



**Administrative Policies and Procedures: 31.5**

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Organization of Family Case Files</b>
<b>Authority:</b>	TCA 37-04-101, 37-04-201, 37-5-105 (3), 37-5-106 et. Seq., 37-5-107
<b>Standards:</b>	<b>COA:</b> PA-FC 13.06, PA-RPM 6.01, PA-RPM 6.02, PA-RPM 7; <b>DCS Practice Model Standard:</b> 7-102A
<b>Application:</b>	All Department of Children's Services Family Service Workers and Supervisory Employees
<b>Policy Statement:</b>	
The Department of Children's Services (DCS) shall maintain all custodial, non-custodial, post-custody and aftercare services <b>Family Case Files</b> in a systematic, confidential manner and are safeguarded from unauthorized and improper disclosure of information.	
<b>Purpose:</b>	
To ensure that <b>Family Case Files</b> are protected, maintained in an organized confidential manner, and contain all pertinent information required to manage the case.	
<b>Procedures:</b>	
<b>A. Confidentiality</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. All <b>Family Case Files</b> must be marked "<b>CONFIDENTIAL</b>" on the spine of the binder and stored in a secure location out of public view.</li> <li>2. The release of any <b>Family Case File</b> information must be in accordance with applicable laws and DCS policies and procedures.</li> </ol>
<b>B. Implementation and organization</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. As of <b>December 15, 2010</b>, all new Family Case Files will be organized as outlined in Section C of this policy.</li> <li>2. All Regional Administrators or their designees must ensure that all existing open case files are organized according to Section C of this policy no later than <b>December 15, 2011</b>.</li> <li>3. Individual child/youth case files that are closed on <b>December 15, 2010</b> do not need to be re-organized into a <b>Family Case File</b>. These case files may be pulled to organize/combine the <b>Family Case File</b>, if a new intake is received on a child/youth.</li> </ol>

<p><b>C. Case File Style, organization and maintenance</b></p>	<p>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. A family is a system of interrelated people; therefore, the ultimate goals are the safety, permanence, and well-being of the child(ren) or youth, the entire family is the focus of intervention. DCS will maintain all paper files as outlined below:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Each family will have one case file.</li> <li>2. 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 will be used to determine case members, Child &amp; 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 <b>TFACTS</b>.</li> <li>3. The FSW who is assigned as the primary worker in <b>TFACTS</b> is responsible for maintaining the family case file while the case is open. The Family Case File binder along with the electronic family record in <b>TFACTS</b> will act as the official family record. If a family's case is closed and re-opened, the prior Family Case File binder will be pulled from closed records (unless they were sealed) and the new services will be added to that file.</li> <li>4. In cases where there is more than one FSW 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 case in <b>TFACTS</b>.</li> <li>5. A duplicate file can be created for the secondary worker if they are housed in separate buildings so that each worker has easy access to the family's information.</li> <li>6. If a duplicate file is created, it is the responsibility of the secondary worker to ensure that all original information is added to the official <b>Family Case File</b> upon the closure of their case. All duplicate files must be:       <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Labeled as a "Duplicate" file; and</li> <li>b) Maintained with "confidentiality" as outlined in <b>Section A</b>.</li> </ol> </li> <li>7. The duplicate file must be destroyed by shredding and placed in the shredder bin within thirty (30) days after the secondary worker has completed his or her work and is no longer assigned to the case.</li> <li>8. A <b>Family Case File binder</b> will be started for all families who are:       <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Receiving ongoing non-custodial services;</li> <li>b) Entering state custody;</li> <li>c) Placed on probation or aftercare; or</li> <li>d) Receiving Family Crisis Intervention Program (FCIP) services.</li> </ol> </li> <li>9. A <b>Family Case File binder</b> must also be started in cases involving a referral for placement and/or services under the Interstate Compact on the Placement of</li> </ol>
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Children (ICPC) or Interstate Compact for Juveniles (ICJ). The **Family Case File binder** will include all the information on the child/youth and family for the custodial episode and any relevant probation and aftercare services or adoption recruitment services.

