



Tennessee Department of Children's Services Protocol for Kinship Exception Request

Supplemental to DCS Policy: 31.9, Conducting Diligent Searches

In accordance with DCS Policy [16.46, Child/Youth Referral and Placement](#), placement with a relative who can provide safety, permanence and ensure well-being for a child/youth shall be preferred over that of a non-relative. DCS staff must inform relative/kinship caregivers of their options and associated support services, prior to entering a safety plan or placement agreement. DCS has an obligation to minimize the impact of trauma on children removed from their homes. Often trauma of separation is reduced when children are placed with relatives/kin.

The Kinship Exception Request Protocol is a process by which all attempts are made via diligent search to locate relatives/kin for out-of-home placement prior to permission being granted for the assigned program staff to seek a traditional foster care placement when relatives/kin cannot be located or are unavailable. Program staff assigned to the case, non-custodial or custodial, is responsible for conducting the diligent search to locate parent(s)/relatives/kin for out-of-home placement.

Case Determination

- 1) Based on circumstances of a Child Protective Services (CPS), Non-custodial/Family Support Services (FSS), or Family Crisis Intervention Program (FCIP) case, it is determined that a child(ren) are to be removed and placed in out-of-home care and into the custody of DCS;
- 2) The assigned program worker contacts their Team Leader (TL) and/or other designated staff;
- 3) Legal is contacted and grants approval for removal; or,
- 4) Juvenile Court awards child(ren) to DCS.

Diligent Search Outcome

- 1) A diligent search is conducted to locate relative/kinship placement for child(ren). Refer to Policy [31.9, Conducting Diligent Search](#) or the [Diligent Search Manual](#);
- 2) If a potential relative/kinship placement is located, the Child and Family Team determines the best placement that meets the safety, well-being and permanency of the child. Once determined, an Expedited Placement Assessment is initiated following policy requirements for both non-custodial (transfer of custody) and custodial (relative/kinship foster care) with identified relative/kin;
- 3) Disclosure of relative/kinship caregivers options for placement options and resources will be provided as required by policy;
- 4) If no relative/kinship placement is identified, contact the Kinship Coordinator (KC) or designee to ensure that all resources have been exhausted prior to requesting a Kinship Exception Request process.

Expedited Placement

- 1) Custodial relative/kinship placement: Program worker or other staff as designated by the program area or region is to complete the Expedited Placement Assessment as outlined in Policy [16.20, Expedited Custodial Placements](#);
- 2) Non-custodial relative/kinship placement: Expedited Placement Assessment as outlined in Policy [14.9, Child Protective Services Immediate Protection Agreements](#) are completed by program worker or other staff as designated by the program area or region;

Effective Date: 07/18

Supersedes: None

Supplemental to: DCS Policy 31.9

Subject: Kinship Exception Request Protocol

- 3) The Expedited Placement Summary is to be completed and approvals obtained, including verbal approvals, prior to placement of child(ren) either non-custodial or custodial placement;
- 4) Contact the Kinship Coordinator (KC) or designee for assistance.

Expedited Placement Approved

- 1) If placement requirements are met, authorization for the expedited is obtained from the Team Leader (TL), Team Coordinator (TC), and Regional Administrator (RA)/designee. Completion of form [CS-0682, Expedited Placement Assessment Summary](#), will follow the initial approvals and is submitted for signatures by the approving supervisors;
- 2) Child is placed in the home of the relative/kin;
- 3) Expedited approval documentation is shared with designated staff;
- 4) The KC also provides TN KEY orientation to the family for custodial expedited placements.

Kinship Exception Request Sought

- 1) If placement requirements are not met or the relative/kinship determines they are not able or willing to meet placement expectations, the program staff assigned to the case resumes the diligent search process;
- 2) If relative/kinship placements are exhausted at this time, as determined by program staff and the KC/designee, program staff may move forward with the Kinship Exception Request (KER) process;
- 3) Form [CS-1013, Kinship Exception Request](#) and form [CS-0774, Contact Sheets for Genogram](#) are a part of this process. The KER must be approved prior to seeking a traditional foster care placement from the Placement Unit staff. The KER is uploaded into TFACTS by the program area attempting to make placement.