

**Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services  
(CCDCFS)  
Policy Statement**

**Policy Chapter:** Case Requirements  
**Policy Number:** 5.01.02  
**Policy Name:** Case Plan / Family Service Plan

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**Approved By:** Cynthia G. Weiskittel

**PURPOSE:** Case Plans and Family Service Plans build on family strengths and address concerns in order to reduce the risk of child abuse and neglect. Service planning is a process of developing and implementing a mutually agreed upon family service plan, case plan, or court ordered case plan between the agency and the family to address their needs. The purpose of this document is to describe the case plan and family service plan, their development and the policies and procedures regarding their use by staff of CCDCFS.

**SCOPE:** This policy applies to all CCDCFS staff responsible for developing and/or implementing case plans or family service plans. This policy is in accordance with the Ohio Administrative Code (OAC), sections 5101:2-38-01 (In-home supportive services, no court order) and 5101:2-38-05 (Children in custody or court ordered protective supervision, court order) regarding PCSA (Public Children Services Agency) case plans.

**POLICY**

Case planning and service planning addresses the contributing factors that have led to the abuse and/or neglect of the child and/or risk contributors that are present in cases brought to agency attention. Case plans and family service plans provide a clear and specific guide for the worker of record (WOR) and the family in order to change individuals' behaviors and the conditions that negatively influence safety, risk, and family functioning.

Information obtained through the family assessment informs what changes need to occur to resolve safety threats, reduce risk, and/or to enhance child well-being. A family assessment is completed prior to the development of a case plan, except in cases of a deserted child, emancipated youth, or permanent surrender. A family service plan may be completed on Alternative Response (AR) cases any time after a service is identified.

The case plan / family service plan is specific to the individual family and their needs. They detail the needs/concerns as well as the expected change and how these

changes are achieved through collaboration with the family, CCDCFS, and identified service providers, including community partners and neighborhood collaborative.

A family's priority needs are identified as those needs or concerns which have the greatest impact on future risk of abuse and neglect and are addressed immediately. Needs identified as priority needs have detailed plans outlined. **These plans specifically detail the expected behavior change.** Detailed plans for secondary needs may be included or amended into the case plan at a later date. Often times, working on secondary needs is not possible or advisable while priority needs remain.

**Family Service Plans are developed for AR cases immediately upon identification of needed services but never late than fifteen (15) days from the completion of the Family Assessment.**

**Case Plans are developed for Traditional Response (TR) cases when services are provided to the child and one of the following occurs:**

- In-home supportive services have been agreed upon by the parent.
- The court requests the preparation of a case plan when the child and his/her parent, guardian, or custodian do not attend a detention or shelter care hearing and the complaint alleged that a child was an abused, neglected, or dependent child.
- The agency files a complaint pursuant to 2151.27 of the Ohio Revised Code alleging that the child is an abused, neglected, or dependent child.
- The agency has court ordered temporary custody or permanent custody of the child.
- The court orders the agency to provide protective supervision for a child living in his/her own home.
- The court orders the agency to place a child in a planned permanent living arrangement.

**The agency develops and completes the case plan within thirty (30) days based upon whichever of the following occurs first:**

- The agreement for in-home supportive services;
- The date the complaint was filed;
- The date the child was first placed away from his/her own home; or
- Prior to the adjudicatory hearing.

When sufficient information is not available to complete the case plan; the agency documents specifics in the case plan the additional information needed to complete the case plan and the steps that are taken to obtain missing information. In this situation, the agency is provided an additional thirty (30) days to complete the case plan.

