

	<b>INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE MANUAL</b>	
	<b>Chapter 8:</b> Out-of-Home Care	<b>Effective Date:</b> November 1, 2013
	<b>Section 48:</b> Relative Placements	<b>Version:</b> 2

**POLICY [NEW]**

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) is committed to securing the most family-like setting for a child when removal from the home occurs. DCS will first consider placing a child with an appropriate noncustodial parent before considering placement with a relative caregiver. If placement with a noncustodial parent or relative caregiver is not possible, DCS will then explore other placement options. DCS will make efforts to minimize stress to the child when transitioning into relative care. By fostering a partnership with the family, relative care placements will lessen the negative effects of removal and increase the likelihood of achieving permanency for the child.

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.

5. Parents and extended family of half siblings (i.e. adult siblings, grandparents, adult aunts or uncle, and adult cousins);
6. Former step parents and extended family of former step parent (i.e. adult siblings, grandparents, adult aunts or uncle, and adult cousins); or
7. Any other adult relative suggested by either parent of a child including but not limited to extended cousins, great aunts or uncles, great or great-greats.

DCS will conduct all required background checks for emergency or non-emergency unlicensed relative placements. See separate policies, [13.5 Conducting Background Checks for Unlicensed Placements](#) and [13.6 Evaluation of Background Checks for Unlicensed Placements](#). After required background checks are complete, DCS will then complete a home visit to the relative's home *prior* to the placement. The [Relative Home Environment Checklist SF 55106](#) must 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. Documented supervisory approval is required for any bolded item on the checklist not being met at the time of placement and any items being met through alternative means. DCS will address all items marked for follow up on the [Relative Home Environment Checklist SF 55106](#) within 48 hours unless a documented supervisor approved plan for the requirement exceeds 48 hours. DCS will inform relative care placements of support services available to them to promote child permanency, stability and well-being. Please see separate policy, [8.45 Assistance for Unlicensed Relative Placements](#). DCS will ensure appropriate services are in place for both the child and the relative caregiver. Please see [Financial Assistance Options for Relative](#)

[Caregivers Brochure](#). DCS will continue to monitor the relative placement to ensure a safe environment with appropriate supervision is being provided.

Relative caregivers who already have obtained licensure through a Licensed Child Placing Agency (LCPA) will receive the LCPA's per diem rate for children placed by DCS.

#### Code References

[IC 31-34-6-2 Placement with a Family Member](#)

[IC 31-9-2-117.3 Sibling](#)

### **PROCEDURE**

For emergency and non-emergency relative placements, the Family Case Manager (FCM) will:

1. Assist the parent, guardian or custodian in identifying possible appropriate relative placement options;
2. Ensure the [Statement of Attestation by Relative Regarding Relationship SF 52727](#) is completed by the relative requesting placement affirming the relationship between the relative caregiver and child;
3. Complete the required emergency or non-emergency background check procedures for unlicensed placements. See separate policy, [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 allow the child to be placed in relative care. See Practice Guidance for further information.

4. Complete an assessment of the relative home where the child will be placed by completing the [Relative Home Environment Checklist SF 55106](#) at the time of placement or prior to placement;
5. Obtain supervisory approval and document in Management Gateway for Indiana's Kids (MaGIK) any plans put into place to meet the requirements on the [Relative Home Environment Checklist](#);
6. Ensure the relative is provided the [Financial Assistance Options for Relative Caregivers Brochure](#) at placement;
7. Ensure the relative caregiver has read and signed the [Resource Parent Role Acknowledgment SF 54642](#);

**Note:** In some circumstances it may be appropriate for the Regional Foster Care Specialist (RFCS) to ensure the caregiver has read and signed the [Resource Parent Role Acknowledgment SF 54642](#) instead of the FCM.

8. Provide the relative caregiver with the [Authorization for Health Care-Resource/Non-Resource Family SF 54247](#) (full page) or [Authorization for Medical Care SF 45093](#) (card);
9. Ensure a plan is in place for school aged children to be transported to school with no disruption of the child's routine;
10. Address all items marked for follow up on the [Relative Home Environment Checklist SF 55106](#) within 48 hours unless a documented supervisory approved plan for the requirement exceeds 48 hours;

11. Advise the relative caregiver that a RFCS will be in contact with them regarding further information about licensing, support, etc within five (5) days;

**Note:** In non-emergency relative placements, the FCM and RFCS 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 to relative caregivers and developing a plan for school transportation.

12. Provide the RFCS with a copy of the Relative Home Environmental Checklist to advise of the relative placement and determine if assistance is needed from the RFCS with following up items identified for follow up that have supervisory approval to exceed the 48 hour time frame for follow up (See Practice Guidance); and
13. Ensure any necessary service referrals are made for the child and relative caregiver.

The RFCS will:

1. Assist the FCM if needed in following up on items that exceed 48 hours or other supervisory approved timeframes for items checked for follow-up on the [Relative Home Environment Checklist SF 55106](#) (See Practice Guidance);
2. Make contact with the relative caregiver within five (5) days to address the possibility of the relative caregiver becoming a licensed foster parent; and
3. 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; and
4. Advise the relative caregiver new finger print and background checks are required if they pursue becoming licensed including applying for new waivers for child protection and criminal history.

