

	<b>INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY</b>	
	<b>Chapter 8:</b> Out-of-Home Services <b>Section 48:</b> Relative or Kinship Placements	
	<b>Effective Date:</b> August 1, 2023	<b>Version:</b> 9

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## POLICY OVERVIEW

Removal of a child from the child’s parent, guardian, or custodian may be necessary to ensure the child’s safety and well-being. Placement with a relative or kinship caregiver allows the child to maintain family connections and traditions while providing the child with familiarity and routines that are important to the child’s overall well-being.

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## PROCEDURE

Placement with a suitable and willing relative or kinship caregiver will be considered when placement with a suitable and willing noncustodial parent is not a possibility (see policies 8.01 Selecting a Placement Option and 5.04 Locating and Engaging 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 all relative or kinship placements, the Family Case Manager (FCM) will:

1. Staff with the FCM Supervisor and Local Office Director (LOD), if appropriate, to determine which type of placement is appropriate, foster care or relative/kinship placement. Consideration should be given to the child’s report of the relationship and the potential for permanency;
2. Conduct a diligent search (see policy 5.23 Diligent Search for Relatives/Kin and Case Participants), including assisting the parent, guardian, or custodian in identifying possible suitable and willing relative or kinship placement options (18 years of age and older):
  - a. Adult siblings including step and half-siblings;
  - b. Grandparents;
  - c. Adult aunts or uncles;
  - d. Adult cousins;
  - e. Parents and extended family of siblings or half-siblings (i.e., adult siblings, grandparents, adult aunts or uncles, and adult cousins);
  - f. Former step-parents and extended family of former step-parents (i.e., adult siblings, grandparents, adult aunts or uncles, and adult cousins);
  - g. Other adult relatives suggested by either parent of a child, including but not limited to, extended cousins or great aunts or uncles (great or great-greats);
  - h. Any other individual with whom a child has an established and significant relationship;

or

- i. Former long-term resource parents.

**Note:** 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.

- 3. Verify the relative's identity and ensure the Statement of Attestation Regarding Relationship is completed by the relative or kin requesting placement to affirm the relationship between the relative or kinship caregiver and child (see policy 2.09 Verifying Identity);

**Note:** When placing a child with an individual 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 13.05 Conducting Background Checks for Nonemergency Unlicensed Placements, 13.06 Evaluating Background Checks for Nonemergency Unlicensed Placements, 13.11 Conducting Background Checks for Emergency Unlicensed Placements, and 13.12 Evaluating Background Checks for Emergency Unlicensed Placements);

**Note:** FCMs may complete background checks on more than one (1) relative or kinship home, if necessary, to improve the chances of the child's placement in relative or kinship care.

- 5. Complete a home visit at the home where the child will be placed and:
  - a. Complete the Relative/Kinship Home Environment Checklist, and

**Note:** The Relative/Kinship Home Environment Checklist should be completed, either prior to or at the time of placement, to ensure the physical environment of the home is safe and appropriate for the child. The Relative/Kinship Home Environment Checklist is not meant to be used for licensing purposes.

- b. Assess the relative or kin'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. The following is a list of factors the FCM should consider when determining if a relative or kin is suitable and willing to accept placement of the child:
      - i. Child's wishes and/or concerns (if age appropriate);
      - ii. Ability of the caregiver to meet the child's needs (e.g., educational, cultural, and language needs);
      - iii. Home size and environment (e.g., suitable sleeping arrangements for the child);
      - iv. Results of background checks;
      - v. Frequency of contact between the child and potential caregiver prior to placement;
      - vi. Sustainability of placement (i.e., the placement is a permanency option);
      - vii. Ability of the caregiver to provide adequate supervision of the child;
      - viii. Willingness of the caregiver to work with DCS, child, and family toward the selected permanency plan; and
      - ix. Any medical/mental health needs that may impact the caregiver's ability to provide appropriate care for the 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.

