

	INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY	
	Chapter 8: Out-of-Home Services	Effective Date: April 1, 2016
	Section 39: Trial Home Visits	Version: 4

STATEMENTS OF PURPOSE

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) will utilize a Trial Home Visit (THV) for a period of up to three (3) months. However, it may be extended for an additional three (3) months, when the safety and well-being of the child can be reasonably ensured and the following conditions have been met:

1. The child’s permanency goal is reunification;
2. There is documented progress toward case goals;
3. Safety concerns have been addressed; and
4. The service level of the case can be decreased at least one (1) level. See separate policy, [4.26 Determining Service Levels and Transitioning to Permanency Services](#).

DCS will obtain a court order approving a THV. DCS will maintain placement and care responsibilities for the child while on a THV. DCS will seek a court order for approval of an extension of the THV, for an additional three (3) months, if needed, prior to the end of the initial three (3) months.

DCS will ensure that a [Family Support/Community Services/Safety Plan \(SF53243\)](#) is completed for all children returning to the care of their parent, guardian, or custodian on a THV.

DCS will remove a child from a THV and return him or her to out-of-home care if his or her safety and/or well-being are at risk and the provision of additional family preservation services has not reduced the risk to allow him or her to remain in the home safely. DCS will return the child to the most recent placement whenever possible. Court approval will be requested for a change in placement from a THV to any out-of-home placement.

Code References

[45 CFR 1356.21 \(e\) Trial Home Visits](#)

PROCEDURE

Prior to the THV, the Family Case Manager (FCM) will:

1. Convene a case plan conference to review case progress and determine if a THV is appropriate. For further guidance, see separate policy [5.7 Family Team Meetings](#);
2. Complete a new [Risk Assessment](#) and a new [Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths \(CANS\) Assessment](#). For further guidance, see separate policies [4.23 Risk Assessment](#) and [5.19 Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths \(CANS\) Assessment](#);
3. Determine the current service level. For further guidance, see separate policy [4.26 Determining Service Levels and Transitioning to Permanency Services](#);
4. Complete a [Family Support/Community Services/Safety Plan \(SF53243\)](#);
5. Obtain supervisory approval to recommend the THV to the court;

6. Work with the DCS Local Office Attorney to make a recommendation to the court and seek court approval for the THV if it is determined that a THV is appropriate;
7. Obtain a court order approving a THV. The court order must state that DCS has placement and care responsibility; and
8. Document all actions and outcomes in the Management Gateway for Indiana's Kids (MaGIK).

If the THV is approved by the court, the FCM will:

1. Provide continued services to the family during the THV;
2. Facilitate a case plan conference to update the [Case Plan \(SF2956\)](#) and have the plan signed by the child's parent, guardian, or custodian and the child if age 14 or older;
3. Provide the parent, guardian, or custodian with a copy of the THV plan and place the original, signed copy in the child's file;
4. Ensure the parent, guardian, or custodian understands the child is still under the care and custody of DCS during the THV;
5. Ensure contact with the family is maintained in accordance with separate policy, [8.10 Minimum Contact](#);
6. Ensure the family has access to appropriate family preservation, family support, and rehabilitative services;
7. Continue to monitor the family's progress and assess any need to extend the THV, prior to exceeding the three (3) months. For further guidance, see separate policies [8.10 Minimum Contact](#) and [8.43 Meaningful Visits](#);
8. Complete a new [Risk Assessment](#) and a new [Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths \(CANS\) Assessment](#), if it is determined at the case plan conference that an extension is necessary and the child's safety and well-being can reasonably be ensured. For further guidance, see separate policies [4.23 Risk Assessment](#) and [5.19 Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths \(CANS\) Assessment](#);

Note: If the child's safety and/or well-being are at risk, and the provision of additional family preservation services has not reduced the risk to allow the child to remain in the home safely, the child should be removed from the THV and returned to out-of-home care. DCS will return the child to the most recent placement whenever possible. **Court approval will be requested to change placement from a THV to any out-of-home placement.**

9. Obtain a court order to extend the THV, prior to exceeding three (3) months; and
10. Document all actions and outcomes in MaGIK.