10. All documents contained in the **Family Case File** binder will be maintained in a three (3) ring binder. There will be only **one** divider tab per **section** over the course of any binders with additional volumes. For cases with multiple children, certain child-specific information will be 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 FFA will be in general information, but when assessments (CANS, YLS, psychological assessments, etc.) are done for individual children, they will be tabbed and divided by child. If there are siblings placed in different placement settings, this process will also apply to the **Placement/Adoption/Guardianship** section.
11. The family's identification information will be placed on the spine of the binder and will consist of:
- a) The family's **TFACTS** ID number;
  - b) First NAME and last initial of the case \*reference person as it appears in **TFACTS**; and
  - c) First NAME and last initial of the child(ren) receiving services from DCS.

**\*Note:** In most cases "case reference person" will be the birth mother. Where there are multiple birth mothers involved with a sibling group, a determination will need to be 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 will be 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" will be the oldest child in the family receiving services

12. The case record contents will be filed according to **CS-0725 Family Case File Organization 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 will be 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-0725**) may be under development or deleted at the release of this policy (by effective date), it is possible that case files will contain different versions of forms and other documents.

13. **CS-0822, Face Sheet for Family Case Files:** Form **CS-0822** will be filed in the front of the **Family Case File** binder (one face sheet per family). Complete

	<p><u>only</u> the information that <u>applies</u> for the family case type, (e.g., delinquent, custodial, noncustodial, etc).</p> <p>14. <b>Current and Updated Photographs:</b> A current photograph is taken of each child/youth upon entering DCS custody. The photograph is placed in a sheet protector directly in front of form <b>CS-0822</b>. The child/youth's name is placed on the front of the photograph and date placed on the back of the photograph.</p> <p>15. A photograph is <b>not required</b> for social services <u>non-custodial</u> children/youth.</p> <p>16. A photograph <b>is required</b> for Probation, Aftercare, ICPC and ICJ cases.</p> <p>17. 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.)</p> <p>18. Old photographs may be preserved for the child/youth by scanning into <b>TFACTS</b> or filed in an envelope within the <b>Family Case File</b>. These old photographs may also be used for developing the child/youth's <a href="#">Life Story Book</a>.</p> <p>19. Case files will contain tab dividers to separate each section. The different sections in <b>CS-0725 Family Case File Checklist</b> can be printed and placed in front of the tab dividers. Form <b>CS-0725</b> lists the contents that may be in each section of the working family case file binder.</p> <p>20. All <b>Family Case Files</b> will be maintained according to this policy and are subject to records disposition according to <b>DCS Records Disposition Authority (RDA)</b> policies and schedules.</p> <p>21. CPS files will be organized as outlined in DCS policy <a href="#">14.16 Child Protective Services Case File Organization</a>. The information in the CPS file will be <u>copied</u> and <u>added</u> to the first section of the <b>Family Case File</b> if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The case is transferred to an FSW, or</li> <li>b) The children/youth enter DCS custody, or</li> <li>c) A child/youth is placed on probation.</li> </ul> <p>22. The original CPS file will remain intact and in the possession of the CPS worker.</p>
<p><b>D. Case files for children in full guardianship or who have been adopted</b></p>	<p>1. Once a child/youth enters the full guardianship of DCS, the legal relationship between the child/youth and the family has been severed. All original information about that child/youth will be removed from the Family Case File. A new distinct and separate <b>Family Case File</b> and electronic <b>TFACTS</b> file for that child/youth (and siblings if they are adopted together) will be created. This separation occurs in <b>TFACTS</b> and in the regional office. It requires a separate case binder be established for the child(ren). The adoption/full guardianship file will be in the same format as described in <i>Section C</i> above. Original</p>

- information prior to guardianship and any new information that occurs after guardianship is held in the child/youth's adoption/full guardianship file.
2. The case recordings, child-specific assessments, and Family Functional Assessment will remain in the Family Case in **TFACTS**. These documents are not required to be placed in the **Family Case File binder** if they are maintained in the electronic Family Case, except for the purposes of a file audit or review, at which time the information will be printed and placed in Family Case File binder.
  3. If a child in full guardianship exits custody through Permanent Guardianship or by aging out, that child/youth's 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 will be 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:
    - a) Information about a referent or identifying information about a referent.
    - b) Other children's names not part of the case file.
    - c) Information regarding the identity or location of an adopted child or the adoptive family.
    - d) Other confidential information pursuant to DCS policies.
  5. To prevent any unintentional disclosure of confidential information, requests for access to records will be handled as follows:
    - a) For Court Orders requesting information from an open or closed case, Legal:
      - ◆ Will check the order to ensure it is appropriate.
      - ◆ If the order is appropriate, Legal will give the TL/FSW general guidance on what must be redacted before the information is released. The TL/FSW must redact all confidential information as outlined in D, (3) (a) through (d) above from the requested DCS information printout or copies.
      - ◆ After the TL/FSW has redacted the protected information, Legal will review the documents and the court order to ensure compliance with the order and with State and Federal laws. The DCS Attorney will ensure that the redaction is done and may advise that a motion and/or order are filed to protect the information.
    - b) "Walk-in" requests (those without a court order) will be referred to the Regional Records Coordinator or their designee, who will be responsible for:
      - ◆ Reviewing the request;
      - ◆ Ensuring that Form **CS-0559 Authorization for Release of Child-Specific Information and HIPAA Protected Information from DCS**

