

	<b>INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY</b>	
	<b>Chapter 8:</b> Out-of-Home Care	<b>Effective Date:</b> July 1, 2019
	<b>Section 48:</b> Relative Placements	<b>Version:</b> 5

<b>STATEMENTS OF PURPOSE</b>
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The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) will consider placement with a suitable and willing relative caregiver if placement with a suitable and willing noncustodial parent is **not** possible. See policies [8.1 Selecting a Placement Option](#) and [5.4 Noncustodial Parents](#) for additional information on noncustodial parents.

**Note:** When a child is a member of an American Indian/Alaska Native tribe and eligible under the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), be mindful that the ICWA placement preferences apply. See policy [2.12 Indian Child Welfare Act \(ICWA\)](#) for additional information.

Suitable and willing adult relatives (18 and older) to be considered for placement include but are not limited to:

1. Adult siblings including step and half-siblings;
2. Maternal or paternal grandparents;
3. Adult aunt or uncle;
4. Adult cousins;

**Note:** The individuals must be first or second cousins to be marked as “cousin” in the case management system. All other cousins are considered **other** adult relatives.

5. Parents and extended family of siblings or half-siblings (i.e., adult siblings, grandparents, adult aunts or uncles, and adult cousins);
6. Former step-parents and extended family of former step-parents (i.e., adult siblings, grandparents, adult aunts or uncles, and adult cousins);
7. Other adult relatives suggested by either parent of a child including, but not limited to, extended cousins, great aunts or uncles (great or great-greats); or
8. Any other individual with whom a child has an established and significant relationship. See [Practice Guidance](#) for additional information.

The following items must be completed prior to placing a child with a relative:

1. Determination of whether the potential relative caregiver is suitable and willing to accept the placement (see [Additional Information](#) below);
2. Required background checks. See policies [13.5 Conducting Background Checks for Unlicensed Placements](#) and [13.6 Evaluation of Background Checks for Unlicensed Placements](#);
3. Home visit; and
4. [Relative Home Environment Check List \(SF55106\)](#).

**Note:** The [Relative Home Environment Check List \(SF55106\)](#) should be completed with the relative either prior to or at the time of placement to ensure the physical environment of the relative’s home is safe and appropriate for the child. The [Relative Home Environment Check](#)

[List \(SF55106\)](#) is not meant to be used for licensing purposes. If the relative placement is considering becoming licensed, there are additional requirements that must be met in addition to completing the checklist. This information should be communicated to the relative placement when placing a child in his or her care.

A determination of whether or not a relative caregiver is suitable and willing to take and sustain placement of a child will take place prior to or at the time of placement. Successful completion of the [Relative Home Environment Check List \(SF55106\)](#) is not the sole deciding factor in making a placement. It is important to make a determination based on the willingness, suitability, and sustainability of the relative placement.

When determining if a relative is suitable and willing, Family Case Managers (FCMs) should consider the following factors:

1. Child's wishes and/or concerns (if age appropriate);
2. Ability to meet the child's needs (including educational, cultural and language);
3. Home size and environment (suitable sleeping arrangements for the child);
4. Background checks;
5. Frequency of contact between the child and potential relative caregiver prior to placement;
6. Sustainability of placement (i.e., is the placement a permanency option);
7. Ability to provide adequate supervision;
8. Willingness to work with DCS, child, and family toward the selected permanency plan; and
9. Medical/mental health issues or concerns regarding the relative caregiver or child.

**Note:** This is not an exhaustive list. There may be other factors to consider depending on the needs of the child and/or family.

Relative placements will be advised of support services available to them to promote the permanency, stability, and well-being of the child at the time of placement and throughout the life of the case.

DCS may consider seeking court approval for a biological parent(s) to reside in the home of an unlicensed relative placement when the proposed situation would be in the best interest of the child and the child's safety can be reasonably ensured. The biological parent may not reside in the placement home with the child prior to receiving approval from the court. The decision of whether to seek court approval will be based on factors including, but not limited to:

1. The relative's ability and willingness to ensure the safety of the child;
2. The needs of the child;
3. The feelings and/or wishes of the child (if age and developmentally able to express his or her feelings and/or wishes);
4. The characteristics of the relationship between the relative caregiver(s) and the biological parent(s);
5. The strength and availability of family supports;
6. Other existing protective factors; and
7. The outcome of a Child and Family Team (CFT) Meeting.

