



Administrative Policies and Procedures: 31.5

Subject:	Organization of Family Case Files <i>Draft</i>
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; DCS Practice Model Standard: 7-102A
Application:	All Department of Children's Services Family Service Workers and Supervisory Employees
Policy Statement:	
The Department of Children's Services (DCS) maintains all custodial, non-custodial (not including CPS), post-custody and aftercare services in TFACTS and Family Case Files in a systematic, confidential manner and ensures they are safeguarded from unauthorized and improper disclosure of information.	
Purpose:	
To ensure that TFACTS and 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"> All Family Case Files must be marked "CONFIDENTIAL" on the spine of the binder and stored in a secure location out of public view. The release of any Family Case File information must be in accordance with applicable laws and DCS policies and procedures.
B. Implementation and organization	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> As of December 15, 2010, all new Family Case Files are organized as outlined in Section C of this policy. 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 December 15, 2011. Individual child/youth case files that are closed on December 15, 2010 do not need to be re-organized into a Family Case File. These case files may be pulled to organize/combine the Family Case File if a new intake is received on a child/youth.
B. Case File Style, organization and maintenance	<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. DCS maintains all paper files as outlined below:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Each family has one case file. All required forms, case recordings and documents are maintained in TFACTS or in the Family Case File. TFACTS,

along with the Family Case File, serves as the official case record. With the exception of documents with original signatures or certified copies, any documents uploaded to TFACTS can be destroyed once they become part of the electronic record.

The case manager must note in their closing case summary whether or not a physical case file was created and stored. If a physical case file was created:

- The inside cover of the physical case file is reserved for the Records Disposition Authority (RDA) information to be recorded.
- The physical case file is labeled on the tab portion of the folder with the mother’s or primary caretaker’s last name listed first separated by a comma followed by the mother’s or primary caretaker’s first name

2. Any documents scanned into TFACTS must be named using a naming standard before being uploaded into TFACTS.

Client specific Document	Last name, First name – Date of Document-Name of Form (e.g. – <u>Doe, John – month/day/year – CS-0668, Authorization for Release of Information to DCS</u>)
Family Document	Case Reference Person Last Name – Date of Document – Name of Form (e.g. – <u>Doe – month/day/year – CS-0727, Initial Intake, Placement Referral and Checklist</u>)

Note: Abbreviations can be used to account for character limitations. The document name should allow staff to identify uploaded documents.

3. 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**.
4. The FSW who is the assigned worker as the primary worker in **TFACTS** 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 **TFACTS** acts as the official family record.
5. 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) and reviewed. Effective March 1, 2016, the former Family Case File contents do not need to be the new services is added to that the active current Family Case File.
6. Documents uploaded to **TFACTS** do not need to be maintained in the **Family Case File** unless the document contains an original signature that must be maintained in the paper record. Any documents scanned into TFACTS are named using the following naming standards below:
6. In cases where there is more than one FSW actively working with the family, it is preferable that the primary worker both assigned workers 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 **TFACTS**.

7. A duplicate file can be created for the **secondary worker FSW's** if they are housed in separate buildings so that each worker has easy access to the family's information.
8. ~~If a duplicate file is created, it is the responsibility of the secondary worker the FSW's to jointly ensure that all original information is added to the official **Family Case File** upon the closure of their case. All duplicate files must be:~~
 - a) ~~Labeled as a "Duplicate" file; and~~
 - b) ~~Maintained with "confidentiality" as outlined in **Section A**.~~

~~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.~~
9. A **Family Case File binder** is started for all families who are:
 - a) Receiving ongoing non-custodial services;
 - b) Entering state custody;
 - c) Placed on probation or aftercare; or
 - d) Receiving Family Crisis Intervention Program (FCIP) services.
10. A **Family Case File binder** must also be started 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 binder** 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.
11. All documents contained in the **Family Case File binder** 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 FFA is in general information, but when assessments (CANS, YLS, psychological assessments, etc.) are done for individual children, they 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.
12. The family's identification information is placed on the spine of the binder and consists 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" is the birth mother. Where there are

multiple birth mothers involved with a sibling group, a determination needs 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 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

13. The case record contents are 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 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-0725**) 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.
14. **CS-0822, Face Cover Sheets for Family Case Files:** Form **CS-0822** 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.).
15. **Current and Updated Photographs:** 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 **CS-0822**. The child/youth’s name is placed on the front of the photograph and date placed on the back of the photograph.
16. A photograph is **not required** for social services **non-custodial** children/youth. A photograph **is required** for Probation, Aftercare, ICPC and ICJ cases.
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.)
18. 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**.
19. Case files contain tab dividers to separate each section. The different sections in **CS-0725 Family Case File Checklist** can be printed and placed in front of the tab dividers. Form **CS-0725** lists the contents that may be in each section of the working family case file binder.

