

	INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY	
	Chapter 8: Out-of-Home Services	Effective Date: February 1, 2020
	Section 1: Selecting a Placement Option	Version: 12

STATEMENTS OF PURPOSE

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 that placing siblings together would not be in the best interest of one (1) or more of the children. See [Practice Guidance](#) for additional information regarding placing siblings together;
4. The possibility of former resource parents as a placement;

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. See policy [8.48 Relative Placements](#) for further guidance.

5. 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](#);
6. The least restrictive environment available to provide for the child's individual needs;
7. 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;
8. The child has been identified as a victim of human trafficking and/or domestic violence; and
9. The child is a member of, or eligible for, membership in an Indian (Native American) tribe. For additional information, see 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 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 policy [5.15 Concurrent Planning – An Overview](#).

Code References

1. [IC 31-34-1-3.5: Victim of Human or Sexual 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](#)
8. [IC 31-32-2.5: Right to Intervene in Child in Need of Services Proceedings and Termination of Parent-Child Relationship Proceedings](#)
9. [IC 31-34-21: Review of Dispositional Decrees; Formal Review Hearings](#)
10. [IC 31-34-23-5: Placement of a child with a previous placement](#)

PROCEDURE

When pursuing a placement, the FCM will:

1. 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. Identify all relatives who may be an appropriate resource for the child utilizing the completed [Family Network Diagram](#). See policies [2.26 Diligent Search](#), [5.6 Locating Absent Parents](#), and [8.48 Relative Placements](#), and [5.B Tool: Family Network Diagram Instruction Guide](#);

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 dcshumantraffickinginformation@dcs.in.gov.

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 or if a relative placement has been identified. See policies [13.5 Conducting Background Checks for Unlicensed Placements](#) and [13.6 Evaluation of Background Checks for Unlicensed Out-of-Home Placements](#);
3. Ask the family if the child is a member of, or eligible for, membership in an Indian (Native American) tribe. See 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 the [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, including the placement of siblings together;
 - 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;

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

- iii. Residential Treatment Center, Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility or State Hospital. This level of placement requires approval of the Residential Placement Committee.
- 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 if it has been determined the siblings cannot be placed together or it is in the best interest for siblings to not be placed together. For further guidance, see 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. Collaborate with the Regional Foster Care Specialist (RFCS) if the child will be placed in a licensed foster home. If the child has previously been placed in a licensed foster home, coordinate with the RFCS to determine if placement in a previous foster home would be in the best interest of the child. The FCM should first consider former foster placements (i.e., prior to placing the child in an unfamiliar home) whenever possible and appropriate. When considering previous foster homes, the FCM should conduct a case management system search of the child's previous placements to identify possible foster homes;
- 6. When discussing placement, provide as much information as possible regarding the child's 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;
- 7. 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. If it is determined the child will be placed in their home, consider services needed for the resource family to meet identified needs and make referrals as necessary See policy [8.15 Services for the Resource Family](#);

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.

8. 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 policy [5.19 Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths \(CANS\) Assessment](#);
9. Submit the recommendation to the court after the recommendation is approved by all required DCS local office staff;
10. Facilitate the placement of the child. For further guidance, see policy [8.9 Placing the Child in Out-of-Home Care](#);
11. Document the placement in the case management system;
12. 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
13. Conduct the initial face-to-face contact with the child and placement resource within three (3) business days of placement.

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

Note: See 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;

Note: Obtain approval by the DCS LOD or designee for children placed in placement types that are different from the [CANS](#) recommendation. See 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; and
3. Ensure all actions taken and any deviation from best practice is documented in the case management system.

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

Placement of Siblings Together

A diligent effort should be made to ensure siblings remain together when placed in out-of-home care. However, placement of siblings together may not be appropriate when:

1. There are documented reasons from a Qualified Mental Health Provider (QMHP),

- therapist, or counselor why placement together would not be in the best interest of one or more of the children, and why it cannot be rectified by intensive family services;
2. A court ordered separation of the siblings; or
 3. A sibling is in a residential placement, hospitalized, or in a juvenile detention center.

DCS will ensure that children who are not initially placed together have face-to-face contact within five (5) days of removal. See policy [8.12 Developing the Visitation Plan](#) for further guidance and exceptions to face-to-face contact.

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;
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.

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/HumanTraffickingOfChildrenIndicatorTool0109.pdf>.

FORMS AND TOOLS

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

RELATED INFORMATION

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. FCMs may make a referral for this assistance in situations where all procedural steps have been completed and their efforts have been unsuccessful. Additional information regarding how to make a referral, when to make a referral, and other helpful information can be found on the [Permanency and Practice Support-Investigator](#) website.

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.

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.

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.

The Importance of Placing Siblings Together

The bond between siblings is often the longest lasting relationship most people have and these bonds help children develop their own unique personal identity throughout their life. Biological siblings share the same genetic makeup; this becomes very important as children move into resource and adoptive families where they may differ in appearance, medical predisposition, talents, and/or intellectual capabilities. When siblings are placed together, they are less likely to feel isolated, and they are able to share experiences and familiar family history. The complex bonds linking brothers and sisters are universal and among the most important in life. These relationships form the blueprint for later relationships with peers, friends, marriage partners, and their own children. A sibling is the only person who knows how things were in the family of origin and the subsequent history of foster care placement. Children need to integrate their past with their future in order to have continuity, as well as an understanding of their own identity.

Eligible Placements

DCS will claim federal (Title IV-E Foster Care or Title IV-A Emergency Assistance) 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 (see policy [15.10 Ongoing Eligibility](#) for additional information on Title IV-E eligible placements). 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.