**Case planning has five permanency planning goal options:**

1. Maintain child in his/her own home; prevent removal
2. Return child to his/her own parent/guardian/or custodian
3. Placement of a child in a planned permanent living arrangement, excluding adoption
4. Independent living
5. Adoption

**PROCEDURES**

**I. DEVELOPING THE CASE PLAN / FAMILY SERVICE PLAN**

- A. **Case plans** are completed for In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS), court ordered protective supervision (COPS), and custody cases. A **Family Service Plan** is completed for Alternative Response (AR) cases.
- B. WOR identifies the parties necessary for involvement in the case plan / service plan. This includes all parents (take special note that absent parents have the right to be involved even if they are not the custodial parent), guardian, or custodian and other parties, such as the Guardian *ad Litem* (GAL).
- C. WOR identifies the strengths and needs of the family.
- D. WOR engages the family in a discussion explaining how they can benefit from services to address concerns.
- E. WOR provides the family the opportunity to be part of the development of the case plan / family service plan. WOR ensures that all appropriate parties are provided this opportunity. Notification is provided seven (7) days or more prior to the development of the case plan or family service plan. The case plan / family service plan is developed at this time preferably in the family home.
  1. The case plan / family service plan is completed by the worker who completed the assessment of the family's strength and needs (family assessment). A case is not transferred prior to the completion of the case plan / family service plan.
  2. A Family Team Meeting is an ideal vehicle for case plan / family service plan development.
  3. After a case plan / family service plan is developed and agreed upon, the WOR works with the parties to identify a date and time they will obtain signatures and present parties with a copy of the plan. This date is prior to the case plan / family service plan due date.
  4. If the required participant cannot agree to a case plan / family service plan and/or refuses services:
    - a. AR or IHSS case: case is closed (unless a TDM is needed to explore options or a court order is already pending).

- b. Court involved cases: the WOR reports to legal department to request the court hold a hearing to consider the case plan and/or amendment.
- F. WOR completes the case plan / family service plan document in SACWIS and submits for supervisory approval. The WOR submits the document to the supervisor no later than 72 business hours prior to the case plan / family service plan due date. The supervisor processes the approval within 72 business hours of receipt and ensures that enough time is provided for signatures to be obtained prior to the case plan / family service plan due date.
- G. WOR meets with the family/parties to the case, reviews the case plan / family service plan document, and obtains signatures prior to the due date. Copies are provided to all parties of the case plan / family service plan (this includes any substitute caregiver and foster care networks). The WOR documents in an activity log and case plan document when and how the participant received a copy of the case plan / family service plan.
- 1. In-Home Supportive Services cases: If a participant refuses to sign a case plan, this refusal is documented on the signature line of the case plan and also documented in an activity log as to why the participant refused to sign the case plan. The supervisor is immediately notified when this occurs to discuss next steps.
  - 2. Court Involved cases: If a participant refuses to sign a case plan, this refusal is documented on the signature line of the case plan and also documented in an activity log as to why the participant refused to sign. The case plan is completed and filed with the court within thirty (30) days of the child being removed from his/her home or from the date the complaint was filed; or prior to the adjudicatory court hearing date (whichever comes first). *NOTE: The case plan participant signatures are obtained prior to the case plan being filed in Juvenile Court.*
- H. The case plan is considered complete:
- 1. AR or IHSS cases: once the parent, guardian, or custodian signs the case plan / family service plan indicating their agreement to participate in services.
  - 2. Court Involved cases: once the court journalizes the case plan.

## **II. NON-CUSTODIAL PARENTS**

It is important that all parents present or absent, are engaged, supported, and accountable for the care of their children. The case plan / family service plan is a useful tool to identify the issues that need to be addressed for a parent to provide safe care.

The level of non-custodial parent's inclusion on the case plan is determined by their role in their child's life. WOR engages with any non-custodial parent to encourage their involvement in their child's life and to determine what their role is or could be. Each family is unique and the role should not be assumed.

When a parent is an active member to a case, they should be a participant on the case plan and provide appropriate services.

- A. For non-court involved cases, a parent is only required to be on a case plan if that person will be participating in case plan services. In cases where a parent is not involved in case plan services, the signature page will indicate why that parent was not involved in the case plan. If the parent is absent, the relationship on the signature page will indicate "Absent Parent".
- B. For court involved cases, if a parent's identity is not known or they have not made themselves available for services, the parent will not have identified services. However, they will be included on the signature page as a non-active member and information will be provided to clearly indicate the reason the parent is not involved on the case plan and that the parent's needs will be assessed upon making themselves available. If the identity is not known, this is stated in the narrative on the signature page. When the parent is making themselves available, their needs will be assessed and appropriate services will be included on the case plan.