Children placed with relative caregivers who already have obtained licensure will have a completed Individual Child Placement Referral (ICPR) consistent with his or her established level of care.

**Note:** A biological parent must complete background checks as required for all household members, in addition to having DCS and court approval, prior to residing in the home of a licensed relative placement. He or she must seek a waiver if necessary. For further guidance, see policy [13.9 Conducting Background Checks for Foster Family Home Licensing](#).

#### Code References

1. [IC 31-34-6-2: Placement with a Family Member](#)
2. [IC 31-9-2-117.3: Sibling](#)
3. [IC 31-9-2-107: Relative](#)
4. [IC 31-32-2.5: Right to Intervene in Child in Need of Services Proceedings and Termination of Parent-Child Relationship Proceedings](#)
5. [IC 31-34-21: Review of Dispositional Decrees; Formal Review Hearings](#)
6. [IC 31-34-18-2: Predispositional report; participation by parent, guardian, or custodian; out-of-home placement with blood or adoptive relative caregiver](#)
7. [42 USC 671 \(a\)\(29\) Notification of Parents of Siblings](#)

#### **PROCEDURE**

For emergency and non-emergency relative placements, the FCM will:

1. Conduct a diligent search, including assisting the parent, guardian, or custodian in identifying possible suitable and willing relative placement options;
2. Discuss DCS expectations of a relative placement with the relative caregiver to ensure the potential relative caregiver is aware of expectations and is suitable and willing (see [factors](#) above) to accept placement of the child;
3. Ensure the [Statement of Attestation Regarding Relationship \(SF52727\)](#) is completed by the relative requesting placement to affirm the relationship between the relative caregiver and child;

**Note:** When placing a child with a relative who is not related to the child by blood, marriage, or adoption, the FCM must choose **other relative** to document the individual's relationship with the child in the case management system.

4. Complete the required emergency or non-emergency background check procedures for unlicensed placements. See policies [13.5 Conducting Background Checks for Unlicensed Placements](#) and [13.6 Evaluation of Background Checks for Unlicensed Placements](#);

**Note:** FCMs may complete background checks on more than one (1) relative home, if necessary, to improve the chances of the child's placement in relative care. See [Practice Guidance](#) for further information.

5. Complete a home visit at the relative home where the child will be placed to:
  - a. Complete the [Relative Home Environment Check List \(SF55106\)](#), and
  - b. Assess the relative's suitability for placement by addressing any child or case specific concerns as well as any additional factors that are specific to the child or situation.
6. Obtain supervisory approval and document in the case management system any plans implemented to meet the requirements on the [Relative Home Environment Check List](#);

7. Address all items marked for follow-up on the [Relative Home Environment Check List \(SF55106\)](#) within 48 hours unless a documented supervisory approved plan for the requirement exceeds 48 hours;
8. Ensure the relative is provided the [Financial Assistance Options for Relative Caregivers Brochure](#) at the time of placement;
9. Ensure the relative caregiver has read and signed the [Resource Parent Role Acknowledgment \(SF54642\)](#);
10. Provide the relative caregiver with the [Authorization for Health Care \(SF54247\)](#) (form) or [Authorization for Health Care \(SF45093\)](#) (card);
11. Ensure any necessary service referrals are made for the child and relative caregiver to support the placement, including an ICPR, if appropriate;
12. Ensure a plan is in place for school-aged children to be transported to school with minimal disruption of the child's routine;
13. Advise the relative caregiver that either a Regional Foster Care Specialist (RFCS) or a Relative Support Specialist (RSS) will be in contact with him or her regarding further information about licensing, support, etc within five (5) days; and

**Note:** In non-emergency relative placements, the FCM, RFCS or RSS will have more time to prepare the relative caregiver by explaining financial obligations and assistance, licensing requirements, safe sleep, water and fire safety, visitation, service referrals for the children, medical care, immediate and ongoing assistance available and to develop a plan for school transportation if needed.