	<p>20. All Family Case Files are maintained according to this policy and are subject to records disposition according to DCS Records Disposition Authority (RDA) policies and schedules.</p> <p>21. CPS files will be organized as outlined in DCS Policy 14.16 Child Protective Services Case File Organization. The information in the CPS file will be copied and added to the first section of the Family Case File if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The case is transferred to an FSW, or b) The children/youth enter DCS custody, or e) A child/youth is placed on probation. <p>22. The original CPS file will remain intact and in the possession of the CPS worker.</p>
<p>C. Case files for children in full guardianship or who have been adopted</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.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) A new distinct and separate electronic TFACTS file for that child/youth (and siblings if they are adopted together) is created. b) The child's (and siblings if they are adopted together) Family Case File becomes the adoption/full guardianship file, and is maintained in the same format as described in <i>Section C</i> above. All original information prior to guardianship and any new information that occurs after guardianship continue to be held in the child/youth's adoption/full guardianship file. (This also includes parent information that was in the file prior to full guardianship for historical purposes.) c) In the event that siblings are separated and are not going to be adopted together, did not enter guardianship together or some other legal separation exists, the FSW creates distinct Family Case Files to account for the newly separate cases. In situations where siblings are headed down different paths to permanency, the FSW separates child-specific information and ensures copies of all family documents are made to create two (or more if necessary) distinct Family Case Files. <p>2. The case recordings, child-specific assessments, and Family Functional Assessment remains 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 is printed and placed in Family Case File binder.</p> <p>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 is sealed as outlined in Policy 15.8 Preparing Adoption Records for Archives once the adoption has been finalized.</p> <p>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:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. <p>5. To prevent any unintentional disclosure of confidential information, requests for access to records are handled as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) For Court Orders requesting information from an open or closed case, Legal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Checks the order to ensure it is appropriate. ◆ If the order is appropriate, Legal gives 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, (4) (a) through (d) above from the requested DCS information printout or copies. ◆ After the TL/FSW 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. b) “Walk-in” requests (those without a court order) are referred to the Regional Records Coordinator or their designee, who is responsible for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 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 ◆ 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. c) Refer to DCS Policy <u>9.5 Access and Release of Confidential Child-Specific Information</u> regarding the release of confidential information.
<p>D. Case files for youth receiving Extension of Foster Care services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When a youth is eligible for Extension of Foster Care Services, a new, separate paper case file is created. All relevant information regarding the youth prior to receiving the Extension of Foster Care Services is copied from the Family Case File and placed in the new Extension of Foster Care case file for the youth. This has no impact on the electronic Family Case record in TFACTS. 2. The youth’s Extension of Foster Care case file is organized as outlined in the Independent Living and Transition Planning Guide: Case File Contents: Extension or Re-Establishment of Foster Care Services for Young Adults.

<p>E. Preparing and maintaining closed records and re-opening the Family Case File 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. If there is a previously closed Family Case File, the current Family Case File contents should be added to the closed record. 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: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) The existing Family Case File is retrieved from the closed file area. b) All documents are transferred from the closed case file and placed in a 3-ring binder in accordance with Section C of this policy.
<p>F. Methods of records disposal</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The approved method for destroying confidential paper record information is shredding. 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.

<p>Forms:</p>	<p><u>CS-0559 Authorization for Release of Child-Specific Information and HIPAA Protected Information from DCS and Notification of Release</u></p> <p><u>CS-0668, Authorization for Release of Information to DCS</u></p> <p><u>CS-0725, Family Case File Organization Checklist</u></p> <p><u>CS-0727, Initial Intake, Placement Referral and Checklist</u></p> <p><u>CS-0822, Face Sheets for Family Case Files</u></p>
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Collateral documents:	<p><u>DCS Policy - 9.5 Access and Release of Confidential Child-Specific Information</u></p> <p><u>DCS Policy - 14.16 Child Protective Services Case File Organization</u></p> <p><u>DCS Policy - 15.8 Preparing Adoption Records for Archives</u></p> <p><u>DCS Policy - 16.8 Attachment 3 – Guidelines for Life Story Books</u></p> <p><u>Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children Procedures and Practice Manual</u></p> <p><i>Independent Living and Transition Planning Guide: Guide for Extension or Re-Establishment of Foster Care Services for Young Adults Protocol</i></p>
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Glossary:	
Term	Definition
Family:	<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 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/paper 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>