

	INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY	
	Chapter 8: Out-of-Home Services	Effective Date: November 1, 2021
	Section 24: Travel and Overnight Stays while in Out-of-Home Care	Version: 4

POLICY OVERVIEW

Participation in travel, vacations, overnight stays, and/or other activities away from a child’s placement (e.g., field trips, sleepovers, and out-of-state and/or out-of-country travel) provides a child in out-of-home care with normalized childhood experiences. In order to ensure there are no conflicts or concerns for the safety and well-being of a child in out-of-home care while participating in those activities, advanced notification of travel plans or overnight stays is required, unless there is an emergency.

PROCEDURE

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) requires advanced notification and approval for travel and participation in overnight stays away from the court ordered placement for a child in out-of-home care.

In-state and out-of-state overnight travel that will exceed 48 hours requires written approval by the Local Office Director (LOD) or designee.

Note: If a parent, guardian, or custodian of the child objects to the child traveling out-of-state or the local court requires DCS to file for authorization, a court order is also required for out-of-state overnight travel that will exceed 48 hours.

Out-of-country travel requires written notification to and approval by the Regional Manager (RM). Once approval has been obtained from the RM, court authorization through a court order is also required. Authorization must be requested at least six (6) weeks in advance.

Requests for a child to travel in-state or out-of-state with the resource parent must be submitted to the Family Case Manager (FCM) using the Resource Parent Travel Request form at least seven (7) calendar days in advance, whenever possible. The Resource Parent Travel Request form must be submitted at least six (6) weeks in advance to request authorization for out-of-country travel.

Note: The Resource Parent Travel Request form should be submitted to the child’s FCM as early as possible to allow sufficient time to obtain permission and provide notification to all required parties.

In the event of an emergency requiring the resource parent to travel out-of-state for a stay that will exceed 48 hours and/or the DCS local office is closed, the resource parent must call the DCS Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline (Hotline), prompting an Information and Referral (I&R) to be generated to the DCS local office, to obtain verbal authorization from the on-call FCM Supervisor.

Note: Refer to the DCS Emergency Operations Plan for detailed instructions regarding ensuring the safety and security for all children under DCS care and supervision during an emergency or disaster.

The FCM will:

1. Review this policy with the resource parent to ensure the resource parent is aware of the need to submit the Resource Parent Travel Request form to the FCM for all in-state and out-of-state overnight travel or out-of-country travel. For overnight travel that exceeds 48 hours, the FCM needs to be provided with the following information:
 - a. The date, duration, and location of the travel,
 - b. The purpose of the travel (e.g., vacation or extended field trip),
 - c. The names of adults who will accompany the child,
 - d. Contact information, including phone numbers and lodging information,
 - e. Copies of any permission slips that must be signed, and
 - f. Make, model, and license plate number of the vehicle, if driving, and flight information, if flying.
2. Ensure the resource parent has been informed of and understands the requirement to call the DCS Hotline to request permission from the on-call FCM Supervisor for the child to travel in the event of an emergency requiring an overnight stay that will exceed 48 hours when the DCS local office is closed. Once the I&R is generated from the DCS Hotline and sent to the local office, the FCM shall contact the resource parent to provide support and obtain additional information, including, but not limited to:
 - a. Confirmation of the child's current location and/or planned destination,
 - b. Contact information, including phone numbers and lodging information,
 - c. Expected date of the child's return,
 - d. The possible need for the FCM to inform other CFT members of the emergency travel, and
 - e. Any need to re-schedule visits and/or service appointments.

Note: The resource parent must contact the assigned FCM to provide notification of the child's return.