14. Provide the RFCS or RSS with a copy of the [Relative Home Environment Check List \(SF55106\)](#) if follow-up is needed from the RFCS or RSS on identified items. Follow up that will exceed the 48 hour timeframe requires Supervisor approval. See [Practice Guidance](#) for additional information.

When considering whether to seek court approval for a biological parent(s) to reside in a relative placement home, the FCM will:

1. Discuss in detail the proposed arrangement with the relative and the parent(s);
2. Discuss the proposed living arrangement with the RFCS or RSS, if involved, and note any concerns he or she may have;
3. Convene a CFT Meeting to discuss the proposed arrangement and plan for any additional service needs;
4. Discuss the proposed arrangement with the child (if age and developmentally appropriate);
5. Discuss the proposed arrangement; the feelings of the relative, child, and parent(s); the recommendation of the CFT; and any concerns expressed by the RFCS or RSS with the FCM Supervisor; and
6. Notify the court of the request and the recommendation of DCS, including the reasons for the recommendation.

The RFCS or RSS will:

1. Assist the FCM, if needed, by following up on items that exceed 48 hours or other supervisory approved timeframes for items checked for follow-up on the [Relative Home Environment Check List \(SF55106\)](#). See [Practice Guidance](#) for additional information;
2. Make contact with the relative caregiver within five (5) days to address the possibility of the relative caregiver becoming a licensed foster parent;

3. Advise the relative caregiver new fingerprint and background checks are required if he or she decides to pursue becoming licensed including, applying for new waivers for child protection and criminal history; and
4. Provide the relative caregiver with the [Relative Resource Guide](#) and discuss all financial assistance available to the relative and answer any questions the relative caregiver may have regarding obtaining the financial assistance.

## PRACTICE GUIDANCE

### **Other Relative Placements**

This refers to placement with individuals who are not related by blood, marriage or adoption. This is an individual with whom a child has an established and significant relationship. The relationship with the child will be **other relative** and **must**:

1. Have the characteristics of a family relationship. The relationship should have the same characteristics or be similar to the relationship that the child has with an individual related to them by blood, marriage, or adoption;
2. Have existed prior to the agency's current involvement with the child or family; and
3. Be verified through interviews or attested by the written [Statement of Attestation Regarding Relationship \(SF52727\)](#) or oral designation of the child or of another person, including other relatives related to the child by blood, marriage, or adoption.

Former [long-term resource parents](#) may be considered as relative placements in cases where the child is the victim of repeat maltreatment or returning to out-of-home care. FCMs should staff with the FCM Supervisor and Local Office Director (LOD) to determine which type of placement is appropriate, Foster Care or Relative Placement. Consideration should be given to the child's report of the relationship and the potential for permanency.

Credible evidence showing that the individual performs or has performed a substantial role in the upbringing or material support of the child should be documented in the case management system. The placement recommendation should be staffed with the FCM Supervisor and, if needed, the LOD. DCS and the court must agree with the placement.

**Note:** Placement with a suitable and willing relative related by blood, marriage, or adoption **must** be ruled out before considering any other out-of-home placement, with the first consideration being given to a suitable and willing noncustodial parent.

### **Relative Home Physical Environment Checklist**

The [Relative Home Environment Check List \(SF55106\)](#) allows for a documented discussion to occur about potential safety concerns. This discussion should reinforce awareness of potential safety concerns regarding fire and water safety. The checklist indicates items that are minimum criterion for placement in a relative home. FCMs should use critical thinking skills when completing the checklist. The FCM should also assist the relative caregiver in finding solutions to any issues that may arise from the completion of the checklist. Requests for additional funding may be appropriate to assist in meeting a checklist item (e.g., carbon monoxide detector). Some items that cannot be met may be evidence that the placement is not suitable.

In the section for follow-up, the placing FCM is to indicate what action is required to complete the checklist requirement. FCMs should document what the plan is for achieving all required items.