	<p><b>and Notification of Release</b> is completed appropriately;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Ensuring that confidentiality provisions are not violated;</li> <li>◆ Consulting with DCS Records Management or DCS Legal as needed; and</li> <li>◆ Ensuring that a <i>copy</i> of the record and request is presented to the local DCS TL/FSW for redaction of protected information prior to release.</li> </ul> <p>c) Refer to DCS Policy <a href="#"><u>9.5 Access and Release of Confidential Child-Specific Information</u></a> regarding the release of confidential information.</p>
<p><b>E. Case files for youth receiving post custody services</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. When a youth is eligible for DCS post-custody services, a new, separate case file is created. All relevant information regarding the child/youth prior to leaving custody is copied from the <b>Family Case File</b> and placed in the new post custody case file for the youth.</li> <li>2. The youth’s post custody case file will be organized as outlined in the <a href="#"><u>Independent Living Manual Post Custody Case File Contents</u></a> protocol.</li> </ol>
<p><b>F. Maintaining and re-opening the Family Case File after closure</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. If all of the children in custody have entered full guardianship and had a separate case file created, the Family Case File is closed and secured in the regional/county office.</li> <li>2. All documents are removed from the 3-ring binder and placed in a folder.</li> <li>3. The tab on the folder will be labeled with Mother or Primary Caretaker’s Last Name; followed by a comma; and then Mother or Primary Caretaker’s First Name (<b>example: Doe, Jane</b>).</li> <li>4. The Tab will also include the family case <b>TFACTS</b> number.</li> <li>5. The upper left hand corner of the inside of the folder will contain the date of birth (DOB) of the youngest child in the <b>Family Case File</b> followed by the Mother or Primary Caretaker’s <u>Last Name</u>, and Mother or Primary Caretaker’s <u>First Name</u>.</li> <li>6. Records Management personnel will enter the closed <b>Family Case File</b> information into the Records Management database.</li> <li>7. The closed <b>Family Case File</b> will be 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).</li> <li>8. To re-open a <b>Family Case File</b> when a new intake is received on any member of the family:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The existing <b>Family Case File</b> will be retrieved from the closed file area.</li> <li>b) All documents will be transferred from the closed case file and placed in a 3-ring binder in accordance with <b>Section C</b> of this policy.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>

<p><b>G. Methods of records disposal</b></p>	<p>1. The approved method for destroying confidential paper record information is <b>shredding</b>. Electronic records will be irreversibly destroyed in accordance with State approved methods.</p> <p>2. Protected Health Information (PHI) records and databases will be 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</p>
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<p><b>Forms:</b></p>	<p><a href="#"><u>CS-0725 Family Case File Checklist</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>CS-0822, Face Sheet for Family Case Files</u></a></p>
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<p><b>Collateral documents:</b></p>	<p><a href="#"><u>DCS Policy - 9.5 Access and Release of Confidential Child-Specific Information</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>DCS Policy - 14.16 Child Protective Services Case File Organization</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>DCS Policy - 15.8 Preparing Adoption Records for Archives</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>DCS Policy - 16.8 Attachment 3 – Guidelines for Life Story Books</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children Procedures and Practice Manual-2010</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>Independent Living Manual - Independent Living Post Custody Case File Contents</u></a></p>
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<p><b>Glossary:</b></p>	
<p><b>Term</b></p>	<p><b>Definition</b></p>
<p><b>Family:</b></p>	<p><u>For this policy per DCS practice:</u> 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 will be used in determining the members of a Child &amp; Family Team (or Family Service Team), and which members are included in a Family Permanency Plan.</p>
<p><b>Family Case File:</b></p>	<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>