It is a need for the child for their parents to be involved and provide both emotional and financial support. However, a case plan need cannot be the responsibility of the child. In some cases, the responsibility to identify and locate a parent can be placed on the custodial or present parent (e.g., Mother will identify and locate the father of the child. Paternity for child will be established).

### **III. CONTACT REQUIREMENTS**

Measuring behavior change, not merely completion of services is necessary to make decisions about returning children home or closing cases. The parents must change specific behaviors in order to reduce risk, and the agency must be able to determine when adequate behavior change has occurred. One way in which case plan progress is measured is through face-to-face contacts with the participants of the case plan.

- A. Alternative Response: The WOR makes face-to-face contact with each parent, guardian, or custodian and child participating in and being provided services through the "Family Service Plan" at least every other week to monitor progress on the service plan activities. Contacts are planned and convenient for the family to the extent that child safety is not compromised.
- B. Traditional Response: The WOR makes face-to-face contact with each parent, guardian or custodian and child listed on the case plan and who is receiving services no less than monthly to monitor case plan objectives. This activity is documented in the case activity log within 72 hours of the event. The WOR documents specifics regarding progress on the case plan.
- C. If the agency is unsuccessful in making at least one successful face-to-face contact per month, the agency attempts to make a minimum of two additional good faith attempts to complete the face-to-face contact within the calendar month.

#### **IV. AMENDING THE CASE PLAN / FAMILY SERVICE PLAN**

- A. The **family service plan** may be changed at any time at the request of the agency or the family. The version number is updated each time the plan is modified. The plan is modified by completing a new “AR Family Service Plan”.
- B. The **case plan** is amended when any of the following occur:
- The conditions of the child and his/her parent, guardian, or custodian, or pre-finalized adoptive parent change and the changes affects the provisions of supportive services;
  - There are changes in the goals for the child and/or changes family members need to address to alleviate concerns;
  - The child needs to be placed in a substitute care setting, returned to his/her parent, guardian, or custodian or pre-finalized adoptive parent, or moved to another substitute care setting;
  - The child has attained the age of 16 and programs and life skill services will be offered, if appropriate;
  - A change in the visitation plan for a child in substitute care needs to be made;
  - Relevant factors within the parent, guardian, or custodian, or pre-finalized adoptive parent’s environment are identified by the agency;
  - A party must be added or deleted from the case plan; or
  - The case has been identified for case closure.
1. **In-Home Supportive Services (non-court involved):** The agency seeks agreement to implement the amended case plan by conducting a case plan development meeting and obtaining signatures of the parent, guardian, or custodian and/or other parties to the case plan. Parties are provided a copy of the amendment within seven days of the agreement. If agreement cannot be obtained, the WOR notifies their supervisor.
- a. If the agency completes the case plan due to placement of the child in out-of-home care, the agency submits the amendment to the court within seven days of the child’s placement in out-of-home care.
  - b. The agency implements the amendment to the case plan once the parent, guardian, or custodian agrees to the change.
  - c. If the agency and the child’s parent, guardian, or custodian no longer agrees on the case plan / family service plan, the agency does one of the following:
    - i. Discontinue supportive services to the family.
    - ii. File a complaint with the court if the child is an abused, neglected, or dependent child; or is threatened to become abused, neglected or dependent; and intervention of the court is needed for the child’s protection (WOR discusses with supervisor and holds Team Decision Making (TDM) meetings/staffings prior to filing a complaint).

