



Administrative Policies and Procedures: 31.5

Subject:	Organization of Family Case Files
Authority:	TCA 37-4-101, 37-4-201, 37-5-105 (3), 37-5-106 et. Seq., 37-5-107
Standards:	COA: PA-FC 13.06, PA-RPM 6.01, PA-RPM 6.02, PA-RPM 7;PA-FC 14; PA-KC 14
Application:	All Department of Children's Services Family Service Workers, Juvenile Service Workers, Juvenile Probation Workers and Supervisory Employees
Policy Statement:	
<p>DCS maintains all custodial, non-custodial, post-custody and aftercare services Family Case Files in a systematic, confidential manner and ensures they are safeguarded from unauthorized and improper disclosure of information.</p> <p>DCS is in transition from maintaining hard copy case files to electronic case files. As of September 28, 2018, electronic case files are the preferred method of storing case files and staff should not create hard copy case files for new cases. Staff are not expected to maintain both hard copy and electronic case files as long as all required documentation is uploaded and maintained in TFACTS. Any new documents added to the case file on September 28, 2018 or later will be scanned into TFACTS. Any documents contained in the in the hard copy case file prior to September 28, 2018 may continue to be maintained in the hard copy case file, but case managers are encouraged to scan those documents into TFACTS whenever feasible.</p>	
Purpose:	
To ensure that Family Case Files are protected, maintained in an organized confidential manner and contain all pertinent information required to manage the case.	
Procedures:	
A. Confidentiality	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All hard copy Family Case Files must be marked "CONFIDENTIAL" on the spine of the binder and stored in a secure location out of public view. 2. The release of any Family Case File information must be in accordance with applicable laws and DCS policies and procedures.
B. Case file style and organization	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. DCS is family-focused and recognizes the importance of maintaining all of the family's information to provide the most effective services for every family. 2. A Family Case File is started for all families who are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Receiving ongoing non-custodial services; ◆ Entering state custody; ◆ Placed on probation or aftercare; or

- ◆ Receiving Family Crisis Intervention Program (FCIP) services.
3. A **Family Case File** must also be started in TFACTS in cases involving a referral for placement and/or services under the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) or Interstate Compact for Juveniles (ICJ). The **Family Case File** includes all the information on the child/youth and family for the custodial episode and any relevant probation and aftercare services or adoption recruitment services.
- Note:** The **Family Case File** is started in TFACTS by the Office of Juvenile Justice ICJ team for youth entering Tennessee from out-of-state. An ICJ Intake is initiated and a Probation case is opened.
4. If there is an existing hard copy file, they are to be maintained as outlined below:
- a) Each family has one case file.
 - b) Family composition varies with every family. It is essential that DCS clients be given the flexibility to define who is a part of their family in addition to those related by blood. The definition of family is used to determine case members, Child & Family or Family Service Team members, and who is included in the planning process. The family members in the paper file must match the composition of the family as defined in **TFACTS**.
 - c) The Family Service worker (FSW)/Juvenile Service Worker (JSW)/Juvenile Probation Worker (JPO) who is assigned as the primary worker in **TFACTS** is responsible for maintaining the family case file while the case is open. The **Family Case File** binder, if one exists along with the electronic family record in **TFACTS** acts as the official family record. If a family's case is closed and re-opened, the prior **Family Case File** binder is pulled from closed records (unless they were sealed) to be used for case history or needed information; however, the new case file will be maintained electronically in accordance with Section C of this policy. No new binder will be created for the re-opened case and no new materials will be added to the existing closed binder.
 - d) In cases where there is more than one FSW/JSW/JPO actively working with the family, it is preferable that the primary worker maintain the **Family Case File** and both workers scan hard copies of information that need to be shared and attach it to the family's electronic case file in **TFACTS**.
 - e) All documents contained in the hard copy **Family Case File** are maintained in a three (3) ring binder. There is only **one** divider tab per **section** over the course of any binders with additional volumes. For cases with multiple children, certain child-specific information is separated by a tab page labeled with the child's first name and last initial. The sections affected include the **Legal** section for a JJ child and the **Medical** and the **Education** sections for all children. In the **Assessment and Verification** section, the CANS assessments, psychologicals, etc. are done for individual children and are tabbed and divided by child. If there are siblings placed in different placement settings, this process also applies to the **Placement/Adoption/Guardianship** section.

f) The family's identification information is placed on the spine of the binder and consists of:

- ◆ The family's **TFACTS** ID number;
- ◆ First NAME and last initial of the case *reference person as it appears in **TFACTS**; and
- ◆ First NAME and last initial of the child(ren) receiving services from DCS.