6. Convene a Child and Family Team (CFT) Meeting around placement for all potential Relative/Kinship placements to discuss any additional service needs;
7. Obtain supervisory approval and document in the case management system any plans implemented to meet the requirements on the Relative/Kinship Home Environment Checklist;
8. Ensure the caregiver is provided the Financial Assistance Options for Relative Caregivers Brochure and advised of available support services at the time of placement (see policy 16.02 Assistance for Unlicensed Relative and Kinship Placements);
9. Ensure the caregiver has read, understood, and signs the Resource Parent Role Acknowledgment form;
10. Ask the caregiver if a reasonable accommodation is needed due to a disability;
11. Provide the caregiver with the Authorization for Health Care form or Authorization for Health Care card;
12. Ensure any necessary service referrals are made for the child and caregiver to support the placement;
13. Complete an Individual Child Placement Referral (ICPR) consistent with the child's established level of care if the child is placed with a licensed relative or kinship caregiver. See policy 16.04 Individual Child Placement Referral (ICPR) for more information;

**Note:** If the recommendation is for the biological parent to reside in the home of a licensed relative or kinship caregiver, the biological parent must complete background checks. Background checks are required for all household members in addition to DCS and court approval prior to the biological parent residing in the home of a licensed relative or kinship placement. The biological parent must seek a waiver if necessary (see policy 13.09 Conducting Background Checks for Foster Family Home Licensing).

14. Ensure a plan is in place for school-aged children to maintain educational stability. See policies 8.20 Educational Services and 8.22 School Notifications and Legal Settlement for additional requirements including transportation needs and when to submit a referral to the Education Services Team;
15. Advise the caregiver that either a Regional Foster Care Specialist (RFCS) or a Kinship Navigator (KN) (formerly known as Relative Support Specialist [RSS]) will be in contact with the caregiver regarding further information such as licensing and support services available within five (5) calendar days of placement;

**Note:** For non-emergency relative and kinship placements, the FCM, RFCS, or KN will have more time to prepare the 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.

16. Provide the RFCS or KN with a copy of the Relative/Kinship Home Environment Checklist if follow-up is needed from the RFCS or KN on identified items. Follow-up that will exceed the 48-hour timeframe requires an FCM, RFCS, or KN Supervisor (formerly known as RSS Supervisor) approval.

**Note:** All items marked for follow-up should be reassessed by the FCM within three (3) business days of the emergency placement unless there is a documented supervisory

approved plan that follow through will exceed three (3) business days. In situations where an FCM is unable to follow-up within three (3) business days due to other responsibilities associated with a removal, the FCM should seek supervisory approval to have the RFCS or KN assist.

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

1. Discuss in detail the proposed living arrangement with the caregiver and the biological parent;
2. Discuss the proposed living arrangement with the RFCS or KN, if involved, and note any concerns the RFCS or KN may have;
3. Convene a Child and Family Team (CFT) Meeting to discuss the proposed living arrangement and plan for any additional service needs;
4. Discuss the proposed living arrangement with the child (if age and developmentally appropriate);
5. Discuss the following with the FCM Supervisor:
  - a. Proposed living arrangement;
  - b. The feelings of the relative or kinship caregiver, child, and biological parent;
  - c. The recommendation of the CFT; and
  - d. Any concerns expressed by the RFCS or KN.
6. Request the DCS Staff Attorney to file a motion with the court to approve the recommendation of DCS, that includes the reasons or basis for the recommendation.

The RFCS or KN will:

1. Assist the FCM, if needed, by following up on items that exceed three (3) business days or other supervisory approved timeframes for items checked for follow-up on the Relative/Kinship Home Environment Checklist;
2. Contact the caregiver within three (3) business days of receiving the Relative Placement Entry form;
3. Discuss licensing with the relative/kinship placement;
4. Provide the caregiver with the Relative Resource Guide and discuss all financial assistance available to the caregiver and answer any questions the caregiver may have regarding obtaining the financial assistance (see policy 16.02 Assistance for Unlicensed Relative and Kinship Placements);
5. Complete the Kinship Connection Diagram with the relative/kinship placement; and
6. Ensure all information is updated in the case management system.