The FCM Supervisor will:

1. Review the assessments, service level, and input from the case plan conference; and
2. Approve or deny the recommendation for the THV.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

Trial Home Visit Scenarios

The following are examples of THV scenarios:

1. A child returns to out-of-home care during the first three (3) months of a THV. New findings of Placement and Care, Best Interest, and Reasonable Efforts are not required if the court has not closed the Child in Need of Services (CHINS) case previously.

2. The THV is extended by the court prior to the end of the first three (3) months, not to exceed a total of six (6) months. The child returns to out-of-home care prior to the end of the court ordered extension. New findings of Best Interest, Reasonable Efforts, and Placement and Care are not required.

Trial Home Visit and Permanency Requirements

The time a child spends at home on a THV **does not count** toward the child's 15 months (of the most recent 22 months) in placement, at which time the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) rules require DCS to file (or join in) a Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) Petition. For more information on TPR, see separate policy, [6.12 Involuntary Termination of Parental Rights](#).

The Safety Plan for Reunification

A [Family Support/Community Services/Safety Plan \(SF53243\)](#) must be completed prior to a THV. The plan should include, but not be limited to the following:

1. Current referrals;
2. Services recommended as preventive measures;
3. Actions the family intends to take (e.g., continue family counseling);
4. Community resources (e.g., support groups and child care referral services); and
5. Established family support systems.

FORMS AND TOOLS

1. [Indiana Family Assessment of Strengths and Needs](#) – Available in MaGIK
2. [Risk Assessment](#) – Available in MaGIK
3. [Case Plan \(SF2956\)](#) – Available in MaGIK
4. [Family Support/Community Services/Safety Plan \(SF53243\)](#)
5. [Family Functional Assessment \(FFA\) Field Guide](#) – Available on the Indiana Practice Model Share Site

RELATED INFORMATION

Preparing the Child for a THV

The necessary preparation for a THV will vary for each child. Factors that will impact the preparation include, but are not limited to the child's age, length of time in out-of-home care, and quality of the child's relationships with his or her parent, guardian, or custodian and resource parent(s). The child's feelings will also play a role in his or her adjustment to returning home. Children may worry that they will be subject to abuse and/or neglect again. They may experience feelings of disloyalty to resource parent(s) for wanting to return home, while some may feel disloyal to their parents for missing the resource parent(s). It is important that the FCM, child's parents, resource parent(s), or another trusted member of the CFT acknowledge the child's feelings and address any fears expressed by the child. Additionally, the CFT should discuss with the child his or her expectations, responsibilities, and safeguards that will be in place to protect him or her.

Preparing the Parent, Guardian, or Custodian for a THV

The parent, guardian, or custodian may feel uncertain about his or her ability to adequately meet the child's needs. To prepare for a THV, the FCM and parent(s) should discuss anticipated issues and develop plans to address those issues. In addition, they should discuss the positive changes that have occurred and the strengths of the family.

Preparing the Resource Parent

The bond between some resource parents and children are so significant that both the child and adult may grieve the loss when the child returns home for a THV. The attitude of the resource parent(s) will influence the child's view. It is important that the resource parent(s) be involved in, and aware of, the plans to reunify the family from the beginning. The goal of reunification should never come as a surprise to the resource parent(s).

Documenting the Trial Home Visit

The THV should be recorded in the Removals and Locations section in MaGIK to ensure the residence of the child is accurately documented. Next to "What type of location is this?" choose "Trial Home Visit". The parent or guardian's profile should be chosen from the auto completer which asks "Who is responsible for the child(ren)?".

Risk Reassessment

The Risk Reassessment is a tool used by the FCM throughout the life of the case to determine the presence of risk factors that indicate the likelihood of future child maltreatment. The Risk Reassessment also assists FCMs in evaluating whether risk levels have decreased, remained the same, or increased since completion of the initial Risk Assessment. In addition to the Risk Reassessment, FCMs should reference the [Family Functional Assessment \(FFA\) Field Guide](#) when working with self-identified Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning (LGBTQ) youth. Risk assessment questions that may be helpful in determining risk factors for LGBTQ youth can be found in the FFA Field Guide.