Note: In most cases "case reference person" is the birth mother. Where there are multiple birth mothers involved with a sibling group, a determination is made regarding how to best define the family case. If the birth mother is deceased or her parental rights have been terminated, a legal or biological father is used as the "case reference person." If there is no clearly identifiable parent, a legal guardian can be designated as the "case reference person." In the event there is no identifiable parent or legal guardian available, the "case reference person" is the oldest child in the family receiving services. When an out of state youth enters Tennessee under the ICJ/ICPC, the "case reference person" is the youth.

g) Form **CS-0822, Face Cover Sheets for Family Case Files** is filed in the front of the **Family Case File** binder (one face sheet per family). Complete **only** the information that **applies** for the family case type, (e.g., delinquent, custodial, noncustodial, etc.).

h) The case record contents are filed according to **CS-1202 Electronic Case File Checklist**. Information contained in the case file binder must be filed in reverse chronological order with the most recent information located on top. Items are not to be filed according to the order of items on the cover sheets but in reverse chronological order for each section. Different children's information can be subdivided within the file sections. Each child's sub-section is filed in reverse chronological order with the most recent information on top of their sub-section.

Note: Documents and forms utilized by DCS, court systems, and its partner agencies may be revised and/or deleted more frequently than DCS policies and documents are revised. Therefore, while forms listed on checklist (**CS-1202**) may be under development or deleted at the release of this policy (by effective date), it is possible that case files contain different versions of forms and other documents.

i) **Current and Updated Photographs:** A current photograph is taken of each child/youth upon entering DCS custody. The child/youth's name is placed on the front of the photograph and date placed on the back of the photograph. The photograph is placed in a sheet protector directly in front of form **CS-0822** and/or scanned into TFACTS.

- ◆ A photograph is not required for social services non-custodial children/youth.
- ◆ A photograph is required for Probation, Aftercare, ICPC and ICJ cases.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Each child's photograph is updated every six (6) months for children under age three (3). For children older than age three (3), the photo is updated at least annually or more frequently as necessary if there are any significant changes in the child/youth's appearance, (e.g., visible scars, tattoos or deformities, etc.) ◆ Old photographs may be preserved for the child/youth by scanning into TFACTS or filed in an envelope within the Family Case File. These old photographs may also be used for developing the child/youth's Life Story Book. <p>j) Case files contain tab dividers to separate each section. The different sections in CS-1202 Electronic Case File Checklist can be printed and placed in front of the tab dividers. Form CS-1202 lists the contents that may be in each section of the working family case file binder.</p> <p>k) All Family Case Files are maintained according to this policy and are subject to records disposition according to DCS Records Disposition Authority (RDA) Index schedules.</p> <p>l) CPS files are organized as outlined in DCS Policy 14.11, Child Protective Services Case File Organization, Documentation, and Disposition. The information in the CPS file is maintained in TFACTS and updated by the CPS worker within five (5) days of transferring a case to Family Support Services or Foster Care.</p> <p>m) For the organization of Foster Home Files, see DCS Policy 16.23, Foster Home Family Case Files.</p>
<p>C. Maintaining Electronic Case Files</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. After September 28, 2018, all new case files are to be maintained electronically. 2. Electronic Case Files will be maintained as dictated by current TFACTS structure. 3. All documents will be uploaded as outlined by the storyboards located on the TFACTS Knowledge Base (teamtn.gov) site. For information on the document storage functionality and category types, see form CS-1202 Electronic Case File Checklist and the Document Storage Tip Sheet. 4. Once entered into TFACTS, documents and other information, including case recordings, assessments and service plans should not be printed for the purpose of sharing with other program areas, audits, case reviews or case records. This information should be accessed directly from the electronic case. Information relative to case evidence that cannot be uploaded into the TFACTS case record is maintained in a supplementary hard copy record (i.e.; DVDs, large medical records, birth certificates).
<p>D. Case files for children in full guardianship or who have been adopted</p>	<p>Once a child/youth enters the full guardianship of DCS, the legal relationship between the child/youth and the family has been severed.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A new distinct and separate electronic TFACTS file for that child/youth (and siblings if they are adopted together) is created. Cases will be maintained electronically; therefore a new hard copy file will not be created. Existing hard copy case files will be uploaded into the electronic case file in TFACTS.