The FCM Supervisor will:

1. Discuss case specifics and any concerns with the FCM during regular staffing;
2. Approve the appropriate relative or kinship placement;
3. Complete the Relative Placement Entry form and email the form to the RFCS or KN (listed on the back of the form) within 24 hours of completion; and

**Note:** The FCM Supervisor should NOT create a relative resource home in the case management system.

4. Ensure the placement is documented in the case management system.

The RFCS Supervisor, KN Supervisor, or designee will:

1. Discuss case specifics and any concerns with the RFCS or KN during regular case

- staffing; and
2. Create the relative or kinship resource home in the case management system and assign to the KN within 24 hours.

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## RELEVANT INFORMATION

### Definitions

#### Case Staffing

Case staffing is a systematic and frequent review of all case information with safety, stability, permanency, and well-being as driving forces for case activities.

#### Long-Term Foster Parent

Long-term foster 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 12 months of age.

#### Relative

A relative is defined in IC 31-9-2-107(c) as any of the following in relation to a child:

1. A parent;
2. A grandparent;
3. A brother;
4. A sister;
5. A stepparent;
6. A stepgrandparent;
7. A stepbrother;
8. A stepsister;
9. A first cousin;
10. An uncle;
11. An aunt; or
12. Any other individual with whom a child has an established and significant relationship.

#### Other Relative

An individual who is not related by blood, marriage, or adoption (as indicated in #12 of the definition of relative) may be considered a relative for purposes of placement and the Guardianship Assistance Program (GAP) when the individual has an established and significant relationship with the child.

The relationship with the child will be other relative and must meet the following three (3) criteria:

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 by blood, marriage, or adoption;
2. Be verified through the following:
  - a. Interviews,
  - b. Attested by the Statement of Attestation Regarding Relationship form, or
  - c. Oral designation of the child or of another person, including other relatives related to the child by blood, marriage, or adoption.
3. Be described by the child, if age appropriate, as someone with whom the child has developed a significant emotional relationship (this may include a resource parent).

Note: If the individual is a resource parent with whom the child currently resides, the child must have resided in the home for a minimum of 12 months. The resource parent will be designated as “other relative” through approval by local office management upon determination that guardianship is in the best interest of the child.

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. If the individual is a resource parent, DCS must seek a court order acknowledging the foster parent as a relative following the court’s approval of the permanency plan change to guardianship, if it is determined that a child is eligible for GAP.

**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 first consideration being given to a suitable and willing non-custodial parent.

### Resource Parent

For purposes of DCS policy, a resource parent includes a foster parent, licensed or unlicensed relative or kinship caregiver, and a pre-adoptive parent.

### **Forms and Tools**

- [American Academy of Pediatrics](#)
- [Authorization for Health Care \(SF45093\) \(card\)](#)
- [Authorization for Health Care \(SF 54247\) \(form\)](#)
- [DCS Safe Sleep](#)
- [Financial Assistance Options for Relative Caregivers Brochure](#)
- [Healthy Children](#)
- [Indiana Safe Sleep Program](#)
- [National Institute of Health](#)
- [Relative/Kinship Home Environment Checklist \(SF 55106\)](#)
- [Relative Placement Entry \(SF 57025\)](#)
- [Resource Parent Role Acknowledgment \(SF 54642\)](#)
- [Relative Resource Guide](#)
- [Riley Children’s Health](#)
- [Statement of Attestation Regarding Relationship \(SF 52727\)](#)