3. Discuss any concerns regarding travel with the FCM Supervisor;
4. Seek approval and completion of the Resource Parent Travel Request form (if applicable) from the child's parent, guardian, or custodian for all overnight stays and travel requests, unless Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) has occurred;
5. Discuss with the Child and Family Team (CFT) all overnight stays and travel requests (see policy 5.07 Child and Family Team Meetings);
6. Consult with the FCM Supervisor regarding all travel requests and submit the following for approval:
 - a. The Resource Parent Travel Request form, and
 - b. A travel request for the court (to be filed by the DCS staff attorney following approval of the travel by DCS) required if:
 - i. The travel will require an overnight stay exceeding 48 hours and permission from each parent, guardian, or custodian for the overnight stay is not obtained or the local court requires DCS to file for authorization; or

Note: In some counties, court authorization may be required for any out-of-state travel, even if travel will not exceed 48 hours.

- ii. The request is for out-of-country travel.
7. Notify the resource parent and the child's parent, guardian, or custodian (unless TPR has occurred) of DCS' response to the travel request, and if approved, the requirement of court authorization for the travel;
 8. Coordinate with the DCS Staff Attorney to request court authorization if the request has been approved by DCS and court approval is required;

Note: Children who will be participating in the travel, who are within the same sibling group, and are placed in the same resource parent's home, may be included on the same travel request to the court.

9. Complete the following upon notification of the court's decision:
 - a. Notify the parent, guardian, or custodian of the court's response to the travel request, unless TPR has occurred,
 - b. Notify the resource parent of the court's response to the travel request, and
 - c. Notify the child's Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) or Guardian ad Litem (GAL) of all approved travel plans.
10. Contact the DCS Travel Unit to provide the court order and request assistance if the youth will travel out-of-state or out-of-country by air, bus, or train (either alone or with DCS staff) and DCS will be purchasing the ticket;
11. Coordinate with the child's parent, guardian, or custodian; resource parent; and visitation service provider if visitation needs to be rearranged; and

Note: DCS may use discretion when determining if background checks are needed for visitation. However, DCS does not have the authority to complete Fingerprint-Based Checks for the purpose of visitation (see policies 8.12 Developing the Visitation Plan and 13.15 Fingerprint-Based Checks).

12. Document all travel details, including the original request, approvals, travel request to the court (if applicable), court order (if applicable), and notifications to all parties in the case management system.

Note: All travel details should be uploaded under "Travel Permissions" in the case management system.

The FCM Supervisor will:

1. Partner with the FCM to ensure safety is addressed and the needs of the child and family are being met;
2. Review and approve the travel request to the court if the travel will require court approval;
3. Send the Resource Parent Travel Request form and/or the travel request for the court to the LOD or designee and RM for required approval, if applicable; and
4. Ensure the FCM receives the LOD or designee or RM's written decision, coordinates with the DCS Staff Attorney to request court approval (if applicable), and notifies all parties of the decision.

The LOD or designee will:

1. Review the Resource Parent Travel Request form and/or travel request to the court (If applicable), send the Resource Parent Travel Request form to the RM for approval (if required) and notify the FCM or FCM Supervisor in writing of the decision; and
2. Approve “blanket” travel requests, when applicable, for frequent in-state travel or out-of-state travel that does not require overnight stays in excess of 48 hours for each instance. Such requests should be clearly detailed in writing and include the following:
 - a. The name of the child who will be traveling,
 - b. The name of each adult who will accompany the child, and
 - c. Travel location and contact information; and
 - d. Reason for frequency of travel.

The RM will review the Resource Parent Travel Request form regarding out-of-country travel and notify the LOD, FCM Supervisor, or FCM in writing of the decision within three (3) business days.

The DCS Staff Attorney will submit the travel request to the court to seek authorization as required.

LEGAL REFERENCES

N/A

RELEVANT INFORMATION

Definitions

N/A

Forms and Tools

- DCS Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline: 1-800-800-5556
- [DCS Emergency Operations Plan](#)
- [DCS Travel Unit](#)
- [Resource Parent Travel Request \(SF 57156\)](#)

Related Policies

- [5.07 Child and Family Team Meetings](#)
- [8.12 Developing the Visitation Plan](#)
- [13.15 Fingerprint-Based Checks](#)