2. The case recordings and child-specific assessments remain in the Family Case in **TFACTS**.
3. If a child in full guardianship exits custody through Permanent Guardianship or by aging out, that child/youth's hard copy case file is closed and secured in the regional/county office. If a child exits custody through adoption, the child/youth (and siblings) case file is sealed as outlined in Policy [15.8, Preparing Adoption Records for Archives](#) once the adoption has been finalized.
4. In the event there is a request for case information from a family case file, steps must be taken to ensure that all confidential information regarding an adopted child is redacted before any information is provided. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - ◆ Information about a referent or identifying information about a referent.
 - ◆ Other children's names not part of the case file.
 - ◆ Information regarding the identity or location of an adopted child or the adoptive family.
 - ◆ Other confidential information pursuant to DCS policies.
5. To prevent any unintentional disclosure of confidential information, requests for access to records is handled as follows:
 - ◆ For Court Orders requesting information from an open or closed case, Legal:
 - ◆ Checks the order to ensure it is appropriate.
 - ◆ If the order is appropriate, Legal gives the TL/FSW/JSW/JPO general guidance on what must be redacted before the information is released. The TL/FSW/JSW/JPO redacts all confidential information as outlined in D, (4) (a) through (d) above from the requested DCS information printout or copies.
 - ◆ After the TL/FSW/JSW/JPO has redacted the protected information, Legal reviews the documents and the court order to ensure compliance with the order and with State and Federal laws. The DCS Attorney ensures that the redaction is done and may advise that a motion and/or order are filed to protect the information.
6. "Walk-in" requests (those without a court order) are referred to the Regional Records Coordinator or their designee, who is responsible for:
 - ◆ Reviewing the request;
 - ◆ Ensuring that Form **CS-0559 Authorization for Release of Child-Specific Information and HIPAA Protected Information from DCS and Notification of Release** is completed appropriately;
 - ◆ Ensuring that confidentiality provisions are not violated;
 - ◆ Consulting with DCS Records Management or DCS Legal as needed; and

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Ensuring that a <i>copy</i> of the record and request is presented to the local DCS TL/FSW/JSW/JPO for redaction of protected information prior to release. <p>7. Refer to DCS Policy 9.5, Access and Release of Confidential Child-Specific Information regarding the release of confidential information.</p>
<p>E. Case files for youth receiving Extension of Foster Care services</p>	<p>When a youth is eligible for Extension of Foster Care Services all relevant information regarding the youth prior to receiving the Extension of Foster Care Services is uploaded into the Family Case record in TFACTS.</p>
<p>F. Preparing and maintaining closed records and re-opening the <i>Family Case File</i> after closure</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When a Family Case closes, all documents are removed from the 3-ring binder and placed in a folder. 2. The tab on the folder is labeled with Mother or Primary Caretaker’s Last Name; followed by a comma; and then Mother or Primary Caretaker’s First Name (example: Doe, Jane). 3. The Tab also includes the family case TFACTS number. 4. The upper left hand corner of the inside of the folder contains the date of birth (DOB) of the youngest child in the Family Case File followed by the Mother or Primary Caretaker’s <u>Last Name</u>, and Mother or Primary Caretaker’s <u>First Name</u>. 5. Records Management personnel enters the closed Family Case File information into the Records Management database. 6. The closed Family Case File is maintained in a secure storage area until it reaches its disposition date as described under the <u>applicable Records Disposition Authority (RDA)</u> (contact the DCS Records Management Division if further information is needed regarding records disposition). 7. To re-open a Family Case File when a new intake is received on any member of the family: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The existing Family Case File is retrieved from the closed file area in order to reference case history or needed information; however, the new case file will be maintained electronically. <p>Note: Existing hard copy closed files are not required to be uploaded into TFACTS other than as required by Section D and E of this policy.</p>
<p>G. Methods of records disposal</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The approved method for destroying confidential paper record information is <u>shredding</u>. Electronic records are irreversibly destroyed in accordance with State approved methods. 2. Protected Health Information (PHI) records and databases are destroyed in accordance with federal and state laws, rules and regulations and applicable <i>Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA)</i> policies and procedures.

Forms:	<u>CS-1202, Electronic Case File Checklist</u>
Collateral documents:	<p><u>9.5, Access and Release of Confidential Child-Specific Information</u></p> <p><u>14.11, Child Protective Services Case File Organization, Documentation and Disposition</u></p> <p><u>15.8, Preparing Adoption Records for Archives</u></p> <p><u>16.8 Attachment 3 – Guidelines for Life Story Books</u></p> <p><u>13.3, Interstate Compact for Juveniles</u></p> <p><u>Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children Procedures Manual</u></p> <p><u>Independent Living and Transition Planning Guide</u></p> <p><u>Extension or Re-Establishment of Foster Care Services for Young Adults</u></p> <p><u>TFACTS Knowledge Base (teamtn.gov)</u></p> <p><u>Document Storage Tip Sheet</u></p> <p><u>Document Category and Type Organization</u></p> <p><u>DCS Records Disposition Authority (RDA) Index</u></p>

Glossary:	
Term	Definition
Family:	<p>For this policy per DCS practice: A family is a system of interrelated people. DCS practice must demonstrate an understanding that any change in one part of the system affects all other members of that system. Though the ultimate goals are the safety, permanence and well-being of the child(ren) or youth, the entire family is the focus of intervention. Family composition varies with every family. It is essential that DCS clients be given the flexibility to define who is a part of their family. This may include nuclear and extended family members as well as kin. The definition of family is used in determining the members of a Child & Family Team (or Family Service Team), and which members are included in a Family Permanency Plan.</p>
Family Case File:	<p>A working case file containing a family’s information that is maintained in a systematic and confidential manner while the family is receiving services from DCS.</p>