### **Related Policies**

- [2.09 Verifying Identity](#)
- [2.12 Indian Child Welfare Act \(ICWA\)](#)
- [5.04 Locating and Engaging Noncustodial Parents](#)
- [8.01 Selecting a Placement Option](#)
- [8.20 Educational Services](#)
- [8.22 School Notifications and Legal Settlement](#)
- [13.05 Conducting Background Checks for Nonemergency Unlicensed Placements](#)
- [13.06 Evaluating Background Checks for Nonemergency Unlicensed Placements](#)
- [13.09 Conducting Background Checks for Foster Family Home Licensing](#)
- [13.11 Conducting Background Checks for Emergency Unlicensed Placements](#)
- [13.12 Evaluating Background Checks for Emergency Unlicensed Placements](#)
- [14.01 Guardianship Assistance Program \(GAP\)](#)
- [16.02 Assistance for Unlicensed Relative and Kinship Placements](#)

- [16.04 Individual Child Placement Referral \(ICPR\)](#)

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## LEGAL REFERENCES

- [IC 31-9-2-76.5: "Long-term foster parent"](#)
- [IC 31-9-2-107: "Relative"](#)
- [IC 31-9-2-117.3: "Sibling"](#)
- [IC 31-32-2.5: Right to Intervene in Child in Need of Services Proceedings and Termination of Parent-Child Relationship Proceedings](#)
- [IC 31-34-6-2: Placement with relative or de facto custodian; background checks](#)
- [IC 31-34-18-2: Predispositional report; participation by parent, guardian, or custodian; out-of-home placement with blood or adoptive relative caregiver](#)
- [IC 31-34-21: Review of Dispositional Decrees; Formal Review Hearings](#)
- [42 USC 12102: Definition of disability](#)
- [42 USC 671 \(a\)\(29\) Requisite features of State Plan](#)

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## PRACTICE GUIDANCE- DCS POLICY 8.48

*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.*

### **Relative/Kinship Home Environment Checklist**

The Relative/Kinship Home Environment Checklist allows for a documented discussion with the relative or kinship caregivers about potential safety regarding fire and water safety. The checklist indicates items that are minimum criteria for placement in a relative/kinship home. FCMs should use critical thinking skills when completing the checklist and assist the relative/kinship 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); however, some items that cannot be met may be evidence that the placement is not suitable.

In the section for follow-up on the checklist, the placing FCM is to indicate what action is required to complete the checklist requirement. FCMs should document the plan for achieving all required items. Items will never be marked for follow-up that are immediate safety concerns for the child, as DCS should NOT place a child in a home (or recommend placement to the court) with immediate safety concerns.

### **Supporting Relative/Kinship Caregivers**

It is the goal of DCS to support a smooth transition from the child's home into the relative/kinship caregiver's home. In cases of emergency placement, the relative/kinship caregiver is unable to plan for placement of their relative's children; this is especially true when placement occurs in the middle of the night. Expressing patience and empathy towards the relative/kinship caregiver while answering questions and addressing concerns helps to ensure the relative/kinship caregiver feels supported. Completing timely service referrals for all identified needs (e.g., childcare assistance, individual or family counseling, and home-based casework) of the relative/kinship caregiver and the child helps to support the placement. See policy 16.03 Assistance for Unlicensed Relative and Kinship Placements for additional information regarding financial assistance for relative/kinship caregivers.

### **Safe Sleep**

The following safe sleep guidelines should be discussed with all parents, guardians, or custodians and caregivers and should be documented in the case management system:

1. Always place babies alone, on their backs, and in a crib (the ABCs) to sleep. The back sleep position is the safest. Keep other caregivers informed of these safe sleep guidelines;
2. Drop-side cribs (i.e., cribs that allow for the sides to be lowered and raised) have been banned from further manufacturing and are not permitted for children under DCS care and supervision.
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 the pacifier;
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 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.

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

1. DCS Safe Sleep;
2. Healthy Children;
3. Indiana Safe Sleep Program;
4. The American Academy of Pediatrics; and
5. The National Institute of Health.

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