2. **Court Involved Cases:** The agency contacts the child's parent, guardian, or custodian, or, if applicable, pre-finalized adoptive parent and the GAL and seeks prior agreement for any amendment to the case plan.
  - a. The agency attempts to obtain the signature of the parent, guardian, and custodian or, if applicable, pre-finalized adoptive parent, and GAL, if an amendment is made.
  - b. Reasons for the amendment are recorded on the case plan amendment cover sheet and the amendment is filed to the court within seven days of the agreement.
  - c. If an amendment is not agreed upon by the child's parent, guardian, or custodian, or, if applicable, pre-finalized adoptive parent, and GAL, the WOR reports to the Prosecutor's Office and requests a court hearing to consider the amendment (must have prior supervisor approval).
  - d. The agency implements the amendment 15 days after submittal to the court, with or without a hearing, if the court journalizes the case plan.
  - e. In an emergency situation or if the child is in immediate danger of serious harm, an emergency case plan amendment is completed. The WOR receives prior approval from supervisor and reports to the Prosecutor's office:
    - i. Implement the change and amend the case plan.
    - ii. Report immediately to the Prosecutor's office to notify all parties, the child's GAL, and the court of the change. A statement of the change is filed with the court within three (3) days after the change is implemented.

## **V. DISTRIBUTION OF CASE PLANS**

CCDCFS has an obligation to share case plans / family service plans with all parties to the case. These parties include the child's parent, guardian, or custodian; any persons identified receiving services on the case plan / family service plan; if applicable, pre-finalized adoptive parent; the child's assigned GAL; and the foster parents caring for children in agency custody. In order to understand the needs of the children placed in their homes and to be able to fully support them, the foster parents must be fully aware of the issues that affect the child.

The case plan contains the plan for parents to visit with their children. CCDCFS requires foster parents to be partners in these visits. Visits are coordinated not only with the parent and child, but with the foster parent as well. The case plan serves as the document of the agreed upon visit plan.

Foster parents fully understand the need to maintain confidentiality in information they receive. CCDCFS ensures the needs of the children in their homes are communicated with them and keeps them informed all throughout the placement episode.

## **VI. PROTECTIVE SERVICES ALERT**

- A. When it is determined that protective services are needed, the whereabouts of the child or his or her parent, guardian, or custodian are unknown and there is reason to believe the child remains at risk of abuse or neglect, the WOR will issue a protective service alert.
1. The WOR creates a protective service alert in statewide automated child welfare information system (SACWIS) and specifies whether the protective service alert is to be processed as an in-state or out of state alert.
  2. When a case is closed with an active protective service alert, the closing supervisor tracks the status of the alert and determines the need for extension.

The protective service alert expires ninety days from the issue date. An extension is completed by the most recent case supervisor prior to the expiration if it is determined the child remains in immediate danger of serious harm. Each extension expires ninety days from the issue date.

## **VII. AMENDING THE CASE PLAN FOR CLOSURE**

At the time of case closure, an amendment is completed to reflect that the family has completed all case plan objectives; objectives are no longer needed; and/or the family has refused recommended services and the WOR and supervisor have determined that there is no need for court involvement.

The closing case plan amendment cover sheet is signed by the WOR and supervisor and accompanies the case closing letter, which advises the family of the case closure. The letter specifies information regarding the neighborhood collaborative or other service provider information pertinent to the family's needs.

*It is important to note that as family dynamics change, so does a family's needs. The addition of a child to a home (e.g., individual receiving legal custody, new child born or due to be born, reunification of child) presents challenges to a family that should be assessed. It is best practice to assess these changes over a period no less than 90 days prior to case closure.*

### **SEE ALSO:**

#### **Ohio Administrative Codes:**

- 5101:2-38-01 Requirements for PCSA Case Plan for In-Home Supportive Services without Court Order  
5101:2-38-05 Case Plan for Children in Custody or Under Protective Supervision

#### **Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services Policies and Procedures Manual**

- Policy 2.06.01 Joint Transfer Conference Policy  
Policy 5.01.04 Family Team Meetings  
Policy 5.02.01 TDM / Staffings Policy  
Policy 5.02.02 Case Reviews / Semi Annual Administrative Reviews