All items marked for follow up should be reassessed by the FCM within 48 hours of the emergency placement unless there is a documented supervisory approved plan that follow through will exceed 48 hours. In situations where an FCM is unable to follow-up within 48 hours due to other responsibilities associated with a removal, the FCM should seek supervisory approval to have the RFCS or RSS assist. **Items will never be marked for follow-up that are immediate safety concerns for the child, as DCS should not be placing (or recommending placement to the court) if there are immediate safety concerns in the home.**

### **Supporting Relative Caregivers**

It is important for FCMs to support all relative caregivers. FCMs must be mindful that relative caregivers may not have planned to take emergency placement of their relative's children. This is especially true in middle of the night placements. The FCM should be patient and exercise empathy for the relative caregivers and serve as a support to them by answering any questions and addressing any concerns they may have. It is the goal of DCS to have a child transition as smoothly as possible from his or her home into the relative caregiver's home. FCMs should complete timely service referrals for identified needs, such as child care assistance, individual or family counseling, home based casework, etc. for the relative caregiver or child. See policy [16.2 Assistance for Unlicensed Relative Placements](#) for additional information on financial assistance for relative caregivers.

### **Safe Sleep**

FCMs will talk to parents, guardians, and caregivers about safe sleep for infants and will document the discussion in the case management system. Refer to the below information for safe sleep guidelines:

1. Always place babies alone, on their backs, and in a crib (the ABCs) to sleep. The back sleep position is the safest<sup>1</sup>. Keep other caregivers informed of these safe sleep guidelines;
2. In 2010, the Consumer Product Safety Commission banned the further manufacture of drop-side cribs (i.e., cribs that allow for the sides to be lowered and raised). These types of cribs are not permitted for children under DCS care and supervision. See the following link for a picture of the new crib: <http://onsafety.cpsc.gov/blog/2011/06/14/the-new-crib-standard-questions-and-answers/>;
3. Place babies on a firm sleep surface, such as on a safety-approved crib mattress, covered by a fitted sheet. Never place babies to sleep on couches, car seats, swings, pillows, bean bags, quilts, sheepskins, or other soft surfaces;
4. Keep soft objects, toys, and loose bedding, out of the baby's sleep area. Do not use pillows, blankets, quilts, or pillow-like crib bumpers in the sleep area. A sleep sack is appropriate to keep the baby warm;
5. Keep baby's sleep area close to, but separate from, where caregivers and others sleep. Babies should not sleep on any surface with adults or other children. They may sleep in the same room as the caregiver;
6. Consider using a clean, dry pacifier when placing the infant down to sleep, but do not force the baby to take it;
7. Dress babies in light sleep clothing and keep the room at a temperature that is comfortable for an adult;
8. Reduce the chance that flat spots will develop on a baby's head by providing "tummy time" when the baby is awake and someone is watching. Also, change the direction that

<sup>1</sup> Riley Children's Health: <https://www.rileychildrens.org/health-info/sleep-safety>

the baby lies in the crib and avoid excessive time in car seats, carriers, bouncers, and swings. These items should be placed/used on appropriate surfaces and should not be utilized in place of a crib; and

9. There should be no smoking around the baby as babies who are around cigarette smoke have a higher risk of sleep-related deaths.<sup>2</sup>

Additional information regarding safe sleep is available on the following websites:

1. [The American Academy of Pediatrics](#);
2. [Healthy Children.org](#);
3. [The National Institute of Health](#);
4. [Riley Children's Health](#); and
5. [The DCS Website](#).

## FORMS AND TOOLS

1. [Relative Home Environment Check List \(SF55106\)](#)
2. [Financial Assistance Options for Relative Caregivers Brochure](#)
3. [Relative Resource Guide](#)
4. [Resource Parent Role Acknowledgment \(SF54642\)](#)
5. [Authorization for Health Care \(SF45093\)](#) (card)
6. [Authorization for Health Care \(SF54247\)](#) (form)
7. [Statement of Attestation Regarding Relationship \(SF52727\)](#)
8. [Application for Criminal History Background Check \(SF53259\)](#)
9. [Triple I Follow-Up Action \(SF53424\)](#)

## RELATED INFORMATION

### **Long-Term Resource Parent**

A resource parent who has provided care and supervision for a child for at least:

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

<sup>2</sup> Riley Children's Health: <https://www.rileychildrens.org/health-info/sleep-safety>