## PRACTICE GUIDANCE

### **Supporting Relative Caregivers**

It is important for FCMs to support all relative caregivers. FCMs will be mindful that relative caregivers may not have planned to take emergency placement of their relative's children. This is especially true in emergency 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 their home into the relative caregiver's home. The transition will be easier to achieve if the relative feels supported and can focus primarily on the child.

FCMs are responsible for communicating all of the support and clinical services that DCS can offer the relative caregiver. See separate policy, [8.45 Assistance for Unlicensed Relative Placements](#) for additional information on financial assistance for relative caregivers. The [Relative Home Environment Checklist SF 55106](#) requires the FCM to provide the relative caregiver with the [Financial Assistance Options for Relative Caregivers Brochure](#) and the RFCS to follow up and provide them with the [Relative Resource Guide](#) that outline the specific financial assistance that DCS offers as well as other community resources available to the relative caregiver.

### **Completion and Follow up on Relative Home Physical Environment Checklist**

The checklist indicates items that are minimum criterion for placement in a relative home. FCMs should use critical thinking skills when completing the checklist with the relative caregiver as the goal is not to make the checklist so restrictive that the placement cannot be achieved. The FCM should assist the relative caregiver in finding solutions to any issues that may arise from the completion of the checklist. 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.

If an item is marked for follow up, the follow up should occur within 48 hours of the emergency placement, unless there is a documented supervisory approved plan that follow through will exceed 48 hours. Follow up can be completed by the placing FCM, ongoing FCM, or RFCS. The placing FCM should complete all follow up within 48 hours. If follow up is approved to go beyond 48 hours, the RFCS will complete the follow up. It is important for the FCM and RFCS to coordinate who will be completing the follow up. 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 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. In non-emergency relative placements, there should be no items that are marked for follow up unless supervisory approval is obtained. The checklist allows for a documented discussion to occur about potential safety concerns. This discussion should consist of reinforcing awareness of potential safety concerns regarding fire and water safety.

### **Emergency and Non-Emergency Name-Based Relative Background Checks**

Relatives who have an emergency named-based check completed but do not have a child placed in their care are not required to be fingerprinted. In these instances, the FCM must complete the [Follow-Up Action for Name-Based Check SF 53424](#) answering questions 1 through 6, 8 and 10 and submit to Indiana State Police (ISP) Records within 72 hours of the named based check. The [Application for Criminal History Background Check SF 53259](#) must be completed and submitted to ISP Data Operations within 24 hours regardless of whether a child is placed with the relative or not.

For non-emergency placements, FCMs should ensure all other required background checks (Sex offender, Child protective services, LEA) are completed prior to requesting the relative be fingerprinted.

In event that placement in a relative home is court ordered, all background checks policies still apply including the need for waivers for child protective services and criminal history. Please see policies, [13.5 Conducting Background Checks for Unlicensed Placements](#) and [13.6 Evaluation of Background Checks for Unlicensed Placements](#).

### **Safe Sleeping**

FCMs will talk to parents, guardians, and caregivers about safe sleeping for infants and will document the discussion in the Management Gateway for Indiana's Kids (MaGIK). Refer to the below information for safe sleeping guidelines:

1. Always place babies on their backs to sleep. The back sleep position is the safest;
2. In December 2010, the Consumer Product Safety Commission banned the further manufacture of drop-side cribs (e.g. cribs that allow for the sides to be lowered and raised). These types of cribs should be avoided for children. See the following link for a picture of the new crib: <http://www.cpsc.gov/nsn/cribrules.pdf>;

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 pillows, bean bags, quilts, sheepskins or other soft surfaces;
4. Keep soft objects, toys, and loose bedding, out of baby's sleep area. Do not use pillows, blankets, quilts, or pillow like crib bumpers in the sleep area and keep any other items away from the baby's face;
5. Keep baby's sleep area close to, but separate from, where you and others sleep. Babies should not sleep in a bed, on a couch, or armchair with adults or other children. They can sleep in the same room as you;
6. Think about 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; and
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, changing the direction that the baby lies in the crib from one week to the next, and avoiding too much time in car seats, carriers and bouncers.

More information can be found through:

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

## FORMS AND TOOLS

[Relative Home Environment Checklist SF 55106](#)  
[Financial Assistance Options for Relative Caregivers Brochure](#)  
[Relative Resource Guide](#)  
[Resource Parent Role Acknowledgment SF 54642](#) (also located in the back of the Relative Resource Guide)  
[Authorization for Medical Care SF 45093](#) (Card)  
[Authorization for Health Care-Resource/Non-Resource Family SF 54247](#) (Full page)  
[Statement of Attestation by Relative Regarding Relationship SF 52727](#)  
[Application for Criminal History Background Check SF 53259](#)  
[Follow-Up Action for Name-Based Check SF 53424](#)

## RELATED INFORMATION

N/A