including all adult relatives and adult siblings) prior to conducting a search for a licensed foster home;

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 policy 2.21 Human Trafficking and/or send questions to the DCS Human Trafficking Information mailbox.

3. Identify all relatives who may be an appropriate resource for the child by utilizing the completed Family Network Diagram. See policies 2.26 Diligent Search, 5.06 Locating Absent Parents, 8.48 Relative Placements, and 5.B Tool: Family Network Diagram Instruction Guide;

Note: Former long-term resource parents may be considered as a relative placement in cases where the child is the victim of repeat maltreatment or returning to out-of-home care.

4. Conduct a criminal history background check if:
 - a. A noncustodial parent is identified as a potential caregiver and there are concerns regarding the noncustodial parent's ability to keep the child safe, or
 - b. A relative placement has been identified. See policies 13.05 Conducting Background Checks for Non-Emergency Unlicensed Placements and 13.06 Evaluation of Background Checks for Non-Emergency Unlicensed Out-of-Home Placements.
5. Facilitate the convening of a Child and Family Team (CFT) Meeting to determine which placement would be in the best interest of the child (unless an immediate placement decision must be made due to an emergency removal):
 - a. Discuss the needs of the child, including the placement of siblings together, and
 - b. Review the 8.A Tool: Placement Needs Summary, CANS, and placement recommendations to determine which of the following is the most appropriate placement type for the child:
 - i. Relative or Kinship Family, including a long-term resource family (see policy 8.48 Relative Placements),
 - ii. Foster Family Home, or

Note: Former foster parents should be considered whenever possible and appropriate.

- iii. Residential Treatment Center, Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility (PRFT) or State Hospital. This level of placement requires approval through the Child-Focused Treatment Review (CFTR). See policy 5.24 Child-Focused Treatment Review (CFTR) for additional guidance.

- 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 policy 5.15 Concurrent Planning – An Overview; and

- d. Develop a Visitation Plan that is agreed upon by all parties. For further guidance, see policy 8.12 Developing the Visitation Plan.
6. Collaborate with the Regional Foster Care Specialist (RFCS) if the child will be placed in a licensed foster home.

Note: If the child was previously in a foster placement, the FCM should coordinate with the RFCS to consider placement in former resource homes.

7. Provide as much information as possible to the RFCS and/or LCPA regarding the child's needs for the purpose of finding an appropriate foster home. The information should include, but is not limited to:
 - a. Child demographics (i.e., age, developmental capacity, gender identity, sexual orientation),
 - b. Child's culture (i.e., preferred language, religious and/or spiritual practices),
 - c. Child's placement preferences (i.e., household composition, community),
 - d. Whether the child is part of a sibling group and if the siblings should be placed together,
 - e. Prior placement history,
 - f. Child's Permanency Plan and visitation schedule,
 - g. Any medical/behavioral/psychological needs and concerns (e.g., bedwetting, fire starting, animal cruelty, medications, and/or special medical equipment),
 - h. Child abuse and/or neglect and legal history, and
 - i. Educational needs and enrollment details.
8. Complete the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) process as outlined in policy 9.01 Request to Place an Indiana Child in Another State for out-of-state placement with a resource parent or in residential treatment, if applicable;
9. Contact the identified family to discuss the child's needs and the family's ability to care for the child. Ensure clear follow up is given to the family regarding whether the child will be placed in their home.
10. Consider services needed for the child and identified family to meet identified needs and make referrals as necessary. See policy 8.15 Services for the Resource Family for additional information;

Note: If the child is placed in a Licensed Child Placing Agency (LCPA) home, ensure the LCPA staff is included in communications with the foster parent.

11. Obtain approval from the DCS Local Office Director (LOD) or designee for children temporarily placed in Emergency Shelter Care (ESC), residential treatment, or placement types that are different from the CANS recommendation.

Note: In addition to this policy, the FCM will follow all additional steps in:

- a. Policy 5.19 for CANS Assessment approvals;
 - b. Policy 8.04 Emergency Shelter Care and Urgent Residential Treatment for youth placed temporarily in ESC or in need of urgent residential treatment; and
 - c. Policy 5.24 Child-Focused Treatment Review (CFTR) for placement in residential treatment.
12. Submit the placement recommendation to the court after the recommendation is approved by all required DCS local office staff; and

13. Facilitate the placement of the child. For further guidance, see policy 8.09 Placing the Child in Out-of-Home Care.

The FCM Supervisor will:

1. Assist the FCM in determining the appropriate type of placement for the child and obtaining any needed approvals;
2. Provide any additional assistance as needed to ensure the child is appropriately placed in a timely manner; and
3. Ensure all actions taken and any deviation from best practice is documented in the case management system.

The LOD or designee will approve, if appropriate, ESC, residential placements, and a placement type that is different from the CANS recommendation.

After being contacted 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.

LEGAL REFERENCES

- [IC 5-26.5-1-3: "Domestic violence"](#)
- [IC 31-32-2.5: 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: Temporary Placement of Child Taken into Custody](#)
- [IC 31-34-6: 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: Review of Dispositional Decrees: Formal Review Hearings](#)
- [IC 31-34-23-5: Placement of a child with a previous placement](#)
- [IC 34-6-2-34.5: "Domestic or Family Violence"](#)
- [IC 35-42-3.5: Human and Sexual Trafficking](#)

RELEVANT INFORMATION

Definitions

DCS Investigators

DCS Investigators are employees of DCS who are responsible for assisting FCMs in locating absent parents, relatives, and/or other identified persons of interest to the case and/or assessment.

Long-Term Resource Parent

A long-term resource parent is a resource parent who has provided care and supervision for a child for at least:

1. The 12 most recent months;
2. Fifteen (15) of the most recent 22 months; or
3. Six (6) months, if the child is less than twelve (12) months of age.

Forms and Tools

- [5.B Tool: Family Network Diagram Instruction Guide](#)
- [8.A Tool: Placement Needs Summary](#)
- [8.B Tool: Separation and Loss](#)
- [DCS Human Trafficking Information mailbox](#)
- Indiana Human Trafficking Screening Tool – Available in the case management system
- [Safety Plan \(SF53243\)](#)
- Visitation Plan – Available in the case management system

Related Policies

- [2.12 Indiana Child Welfare Act \(ICWA\)](#)
- [2.21 Human Trafficking](#)
- [2.26 Diligent Search](#)
- [5.06 Locating Absent Parents](#)
- [5.15 Concurrent Planning- An Overview](#)
- [5.19 Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths \(CANS\) Assessment](#)
- [5.24 Child-Focused Treatment Review \(CFTR\)](#)
- [8.04 Emergency Shelter Care and Urgent Residential Treatment](#)
- [8.09 Placing a Child in Out-of-Home Care](#)
- [8.12 Developing the Visitation Plan](#)
- [8.15 Services for the Resource Family](#)
- [8.48 Relative or Kinship Placements](#)
- [9.01 Request to Place an Indiana Child in Another State](#)
- [13.05 Conducting Background Checks for Non-Emergency Unlicensed Placements](#)
- [13.06 Evaluation of Background Checks for Non-Emergency Unlicensed Out-of-Home Placements](#)
- [15.10 Continued Title IV-E Eligibility Requirements](#)
- [16.04 Placement Referrals](#)